

THE ECCLESIASTICAL ELECTION OF LEADERS IN ACTS 6:1-8: AN INSIGHT FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Karbon, Philip Benjamin
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
Taraba State University, Jalingo
Karbon01yahoo.com 07035890284

Daniel BemApuuivom, Ph.D
Department of Religion and Philosophy,
University of Mkar, Mkar, Nigeria.
apuuivombem@gmail.com 09066787271

Abstract

Elections the world over have been characterized by rigging, crisis, bloodshed, and several abnormalities to putting wrong persons into political offices. Nigeria as a nation has suffered dearly from elections that some individuals for their selfish and evil gain manipulated the wrong leaders on the throne. The study examined the election of the Deacons in Acts 6:1-8: An Insight for National Integration. The 21st Century has become a century where most, if not all, adults have increasingly become aware that social, political, ethnic, and religious tensions are both at local, national, and international levels. Aggressors, who will continually want to dominate others to satisfy their expansionist ambition and other selfish interest, have infiltrated our world. What should be the practical National response to the threats being posed by Fulani Militia, Niger-Delta Militia, Boko-Haram, bandits, and religious fanatics on our elections? The paper focused on Acts 6:1-8 to bring insight into national integration. The researcher used a qualitative case study for this work. The qualitative case study is a research method that enables a complex phenomenon to be explored by identifying different factors interacting with each other. Primary and secondary sources were also used for the work. The research finding showed that the election conducted in Acts 6:1-8 did not characterize a threat to properties or human lives, it was free and fair. The research argued that, though Nigeria is already a secular state, the formula for the election of the Deacons in Acts 6:1-8 can be adopted for the benefit of national integration. The research proffered some recommendations and conclusions.

Keywords: Election, Deacons, Insight, National Integration

Introduction

Election has been a serious problem world-over. These problems include the security of the electorates in every polling unit; these are because thugs and election malpractices start from the units. Therefore, the security of their votes and their lives is needed by the government. Finances are needed to produce the materials that will make the election processes hitch-free.

Personnel that will work to make the election hitch free are needed to be trained at all costs. International observers are needed to be invited to observe the characteristic of the election from the grass-root to the national level. In the United States of America where elections used to be an example for many countries and continents to copy or emulate to do the same, years back has started to take a different level where the election has started to have inconclusive records in other regions where election use to be free and fair.

In many African countries, elections are conducted in the favour of those leaders that are on the throne, and in the favour of rich ones that can pay whatsoever they can, to get on the leadership positions. Some continue to maintain themselves on the throne for as long as they can.

In our country, Nigeria's election is a do or die affair. Thugs and agents are hired to make sure that their candidates ascend electoral positions by all means. These can be seen in thugs and agents snatching ballot boxes, killings, burning of properties, including the INEC offices and materials, manipulations, rigging of elections, fake voters' materials, and elections may sometime be declared inconclusive. These are always the nature and characteristic of Nigeria's elections. Election materials, INEC staff, and offices are not always safe during the election period, hoodlums, unknown gunmen, and militants are always active to take over power in the country. The human and electronic system of election has failed to produce good results in Nigeria. Therefore, the researcher wants to examine the Ecclesiastical Election of leaders in Acts 6:1-8: An Insight to National Integration

Election of Deacons in Acts 6:1-8

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not the reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, which we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicano, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests was obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people, Acts 6:1-8. AKJV.

The Israelites were chosen people of God through their fore-fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were a kingdom, and countries of themselves, they need no other nations to make up nations and countries. The early disciples were their leaders in all things, and it makes it difficult to meet all the needs of peoples in various ethnic groups, and beyond. Therefore, it called for additional leaders to carry out the work faithfully to certify the needs of all the yening, the ethnic groups, men, women, youths, widows, and orphans, this then will bring

peace, justice, and co-expectance among the different tribes, and ethnic groups in the society. According to Richards when ethnic disputes over the fair distribution of food strain harmony in the young Christian community, the apostles guide the Church to elect (select) Deacons, who take on that responsibility, (2002,p714).

The disciples knew that they were leading peoples of different tribes, ethnic groups, and cultures in one kingdom; hence, there must be transparency in all that they do. Unger agreed with the above by expressing that, the Grecian Jews were Hellenists who adopted their Greek language and customs. The Hebrews Clung to Aramaic and Jews practices. Waiting on the table including financial and temporal duties, prayers and the ministry of the word are always the principal responsibility of the pastors, presbyters, or bishops. The Deacon's office was to guard this calling against encroachment by other necessary functions of a minister of Christ. The growth of the Jerusalem church is indicated. The laying on of hands, speaks of the simple identification of the apostles, and the assembly with the chosen deacons in their work, (1998, p.44).

