

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO GOVERNMENT

Emmanuel O. Alonge



Those who embrace Christianity should be known for purity, uprightness and simplicity in their profession of being Christ's followers. Be that as it is, the life of Christians embraces many relationships. Christians are family members at home. They have spiritual relationship with the church, social relation in the community, economic relationship in business and civil relationship with government. A Christian worldview ought to be comprehensive enough to understand this reality.

When talking about Christians and government, there are diversities of opinion among brethren on how Christians should view government and politics. Some believe that Christians should be actively involved in government with aim of making right the wrongs; while others opine that Christian should not incline towards political/government direction so as not to soil their hands and defile their garments. The Bible, God's law and commandment (Prov. 6:23), which is sufficient to be godly (2 Pet. 1:3) talks about civil government and provides examples of how faithful Christians can see it.

Civil government is God's initiative and He ordained it for the good of mankind. Government derives her authority from God to restrain evils and promote good. This mandate is expressly stated by Paul in Romans 13:1-7. Good government that functions as God directs will do all to make the citizens live in a peaceful and conducive environment. It will advance justice, grant religious liberty, promote literacy etc. and be concerned about the joy of her citizenry. Bad government on the contrary will foster corruption, violence, uproar and instability (Prov. 29:2; 28:12, 28). Whichever ways, Christians own their government certain responsibilities.

Christian's Duties to Government

As Christians, we are under obligation to submit to the laws of the land. It is unchristian to resist the authority of those in power. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves” (Rom. 13:1-2). If Christians submit to the authority, they will also be at the mercy of the government.

In addition to submissiveness, Christians are divinely charged to pay dues to government. Jesus when asked on whether or not one should pay tax in Matt. 22:21 says, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and

to God things that are God's, render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.” It is possible that someone may want to complain of the corrupt practices of those in government, but so were the Roman government under which Jesus and the disciples preached. Yet, they taught believers to pay their dues. “Those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, yes... Jesus said to him... go to the sea, cast in a hook and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth you will find a piece of money, take that and give it to them for me and you” (Matt. 12:24-27). Christians should not refuse the payment of taxes because of the unfaithfulness of those in government (Rom. 12:17-21).

As children of God, we owe those in authority our prayers. We are to recognise them as God's minister for good works. “Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). God made it known that if we will live “a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence,” we need to pray for them. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour who desires all men (including those in authority) to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4, *emphasis mine*). In her days in office as queen, Esther solicited fasting and prayers in her bid to seek for the relief and deliverance of the Jews (Esther 4:14-17). Nehemiah prayed to God concerning king Artaxerxes on the rebuilding of Jerusalem and God heard his prayers. Instead of saying negative words about our nation and the rulers, let us be positive, optimistic and put in our best. If all Christians will be united in approaching God with seriousness and faithfulness, something positive will result from it. It is within His power to enthrone and dethrone. Let us leave that to God and pray for His will in all situations, especially for our nation and our leaders.

Be patriotic. It is important to be concerned sincerely about the distress of one's nation and the government. Some people say they regret the nation they belong to. Christians should not. God places individual in his nation. We do not choose it. It is involuntary. To regret it is to blame God. He knows we can do something. He endows us with what it takes to make the nation better. Nehemiah was not pleased with the state of Jerusalem. He wept and prayed and effected changes (Neh. ch. 1, 2). Gideon (Judges ch. 6, 7) Jephthah (Judges ch. 11, 12) and Paul (Rom. 10:1-3) were committed to give whatever possible they could that their nation might be at its best. Faithful Christian should share such view. In fact, more than that, they should seek same of any nation in which they live in their life time. God

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CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

This I say and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk ..." (Eph. 4:17). Christians are in the world but not of the world (1 Cor. 5:10-11; 1 John 2:15-17). To this end, Christ described His disciples as the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14). Peter admonished thus "having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12).

As we live in the world as Christians, we exhibit constant relationship with Christians and non-Christians alike. Our conduct should be "honorable not only in the sight of God but also of men" (2 Cor. 8:21) edifying Christians and leading non-Christians to Christ (Rom. 14:19; 1 Pet. 3:1-3). Common among Christian relationships are spiritual, family, civil, social and economic relationships. This edition is specially devoted to civil relationship; hence, we have invited able ministers of Christ to address duties of Christians to the government, Christian relations to politics, electoral voting and civil protest.

