

The Philosopher-King and the Quest for Religious and National Stability

Kayode Peter Kareem (PhD)
 Federal College of Education, Ilawe, Ekiti State
 Email: kayode_kareem@yahoo.com, kayodekareem029@gmail.com

Abstract

The need for national stability has been emphasised by many thinkers because there cannot be peace and progress in chaos. Although much ink had been spilled on how religion and politics can engender societal growth and stability, the place of philosopher kings in enshrining logical governance and religion has not been given enough attention and this constitutes the lacuna to be filled. Many crises bedevilling Nigeria today could be traced to lack of people that are imbued with sound knowledge to lead in political and religious arenas. Plato in his "The Republic," echoed that there will not be an ideal society until philosophers become kings and kings become philosophers. The way politics and religion have been used to promote hardship and oppression of people shows the need for people to be mindful of those they elect to lead them and direct their religious affairs. This paper examines the necessity of philosopher-kings in maintaining peace and progress in societies and religions. This paper adopts a phenomenological research method to gather its data and employs Socrates' Ignorance-Crises Theory as its theoretical framework. This paper recommends that those that will lead in both political and religious arenas should have transformative education and exposures that will help them build an ideal society and religion (s). People should choose individuals with sound knowledge to lead them and there should be ethical reorientation for Nigerians in order to have an ideal society and religion(s).

Key words: Philosopher-kings, politics, religion, Justice, national stability.

Introduction

Political and religious leaders are strategic to societal peace and harmony. Both spheres are crucial for building human capacity that will in return help to move society forward. Since political and religious leaders are fundamental to societal stability, care must be given to how they are chosen and supported in their leadership dispositions. Many things are wrong with many societies and religions because many of their leaders are gravely ignorant and inhuman. The erroneous dispositions of these leaders have bastardised political and religious arenas and this has brought pain and sorrow to people. The thought-provoking article of Lasisi Olagunju titled "Kingdom of the Fools" indicates clearly that there will not be peace, harmony and reasonable development unless the right leaders that are imbued with knowledge (wisdom) are chosen to lead societies, and the same conclusion could be applied to the religious spheres -there will not be stable and edifying religions until knowledgeable leaders are found in religious spheres. According to Olagunju (1-2)

A nation at peace with a disability cannot be well. Intellectual disability (idiocy) and 'mental illnesses have a binary relationship – and it is self-evident. Nigeria cannot be well with idiots, madmen and madder specialists running the show. The safest thing to do, going forward, is, to stay away from fools – do not set them on your throne, do not elect them as your leaders; they lack capacity, they cannot rule; they ruin.

It is not only politics or secular governance that reasonable people should be concerned about. What happens in religions and their centres should also receive attention today because human beings are religious animals just as they are political animals. There are crises in many societies and particularly Nigeria because of religious bigotry and intolerance. The roles that religion plays in societal stability cannot be over-emphasised. Freedman (8) captures this reality well when he writes, "...Unless there is peace among the religions of the world, there will be no peace among nations. Or there can be no peace

among nations unless there is peace among religions." Consequently, the need for philosopher-kings and philosopher-clerics cannot be overemphasized. Plato realised and echoed this in his time. His thought is significant to the turbulent 21st century Nigerian society that is characterised by violence and horrors perpetrated by many political and religious leaders. This was echoed by Omosor (81) that religious fundamentalism resulting in violence in Nigeria is partly as a result of political leadership. In the same vein, Ottuh and Omosor (38) affirmed that the manipulation of religion by political elites in Nigeria cause religionophobia, which leads to conflagration between Islam and Christianity.

The gateway to religious and societal peace and stability is the leadership of philosopher-kings and philosopher-clerics who have risen above political sentiments and religious bigotry and who will use politics and religion to promote love for God and service to humanity. Many crises bedeviling Nigeria today could be traced to lack of people that are imbued with sound knowledge to lead in political and religious arenas. It is unfortunate that Nigerian politics and religious spheres are dominated by thugs and ignorant people who only think about their prerogatives and prey on the people they are called to protect and lead aright. Plato in his monumental work "The Republic" echoed that there will not be an ideal society until philosophers become kings and kings become philosophers. The way politics and religions have been used to promote hardship and extortion of people today shows the need for people to be mindful of those they elect to lead them and direct their religious affairs. This paper chronicles the necessity of philosopher kings in maintaining peace and progress in societies and religions, the making of philosopher kings, the political and religious dilemmas in Nigeria and roles of philosopher kings in national and religious transformation. This paper adopts phenomenological method that studies the commonality of lived experiences of people in a society and the resultant effects of such experiences to gather its data. Plato, whose thought served as a foundation to this paper, was influenced by the experiences of his day and this paper also generated its data by popular happenings in Nigerian society [and even beyond] as chronicled by popular books and dailies and their felt effects. This study adopts Socrates' Ignorance-crises theory, which states that "If you know what is right, you will do it. Wrong-doing is the result of wrong thinking and wrong information" to guide it through.