The mixture of families, clans, tribes, and ethnic groups among the church members, and complaints by Hellenist Jews brought about leaders that were full of the Holy Ghost that will lead these people to fear God, and how God can be seen in the leadership of the disciples. People that are corrupt, injustice, tribalistic, fanatic, wicked, lovers of self, haters of good, and people that are kidnappers and terrorists are not qualified to be leaders in any aspect under the leadership of the disciples. Walvoord states that the apostles mentioned three qualifications for those who would be enlisted to serve: they must (a) be full of the Spirit and (b) be full of wisdom, in addition, they were to (c) be known for these things, that is, the previous two qualifications were to be their reputations. All three were necessary for the handling of finances. Faith, is not another qualification, for belief is simply the means of being filled with the Holy Spirit, (2000, p367).

The election of Acts 6:1-8 was excellent in that no one complaint or tribunal for those that was grieved on the election was set. Let's take a look at the past and present elections in Nigeria, and the activities that characterized the elections.

An overview of past elections in Nigeria

In 1959, the election that ushered in political independence was conducted and superintended by the British colonial government. It produced the political leaders of Nigeria independence from mainly the National council for Nigerians and Cameroons (NCNC), northern people's congress (NPC), and Action Group (AG). There seemed arrangements that portrayed power sharing and no political party looked too irrelevant in the political process. The NPC and NCNC allied to produce a federal government in which Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC became governor-general and later president while the NPC produced the prime minister in the person of Sir Abubakar Tafawa-Belewa. The AG constituted an official opposition.

Despite the usual challenges of a new nation, the joy of independence triumphed over the rough interplay of the centrifugal and centripetal forces of that era, Nwoko, (2019).

Nigeria, in the real and political sense, commenced its electoral journey in 1964, having achieved the status of a republic in 1963 with the elections supervised by the most northern people Congress' controlled federal government. The political alliances formed by the two opposing political forces of that first Republic produced Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), and United Progressives Grand Alliance (UPGA) before the election. The outcomes of the election nationwide were considered massively rigging in favour of the NPC and their allies, especially in the western region. It was very glaring the signs of electoral confusion were imminent and visible. Election meant to take place on the 30th of December 1964 did not take place until 18th March 1965 in some constituencies in eastern Region, Lagos, and mid-western Region due to a bay-cot in December. This was the early sign that Nigeria would have it tough with elections in its political journey to nationhood. The election was marred by violence and manipulations. The ensuing crises led to a series of riots in the western region and created a situation that came to be known as wild-wild west. A state of emergency was declared in the west, and Chief Awolowo and his associates were accused of phantom coup plotting, tried, and sentenced to prison. Nigeria was not the same again, (Nwoko, 2019).

An overview of Nigeria's past elections shows that from 1959 to date, the country had not had a credible election like that one in Acts 6:1-8, it is the decision of the people on who should govern them. The aim of the election always defects at the end of every election because the election always ended up in violence, while triggered into killings, and lots of properties in our country, and always sending most of our young Nigerian that could have better this country in no distance time to their early graves, the world of no return. Ibanga observes that for Nigeria to have a proper election like that one of Acts 6:1-8, that will change the nation for the better like other developed countries of the world there is a need to educate her citizens. There is no doubt that many citizens in Nigeria are not aware of the existence and extent of their social, cultural, and economic rights, and the responsibility of the government in promoting and protecting these rights. Nigerians are very resilient people, and this attribute is informed by a lack of knowledge as to their rights and responsibilities to the government. It is only awareness of the citizens on this matter that informed meaningful participation in democratic processes and help in building a vibrant civil society, (2008, p.447).

The overview of past elections in Nigeria showed that true elections have not been conducted in the country. The leaders emerged through corruption, violence, rigging, or electoral malpractices. This can also be seen as the imposition of leaders against the people's will.