However, the most important relationship to Christian is their spiritual relationship -interaction between Christians. Paul admonished us to "... consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25). It is expected of Christians to be in assembly regularly, devotedly and constantly (Acts 2:42). Furthermore, we are expected to be decent and orderly in worship (1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Thess. 3:6-11). Unfortunately, the attitude of irregular worship attendance, delinquent attitudes, such as browsing the internet and chatting as well as sleeping in worship now rampant in the church, are gradually destroying spiritual lives of many Christians.

While we worship and serve together, strife, jealousy, hatred, division and grudges are all tools of the devil deliberately introduced to the heart of Christians against their fellow Christian contrary to the law of Christ and of God (James 3:14-16; Philip. 2:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20). It is incontrovertible that we have individual weakness and idiosyncrasies which can engender disagreement and misunderstanding. Hence, Paul exhorted us to "bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Patience, self-control and meekness are all virtues of Christians, being exemplified by Christ and taught by His Apostles (Rom. 12:10-17). Finally, Christians relationship among themselves goes beyond the place of worship. Incessant prayers for the brethren as well as visitations are needed to encourage ourselves (2 Cor. 9:14; Eph. 1:16; 6:18; Philip. 1:19; Matt. 25:43; James 1:27).

Next is the home. It is worthy of note that just as the home can make the spiritual life of a Christian, it can as well mar it. Aquila and Priscilla were good examples for every Christians while Ananias and Sapphira were bad. (Acts 18:26; 5:1-10). Samson the most powerful man on earth was

destroyed by his wife; while Labal, a foolish man was, saved from death by his wife (1 Sam. 25:14-32; Judges 16:20). Christians are enjoined to choose a wife for themselves in holiness (1 Thess. 4:3-6). Thus pre-marital sex is a great and heinous sin before God. The choice of life's partner must be in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39) just as Peter had a sister as a wife (1 Cor. 9:5). However, when one of the partners believes, he/she is bound to maintain good conduct such as capable of bringing the other partner to Christ (1 Pet. 3:2-4). It is a pity that people make their choice in marriage based on beauty, wealth, fame and ethnicity which may be detrimental.

In other to maintain and sustain the home, husbands are commanded to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:22-26). Wives in return are expected to be submissive to their husbands. It is saddening and hearth-breaking when news of men beating up their wives and women dishonoring their husbands are reported even among brethren. "You did not so learn Christ" (Eph. 4:20). Sex in marriage is a divine injunction (1 Cor. 7:1-5). It must never be used as bait. Paul the Apostle instructed the Corinthians not to defraud each other of this right. Unfortunately, sexual denial, dissatisfaction and discontentment are among the leading causes of marriage failure today.

Children are the blessing of the Lord in marriage (Gen. 1:22). They are to be trained and admonished in the nurture of the Lord; while children are expected to be obedient to their parents (Eph. 6:1-4). Children from godly homes are expected to be decent, discrete and chaste.

The economic relationship of Christians follows. We are commanded to work and never be idle (1 Thess. 3:11-14) Christ and the Apostles gave us this example (Acts 20:32-33). However, as we serve and being served, it should be a thing of joy when the beneficiaries of our employment or service is a Christian. Christians should be obedient and faithful servants to their bosses, not only to the godly and God-fearing one but also those who are tyrants (Eph. 6:5-8). "And ye masters do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening knowing that your master also is in heaven Neither is their respect of persons with him" (v. 9). It is mandatory that Christians shun attitudes such as falsification, lying, eye service, fraud and conspiracy which are rampant in working places today (1 Pet. 2:12).

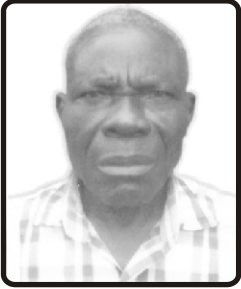
Furthermore, in our social relationship, Christian should demonstrate chaste and honorable behavior. We often give, receive and honor invitations for social activities (1 Cor. 10:27) even from unbelievers. However, it should be an avenue to demonstrate the love of Christ rather than being like them. In such occasion, alcoholism, (drunkenness), lasciviousness, indecent body movement (dancing) as well as gluttony should be avoided. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). In cases of Christians organizing social functions, it is expected to be conducted to the glory of God and according to Christ's will. "And whatsoever you do in words or deed, do all in the name of the lord..." (Col. 3:17).

Lastly, Christians are responsible to the government. Being God's ordained institution, Christians are bound to be obedient to the civil government (Rom. 13:1-7). Thus, payment of taxes and other related demands when due are compulsory for Christians as their civic responsibilities. Besides, Christians are expected to pray for those in authority to lead quiet and tranquil life (1 Tim. 2:1-3). They must be law-abiding and never be antagonistic to the

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CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

-Ezekiel O. Ajayi



The issue of whether a Christian (a disciple of Jesus Christ indeed, Jn. 8:31) should be involved in (partisan) politics or not, has always been a controversy. In this article, we shall examine the issue from the Biblical, expedient and experience perspective in order to arrive at a godly conclusion.