The Philosopher King in Plato's Ideology

According to Shouler (28) Plato was born about 428 or 427 B.C. and died at the age of eighty or eighty-one in 348 or 347 B.C. Plato was a polymath and student of Socrates. Ferguson (260) echoed that "Plato came from an aristocratic family of Athens and if it were not for the death of Socrates he might have been a poet or a statesman." Plato's whole life had been opened up by personal contact with Socrates and the latter's death (in 399 B.C.) changed the course of his life. He could not serve Athens or advocate a democracy that would put such a man as Socrates to death. Plato was a great philosopher who loved philosophy as a discipline. According to Brown (19), "The first man to use the term philosophy and call himself a philosopher was Pythagoras, the thinker and mathematician who lived in the sixth century B.C. Pythagoras declared that no one is wise except God. He disclaimed the title of being "wise" and preferred to be known as a "philosopher" or "lover of wisdom." Philosophers are regular and consistent searchers for wisdom because they want outstanding knowledge that will help them to build or reform their societies.

Plato left Athens and travelled for about twelve years; he returned to Athens and after 387 began teaching near the grove sacred to the deity *Akademos*. He organized a fellowship, a corporation like many of the associations of the time, dedicated to the muses. The building where he taught, and his school, came to be called the academy. Plato produced works that immortalised him. His two popular works were Dialogues and The Republic. It is in the Republic that Plato expressed his political thought that is worth considering today.

The political philosophy of Plato is embedded in The Republic. It was the quest for justice that gave birth to the political philosophy of Plato. According to Plato, political theory is married to moral theory. The work pays attention to the nature and value of justice. Plato held that the State is like a giant person. As justice is the general virtue of the moral person, so also is the justice that characterises a good society. Justice is indispensable to peace. There will not be peace where there is injustice. In the thought of Olawoyin (133), "Justice is to render to every man (humanity) his due. Both the individual and the

society can experience injustice, chaos, discord or imbalance. However, it is 'justice' that brings order; order in turn brings peace and happiness." Stroll and Popkin (206) noted that a critical look at Plato's "The Republic" shows that it is built around three major questions: (1) what characteristics should an ideal society have? (2) Is such a society desirable? (3) Is it possible to bring such a society into existence? It is clear from information gotten about Plato's life that these questions were not merely the result of idle speculation but were posed from a sense of urgency.

Plato lived in a country that was made up of small, autonomous city-states. These city-states not only frequently engaged in warfare with one another, as in the bloody twenty-seven-year-long conflict between Athens and Sparta (Peloponnesian War) but they also fought against such major powers as Persia. And even within the city-states themselves, especially within Plato's native city of Athens, civil strife was common. When under Pericles, the democrats ruled Athens; they initiated harsh measures against their opponents, most of whom, like Plato, came from the aristocracy. When the democrats were toppled from their positions of authority, their aristocratic enemies exacted retribution on them in savage reprisals. Plato's teacher and friend, Socrates, was put to death by the Democrats while they were in power. To Plato life must have been indeed precarious and uncertain. It was more than clear that the society should be remade but how?

Mainly, he argued, it should minimize class conflict. From his own experience, Plato saw that the greatest barrier to human happiness lay in the constant struggles between rival factions within the corpus of society. No one could feel at ease or be contented within a community which might explode at any moment. Domestic instability put pressure on the individual that is even worse than those applied by external foes, and they had to be relieved if men were to achieve equanimity.

Plato assumed that society resembles an individual human being. Of course, it is larger, more complex, and more intricate; but at the same time, like a human being, it grows and decays, flourishes and falls ill; it sometimes operates rationally and sometimes not. This doctrine has been called the *biological analogy*. For Plato, in effect, society is nothing but "the individual writ large," as he put it in a memorable phrase. This doctrine implies that through the study of the smaller entity, the individual human being, rules can be discovered which can be applied to the larger thing, society, and which, if applied, will assuage its troubles. It seemed natural to Plato, then, to begin his investigation of society by investigating the nature of the individual.

The psychology of the time analyzed every human being into two different, but basic, ingredients—a physical body and a "soul." The soul, it was held, is not a simple, indivisible entity but is composed of three parts—a rational part, which deliberates, thinks, remembers, or believes; a spirited part, which makes a man courageous, cowardly, or rash, and finally a part containing the passions or the appetites, such as the desires for sexual satisfaction, food, and drink. Each of these elements has a particular role to play in a normal human being. If the rational elements were lacking, for example, a person would be mentally defective; if he had no desires, he would be a thing without emotions and feelings.

Moreover, if any element dominates the others, the person in question will not be psychologically healthy; if he is controlled by his passions, for instance, he will be neurotic and anxious. It is only when these elements function in mutual concord that man can be described as being psychologically perfect. In such a case, each element will play its proper role and none will dominate the others.

Plato felt that this same analysis can be applied to the state. Like the individual soul, the ideal state would require a hierarchical class structure. It must have (1) leadership, (2) soldiers to defend it, and (3) workers to provide the necessities of life. Each of these needs can be met by developing a class of individuals to perform the corresponding functions. So Plato's ideal society has a tripartite class structure; the ruling class, which is analogous to the rational elements in the soul; the soldiers who resemble the spirited element, and the workers who correspond to the appetitive elements. For Plato, then, an ideal society would be one in which each class performs its duties without attempting to invade the areas dominated by the others. Such a society would provide the stability required for domestic tranquillity.

Plato's answer to his second question "Is such a society desirable?" as for him an obvious affirmative answer. He thinks it unmistakably better to have a society which operates harmoniously than

have one riddled with unrest and dissension. Like individuals, societies may be neurotic, frustrated and unhappy.