Imposition of Leaders into Power without proper election

Impositions of candidates have become the order of every election, and in every political party in Nigeria. Unlike the proper election that was done in Acts 6: 1-8, all the believers went home

happily, without complaining, and had no loss of lives and properties. Impositions of leaders are the opposite of what happened in the book of Acts 6:1-8. Edeh & Ugwueze (2013) observed that: in 2007, the electorates were of high spirit that the election was going to be better than the previous ones, but much to their chagrin the political gladiators had already perfected their plans to hijack the process indeed, the 2003 general election was the litmus test of what will happen in 2007, and not even the leaders emerged thereafter found it easy to be welcome the large-scale rigging that characterised the process. This propelled the then-president Musa Yar'Adua to be initiating a process of electoral reforms, (p.101).

Most of the problems facing our country Nigeria is the imposition of candidates against the will of the people either from the parties or by those at the amid of affairs, those candidates that are imposed on People, may not have the knowledge to do what the people want and will under develop the country. Ogbu argues that: the practice of imposition particularly of candidatures has become a political culture of most political parties in Nigeria. "today all the parties are guilty of lack of internal democracy... leaders sit at the parties secretariats' to send names to independence national electoral commission (INEC) ... "it is high time for Nigeria political parties to acknowledge that imposition of candidates due to lack of political parties internal democracy is the chief root of the countries development problems, leadership, social and economic ills, (2018, p.42).

The cry of every Nigerian is that our elections should always be without the imposition of any candidate. The election of the Deacons in Acts had not recorded any imposition of candidates either by God or the disciples themselves, the only instruction was to choose a person that was filled with the Holy Spirit, and that was what the electoral deed and the disciples announced the very candidates that the believers selected for the work of sharing. The group of angry party members from across the six area councils, which made up the federal capital territory, besieged the APC national secretariats in Abuja on Wednesday. They were at the party headquarters to register their displeasure with what they claimed was an attempt by the party leadership to impose a senatorial aspirant on them. The leader of the protesters Usman karshi, said, "We are here to make it clear to Mr. Adams oshiomhole that we in the FCT will not accept the imposition of candidates. We must be allowed to freely choose our representatives. "We are here to protest against the imposition of candidates. We are here to tell the party that we will not accept people to go into a room, write names, and come out to say we elected them", Taiwo, (2018). Impositions of candidates in Nigeria have been the order of the day, candidates are imposed into positions at when due. Our country needs God-fearing people that will facilitate the electoral system to free Nigeria from electoral problems.

Results of Electing God-fearing People According to Acts 6:1-8

God-fearing leaders were desperately needed under the leadership of the disciples. The believers were faced with different challenges from King Herod and other enemies that would not like the spread of the gospel. They were persecuted and treated as a second-class citizen in their fatherland, new members were joining the believers on daily bases, food and materials

needed were sheared to those that left their families, and widows whose husbands had died before or during the cause of serving Christ were added to the believers. The mixture of people with different understanding, tribes, sex, and cultures under one nation, needs God-fearing leaders that can bring them all into one understanding. “Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they led their hands on them. And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priest was obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, deeds great wonders, and miracles among the people, Acts 6: 6-8.

The election of God-fearing leaders in Acts 6:1-8 brought to an end the various complaints of the Hellenist widows and many other tribes that were non-Jews speaking the language. The disciples continue with the works of preaching, and prayers without any- group complaining or grumbling as before. This makes the word of God move further than it was. The Deacons without tribalism, religious sentiment, language barrier, cultural difference, and political differences were able to shear food and materials with everyone without problems. Unger attests that: Stephen's spirit-filled, and miracle-attest witness to the nation's leaders was rebuffed, bringing final Jewish rejection of the testimony of the triune God- God the father in the Old Testament, God the Son in the gospel, now God the Spirit in the powerful appeal through Stephen. The libertines, correctly freemen; were Jews who had been Roman slaves but were subsequently freed. The reference is a Jerusalem synagogue frequented by the Jews from a number of the lands of the dispersion- Cyrene in the North. North Africa west of Egypt, Alexandria in Egypt, Cilicia North-west of Syria and proconsul Asia (1998,p.442).

God-fearing leaders are willing to protect their people from any difficulties, develop, and help their people in all that they need to do, those who fear to know what is right for their people, and nation. God-fearing leaders are the think-tank of their nation's development. Richard observed that: one of these Deacons, Stephen, is especially effective in debating those who attack the faith. Frustrated by Stephen's skill, his opponent falsely accuses him and he is called before the Sanhedrin, the governing council and Supreme Court of Judaism. There Stephen makes an inspired defense, dragging on secret history to demonstrate persistent rejection by God's people of an agent of salvation sent by him. Then Stephen applies his history lesson. Israel's resistance has culminated in the council's murder of God's righteous ones, the Messiah, (2002, p.714).