Christian and Partisan Politics

Even though there is no Scripture where God either specifically commands or forbids a Christian's involvement in politics, yet Christians cannot afford to be unconcerned about the type of people who govern them in their country; since politics is the ideas and activities relating to gaining and using power in a country. After all, the Bible itself says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan" (Prov. 29:2, NKJV). In view of this, a Christian as a citizen and as a beneficiary of good governance, can exercise his franchise to choose a party or candidate(s) of his choice by vote; with a good conscience, without sinning and without necessarily being a member of any particular party.

Similarly, a Christian, of his own volition, may feel like serving humanity besides his duty to the Creator. He may want to consider the Scripture which describes those in Government as follows: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God... For he is God's minister to you for good..." (Rom. 13:1-4). In the light of this Scripture, a Christian may want to become a politician, thinking he can become a minister of God for good in earthly administration. Perhaps this is what some Christians had in mind when they tried to become politicians and contested elections. Before discussing this aspect in detail, we will, however, submit the following for consideration by any Christian who wants to be a politician.

To start with, as a condition, he must be a bonafide or recognized member of a political party; who is loyal to the party, seeking the good and success of his party and its candidates, at the expense of seeking good of other parties and their candidates. Does the Bible not teach that a Christian should love his neighbour as himself? (Matt. 22:35-39, note verse 39, cf. 7:12).

If he was not used to lying before, he may need to learn how to tell lies; since lying seems to be part of the Nigerian politics; if a politician were to be successful. Does the Bible teach telling lies? (cf. Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8). If his trust was only in God before, he may now need to be armed with charms, and probably, with political thugs in addition, for protection. Does God's word teach this? (cf. Rom. 8:31; 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21). If he has been having time for God and his own family before, the love for them may now be expected to decline, in view of series of political meetings and other activities. Is that the will of God for His children? (cf. Matt. 22:35-38; 1 Tim. 5:8). The foregoing examples are some of those things that seem to make it difficult for any Christian, who chose to be a politician and still wants to remain faithful to God.

Christian and an Elective Position

Apart from political offices within a political party, there are other offices in Government that a Christian turned politician can occupy any of them through election. It can be that of the President, Governor, a Senator, a Member of any of the other Houses of Assembly, Chairman of a Local Government Area, or a Councillor in any of the Local Government Areas. The following examples are some of what he should, unsurprisingly, expect should he contest an election:

1. A Christian, whose aim is to serve the people, and not to steal money while in office may find it difficult to obtain his party's ticket for contesting an election into any office since he may not be able to pay the exorbitant money required by the party.
2. Having successfully gotten the money and paid through the nose, he can still end up losing a primary election of the party.
3. In case he won the primary election, he has to face the challenge of contesting with the opponents in other parties. The challenge, which also includes, among others, meeting the National Electoral Commission's requirements, money for political campaigns through holding of rallies, advertisement in various ways, and meeting many people's inundating demands or requests before election; without the certainty of winning that election.
4. If he, eventually, won the election, he will face the challenge of continually meeting the myriads of people's demands, if he were not to be regarded as an ingrate. However, rather than being multiple, his loss, indebtedness (if any) and sorrow may be minimal only if he desists from seeking redress at the Election Petition Tribunal, Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court if lost the election.
5. Finally, a Christian turned politician may not be able to realize his purpose of effecting a change in governance of the society if care is not taken; since the decisions of his party are supreme, in most cases, over his own personal interests and decisions in case he won the election.

Christian and a Political Appointment

The appointment, among others, could be that of the Secretary to the Government, an Adviser, Minister, Commissioner, Chief of Staff, Chairman of a Commission or Board of Directors of a Corporation, or a Member of a Commission or Board of Directors of a Corporation. All these appointments are purely based on selection by the President or a Governor. However, the selection may require keen competition by many people who seek the same appointment. It could also be done from the party in Government, other parties, or from the society at large. The appointment is not without its own challenges.

For example, the appointee may be expected to be dancing to the tune of his boss, whether good or bad. Can a Christian do this? (cf. Isa. 5:20). What about the series of political meetings and other activities that may conflict with his spiritual and family responsibilities? Will a Christian be able to pay the price? (Matt. 6:24). How will a Christian turned politician be able to satisfy all and sundry, by

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instructed Israel of Babylon, "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for by its peace you will have peace" (Jer. 29:7). Babylon would enslave Judah. Yet God required of them to pray for her peace. If so then, why not now?