Even though an “Ideal Society” is desirable but the last question must be treated with utmost sincerity: “Can such a society be brought into existence?” Is such a plan merely a philosophical conjecture or is it a practical possibility? Plato’s answer to this question is cautiously affirmative. Roughly, it consists in arguing that this ideal commonwealth will be feasible if two conditions can be met: (1) It must be ruled by people who have knowledge and (2) it must be ruled by people who have absolute authority.

Plato states that the ideal state will only be possible when people of outstanding knowledge whom he regards as philosopher-kings are made leaders. He echoes loud and clear that there will not be an ideal society until kings become philosophers and philosophers become kings. Shouler (36) echoed that Philosopher-kings are lovers of knowledge who had been trained to possess outstanding knowledge. Philosopher-kings are those guided by reason and not by passion. Plato states that a state governed by reason—a state with justice—is the ideal state.

The idea of a Philosopher-king was put forth by Plato in Book VI of his work *The Republic*. In it, he claimed that philosophers would make the best kings (and queens) or rather, rulers. This was because of their inherent love of truth and wisdom that would help them endure against corruption; as well as, ironically, a supposed lack of interest in ruling.

Those chosen as possible philosopher-kings and queens would be put through an arduous training regimen over several years that would prepare them for ruling, and only those who showed themselves to be exceptional in this regard would become leaders. Plato states that such philosopher-kings should have absolute power because they have risen above corruption and self-aggravation.

For Plato, the philosophical king is the one whose education has led him up step by step through the ascending degree of knowledge of the Divided Line until at last he possesses knowledge of the Good, that synoptic vision of the interrelation of all truths to one another. Plato declared his preference for aristocracy, which means “the rule by the best or excellent.” This would not be a government based on the arbitrary rights of an individual—as with the divine right of kings—but a government under the leadership of one person who is by nature and education best qualified for the task of governing.

Political and Religious Trajectory in Nigeria

It may be logical to agree with the writer of Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new under the heaven. Human society has a history of being characterised by chaotic situations that make life difficult for people. The chaotic situations most of the time give birth to quests for good leaders and leadership that will put things in the right perspective. It is sad to note that Nigeria in its 4th republic that was birthed in 1999 has not experienced the needed political stability. There are many problems in Nigerian politics. Cases of thuggery, violence, corruption, injustice, political assassinations, godfatherism, etc. are rampant in Nigerian politics and this has made Nigerian political realm a dangerous zone that fair-minded individuals are afraid to venture into. The political assassinations of two PDP gubernatorial aspirants, Chief Funsho Williams in Lagos and Dr. Ayodeji Daramola in Ekiti State in 2006, are indicators of gory tale of Nigerian politics. Godfatherism has also corrupted the political landscape in Nigeria. There are many political godfathers in Nigeria. Anyone that will contest for political office must receive their approval. Most of these Godfathers provide financial support for their godsons or goddaughters during campaign and as a result they become political dictators who claim financial and economic fortunes of their states for themselves. According to Familusi (439), “In many states of the federation (Nigeria), godfathers have become de facto governors while real governors are mere rubber stamps.”

Nigerian politics is dominated by violence and disruption of public peace. The time of political campaign and election is often filled with political clashes; political intolerance, fear, terrorism and killing of voters as thugs are often unleashed to wreak havoc on political opponents and adamant voters who are not swayed by bribery and political jingoism. Election riggings, bribery, buying and selling of votes etc. are the order of the day in Nigeria. Many politicians have turned politics into do or die affairs and political game has become the survival of the scariest as qualities of leadership are often downplayed most of the time. Leaders that had been indicted or convicted of corrupt practices often run for and win elections into political offices. Abogunrin (xii) rightly observes that, “Leaders, who are accused of stealing

billions of Naira each, are walking free and tall and they often have the audacity to contest elections because they know that money, power, influence and terrorism can easily fetch them what they want. The resultant effects of the ugly political situation in Nigeria are political corruption, poverty, insecurity, underdevelopment, poor quality of life, just to mention but a few. The chaotic situation in which Nigeria finds herself today is heartbreaking and can easily be traced to lack of adequate leaders in politics and this eventually makes the quest for philosopher-kings laudable.

Nigerian dailies are replete with heart renting news of corruption, nepotism, herdsmen attacks, banditry, kidnapping, religious bigotry and intolerance, interreligious clashes, etc. It is apt to say that there is no news as bad news in Nigeria. Ugly incidents of gruesome killings, kidnapping, Boko Haram attacks, human rights violations, herdsmen attacks on innocent villagers and destruction of farmlands have made Nigeria a difficult place to live. Adepegba (2021) stated that "The Chandler Good Government Index has ranked Nigeria as the third worst governed country in the world." Nigeria is now one of the worst countries to live on earth.