The scripture is very clear when it says when the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, people groan. Proverbs 29:2. Rashad& Moo agreed with the scripture above that: effective leadership is one of the essential parts of the overall method for an organisation to sustain their business in the face of the problem caused by the rapid growth of the economic environment. Leaders are the one who controls and takes charge of the operation of an organisation, and good leaders can set optimistic goals, and objectives while steering the operation of the company toward those goals through effective strategies. Other than that, good leaders can also influence their employees and motivate them by strengthening

positive organisation culture, and through generous employee benefits, for instance, health care insurance, worker compensation, leave benefits, and others(2015,p.2).

The results of selecting God-fearing leaders are to enable them to embark so much on peoples' needs and help people to see that life is worth living. These leaders will reunite all the tribes, cultures, and religions that were fighting with each other in the same local government, states, and nations at large. God-fearing leaders bring development and help the race of the followers to look unto their leaders for what to do for the nation. Emaka et al explain that: the style of Jesus' leadership was clear from the manner he lived, "for the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve..." Mark 10:45). He described his style of leadership as that of a servant. In reading the account of an encounter with others we cannot but notice how Jesus consistently put himself at the service of others. He consoled his friends at the loss of the loved one (John 11:20) he frequently taught, giving new ideas, inspiration, and courage. He healed in a variety of ways, physically, spiritually, and relationally. He certainly prayed for others. Jesus fed his followers with all kinds of food, particularly with hope, by describing a vision of what could be. He led by encouraging and shaping, future leaders. In order words, he served. He was typically a servant leader, (2016, pp.18-19).

Nigeria as a country needs God-fearing leaders that will lead the nation under the fear of God as in Acts 6: 1-8. Nigeria's population in 1960 was 45.14 million persons, in 2021 the population escalated to 211.40 million persons, according to world data info. In those days the leadership of the country was rolled by the Igbo, Yoruba, and the Hausas, which are the southeast, southwest, and north. But as the population escalated to 211.40 million persons became more educated, and need more development to make Nigeria better than other nations or countries. Clifford& Karbon observed that: for much of Nigeria's political history, north-dominated political networks have been more successful at controlling national power. This success was a product of a very practical kind of politics that was demonstrated in a greater willingness to bargain and accommodate the interest and agendas of the influential people from the middle belt and the south of the country. However, the greater influence that northern leaders had on the national affairs in Nigeria has historically caused tension between the north and south and was a foremost issue when Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, (2019,p.60).

God-fearing leaders will reunite the southeast, the southwest, the middle belt, and the entire northern geo-political zone, to come together in unity to develop one Nigeria. When the country is governed by God-fearing persons, the issues of religion, culture, tribes and whatever sentiment will not divide the country. The key appointments will be given to any God-fearing person, either from the southeast, southwest, north, or any outstanding Christians or Muslims that will carry the masses and the nation together. The God-fearing leaders will make sure that the development of our country is the number one agenda in their lives, and the success of all Nigeria and the security of lives and properties are their focus. Religious sentiments that bedevil our country will not raise their ugly head again.

Religious Sentiments in Election

Religious sentiments also play a key role in determining the dynamism of the governance and the outcome of elections in Nigeria. Over the years, it has been used as a tool by the leaders in Nigeria to control, and oppress the people. Commenting on the dimensions of religious sentiments, Udeagha&Nwamah, equally highlight the roles of politicians, traditional rulers, and religious leaders in what they refer to as the 'religionisation' of politics. While the politicians express their religious sentiments through the manipulation of religion in their bid to secure votes and advance their egotistical hold on power, the traditional rulers and religious leaders manipulate the same religious identities, by beguiling the politicians with religious proposals, (2020,p.22).

Religious sentiments have gone down deep in the Nigeria elections. In the Muslims' dominated areas, like in the north, all governors and elective positions are given to Muslim candidates no matter how capable, intelligent, and knowledgeable Christian candidates are, they must make sure that Muslim candidates win elections because he is a Muslim. Godfrey&Fatteh reported in Punch newspaper on 16th July that: the Kano state Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, has charged all Muslims faithful in Osun State to vote for the incumbent governor, Gboyega Oyetola, to continue his tenure as governor for the second term because he is a Muslim like them. This is as he stated that Oyetola was the only Muslim governor in the southwest, noting that he was their brother. This was made known in an audio clip published by BBC Hausa on Friday night. Ganduje reportedly visited a Mosque in Osogbo on Friday during the Jumaat prayers, where he was said to have met with the Hausa community in Osogbo, canvassing vote for Oyetola. Ganduje said, "I have come to this Mosque to talk to the Muslims here. Please, the person you should vote for is Oyetola. Do you know why? This is because he is a Muslim like you. We are guiding you on the path (to follow)". Ganduje also noted that the presidential flag bearer of the All Progressive Congress was asked to pick a fellow Muslim as running mate, which he did,(2022).