Children of God should not be violent nor riotous against government. No doubt, there would be social injustices. During the early days of Christianity, Roman Empire enslaved and imprisoned and even executed some Christians. There were no traces or evidences that God's people did anything violent. Rather, they taught on what ought to be done to remedy the abuse (2 Cor. 10:3-6). In the light of that, Christians should not be involved in riot, throwing of bombs, kidnapping, assassination etc. as form of protest against bad leadership. Rather they should seek peace in all godly manners.

However, when those in government enact laws that contradict the Bible and Divine purpose, God does not expect Christians to compromise their faith because they want to please government. Rather they are under obligation to articulate the will of God in clear terms. This is an exemption to Christians' submission to government. Even if obedience to God will lead to prison or death, we must make known the will of God. Therefore, defending the truth against godless law and acts is Christian mandate. The truth, which is the gospel (John 17:17) and morality are indispensable and fundamental pillars of success to any government and these will make subjects happy. Check through history for those who have governed and succeeded. The leaders were men who feared God and allowed Him at the helm of their affairs.

Lots of our governments have failed God and man because majority of those leading relied on their prowess and put their minds in embezzling public treasury. Good majority died in and out of office foolishly and in sadness. Funny enough, none have left this globe with a kobo. God is correct after all when He says, "As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool" (Jer. 17:11). "But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You." (Psalm 55:23; cf. Luke 12:20). At their exit from offices, some continue to live with regret because of the good they ought to have done which they did not. Yet, some have "their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). It is not wrong to tell government that treat godliness and moral sanctity disdainfully to her face when needful. While Christians are not encouraged to take to violence, he can defend the truth before any government and /or disobey government when obedience to civil law would involve disobedience to Divine will. Hence, Christian cannot give in to godless laws that permit homosexual practice, lesbianism, harlotry, assassination or that introduces non-Christian religion and mandates all to submit to such (cf. Dan. 3:1-30).

Along that line is the fact that Christians should in a godly manner, rebuke sinful and anarchical government; and if possible appeal to higher authorities when need be. Some may object to it and say it is sinful to rebuke ruler. But as Christians, we are under obligation to rebuke sin wherever it occurs (Rev. 3:19; Eph. 5:11; 2 Tim 2:2-4). This includes rebuking sinful and wicked rulers. John the Baptist

told Herod to his face that he was wrong in taking his brother's wife (Matt. 14:1-4). Though John was imprisoned and beheaded. Yet, John was right. Paul also reasoned with Felix on righteousness, self-control and judgment to come until he was afraid (Acts 24:24-26). Felix was a leader who took bribe. Paul also was right. In the Old Testament, Nathan rebuked David for his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband. He told him, "sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Sam 12:1-15). Samuel did not hesitate to tell king Saul of his foolish acts which God disdained (cf. 1 Sam 13:1-15; 1-34; Read 1 Kings 13:1-5, Daniel 4:1-37, 5:1-30). Christians today should not tolerate and stomach evil acts when law makers become law breakers or when they promote nudity, pornography, homosexual, abortion, divorce, gambling etc. The gospel we preach should condemn any ungodly act in clear terms in the public, on radio, television and cable network. When need be, Christians like Esther, can appeal to a higher authority for redress (cf. Esther 7:1-6; Acts 22:24-29; 23:12-33; 25:10-12).

In addition, Christians can vote in elections for people who are responsible, morally upright, of reputable character and have respect for God and His word (cf. Ex 18:21-22; Prov. 29:2; 14:34). It is unfortunate that most voters in our days concern themselves with tribal politics, vain promises of material distribution, white elephant projects, compromises of various types, vague fame etc. rather than godly qualities. The result is all around us.

Brother James Garfield, the 20th president of the United States stated, "Now more than ever the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature. ... If the next centennial does not find us a great nation ... it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces." How true!

Noah Webster, author of the American Dictionary of the English language said, "When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers, "just men who will rule in the fear of God." The preservation of government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty; if the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made, not for the public good so much as for selfish or local purposes; corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws; the public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men; and the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded. If a ... government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws."

In conclusion, every Christian is influenced and affected by the government. They also should endeavour to do their God-given responsibilities to show good examples and be optimistic of something better.