Olagunju (1-2) traced the present political dilemma in Nigeria to a lack of knowledgeable leaders who have what it takes to lead. Nigerian political terrain has become a place where people who have enough money to buy votes can easily find their ways into. It is also an arena where those who have money to hire thugs and terrorists to frighten people to submission can easily occupy. Many Nigerian politicians are only after their prerogatives at the expense of the electorates who brought them into power. He made it abundantly clear that many Nigerian leaders are fools who lack the mental capacity to do what is right. According to him, "Where else do cows, what they eat, how they eat, and where they eat dominate discourses in the 21st century if not in a kingdom of fools?" Foolishness and idiocy are synonyms. Idiocy and madness are relatives – they are first cousins. Psychiatrists say one is a form of the other. Fools are dangerous people; they are more dangerous when they are made kings over people. As kings, they can be as life-threatening and as unpredictable as death. Where fools or people without the presence of mind rule, peace takes flight; right is always wrong; truth told in naked verse is dangerous to the teller; paranoid is the king's and his minister's companion; their guide book hunts the plain talker, they seek to jail truth. Nigeria cannot be well with idiots, madmen and madder specialists running the show. Our constitution says people with mental illness should stay away from our leadership. We don't want madmen as leaders but we elect idiots who drool over the sight and sound of disaster; people who invert reason and logic; people who fete deadly terrorists in Borno and Zamfara and terrorize peaceful protesters in Lagos. This article by Olagunju unveils that the primary cause of the present political dilemma in Nigeria is the dominance of fools in Nigerian politics.

It is not only the political arena that is characterised by turmoil. The religious sphere does not fare better. The happenings in the religious arenas sicken many intelligentsias. Interreligious clashes and religious intolerance brought by the ignorance of many religious leaders and followers are lamentable. Religious violence had claimed the lives of many people in horrendous proportions in Nigeria. Religion that ought to promote peace and harmony among people has become one of the greatest divisive forces that causes rancour and violence. Religious violence in Nigeria refers to Christian-Muslim strife in modern Nigeria, which can be traced back to 1953. Today, religious violence in Nigeria is dominated by the Boko Haram insurgency, which aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. It is impossible to chronicle all the interreligious violence and clashes in Nigeria that had claimed thousands of lives and destroyed property worth billions of Naira. The annual report published by the United States of America on International Religious Freedom has this to say on interreligious clashes and violence in Nigeria:

Since 1999, more than 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in sectarian and communal attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians. The most serious of these clashes occurred in Kaduna state (February and May 2000 and November 2002); Jos, Plateau state (September 2001); Kano state and Yelwa, Plateau state (February-May 2004); and in northern and southeastern Nigeria, in the wake of the controversy over depictions of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish press in February 2006. Ethnic and religious violence continued throughout the past year, although the number of deaths resulting from the violence decreased compared to previous years. Dozens of people were killed and dozens of churches and mosques were destroyed in communal violence in several towns and villages in

southeastern Nigeria, the Middle Belt region, and northern Nigeria. In September 2007, rioting in the northern state of Kano resulted in the deaths of 10 Christians and the destruction of at least nine churches. US Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report (1-2)

Aside from these few interreligious violence or clashes showcased by US Commission on International Religious Freedom, one recent interreligious clash between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria occurred on Wednesday 17th March 2021 over the Kwara State government's pronouncement that willing Muslim female students or pupils could wear the headgear called *hijab* in schools in Kwara State. The pronouncement gave birth to the battle of words and provocative utterances on social media and particularly on Facebook before physical assaults manifested on 17th March 2021 in Ilorin between Muslims and Christians. The assaults in question resulted in shedding of blood and even death. Akinyemi and Jannamike (2021) report that:

Christians and Muslims yesterday clashed violently in Ilorin, Kwara State over the raging Hajib controversy as the state government reopened the 10 affected schools for academic activities. This came as the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, asked Nigerians to hold Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq responsible for the violence and bloodletting in the state over his administration's Hijab policy. The Baptist Secondary School, Surulere, was the major battleground where opposing parties besides exchange of harsh words, freely threw pebbles at each other, even as security operatives struggled to disperse the combatants including parents.

Some churches were vandalized in the attacks and some people were injured in the horrible but comic battle of pebbles throwing.

Nigeria is notorious for religious crises that emanated from unguided particularism and insensitivity to the religious feelings of other people in the country. The way many religious leaders had used religion to incite violence and hatred against people of other religions is alarming. Dopamu (48) notes that "The catalogue of religious crises in Nigeria is endless. These have continued to rear their ugly heads from time to time. More often than not, the crises are between Christianity and Islam, mostly in the Northern parts of the country." Religious crises or violence had violated the religious freedom of some religious adherents which is protected under the Nigerian 1999 Constitution. The state of religious crises and intolerance in Nigeria has received global attention. This is the reason why The Punch's "Editorial" of Wednesday, June 2, 2021, was based on "Curbing the Disturbing Violation of Religious Freedom." The United States State Department lamented the violation of religious freedom in Nigeria. Nigeria was chided for failing to live up to global standards in this regard. The daily states that, "The Nigerian State is, and has long been a serial violator of religious freedom. The report said, "Religious freedom condition in Nigeria remains poor, with both state-and societally-perpetrated violations." Nigeria is rife with persecution and marginalization of some religious groups and particularly Christians. North-Western, North-Eastern and some North-Central states routinely discriminated against non-Muslims, restricting their freedom to erect worship centres in certain places and denying them equal opportunities in state appointment.

Causes of Political and Religious Problems in Nigeria

All the causes of political and religious problems in Nigeria are beyond what could be chronicled in this article. Nonetheless, these important ones are discussed below.

