

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICAL GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria, a country with a significant Christian population, has seen the emergence of godfatherism as a prominent feature in its political landscape. Godfatherism refers to the undue influence exerted by powerful individuals or groups over the selection of political candidates and the governance process. Nigeria, a country with a diverse religious landscape, has witnessed the significant influence of religion on its political processes. Critical discourse was adopted for this paper. Christianity, one of the major religions, plays a crucial role in shaping political attitudes and behaviours. Concurrently, the phenomenon of godfatherism—where powerful individuals, often with considerable political and economic clout, control political outcomes—has been a persistent feature of Nigerian politics. This paper recommended free and fair election, transparency and independent judiciary to eradicate godfatherism in Nigeria politics. It also advocated for separation of the church and the state, ethical values among clergies and youths' education to avoid dependency on godfatherism.

Keywords: Godfatherism, Politics, Nigerian Christians.

Introduction

The place of godfathers in any democratic system cannot be underestimated. In saner climes, they are expected to guide, chart courses and provide guidance for young politicians. The role of godfathers is expected to enhance the continuity and consistency of the ideology and principles of a political party. Godfathers are needed to bring sanity into politics, correct and sanction erring members of the party holding political office. Even in spiritual organizations, godfatherism is not a strange concept although it may come under different names and nomenclatures such as mentors, disciples, fathers-in the Lord etc.

However, Christianity has been a part of Nigerian society since the 15th century, but its significant political influence began in the 19th and 20th centuries with the advent of missionary activities and colonial rule. Christian missions established educational and social institutions that became breeding grounds for political leaders. Christian values and networks continued to influence political movements and decisions after post-independence in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, in Nigerian politics, the concept of godfatherism has been utterly bastardized to mean more of an investment drive, cult like or a near clandestine relationship between two people wherein the older or the senior perpetually holds the younger or junior into

some form of bondage as a result of help or assistance rendered by the former while the latter sought political patronage. Politics in Nigeria has become an investment where the investors are set to make a profit at all costs; as a result, political brutality is pervading the society. It is not strange to find a situation where a typical aspirant or candidate enjoys the patronage and support of his godfather prior to the elections. Godfatherism according to Scott (1990), is a special case of dyadic (two-persons) relations involving a mostly instrumental friendship in which a person of higher socio economic status (patron or godfather) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits or both for a person of lower socioeconomic status (client or godson), who in turn reciprocates by offering general support assistance. Furthermore, Olawale (2005) espouses that the modern day godfatherism is an ancient tradition that has been taken to a criminality level. Conversely, Attah, et.al (2014) note that godfatherism is seen all over the world and not peculiar to Nigeria alone.

Politics

Politics refers to the activities, actions and policies that involve governance and decision-making within a society. It encompasses the processes by which individuals and groups seek to influence or control public policies and government institutions. Politics typically revolves around power dynamics, conflicting interest, ideology and the distribution of resources and authority. It includes activities such as voting, campaigning, lobbying and political discourse aimed at shaping public opinion and policy outcomes.

Christianity:

Christianity is a monotheistic religion centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is based on the belief in Jesus as the son of God and the saviour of humanity. Key aspects include faith in Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, the Bible as sacred scripture and importance of love, compassion and justice.

Concept of Political Godfatherism

Godfatherism refers to the system where influential individuals (godfathers) use their resources and networks to control political outcomes and appoint protégés to key positions (Albert, 2005). This practice undermines democratic principles by prioritizing loyalty over merit. Political godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. However, the literary meaning and attributes of godfather needs to be emphasized. Literarily, godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins an election. According to Audu (2016), Godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influence who robbed political parties of the conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programmers on the basis of which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters. He observes that ideally, a government that is freely and fairly instituted by the people must be accountable to them as the source of its moral authority to rule. However, this is not possible with people of questionable wealth whose major concern is to recover the money spent for installing their candidates in power and thereafter share a certain percentage of what comes to the government purse as their share of the economy.

In the argument of Akpan (2014), Godfathers are people that finance political party activities and individual electoral campaigns as actively throughout investment outlet to be recorded through frivolous and bloated government contracts, appointment of cronies into choice public offices and other perennial returns by the beneficiaries. In the same vein, Ibrahim (2006) qualifies Godfathers as individuals who have the ability to deliver the desired outcome in an electoral contest. The emphasis here is that politicians can only achieve political offices with the backing of the so-called “Godfathers”. Indeed, godsons become mere surrogates and remain totally subservient to their godfathers. Not only that, Omotola (2017) is of the view that godfathers are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight, and so on, to plot and determine the success or otherwise of a power seeker at any level of supposedly competitive politics. The complex processes of doing this from womb to tomb' are famously known as “godfatherism (Omotola, 2017).