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CHRISTIAN AND ELECTORAL VOTING

Joseph I. Oyerinde



Civil government is an institution of God ordained for the peace, safety and security of the citizen for them to peaceably do honourable work and live tranquil life (1 Tim. 2:2); and for the praise of those who do good and affliction of those who do evil (Rom. 13:104; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). With this model of civil authority, God rules in the kingdom of men (Dan. 4:25, 32).

However, over the years, there have been different systems of governance where some of the systems give the citizens the privilege to actively and freely participate in the appointment of officials for the functions of the government. In most cases, this privilege is utilized by voting. But in such atmosphere, what righteousness is expected of a faithful child of God? Answer to this question constitutes the index of this writing.

In any privilege of life, a Christian must endeavour to utilize it to practice righteousness out of good conscience towards God and men (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 2:15). In view of this, the will of God and His fear must guide a Christian. So, Christian participation in an electoral voting is not an exemption.

The first of all Christian duties in all life endeavours is prayer (1 Tim. 2:1). It is a practice of complete trust in God for guidance to fulfil righteousness and for the best result. This is done out of belief in the all-knowing and powerful God that nothing goes beyond His ultimate reach. Christian needs to offer substantive prayer for God to take complete charge of the situation to effect model of government He approved in His Holy Writ (v. 2). Prayer for god-fearing person to be appointed for the good of the citizens is a key point especially in most cases where evil men could greatly influence the vote for an appointment because they far more outnumbered the good people or by rigging. "This is a season for prolonged and earnest prayer on the part of Christians that our leaders and "all that are in authority" might govern in such a way that we enjoy the freedom to worship God according to his will" (Highers, 2016, p. 2).

Besides, Christian voting must be done in peace and corruption-free. Christian is enjoined that "if it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Christian must always pursue the things which make for peace (Rom. 14:19). Any endeavour that is devoid of peace Christian must ensure to avoid it. Likewise, Christian must always make effort to exhibit righteousness in all life undertakings as light and salt of the world (Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:12). It is unfortunate to know that some so-called Christians do completely forget their call to righteousness during elections by giving in to various vices and corruptions such as taking of bribe, committing their vote to a candidate to receive a certain personal benefits (like employment etc.). Such act is a total reproach or disgrace to a child of God. The scripture said, "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34, NKJV, NASB). Tim Haile noted that "Righteousness' involves one's treatment of his fellow man. When exercised by the members of any nation, the principles of righteousness will elevate that nation.

Honesty, integrity, justice, fairness, generosity, personal responsibility and respect for others are just a few of the qualities that are embodied in righteousness. History tells us that as long as the people of a nation abide by these principles their nation is exalted" (n.d., p. 6). Corruption is both anti-constitution and anti-godliness. Christian liberty must not be used "as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16; Gal. 5:13).

Moreover, Christian should vote out of good conscience for candidate of moral value with faith that God could effect His goodness to the citizens through his governance (Heb. 13:18). Nothing in this realm is as good as morality. In most cases, it goes beyond vain words, empty promises etc.; it is the index of the heart and prediction of action. Jesus noted that "a tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33).

Conclusion: It would be a terrible mistake when the Christians fail to properly utilize their life privilege especially in appointment to civil authorities where millions of life could be affected for number of years. While we trust in the Lord in all our undertakings (Prov. 3:5-6), we must pursue peace, righteousness and morality out of good conscience to faithfully use our life privilege that worth to be utilized. It may be a privilege we will account for before the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10). Who knows, perhaps, you have the privilege for such a time as this (cf. Esther 4:14).

Reference

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government. This is right. Meanwhile when government laws run parallel to the law of the Lord, Christians are to obey the Lord (Acts 5:29). For instance, the disciples were beaten and charged never to speak in Christ's name again. This did not stop them but they prayed for boldness to speak further to the people (Acts 4:18-24).

Having considering the different ways Christians interact with Christians and non- Christians, it is necessary to live our lives to the glory of God; preparing ourselves for eternal life. Reader, what do people call you? What is your name? Judas was a thief (John 12:6). Tamar was a harlot (Gen. 38:6-15) and Paul was an Apostles (1 Cor. 1:1-2). Who are you? "Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sins which doeth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1)

-Segun D. Babarimisa (Associate Editor)



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THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

The word “kingdom” as used in the New Testament is from the Greek word “*basileia*” which is “primarily an abstract noun, denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion” (Vine *et al.*, 1996, p. 334). Eddie Cloer noted that “the word ‘kingdom’ appears in about six different contexts in the New Testament. First, the word is used in reference to an earthly, political rule (See Matthew 4:8). Second, it is used in reference to the kingdom of Israel (See Matthew 8:12). Third, it is used in reference to the power or rule of God (See Matthew 12:28). Fourth, it is used in reference to the church, the special rule of God on earth today (See Matthew 11:11; 16:18; John 3:5; Colossians 1:13). Fifth, it is used in reference to heaven as the eternal kingdom of God (See Luke 13:28). Sixth, it is used of Satan’s realm of dominion (See Matthew 12:26)” (*What is “the Church”?*, 1993, p. 281).