Religious sentiments have rooted so much in Nigerians' that knowledge and competency in candidates are not more considered by many Christians or Muslims. The Christians in the north will prefer the Christian candidates to win no matter how illiterate and incompetent they may be, and that is also to a Muslim person, for a Christian to win the election, it is better to have illiterates win than for Christians to lead Muslims in their majority states, and Nigeria. In the southern part of Nigeria where Christians are in majority, almost all the states are governed by the Christians, no matter how competent a Muslim may be, he will not win elective positions in the southeast and south-south. With all the religious sentiments, both Christians and Muslim leaders are still embezzling and corrupting the government system in Nigeria. Therefore, religious sentiments have not developed, unite, eradicate poverty, or make our country better than other developed countries. Religious sentiments always create an atmosphere that makes elections not to be free and fair.

Elections are not always free and fair

The elections of Nigeria are not always free and fair since the time the country got independence. The leaders and their followers did not learn from other countries how to conduct free and fair elections for the glory of God, and the joy of the electoral. Oyewola reported on June 7 that: violence is one of the recurrent features of Nigeria's electoral history and democratic journey since independence in 1960. The country invariably sees an escalation of violence in the period before, during, and after elections, (2022). In almost all elections in Nigeria, lives and properties are always killed, injured, destroyed, or created crises that will set the country at a total loss. During elections, many Nigerians at home and in Diaspora are left in fear of what the outcome of the elections will be. Many times, the elections may end with political or religious crises which will characterize many evil activities. Adepegba&Oloko revealed in punch news of 19th April that: the Independence National Electoral Commission has lost no fewer than 9,836 Smart Card readers in over 42 Attacks on its officers and staff in three years. Also, more than 1,149 persons, including INEC employees and security officers were killed in the three elections held in 2011, 2015, and 2019. Ballot papers, cubicles, and other materials were similarly destroyed, (2022).

Nigeria could have had free and fair elections if the electoral were given chance to elect the candidates of their choice, and the person elected from the polls will be given the position as the people elected without manipulations. The continued manipulations, killings, riggings, and destructions of properties during elections in Nigeria since 1960, is because of the selfish interests of some political leaders who want to ascend to power by all means. The persistent disruptions of elections within the past three elections (2011, 2015, and 2019) have wasted more lives, destroyed properties, and brought shame and setbacks to the entire country. Nigeria as a giant in Africa must adopt the right methods of elections, and select credible leaders to have free and fair elections without wasting lives, and properties. The above situations are the results of electing leaders that are not God-fearing.

Elected leaders are not always God-fearing

Regrettably, the governmental institutions which enjoy the collective representation and weird political authority on behalf of the generality of the masses (society) are well rooted in the same heinous and debased crime of corruption. Instead of positively exercising their legitimate muscle in the effective control of society, to enhance the collective trust, and confidence reposed on them, they make nonsense of the people's collective consciousness by competitively setting the political arena in form of “mass politics, and policy formation, including bribery, extortion, election fraud, abusive patronage, and official intimidation of all manner of gratification, and devices geared at contract” Ngele & Maxwell, (2013, p.245).

In a democracy, elected leaders are supposed to work with the opinions or views of the people on how the country should move or develop. Like in Nigeria, many people are educated that have the intellectual ability to advise the authorities on how to relate to national and international relations on how to develop our country like other developed countries. Ibanga observes that: in a democracy, respect for the will of the people means that those who are in

positions of authority have the act in line with the wishes, and aspirations of the people. The people make their wishes known by expressing their views and giving their opinions on how matters of public interest should be handled. The arbitrariness of action is not conducive to democracy, and the political responsibility of a government demands that public opinions should be done on the factors informing its actions. The government-constituted by elected political leaders and their appointees- must always recognize that it is merely established to execute the mandate of the people. When policies are formulated and adopted by the government, it is understood in a democracy that, the government does so as the agent of the people. It is, therefore, important that proposed policies be made known to the people; and they can approve or reject such by expressing their opinions, (2008, pp.443-444).