In the final analysis, political godfatherism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It has historical significance in the era of the country's first republic. And it has been an ugly system that has disrupted the democratization process in Nigeria. In Nigeria, “godfatherism” in politics refers to the phenomenon where influential individuals or groups exert significant control over political processes and decisions. While it has its critics, some argue there are perceived benefits to godfatherism in Nigerian politics:

Positive effects of political God fathers in Nigeria

Political Stability and Order: Godfathers can help maintain stability within political parties by managing conflicts and ensuring party discipline. This can prevent internal strife that might otherwise weaken the party’s effectiveness.

Resource Mobilization: Godfathers often have access to significant financial resources, which can be crucial for funding political campaigns, rallies, and other activities. This financial backing can be instrumental in helping candidates win elections.

Experience and Guidance: Many godfathers are experienced politicians who have navigated the complexities of Nigerian politics. They can offer valuable guidance to younger or less experienced politicians, helping them understand the political terrain and avoid pitfalls.

Unity and Coordination: Godfathers can play a role in coordinating political activities and ensuring that different factions within a party work together towards common goals. This can enhance the party’s overall effectiveness and good performance.

Network and Support: Godfathers usually have extensive networks and influence within the political landscape. They can provide support in terms of strategic advice, endorsements, and connections to key stakeholders, which can boost a candidate’s chances of success.

Negative effects of godfatherism in Nigerian Politics

However, it’s important to note that godfatherism in Nigerian politics is controversial and often criticized for perpetuating corruption, undermining democracy, and concentrating

power in the hands of a few individuals rather than the electorate. It can also lead to patronage and nepotism, where political positions and resources are allocated based on loyalty rather than merit. Therefore, the negative effects are hereby examined.

Political Patronage: Godfathers exert significant influence over political appointments, including the selection of candidates for various political offices. This often results in the promotion of individuals who may not necessarily be the most qualified but are loyal to the godfather.

Corruption: The relationship between godfathers and their protégés often involves financial transactions and favours, leading to corrupt practices such as embezzlement of public funds and kickbacks in exchange for political support.

Weak Democratic Institutions: Godfatherism undermines the principles of democracy by concentrating power in the hands of a few individuals rather than fostering transparent and accountable governance. Institutions meant to check the abuse of power can be weakened or bypassed. Citizens are disenfranchised from exercising their political rights as elections are rigged and manipulated in favour of unpopular candidates who are ready to do the bidding of the godfather.

Impeded Development: When political decisions are driven by patronage rather than merit, developmental projects and policies may suffer. Resources may be allocated based on political considerations rather than actual needs, leading to inefficiencies and inequalities in development.

Erosion of Party Ideology: Godfatherism often prioritizes personal interests and loyalty over party ideologies and principles. This can lead to fragmentation within political parties and reduce their ability to offer coherent alternatives to voters.

Violence and Intimidation: In some cases, godfatherism is associated with violence and intimidation, especially during elections. Turning young citizens into hooligans cum thugs' Political thugs may be employed to intimidate opponents and voters, undermining the electoral process and public trust in democracy.

Lack of Accountability: Godfathers and their protégés may operate without adequate oversight, perpetuating a cycle of impunity where individuals evade accountability for their actions.

Youth Marginalization: Godfatherism tends to perpetuate the dominance of older politicians and elites, recycling old hands, marginalizing younger aspirants and reducing opportunities for fresh ideas and leadership in politics.

Politicized Employment in the State cum Centre: The appointment of political office holders and some civil servants is purely political. The godfathers of a particular state, as well as centre today, actually task their godsons on the kind of people to be employed in their cabinet, even though the person may not be up to the task in terms of experience or ability to deliver. He

ought to be employed since the directive comes from the godfather. However, if Godson reacts to the directive of his godfather negatively, it leads to political violence.

Enhanced disrespect of the rule of law: The Nigerian-styled patron-client relationship nearly truncated Nigerian puerile democracy in June 2003. A self-confessed godfather, Uba employed thugs and 10th, Nigerian police to abduct his godson, Chris Ngige, who was the elected governor of Anambra State. Ngige's sin was his refusal to allow Uba to nominate all political appointees, take the largest share of the state's allocation, and instantly pay him a sum of N2.5 billion, the claimed cost of installing Ngige as governor (Onwumere, 2007).