Since the creation of things in heavens and also of the earth, there has been **one** universal kingdom of God, the sovereignty of the Father over all things created both visible and invisible (Col. 1:16). The Psalmist identifies the reign and power of God, the Father, over all when he said, “The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). He is the head and sovereignty over all; He rules over the nations (1 Chron. 29:11, 12; Ps. 27:28). God’s dominion is heavens-and-earth kingdom; it is far beyond political earthly kingdom that comes to an end at a definite time. In fulfilment of divine prophecies (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13, 14), God delivered this **universal kingdom** to Christ. God puts all things (*name it if you can*) in heavens and on earth in subjection under Christ’s feet, **only the Father** Himself is exempted (Eph. 1:22, ASV; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). All dominion, rule, power and authority in heaven and on earth are given to Christ (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11). Angels, authorities and powers are all made subjected to Him (1 Pet. 3:22). He sits down with the Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21). God left nothing that is not put under Christ, although now we do not yet see all things put under Him (Heb. 2:8, 9); but His kingship over all will be evident without doubt when all shall appear before His judgment seat on the last day (2 Cor. 5:10; John 12:48).

Meanwhile, it is important to stress that just as the kingdom of God with Israelites was just an expression of His universal kingdom (Exo. 19:5-8; 2 Chron. 13:8); likewise the church of the Lord as spiritual kingdom is **only** an expression, a subset, of Christ’s universal kingdom (John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13). Jim McGuiggan rightly observed that “when we speak of the kingdom of Christ being spiritual we have **the church aspect of the kingdom** in mind” (*The Kingdom Of God and the Planet*, 1978, p. 116). The church is the people on earth who enjoy the spiritual blessings in Christ’s kingdom through their willing submission to His reign (Eph. 1:3, 14). In view of the foregoing, Roger E. Dickson rightly noted that “the word ‘kingdom’ in reference to Deity ruling in the affairs of man is used five ways in the Bible: 1. The **universal kingdom of Deity** that existed before the ascension of Jesus over which the Father was King and head. 2. The chosen **Israelite kingdom** before the ascension of Jesus over which the Father was King and head. 3. The **universal kingdom of the Son** that exists after the ascension over which Jesus is now King and head. 4. The chosen **church as a manifestation of kingdom reign** after the ascension over which the Son is now King and head. 5. The **heavenly kingdom** to come where the Father will again exercise kingship” (*Biblical Research Library: Book 3*, 2000, pp. 284-285).

One obvious and undeniable truth the Bible teaches about Christ’s kingdom is that it commenced after His ascension to heaven in the first century (Acts 1:9). According to the prophecies of Daniel, the universal kingdom will be delivered to the Son of man (i.e. Christ) when He ascends to the Ancient of Days (i.e. God, the Father) in **the days of the kings of Roman Empire**, the fourth worldwide kingdom in succession from *Babylonian Empire*, *Medo-Persian Empire*, and *Greece Empire* (Dan. 7:13, 14; 2:44; 8:20-21). When John the baptizer and Jesus Christ came in the days of Roman kings called Caesars (cf. Luke 3:1), they both vehemently proclaimed that the kingdom of God prophesied was **at hand** (i.e. near), and **the time** of its commencement, as prophesied, **had been fulfilled** (Matt. 3:1, 2; Mark 1:15). Hence, Jesus boldly said to people of His days that “assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1). Without variation to the prophecies and promises, Christ’s kingdom commenced and He is proclaimed both Lord and Christ on the first Pentecost after His ascension (Acts 2:36). Since then, Jesus Christ has been ruling in heaven and on earth, and obedient ones to the gospel (i.e. those who were born of water and the Spirit, John 3:1-5) have been receiving the reign of Christ (Heb. 12:28). They have been *called into*, and *conveyed into*, **the kingdom of Christ** (Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:12; Rev. 1:9).