Nigeria as a country needs good leaders who fear God, and dose that which pleases God, and the people. These leaders need to lead in every state of the federation or the three tiers of the government to liberate the country from all evils. A good governor or leader manifesting the fear of God distance himself from corrupt practices such as stealing state money to either enrich him or sponsor religious fanaticism. A few African leaders who may serve as veritable models are Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Dr. Nelson Mandela of South Africa who never enriched themselves for any purposes whatsoever. Describing these two leaders, Nwanju writes to say that: “it is indeed regrettable to note that Nigeria is yet to get a leader in a mode of late Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who ruled his country for more than three decades and eventually left office without having a house of his own or Dr. Nelson Mandela of South Africa who ruled his country for just a single term, and shortly refused to vie for a second term despite pressures mounted on him to do so. Unfortunately, this cannot be said of most Nigerian political leaders both past and present leaders. “It is not surprising that not such leaders have emerged because it is demand for a one with a true sense of religion and moral discipline to promote good governance based on truth honesty, (2013,p.54).

Many elected leaders in Nigeria are not God-fearing leaders; this can be seen in their leadership style and administration during and after their services. Most of them become richer than their states, put their states in abject poverty, and make the civil servant serve for some months without being paid, while some will under develop their states that no meaningful development will be recorded during their periods of leadership. Ayodeji reported in the premium Times on 13 August that “eight Nigeria states owe workers for at least six months” eight state governments failed to pay some of their workers for at least six months, a new report says. The states are \Taraba, Nassarawa, Edo, Ebonyi, Ondo, Plateau, Imo, and Abia. They owe actives workers as while as retirees. The reports by the civic organisationBudgit show that at least 12 out of Nigeria's 36 states owe workers at least one-month salary as of July 28. One state, Abia, did not pay some workers for 22 months. “The state (Abia) currently owes its state tertiary institution workers six months' salary, while Ebonyi state has not paid its pensioners in the last six months”, Budgit says in its report. It states secretariat workers in Taraba state complained of irregular salary payments for up to six months, while lecturers at the tertiary institution and midwives in the state-owned hospital in Ondo state have not paid in the last four months, (2022).

From the above indications, it proved that many elected leaders in Nigeria are not God-fearing people. Their struggles are for their families, themselves, to under develop the nation, and enrich themselves, and their families forever. The election conducted in Acts 6: 1-8 can only be the solution for Nigeria to adopt.

Acts 6:1-8 as Solution to Nigeria Election

Nigerians also suffer in many ways that our outcry has been seen and heard in many countries. Like the Hellenists Jews that murmured against their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Nigerians are also murmuring in their father's land for neglect of distributions of positions to credible and peace-loving Nigerians: the southeast is lamenting that since Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe left as president in 1960, no Igbo person has become president in Nigeria. The south-south are of the view that president Goodluck Jonathan did not complete his two tenures as others do, therefore, they are marginalised for their oil in Niger Delta being used to run Nigeria projects. The southwest is still calling for justices to be made on June 12 elections that Abiola won, and was not given to rule. The Christians in the north are complaining about not being in power. The Muslims in the north are complaining that Nigeria is their country, and will not allow anyone to rule over them. Like the disciples of old, Nigeria leaders must know what to do for this great nation to be like other developed nations of the world. "The Twelve recognized their proper priorities in the ministry of the word of God and prayer", Acts 6:4.

Nigeria leaders must have credible qualifications, both paper and spiritual to lead others; those that are incompetent should not be allowed to lead in whatever capacity. According to Walvoord, the apostles mentioned three qualifications for those who would be enlisted to serve: they must (a) be full of the Spirit and (b) be full of wisdom. In addition, they were to be known for these things are the previous two qualifications were to be their reputations. All three were necessary for the handling of finances. Faith is not another qualification, for belief is simply the means to being filled with the Holy Spirit, (2000, p.367). Our country Nigeria will develop rapidly if God-fearing leaders, people who are spiritual, academically, physically, and competent to rule are elected into the positions. "The church was rapidly growing in numbers with even many Jewish priests becoming believers, obedient to the faith," Acts 6:7.