Emergence of Godfathers in Nigeria's Politics.

An emergent feature of politics in Nigeria is the phenomenon of godfatherism (Olarinmoye, 2008). The political class has been instrumental in propagating this political orientation which deliberately nurtures the corruption of the electoral processes and governmental structures and equally ensures that the electoral processes and state power are skewed towards satisfying the selfish interests of the dominant political mentors, otherwise known as "political godfathers. John (2016) observed that godfatherism has become a scary phenomenon in Nigerian politics. This is because godfathers have sustained a reputation for deploying their wealth to secure party nominations for candidates of their choice and sponsoring their elections, including manipulating the electoral processes for their selfish interest. This dominant political culture has not only been sustained by the privileged few but has become perverse and is today a major source of tension and political instability in the polity

The concept of godfathers is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary Nigerian politics. Godfathers are generally defined as men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins in the election (Chibuzo, 2015). Godfatherism is an old-fashioned enterprise that has circulated around the nation with different names or headings for centuries. The issue about godfathers in the politics of Nigeria has become a plague in the body of politics irrespective of the political party that is involved. This whole process undermines the usual popular sovereignty and other attributes that make democracies often unique and preferable to other systems of government.

The political godfatherism also connotes sponsorship of the contestants in an election by a wealthy and influential individual or group who in return expect protection and other forms of rewards and privileges. Kolawole (2014) therefore sees godfatherism as an institution of political king making through which certain political office holders of tenuous political clout come into power. Mbamara (2004) aptly asserts that godfatherism invasion of the polity is for the nomination of political candidates for the purpose of selfish gratification.

The dominant role of the political godfathers in Nigerian politics and the competition amongst godfathers to win elections for their godsons with the ultimate aim of controlling state apparatus and resources has necessitated the adoption of varying techniques to achieve electoral victory. A well-distinctive aspect of every state in the country is the nature in which

politics is being played and however the institution of the government acts on behalf of the state and through its structures, institutions and agencies, the government enacts and expresses the sovereign will of the state. It is the desire of the citizens in the country to get control of the machinery of government for the ultimate purpose of the distribution and redistribution of the scarce resources. The concentration of power and wealth in the state explains the scramble for the control of its structures and institutions by the political class in the society, this struggle and the consequent value have impacted on society negatively. In our nascent democratic experience, the power tussles among the members of the political class have resulted in violence in varying forms and intensities. Godfathers exert control through financial support, manipulation of party structures, and influence over electoral processes. They can also use intimidation and violence to maintain their power.

History of some political godfathers and godson in Nigeria

The political godfather phenomenon is not new in Nigeria. It started during the First Republic when the foremost nationalists of the country (Zik, Awo, Tafawa-Balewa, etc) influenced and controlled political activities in Nigeria. However, there are lots of differences between the ideological godfatherism of the first Republic and the crude form. Quoting Ibrahim (2017), Bernard traced the origin of godfatherism in electoral politics to the city of Chicago in the United States of America in the pre-World War II era, when the heads of criminal gangs sponsored politicians in elections, manipulated the results to get them elected and, in turn, received protection and contracts from their political godsons.

However, the advent of godfatherism in Nigerian partisan politics dates back to the first Republic when leaders of the three main political parties [Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)] carefully and meticulously cultivated godsons that they were convinced would advance the well-being of the citizens. According to Gambo, Sir Ahmadu Bello of the NPC, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe of the NCNC and Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the AG were to do so and not to use godsons as surrogates to promote parochial interests, but to promote the developmental aspirations of the people. Unlike the present crop of political godfathers, the first generation godfathers were essentially benevolent and progressive because they did not abuse their status as godfathers by imposing frivolous demands on their godsons as is the case today.

They served as a huge reservoir of wisdom and experience consulted on the business of governance. Indeed, in a relative the first republic, political godfathers were drawn by community sense interest in seeking to influence the electorates to vote for some candidates of their choice. It was enough satisfaction for them that they wielded tremendous influence in the society and this inevitably generated a groundswell of goodwill and reverence for them, as their views on political issues were scarcely contested in their respective regions of the country.