Moreover, the Bible likewise discloses the climax of Christ’s universal kingdom. He must reign till all His enemies are put under His feet, and the last enemy -death- is destroyed. Then, having put an end to all rule, all authority and power, Christ will deliver the kingdom (that is, all things in heaven and on earth, **the universal kingdom**) back to God, the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-27). Paul noted that “when all things are made subject to Him (God, the Father - *emp.* JIO), then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

In view of the foregoing, it is a complete antithesis of the truth, and of course erroneous to believe, claim or teach that God’s kingdom is still in future to come. It is fallacious to think of Christ’s kingdom as mere earthly dominion. Jesus has been enthroned since His ascension to heaven in the first century, not until 1914 or sometime in future. He is not coming back to have the seat of His kingdom established in Jerusalem to rule the world; rather He has already been ruling from heaven and He is coming back for climax of His universal kingdom and to deliver it back to God, the Father.

It is a great blessing for all who have gladly received the reign of Christ in their lives by being born of water (i.e. water baptism, Acts 10:47) and the spirit (i.e. words of the spirit, John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23) and continue in faithfulness till death; such people shall not be hurt by the second death (John 3:3-5; Rev. 2:10-11). Have you receive the reign of Christ in your life, or you still tarry till you stand condemned in judgment before Him at last (2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:31)? The decision is solely yours, but you can’t afford to perish!

-Joseph I. Oyerinde (Editor)

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NATIONS AND GOD'S FAVOR

Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34 NASB). As God is our Creator and Sustainer, it should not surprise us that He desires nations to walk according to His will – to live by His principles of righteousness. That nations do not always walk in righteousness is understood by what John tells us in 1 John 5:19, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." We should not be surprised, then, that God responds to the unrighteousness a nation commits, either against itself or against other nations. To Jeremiah He said, "If it does evil in my sight, by not obeying my voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it" (Jeremiah 18:10). Sin in any nation can bring God's judgment against it, to warn, to punish or to destroy.

God's desire, however, is not to condemn, but to restore and to bless. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh, the message he was given to preach was short but powerful. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). The people believed in God and repented, and showed the sincerity of their belief by reforming their lifestyles. This is what God desired, not to overthrow them, but to bring them to His righteousness so that He could bless them. Jonah knew this about God and wanted Nineveh destroyed since they were enemies of Israel. "For I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (Jonah 4:2). Destruction is not God's first option; He desires a change of heart from sin to righteousness – from what condemns to what will bless.

God warned Solomon of what would happen if his nation turned from God, but also what they should do to find His grace and mercy again. "And my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Through Isaiah He says, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow...If you will consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. Truly the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isaiah 1:16-17, 19-20).

Clearly, God wants to bless all nations, as He has created us all. The problem is in exalting sin and abandoning God's righteous ways, but the solution is in returning to righteousness. God's Word gives all nations the principles by which they need to live. Rather than reject His will, it's time to return to the truth of His Word. Rather than justify sin, we must abandon it and from the heart recognize right from wrong once again. We must embrace what is right. As our Creator, God alone knows what is best for us and how we should live. We have the time and the opportunity to return to Him; we must respond while there is yet time. If we repent and return to righteousness, we can find God's grace again. This is what God wants. This should be our resolve.

-Robert Johnson

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Christian And Politics...

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meeting all their inundating demands/requests, without returning to the society as a callous and disappointing politician?

Conclusion: While the church, as a collective body cannot, and should not, be involved in politics, since it is God's house and kingdom on earth (1 Pet. 2:5,9), having duty to God, to look after the spiritual welfare of Christians, to pray for the success of those in Government (1 Tim. 2:1-4), and to teach Christians to be law-abiding (Rom. 13:1-8), Christians as individuals can exercise their rights in contributing to the governance of their respective countries, as explicitly and already stated in this article. However, if being a politician is not compatible with being a Christian, Christians are warned to "abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). A Christian can still serve humanity without necessarily becoming a politician.

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the Apostles and early Christians lived, is a world of slavery, a world of absolute rulers, all powers were in the hands of Roman emperors, a world of high taxes Luke 2:1, and a world of persecution, yet our Lord did not stage any protest against the Roman authority. Rather, He continued to preach the word of God and speak against sin. The Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ did not lead nor encourage any mass protest against the likes of emperors Nero, Domitian, Trajan and a host of others whose reign were reign of terror. Christ paid tax (See Matt. 17:24-27; 22:15-22). He did not stage a protest against the imposition of temple tax.

Consequently, there is no direct commandment or apostolic example that instructs us to lead or demonstrate against government policies. Christians can change the attitude of civil government through prayer, not protest (See Acts 4:23-31; 12:1-12; 1 Tim 2:1-3). However, whenever civil authority makes law that is against the teachings of Christ, God must be obeyed (See Acts 5:29; 4:19-20).