The elected leaders who are under the fear of God, and have the knowledge to do the work in Nigeria will do wonders, our naira will be appreciated again, and terrorism and all other evil activities will not withstand our country Nigeria. Our country will be heaven on earth. Walvoord continues by saying that: like Christ and the apostles, Stephen was full of God's grace and power. Interestingly Stephen was "full of" or controlled by five factors: the Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace, and power. What outstanding leaders! Furthermore, he did great wonders and miraculous signs. This evidence of God's grace was in addition to his responsibilities in the daily ministrations to the widows, (2000, p.368).

Acts 6:1 now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists; because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Peters reveals that: historically, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual state with a population of over 170 million people and evidence of further population explosion so; naturally, there would be a crisis of partiality and flagrant nepotism, as was the case between the Hebraic and the Hellenistic, Nigeria's major problem has been its pluralism,(2020,p.5).

Acts 6:2-4.then the twelve summoned the multitude of disciples and said, “We shouldn't leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word. In line with the above, Salman reported that: Several Clerics in Sokoto State have called on Nigerians to consider capability and experience in electing leaders during the 2023 general election. A cross-section of clerics, while speaking with newsmen on Sunday in Sokoto, disclosed that this was necessary for the nation to have credible, pious, and committed leaders. prof. Sani Sagir of the Physics Department in UsmanuDanfodio University, Sokoto, described leadership as a “responsibility that requires an able person who is healthy, physically fit, intelligent and experienced”, he further stressed that “Nigeria needs a very good leader with experience, good political will, someone that means well for the country, not someone that will steal public funds. A person that will do the right thing, not minding what people will say, as far as it is a right and acceptable decision because as a leader, you need to be courageous in doing the right thing always, (30th May 2020)

Acts 6:5-7, and the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

A nongovernmental organization, Advocacy for good citizenship and peace, AGCP, has called on the Nigerian electorate to vote for candidates based on their attributes and not for political party considerations. It also picked holes in the process through which Nigerian leaders emerge, alleging that it has caused a lack of progress and development in the country. Barrister Kelechi Mbam, the National Coordinator of the nongovernmental organization, said this at public enlightenment in Abakaliki. It further explained that it was high time the electorate vote for credible leaders of their choice based on their person and not based on political party for the progress of the country, Tauna, (May, 4th 2022).

Human Rights Advancement Development and Advocacy centre, yesterday, called on

Nigerians to elect the right person without religious, tribal, or sectional bias as the 2023 election draws nearer. He further called on Nigerians to seize the golden opportunity to decide and elect credible leaders by registering to vote and selecting candidates based on defined capacity, and character, Onyebula, (17th May 2022).

Acts 6:8, and Stephen, full of faith and power did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the synagogue of the freedman (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has asked Christian, especially Church leaders to get more involved in the process of electing leaders, saying the country needs a God-fearing president in 2023 to tackle its numerous challenges. CAN president, Daniel Okoh, gave the charge during the 75th birthday celebrations of the general overseer of Grace of God International, Paul Nwachukwu, in Onitsha, Anambra State. He further said that “To get righteous on the throne, we must be involved in the process. It is time to get the righteous people into the political positions to bring the change the country desires”. Like Stephen in Acts 6:8, Ewepu says: “Nigerians want a credible and competent leader, who is God-fearing, kindhearted, and can tackle insecurity head-on. These were the top qualities I can remember. In other words, Nigerians are looking for a leader who knows that we can be much better than we are today as a country, and is willing to work with his or her team to lay the vision to make this country great again, one that every citizen would be proud of, and be glad to contribute their quota to her development”, (January 11th, 2022).

Recommendations

To achieve peaceful elections in Nigeria, this paper recommends the following:

- ✓ The federal government should address the root cause of the election's malpractices in Nigeria to curtail this satanic activity
- ✓ Employment opportunities should be created for men, women, and youths to engage them actively in business and human services
- ✓ INEC should maintain electoral standards to bring sanity to the electoral system in Nigeria
- ✓ Court should maintain justices in all elections tribunals to bring in the right person that won the election as the people elected.
- ✓ The state and federal governments need to take urgent steps to address the influxes of armed Fulani herdsmen and boundary adjustments between Nigeria and neighbouring countries to reduce the hiring of foreigners during election periods.
- ✓ The state and the federal government should preserve and maintain the stability of the country, before, during, and after elections.
- ✓ Unemployment of the youths should be addressed by governments to reduce the rate

of idleness that leads them to loot during elections crises.

- ✓ The state and the federal government should adopt the election of Acts 6:1-8, to reduce the rate of killings, rigging, corruption, and any forms of satanic activities during elections.