Ignorance: Ignorance is a major problem causing political and religious problems in Nigeria. Many political leaders in Nigeria are ignorant of the art of governance. Many of them lack training and basic knowledge of leadership. Many of them are only interested in enriching themselves. They see politics as a lucrative business that can make them millionaires if not billionaires within a few months. Instead of getting a worthwhile knowledge and willingness to serve the electorates, materialism is the driving force that inspires many people to contest for political offices. Ignorance is also a bane to many religious institutions. Many religious leaders are ignorant of human civilisation and the complexities of human societies. There are many religious leaders—pastors and imams who are ignorant. Many even lack basic education in

religion and sociology. They often act on their instincts and used their alleged divine revelation to lead many people astray. Many religious leaders do not know much about other religions and unfortunately, they speak authoritatively about them. Many of them are particularly ignorant of interreligious relations that will help them to be sensitive to religious pluralism and particularism. Ayantayo (9) identifies ignorance as one major factor fueling religious controversies in Nigeria. He sees this ignorance being gravely demonstrated in religious fundamentalism and radicalism.

Corruption: Corruption is the major cause of political and religious problems in Nigeria. Corruption is a dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority. It is also seen as the act or effect of making somebody change from a moral to an immoral standard or behaviour. Corruption is dishonest or fraudulent conduct by political or religious leaders. Oladunjoye (1) noted that:

Corruption has become a cancer in the life of nations and it seems to have defied all treatment. One major reason for this state of affairs is that those saddled with the responsibility of applying the medicine are not sincere in their diagnosis and in dispensing of the prescribed drugs. Corruption has been seen as a threat to development and it is a major cause of poverty.

The observation of Oladunjoye is apt. Many political leaders in Nigeria are guilty of corrupt practices like aiding and abetting crime, sponsoring terrorism, embezzlement, bribery, etc. Many political leaders don't pay their workers their salaries and allowances as at when due. Leaders, who are accused of stealing billions of Naira each, are walking free and tall in the society. They have succeeded in using the courts to secure bails, long adjournments, interim injunctions and questionable judgment. Abogunrin (xii) opined that, "Since nothing has happened to most of these corrupt leaders, corruption, greed and avarice have continued unabated in Nigeria." Corruption is a threat to development and it is a major cause of poverty and insecurity.

Corruption is not restricted to the political sphere; it is also found in the religious arenas. Many religious leaders in Nigeria have been accused of corrupt practices like rape, embezzlement, adultery, syncretism, nepotism, bribery, etc. It has been affirmed severally that many religious leaders instigate their followers into religious violence because of their selfish ambition. The corrupt practices that characterise Christianity and Islam today have made some people to revert to African Traditional worship.

Godfatherism and Impunity: Another food for thought in Nigerian politics is the pervasiveness of godfatherism that threatens political stability and true democratisation. Godfatherism is directly related to impunity. Godfatherism has manifested itself in the choice of candidates for political appointment. There are many political godfathers in Nigeria. Anyone that will contest for political office must receive their approval. Most of these Godfathers provide financial support for their godsons or goddaughters during campaigns and as a result, they become political dictators who claim the financial and economic fortunes of their states for themselves. Many godfathers in Nigeria are notoriously known for sponsoring political assassination, disruption of public peace, disruption of the political system, political dictatorship, election rigging, etc. Today, many political leaders dare to abuse their power and positions because they have god-fathers who will shield them from the long arm of justice. Godfatherism is promoting impunity in the society and impunity in return is aggravating injustice and societal instability.

Godfatherism is also prominent in the religious arenas. Many pastors and Islamic clerics today occupy unmerited positions because they have godfathers to champion their cause. Many corrupt practices saturate the church particularly because many pastors and other church functionaries have godfathers who will protect them and sweep their sins under the carpet. There have been cases of many pastors abusing their powers and committing culpable crimes simply because they know that they have godfathers at senior administrative levels of their denominations that will protect them regardless of what they had done. This is seriously promoting corruption and godlessness in religious circles.

Ineffective Monitoring: Life calls for checks and balances if it will be stable. The lack of effective monitoring leads to complacency. The abuse of power by many local, state and national leaders stems from a lack of proper monitoring by appropriate stakeholders. For example, many state governors dare to embezzle state funds because the Federal Government will not hold them accountable for how they

spend their state allocations. Many state governors owe their workers three or four months' salaries because there is no one to query them about why they refused to pay their workers as at when due. The immunity that the Nigerian constitution grants to political leaders also encourage them to steal and impoverish the poor masses. Ineffective monitoring reduces the sense of accountability. This problem is also seen in religion. Many political leaders fail to monitor things going on in religious centres. The lackadaisical attitude of the government to religious issues also promotes corrupt and unethical practices by many religious leaders. It is good for the government to monitor what is going on in religious centres and realise that religion is a social phenomenon that can affect the society positively or negatively. The Nigerian government must ensure that religious leaders desist from confrontational sermons or messages that can incite religious violence. Religious particularism and fundamentalism should particularly be regulated to maintain societal stability.