Conclusion: Christians are the light of the world. Hence, they must allow their light to be so shining among this crooked and perverse generation; not in staging protest against administrative malady of the civil government but to be examples of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ (See Eph. 5:8-11; Phillip. 2:15-16; 1 Thess. 5: 5-8; Matt. 5:14-16). Let us imitate Christ and His Apostles (See Eph. 5:1; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 6:12).

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CHRISTIAN AND CIVIL PROTEST

Anthony O. Adanlwo



The administrative malady and malafide of our political leaders has led to series of civil protest in our society today. On daily basis, the rate of crime is increasing at a geometrical progression. However, when people could no longer bear the administrative inefficiency of our government, they resulted into self-help by staging series of demonstrations. The most outstanding of it is “Endsars” protest embarked on by Nigerian youths late last year, demanding the government to put an end to police brutality. Some even went into crime as a result of failure on the part of the government to cater and provide for her citizens.

Consequently, the task before us is whether a Christian can join or participate in any of these civil protests ravaging our nation currently. Therefore, before we go into the heart of our discussion, there is a great need for us to define the key words in our topic to wit: “Christian”; “Civil” and “Protest.”

Christian: “Christianos” is the Greek word translated Christian and it means “followers of Christ. Pronunciation: *khri-tee-an-os*’ See Acts 26:28; 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16. These are the people who imbibe the doctrine or teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ *ipsissima verba*, that is, exactly the way it was handed over by the Lord Jesus Christ. See John 8:31; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 28:20 (See Holy Bible Strong Concordance). **Civil:** What is relating to citizens civil duties or relating to the state or its citizenry (See Merriam-Webster Dictionary). **Protest:** The act of objecting or a gesture of disapproval, usually organized public demonstration. An objection made to an official or a complaint, objection or display of unwillingness usually to an idea of a course of action (See Merriam Webster Dictionary).

Having defined the key words of our discussion, we can arrive at this question: “Can a Christian go on protest against the state or civil authority?” Before this question is answered in the light of the scriptures, let us quickly run through legal framework available in Nigeria to protect the right of the citizens to peaceful assembly.

THE DOMESTIC LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Constitutional Provision: Under section 40 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), every person is entitled to assembly freely and associates with other persons. Section 45 permits these rights to be restricted in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health or to protect the rights or freedom of others.

National Legislation: Public Order Act of 1979 is also a primary legislation regulating assemblies in Nigeria. This Act empowers a state governor to prescribe the route by which and time at which any possession may pass. Section 7 of the Act also permits the commissioner of police in the relevant state to prohibit the use of uniform by the protesters if he or she is of the opinion that wearing it is offensive or is likely to promote a breach of peace.

However, it is worthy of note that in 2007, the court of

Appeal quashed several sections of Public Order Act. The court’s decision however has not yet been reflected in legislative changes. Notification is no longer required, unless the organizers wish to receive police protection. In its 2007 judgment, All Nigeria Weekly Law Report Peoples Party Vs. Inspector General of Police, Justice Adekeye held that:

The Public Order Act should be promulgated to complement section 39 and 40 of the 1999 constitution in context and not to stifle or cripple it. A rally or placard carrying demonstration has become a form of expression of views on current issues affecting government and the governed in a sovereign state. It is a trend recognized and deeply entrenched in the system of governance in civilized countries. It will not only be primitive but also retrogressive if Nigeria continues to require a pass to hold a rally. We must borrow a leaf from those who have trekked the rugged path of democracy and are now reaping the dividend of their experience. (See www.rightofassembly.com)

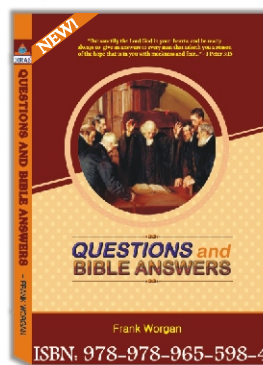
CAN A CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATE IN CIVIL PROTEST?

The civil authority are appointed by God, and Christians are enjoined to obey the civil government (See Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-15; Titus 3:1). In most cases, the government does not seek to enforce that which is moral and spiritual but that which is civil and criminal among its citizens. Therefore, Christians should speak against sin and devote quality time to the preaching of the gospel as the salt and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:12). They are not expected to lead civil protest against the failure of government in their civil responsibilities to their subjects. The reigns of Roman emperors were more tyrannical than what we have in our country today. The world in which the Lord Jesus Christ,

...continues on p. 7

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REASON

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