Manifestation of Politics of Godfathers in Nigeria

Godfathers play an important role in democratic sustenance in Nigerian politicking since 1953 during the era of self-government up to the fourth republic, where uninterrupted democracy is experienced from 1999 to 2011. As indicated earlier, the power and influence of the godfather are enhanced by political connections at the highest tier of government. Where this is absent the individual can only operate as a mentor, benefactor, or financier. He must

avoid a brush with the law because it will be visited with a heavy penalty. Considering Kwara State from 1979, Dr. Olusola Saraki operated as a financier or benefactor to Alhaji Adamu Attah the Governor of Kwara State. The relationship turned out and he withdrew the support Dr Olusola Saraki, who then shifted support to Chief Cornelius Adebayo who was in the Unity Party of Nigeria, although he (Saraki) remained in the National Party of Nigeria Chief Cornelius Adebayo went ahead to win the gubernatorial election in Kwara in 1983. Dr Olusola Saraki was clearly the deciding factor in the election, as he had proved that whichever candidate he backed could win the election irrespective of party affiliation (Ayoade, 2010). In furtherance to this, Dr. Olusola Saraki, the strongman of Kwara politics also succeeded in taking over power from late Mohammed Lawal in 2003 to install his son Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki as Executive Governor of Kwara State from 2003 to 2011.

However, at the tail of his son's administration, Dr Olusola Saraki wanted Gbemisola Saraki to take over the power from her brother under the platform of the PDP but to no avail the situation could not help him to achieve this objective in the Kwara State ruling party and this led to the rift between father and son to part ways in the control of the PDP. Therefore, Governor Saraki who had firm control of the PDP structure in Kwara while his father was forced to move to the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), a less popular political party, where Gbemisola Saraki gained the party gubernatorial flag bearer through politics of consensus among party members to enable her to replace the brother as governor in the year 2011. This calculation failed as the target could not be reached.

Another example of the significance of political connections is the Anambra case where Chris Uba installed Dr. Chris Ngige as governor for only one term as he had signed an agreement saying "I SHALL NOT seek re-election or stand for nomination to recontest the gubernatorial seat of Anambra State for a second term (Adeyemo, 2014). Prior to the election, Dr. Ngige also signed a covenant of relationship on March 28, 2003 in which he pledged to continue to do the biddings of Chris Uba. In addition, on May 5, 2003 he was also alleged to have signed three undated letters of resignation as PDP Candidate, Governor elect, and governor respectively (Adeyemo, 2014). Thus, if he reneged on his pledge, the appropriate letter would be dated and submitted as a letter of resignation. Chris Uba was alleged to have put in place a collegial administration in the name of a caucus. And on May 19, 2003 the Caucus decided (Adeyemo, 2014). Chris Ngige was alleged to have reneged on his promises within six weeks of his inauguration as governor. Consequently, he was abducted by the Police on July 10, 2003 and was saved by a telephone call that he made from where he was kept. Ngige was alleged to have resigned as Governor on July 10, 2003 using the preassigned letter of resignation of May 5, 2003 (Ayoade, 2012). That attempt to remove him from office failed and it was followed in November 2003 by a four-day riot resulting in the wanton destruction of public property. The mercenaries were allegedly paid N10,000 each per day for four days of the operation. The massive arson of public property in the state was organized to discredit Dr. Ngige (Agbo, 2014). In fact, in a release, the Uba camp claimed that the action was taken to "let the world know that we have taken charge to implant new government and thus enjoined everyone to join the cru because" Ngige is going today (Agbo, 2014). It is believed that the Godfather can make and unmake. In this vein, Dan Ulasi, a believer in Chris Uba, is quoted as saying;

If you read what the Minister of Works said about Obasanjo and his first term (sic) The President realized that he came through a source and you will see that it would appear the source managed his government for the first four years and the President pretended to be a fool because he knew that people spent a lot of money to make him President from prison (Adeyemo 2014)

Also, the rift between Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and Senator Rasheed Ladoja the former Governor of Oyo State is another good example. Alhaji Adedibu was a man of tremendous political clout and courage. He had nurtured and maintained a formidable grassroots support and he was an astute mobilizer. He had very strong political and security connections as well as access to funds when needed to oil his political machine. He claimed to have deployed all those resources to secure the election of Senator Rasheed Ladoja. He was therefore quoted as saying

I installed him there when people opposed him (Oguchi, 2015) Speaking like Louis XIV of France, he said am the politics in Oyo state and I am the issue to discuss by all and sundry (Oguchi 2015).