Devaluation of Traditional Culture: This is a serious problem in religious life in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. One of the areas in which many African religious leaders have demonstrated ignorance is in the devaluation of African culture. Many African religious leaders have been colonised; they embrace Western culture and see African culture as barbaric, fetish and crude. The resultant effect of such an attitude is a lack of appreciation for African traditional culture. This is particularly obvious in Islam and Christianity. When the Western missionaries re-introduced Christianity to Africa, they projected Western culture as superior to that of Africans. Since the Western culture was considered superior to that of Africa, the Western missionaries made it their goal to impose Western culture and values on Africans. For this reason, Africans were taught new culture. Being a Christian then means speaking, drinking, dressing and thinking like Westerners. The attempt to impose Western culture and ideologies were also evident in the schools that were established by the missionaries and the curriculum. Western Education has been a veritable tool for Western Cultural Imperialism. Adamo (21) lamented how Western education has put many Africans in bondage culturally. Western cultural imperialism which is a continuation of colonisation continued with the establishment of the Bible colleges, seminaries and universities in Africa by the missionaries. The missionaries in their enthusiasm to teach students how to communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ also taught Western culture and way of life. African culture and religion were not important and therefore were not taught to students.

Adamo noted that throughout his studies in seminary and Bible College in Nigeria, no course was taught on African culture and religion. The only course on African indigenous religion was taught with the main purpose of showing how heathenistic and useless the African Religion and culture are. It is painful to note that Islam has been dominated by Arabian culture and many Islamic clerics preach sermons that discredit African culture most of the time. The devaluation of African culture is a serious problem to true religiosity in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. Many pastors kick against anything African. They taught their members to detest the African way of life. The result of this attitude is a religion that separates people from their roots and forces them to live another man's life. Consequently, western individualism, sexual philosophy, nudity, nuclear family mentality, etc. that are foreign to Africa have been infused into Africans in the name of Western superiority. These religious leaders failed to realise that cultural identity is essential for societal and national development. The lack of development in many parts of Africa can be traced to the devaluation of African culture. People who forget who they are and where they are coming from will never make reasonable progress in life.

The Need for Philosopher-kings and Philosopher-clerics

The need for philosopher-kings and philosopher-clerics cannot be overemphasized. Only a fool will say that they are not needed. As Plato shows, there will not be an ideal society—a society characterised by justice and equity until people of understanding are allowed to lead societies or nations. In Athens of Plato's day, and as it were in many ancient Indo-European societies, human society is divided into three classes: the guardians, the auxiliary and the trader. Plato, Book IV (435) illustrated this division thus: the traders are by nature greedy, for they like money. The Phoenicians and Egyptians were categorised into this class. A state where such greedy people govern will not have justice; hence, there would be neither order nor peace. The auxiliary class on the other hand are people of passion and emotion. The Thracians

and Scythians belonged to this class. It is people that naturally have love for knowledge such as the Athenians of Plato's day that are the guardians, the philosopher-kings. They are the ones that are fit to govern. Almost everyone wants a society characterised by joy, peace, stability and progress. Olagunju also made it abundantly clear that nations or societies that want peace and progress should not elect fools (ignorant people) to lead them.

The protests that characterised June 12, 2021, the Nigerian Democracy Day, are clear indications that Nigerians want philosopher-kings to lead them. Many Nigerians then demanded the resignation of President Mohammadu Buhari because he has failed to provide a society characterised by justice, security, freedom of speech, equity and prosperity for all. President Bola Hamed Tinubu administration has brought unprecedented pains and anguish on Nigerians. The removal of the fuel subsidy and various increments in taxation, electricity tariff, etc. have made life difficult for many Nigerians and Tinubu administration had witnessed a lot of criticisms and hunger protests by many Nigerians. The Nationwide protest across Nigeria on the first of August 2024 over economic hardship and bad governance is monumental. Olanrewaju (1st August, 2024) along with many dailies notes, "Mass protests begin in Nigeria over economic hardship, food crises; protesters demand cut in food, electricity, petrol prices; good governance, justice, constitutional reform." In spite of the various protests that had claimed not less than thirteen lives of Nigerians, the government has not been sensitive enough to the plight of the masses. These criticisms and protests are clear indications that Nigerians need philosopher-kings to lead them in every facet of life.

The Bible is not silent on the need for knowledgeable people to lead societies. In the Old Testament, Yahweh detests ignorant leaders. Yahweh takes the education of the Israelites seriously. The *Shema* forms the template for Jewish education. The *Shema* encompasses the theology of God and the demand on the people to serve God (Deut. 6:4-9; 11: 13-21 and Num. 15: 37-41). White (105-106) wrote that, "In the Jewish home, the parents are under an obligation to teach their children the fear of God. The duty of educating the young ones was delegated by the Mosaic Law, especially to the parents. The home was to be a school and the parents were to be teachers." The school of the prophets inculcated needed knowledge in young men learning about the prophetic ministry. The wise men particularly made needed knowledge available to young people and people in government so that they will avoid the pitfalls of youthful age and abuse of authority. By the time of the prophet Jeremiah the office of the wise men had been firmly established, for the enemies of Jeremiah said: "For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet (Jer. 18:18)." Kareem (43-44) noted that the wise men were saddled with the responsibility of guiding people to make right choices so that the society will function according to the divine order. The priests, prophets and wise men were recognised agents for educating people about the will of God that will help in societal transformation. God detests ignorance because it is directly related to gullibility that upsets the social balance. The classical expression of God's displeasure for ignorance is embedded in Hosea 4:6 which says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge I also reject you as my priest..." This golden text echoes that God detests ignorant people who are leading in both political and religious arenas. This philosophy is obvious in the later rabbinic educational tradition. The Rabbis who were Jewish religious scholars crusaded against ignorance because of its devastating effects on people. Hillel, a leading Pharisaic scholar of later Judaism (1st Century B.C.) taught that "an ignorant man cannot be truly pious" (Aboth 2:5). From this data from the Old Testament, it can also be radically established that philosopher-clerics are needed to lead the religious life of people.