Conclusion

An election has a global problem that affects not only Nigeria but countries all over the world from New Zealand and the Chatham islands to many countries in Africa, Asia, and beyond. Governments are working hard to address the lingering problem of any form of elections problem to bring lasting peace to the country. Though the problem is not a new thing in Nigeria, however, it is one of the country's biggest challenges. The country faces many problems, including unemployment, corruption, and a low level of education. The facts discussed so far show that elections malpractices in Nigeria are indeed high; thus, INEC and governments are called to do justice in all the elections activities to reduce elections problems in Nigeria. The cultural and religious divergences between individuals, tribes and ethnic groups of the country have also contributed much to the past and present elections' malpractices and corruption in Nigeria. Therefore, it is recommended that the governments, the Christians Associations of Nigeria CAN, the Muslim council and African Traditionalists should adopt the election of Acts 6:1-8, to help reduce any forms of elections malpractices and corruptions that bedevil the country

References

- Adepegba, A & Oloko, F (2022) *Electoral Violence: 1,149 Nigerians Killed, INEC Suffers 42 Attacks, decries Rising Insecurity*. Retrieved from punchng.com
- Amechi, A.F (2022) *2023: Nigeria Needs God-fearing President-CAN*. Retrieved from <https://www.sunnewsonline.com>
- Ayodeji, H (2022) *Eight Nigerian States Owe Workers for at Least Six Months*. Retrieved from <https://premiumtimes.com>
- Clifford T.G Karbon, B.P & Habila K (2019) *Imaging a Religious View of Restructuring in Nigeria*. *CCU Journal of Humanities* vol.1 pp 57-66
- Edeh, H.c & Ugwuege, M.I (2013) *Democratic Performance and Political Discourse in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences NJSS* vol.9.no2, July-December, pp 94-117
- Emeka, N, Pau, E & Isidare N (2016) *Religion and State Priests & Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu, Snaap Press

- Ewepu, G.(2022) *2023: Nigerians Want Competent, God-fearing, and Kind-hearted President-Ibua*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com>
- Gogfrey, G & Faith H (2022) *Vote Oyetola Because he's a Muslim-Ganduje*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/vote-oyetola>
- Ibanga, M.(2008) *The Role of Non-governmental organizations in Strengthening Democracy in Nigeria Calabar*, CATS Publishers
- Muhammad, S (2022) *Imposition of Candidates by Political Parties Worrisome- Anglican Bishop*. Retrieved from [Tribune online.com/in](https://tribuneonline.com/in)
- Ngele, O.K & Maxwell U.I (2013) Political Authority and Corruption in Nigeria: A Moral Imperative *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences* vol. 9. pp 240-256
- Nwanaju, U.I (2013) Religious Bigotry and Good Governance in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences* vol.9, no2 July-December. Pp 42-56
- Nwoko, J.U (2019) *Nigerian Elections A History and a Loss of Memory*. Retrieved from the Cable.ng/Nigerian.el
- Ogbe, H.E (2018) Political Parties and Candidates Imposition in Nigeria: A Menace to Democracy and National Security, *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Arts*
- onyegbula, E(2022) 2023 Election: Group Urge Nigerians to Elect Credible Leaders. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com>
- Oyewola, S (2022) *there's Violence Every Election Season in Nigeria: What can be done to stop it*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com>
- peters, P.E(2020) *A Critical Study of Acts 6:1-3 and its Implications for Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336792670>
- Rashad, M(2015) How Effective Leadership can Facilitate Change in Organization Through Improvement and Innovation. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: Administration and Management* vol. 15 pp 2-7
- Richards, L.O (2002) *Bible Reader's Companion*, Cook Communications Ministries USA
- Salman, A(2022) *Sokoto Clerics Advocate Voting Capable Experience Leaders*. Retrieved

from

<https://punchng.com>

Taiwo,O (2018) *Candidates Imposition, Chaotic Primaries and Helpless Electorate*. Retrieved

from punchng.com

Tauna, A. (2022) *2023: Vote for Credible Candidates, not Political Party-Group Warns*.

Retrieved from [https:// daily post.ng](https://daily.post.ng)

Udeagha, N&Nwamah,G (2020)Ethno-Religious Sentiments and the need for Restructuring in

Nigeria Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal 7(8):pp.17-34

Unger, M.F (1998) *The New Unger's Bible Handbook*. Chicago Moody Press

Walwoard, J.F (2000) *the Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*. Cook Communication

Ministries USA