He fell out with Ladoja, because according to him, he failed to honour all agreements entered into before his election and for keeping former Chairman of the Oyo State National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Alhaji Lateef Akinsola (Tokvo) in Agodi Prison for months. Furthermore, he asserted that before Ladoja's election, he controlled the political machinery. He claimed that after the election, Ladoja "withdrew the machinery to himself and refused to give them an appointment or to compensate them. This is now "the time for me to withdraw all the machinery from him and compensate them. (Oguchi 2015 quoted in Ayoade, 2012). Alhaji Adedibu deployed the eighteen members of the House of Assembly who supported him to institute the impeachment of Ladoja. These legislators were camped in D'Rovans Hotel, Ibadan. Since they did not constitute two thirds of the thirty-two-member legislature, they suspended five of the fourteen members including the speaker who supported Governor Ladoja. They then claimed that they (18) constituted two thirds of the remaining 27 members of the legislature".

Many people saw the impeachment process as opaque and the Supreme Court upturned it after eleven months. Alhaji Adedibu had support from President Obasanjo as he himself boasted: "It is not that Obasanjo is supporting me blindly. He has reasons to support me. He has waded into the crisis several times... There was a time when Obasanjo prostrated for me about six times (Oguchi 2015)". Another example of godfatherism in Nigeria is the ongoing political crisis in Rivers State between the former governor of Rivers State Nyesom Wike and his godson the incumbent governor of Rivers State Simlayi Fubara. The crisis has turned the State into crisis which has remained unresolved with political benefactors taking sides. The crisis has led to the division of the honourable members into two fashions with 27 members loyal to Wike while the remaining 6 members are loyal to the incumbent governor. There are series of court judgements which are unsettled the State. The battle is still ongoing in Rivers State as at March 2025.

Impact of godfatherism on Political Processes

Godfatherism undermines democratic processes, leading to the selection of candidates based on loyalty rather than competence. This can result in poor governance and a lack of accountability. The idea that the winner takes all has no place in a democracy because if losers lose all, they will opt out of the democratic game. Sharing is essential in a democratic society, the sharing of power, of resources and of responsibilities. Those skills and the will or necessary trait of private and public characters are the products of a good civil election. The aspirants depend solely on the godfather who has been seen as one having the abilities and capabilities to manipulate the electoral processes to favour them. It is believed that the role of the godfather tends to become more apparent and even more effective after the election. However, the elections have been contested and won. Consequent upon this, the godfather stands to reap his investment, it can therefore be described as a relationship based on give and take. The godfathers begin to request an amount of money and want to direct the aspirant.

Due to the overbearing influence of the political godfathers on political office seekers, the latter are robbed of their independence, thus they become mere surrogates and are conditioned in such a way that they become totally subservient to their godfathers. It is a political slave trade or political sponsorship based on political manipulation with several evil agenda. The Nigerian political office holders are not performing as expected as a result of overbearing of godfathers. We need to find out the influence of godfathers on political office holders in discharging their electoral promises before the elections and how well have they been discharging dividends of democracy after elections in Nigeria.

Intersection of Christianity and Godfathers

Christianity was introduced to Nigeria by European missionaries in the 19th century, significantly impacting the socio-political landscape (Isichei, 1995). Early missionaries like Samuel Ajayi Crowther not only spread religious beliefs but also engaged in educational and social reforms that laid the foundation for political engagement among Nigerian Christians (Jenkins, 2002).

In modern times, Christian organizations and leaders have been active in advocating for social justice and political reforms. For example, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been vocal in political matters, influencing policy decisions and electoral outcomes (Falola, 2001). Religious affiliations can strengthen political patronage networks with Christian leaders using their influence to endorse and support political candidates. This intersection is evident in the support given by Christian organizations to certain politicians during elections (Iwu, 2008).

Christian teachings emphasize values such as honesty, integrity, and justice. These values can positively influence political behaviour and decision-making, encouraging leaders to act in the public interest. Religious leaders often play significant roles in politics, providing endorsements and mobilizing voters. Their influence can sway election outcomes and shape political discourse. The relationship between the church and the state in Nigeria is complex. While the constitution advocates for the separation of religion and state, religious influence is pervasive in political processes. The practice of godfathers poses ethical challenges for Christian politicians who are torn between their religious principles and the demands of political loyalty. This conflict often leads to compromised integrity and public trust.