Gateways to making Philosopher-kings and Philosopher-clerics in Africa

This paper has established the necessity of philosopher-leaders in the stability of nations and religions. The question that will come to mind is: "How will such a philosopher-leader be made" to achieve stability of nations and societies? Here are notable ways of achieving this noble agendum:

Transformative Education: The role of education in dispelling errors and ignorance cannot be overemphasized. Education brings light that guides people in making the right choices as it sharpens their edges in thinking soundly and making reasonable decisions. Plato thought that those that will be future

leaders should be given sound education that will inculcate timely knowledge in them. Plato believes that knowledge gained by human senses cannot be trusted. Consequently, he believes that knowledge comes through reasoning brought about by exposure to the Platonic idea of the “form” of things. As unveiled by Stroll and Popkin (68-69), Plato stated that the potential philosopher-king should learn arithmetic and then geometry which will help in inculcating sound reasoning. He later added that such individuals should learn arithmetic, psychology, economics and philosophy that will provide the ruler with the kind of knowledge that will help to solve leadership problems. This position of Plato is commendable. It is good to educate potential leaders of societies and religions so that they will know what to do and how to do it. No society or religion led by ignorant people will make reasonable progress. For this reason, every society and religion should take education seriously. Such education should cover areas such as leadership, economics, religion, theology, sociology, international relation, intercultural studies, etc. Stakeholders in societies and nations such as parents, teachers, religious leaders and political leaders should take the education of youths that will be leaders tomorrow seriously. The mind that knows is the mind that is free indeed. Such education, however, should be transformative. Such education should produce good character that is needed to lead societies and religions.

Ethical Reorientation: Education is directly related to ethics. Ethics is an integral part of education whether secular or religious. The major problem in many societies is not that many people are not educated; the major problem is that many people are not ethical in their daily life. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the science of moral conduct. In the thinking of Geisler and Feinberg (353), “Ethics is the study of what is right and what is wrong.” Ethics was the principal concern of the leading Hellenistic philosophies. Hellenistic philosophies aimed to teach people how to live. Consequently, it is high time to teach people the need to know what is right and do what is right. Moral bankruptcy is a bane to national and societal development. Educational and religious institutions should create ethical awareness among their students and adherents and impress on them that it is wrong to do wrong. Abuse of power, corruption, injustice, religious intolerance, nepotism, etc. are unethical and should be discouraged. There is an urgent need for ethical re-orientation for many Nigerians who think that fulfilment in life lies in materialism. Philosopher-kings and philosopher-clerics can only be prepared to lead societies and religions when they are ethical in their dispositions. Head knowledge that does not translate to ethical living is useless and more often than not demonic.

Exposure to Unveil Talents: Exposure creates an opportunity to unveil talents of potential leaders. Plato makes it abundantly clear that it is not everyone that can lead. This means that leadership is more than an art that should be learned; it can be innate in some occasions. Plato thinks that aside from training in some subjects for gaining basic knowledge about human affairs, the need for practical experience in administration is recognised, and the candidates are allowed to govern in minor administrative posts. The entire program would last for thirty years; those who complete it would become full-fledged rulers of the state. Great insight could be gleaned from this position of Plato. Those that would be effective leaders in political and religious spheres should be exposed to some leadership tasks; they should be tested and trusted before they are given the chance to lead. It is those who can lead effectively that should be given the chance to lead. It is therefore expedient for nations and societies to identify people with talents and train them to be effective leaders. One of the major problems in political and religious leadership in Nigeria is that many of the political and religious leaders lack the ability and capacity to lead. Many of them only wing leadership and commit grave errors that throw nations or societies into confusion.

Conclusion

The significance of philosopher-kings or philosopher-clerics in the stability of nations and societies cannot be overemphasized. As made known by Sinha (1), Philosophy is an attempt to arrive at a rational conception of reality as a whole. True philosophers are on a constant quest for wisdom that will benefit them and the people around them. Humility is a true characteristic of a real philosopher. Wisdom is directly related to knowledge. It is knowledge that paves way to wisdom. For this reason, it is only those who have sound knowledge that translates to wisdom that should be chosen to lead politically and

religiously. Nigerians should be wary of ignorant political and religious leaders that are creating confusion in the society. People should always be careful of whom they vote for politically and those they take orders from in religious arenas. Idiotic leaders are worse than madmen. They can be as life-threatening as death. Nigerians should be careful of the kinds of leaders they appoint or vote for to lead them. They should know that their future is determined to an extent by the kinds of leaders they choose to lead them. Monetized politics and nepotism should be shunned if ideal leaders (philosopher-kings) who bring an ideal society are needed. The future of every society is determined by the kinds of leaders chosen to lead it. A nation or society that allows fools to lead her will not experience lasting peace. Every society or nation that values stability and progress should take education and exposure of potential political and religious leaders seriously for the society cannot be stable without them.

To this end, it is worthwhile for institutions in Nigeria to take the education of potential leaders seriously. Educational institutions should instil sound knowledge and ethics in their students, religious institutions should instil ethical values and fear of God in their followers and legal institutions should mete out commensurable punishment on potential leaders who err to reform them. Above all, political leaders should take the education of people and particularly youths seriously because they are future leaders and should regulate the excesses in religious circles to minimise crises in the society. Unguided particularism, religious bigotry, inhuman fundamentalism and noise pollution should be discouraged among religious practitioners in Nigeria and Africa as a whole in order to have an ideal society. Philosopher-clerics should not manifest these tendencies. Nigerian political leaders should make justice and prosperity of Nigerians their watch-word in order to be philosopher-kings indeed. If they do, poverty and crime will reduce and Nigeria will experience enduring peace.

Works Cited

Abogunrin, S. Oyin. "Re-branding Nigeria from Biblical Theological Perspective." *Biblical Studies and Rebranding Nigeria Campaign*, NABIS West Biblical Studies 2. Edited by Dorcas O. Akintunde. Ibadan: TextLinks Publishers, 2012.

Adepegba, Adelani. "Report ranks Nigeria third worst country in the world." *The Punch*, 28th April, 2021. Accessed on 12th June, 2023. <https://punchng.com/report-ranks-nigeria-third-worst-country-in-the-world/>.

Adeyanju, James O. *Between Malachi and Matthew*, Vol. 1. Ilorin: Amazing Grace Printmedia, 2009.

Akinyemi, Demola and Luminous Jannamike. "Hijab controversy: Christians, Muslims in violent clash as Kwara govt. reopens schools," *Vanguard News Nigeria*. Accessed 11th June, 2023. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/03/hijab-controversy-christians-muslims-in-violent-clash-as-kwara-govt-reopens-schools/>.

Ayantayo, Jacob Kehinde. "Rescuing God from His Adductors," An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on Thursday, 26 April, 2018, Ibadan: Ibadan University, Press, 2018.

Ayinde, Adebayo. "Bandits confirm kidnap of 156 Niger pupils, demand ₦ 110 million." *The Punch*, Wednesday, June 2, 2021.

Brown, Colin. *Christianity & Western Thought* vol. 1. Downers Groves: Intervarsity Press, 1990.

Dopamu, Adelomo Peter. "In the Service of Humanity," *A Farewell Lecture*. Ilorin: Unilorin Press, 2009.

Familusi, O.O. "Towards a Religious Alternatives to political Godfatherism in Nigeria." *Religion and Governance in Nigeria*, Religious Studies Series, Vol. 4. Edited by J.K. Ayantayo, A.O. Dada and H.A. Labeodan. Ibadan: Samprints & Graphic Co., 2012.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Foreman, J.B. (ed), *Collins Westminster Dictionary*. London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1987.

Freedman, David Noel. "Introduction: The Rivers of Paradise." *The Rivers of Paradise*. Edited by David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001

Geisler, Norman L. and Paul D. Feinberg. *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

Heller, Karin. "Justice, Order and Peace: A reading of Augustine's City of God, Book XIX in the Light of His Conversion Experience." Accessed 21st January, 2011. <http://www.viterbo.edu/uploadedFiles/centers.../Heller07.pdf>.

Hyde, Isaak. "Finding the Philosopher King." Accessed on 8th June, 2023. <https://medium.com/@isaakhyde/finding-the-philosopher-king-a4a7239169da>.

Kareem, Kayode Peter. "A Comparative Analysis of Hedonistic Ideology in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs." PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, 2018.

Oladunjoye, J.A. "Chairman's Keynote Addres." *Biblical Studies and Corruption in Africa*, Biblical Studies Series No. 6. Edited by S.O. Abogunrin. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 2007.

Olagunju, Lasisi. "Kingdom of Fools." Accessed 14th April, 2023. <https://eaglespath.com.ng/kingdom-of-fools-lasisi-olagunju/>

Olawoyin, Olusegun Noah "‘Governors’ and Robbers: St Augustine’s Political Philosophy in Nigerian Context." *Religion and Governance Nigeria*, Religious Studies Series, Vol. 4. Edited by J.K. Ayantayo, A.O. Dada and A.H. Labeodan. Ibadan: Samprint & Graphic Co., 2012.

Omosor, F. O. The interface between religious fundamentalism and political terrorism: The boko haram scourge and security in Nigeria. *Abraka Humanities review*, 5(1), 80 – 96, 2013.

Ottuh, P. O. O. and Omosor, F. O. Examination of religionphobia and politicization of religious crises in postcolonial Nigeria. *Cogito: Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 14(4). 37-54, 2022.

Sinha, J.N. *Introduction to Philosophy*, Reprint. London: New Central Book Agency (P) Ltd., 2009.

Shouler, Kenneth. *The Everything Guide to Understanding Philosophy*. Avon: Adams Media, 2008.

Stroll, Avrum and Richard H. Popkin. *Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.

Wight, Fred. *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1953.

N.A., "Editorial." *The Punch*, Wednesday, June 2, 2023, 18.

N.A., "Religious Violence in Nigeria." Accessed 11th June, 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_violence_in_Nigeria, 1.

N.A., "US Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report, 2008." Accessed 12th June, 2023. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/49b91f0c2.pdf>.