Prominent Christian politicians such as Olusegun Obasanjo have played significant roles in Nigerian politics. Obasanjo, a former military head of state and later a democratically elected president, often emphasized his Christian faith in his political rhetoric and decision-making processes (Adejumobi, 2004).

Mordecai, a Good Example of Godfather in the Bible.

The role Mordecai played in the life of young girl Esther who eventually became the queen of King Ahasuerus of Persia was no less than the role of a godfather. Mordecai not only adopted Esther as his own daughter, he also informed her of a vacancy in the office of the Queen as announced by the “Persian Electoral Commission”. Then the king’s personal attendants proposed, “Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king”.

Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Haggai, the king’s eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This advice pleased the king, and he followed it”. Esther 2:2-4

Mordecai not only collected “nomination forms” from his niece, but he also spent time, effort and connection to ensure that the young lady won the election. He did not just pray for her! He was available and also gave her political education! Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her. Esther 2:10-11. He paid the price to ensure her niece won the election. Mordecai was a Godfather!

It is worthy to note that Esther took cognizance of this and gave due regard to Mordecai for the role he played in her emergence as the queen of Persia. No wonder, when Mordecai brought that great request asking her to present herself before the King uninvited, she readily risked her life and made that classical statement we have all quoted severally, “If I perish, I perish”.

We may not be completely right to assume that it was the love of God and her nation that made Esther take such a huge risk. I think loyalty to Mordecai and appreciation for him for the role he had played in her life and especially her emergence as the queen prompted Esther to take that great risk. Imagine if some of the Jewish leaders, without Mordecai’s input were the ones who approached Esther and requested her to put her life on the risk. I doubt if she would go all the way with them.

This is one lesson the church is yet to learn. A child of God is contesting election and he gets all his support from the wrong people. Church leaders only prayed for him. When such a fellow becomes a political office holder and brethren approach him for assistance with the usual “You know we are together” kind of requests, many a time the expected “If I perish, I perish” response does not come for obvious reasons.

One of the most crucial lacunas in the politics of Nigeria today is the absence of righteous godfathers who can genuinely mentor Christian politicians. Most Christians who go into politics today are being mentored and godfathered by the kind of people whose ideals and principles do not agree with or accept to submit themselves, so they don’t lose out completely.

Overall, while godfatherism can provide short-term benefits for those involved, it poses long-term risks to democratic governance, economic development, and social cohesion in Nigeria. Addressing these issues requires reforms that strengthen democratic institutions, promote transparency, and reduce the influence of personal patronage in politics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Christianity as a faith promotes values that oppose political godfatherism, the reality in Nigeria shows a more nuanced picture where religious leaders and institutions may be entangled in the complexities of political power dynamics. This relationship underscores the on-going tension between faith-based principles and realities of political practice in the country.

Recommendations

To mitigate the influence of godfatherism, it is essential to strengthen democratic institutions. This includes ensuring free and fair elections, promoting transparency, and enhancing the independence of the judiciary.

Separation of Church and State: Christian leaders should prioritize spiritual leadership over political influence, adhering to principles of separation of church and state to maintain impartiality and credibility.

Ethical Guidelines: Establish clear ethical guidelines within Christian communities to prevent clergy from engaging in or endorsing practices that undermine democratic values, such as godfatherism.

Advocacy for Transparency: Encourage transparency and accountability in political processes through advocacy and public statements, promoting fair elections and governance that reflects the will of the people rather than vested interests.

Educational Campaigns: Conduct educational campaigns within churches and communities to raise awareness about the negative impacts of godfatherism on democracy and societal development.

Collaboration with Civil Society: Collaborate with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to advocate for electoral reforms and policies that combat political corruption and ensure fair representation.

Educational Reform: Introduce courses in religious institutions that emphasize ethical leadership, social justice, and the separation of church and state.

Pastoral Guidance: Encourage religious leaders to actively preach against the negative impacts of political godfatherism during sermons and engage their congregations in discussions about ethical governance.

Transparency and Accountability: Advocate for legislation that promotes transparency in political funding, reduces the influence of godfathers, and enhances accountability among elected officials.

Interfaith Dialogue: Foster dialogue among Christian denominations and other faithfulls to collectively address the ethical challenges posed by political godfatherism.

Youth Empowerment: Invest in youth education, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement programs to reduce dependency on godfathers for political and economic opportunities.

International Support: Engage with international partners and organizations to provide expertise and support in strengthening democratic institutions and promoting good governance practices.

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