

## Politics and Prosperity in a Religious-Political Nigerian Society: Reflection of a Christian Theologian

Silas Guda Mishi<sup>1</sup> & Ephraim S. Ikyernum<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nigerian Christian Bible College, Ukpom, Nigeria

Corresponding author: silasgudamishi2015@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Religious Studies

University of Ibadan

### Abstract

Politics is a medium through which the society seeks to be organized and governed in order to improve human potentials, social relations and economic viability for the overall benefit and prosperity of the members and society. This entails that one major hallmark or aim of politics is to drive the society and members towards prosperity, and prosperity is multidimensional – it stretches to include good social relations and economic wellbeing. Good social relationship is built on the pillars of righteousness or moral uprightness, equity and justice. It is not surprising that there is a nexus between religion and politics, and the religions (Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion) uphold these tenets as the ideals of good interpersonal dealings and relationship among members of the society. It is however, observed that the understanding and concept of prosperity among political players in Nigeria today is skewed and lopsided. It is based mainly on selfish interests and economic prosperity and material wellbeing, almost or totally neglecting the other important aspects of prosperity. This paper therefore, seeks to re-echo what better, and or true politics is, and the fact that prosperity is multidimensional, with emphasis from the religious perspective. Allusion may be made to Islam and the African Traditional Religion, but focus is mainly on the Tanakh – the Old Testament part of the Christian scriptures as well as other relevant parts of the Christian canon – Bible. This research work is built on Justin Ukpong's Enculturation hermeneutics (also called enculturation hermeneutics hermeneutical theory and reconstruction hermeneutics).

**Keywords:** *Tanakh*, *mishpat*, *tatzli·ach*, *tas·kil* and politics

### Introduction

Politics is a medium through which the society seeks to be organized and governed in order to improve human potentials, social relations and economic viability for the overall benefit and prosperity of the members and society. This entails that one major hallmark or aim of politics is to drive the society and members towards prosperity, and prosperity is multidimensional – it stretches to include good social relations and economic wellbeing. Good social relationship is built on the pillars of righteousness or moral uprightness, equity and justice. It is not surprising that there is a nexus between religion and politics, as the religions (Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion) uphold these tenets as the ideals of good interpersonal dealings and relationship among members of the society. Thus, by clear indication, these religions affirm that there is more to prosperity than just material gains and

wellbeing. What is of concerned however that is, the understanding of prosperity in present political milieu of Nigeria is skewed and lopsided. It is focused almost mainly and entirely on material acquisitions, even though most of these political players profess and belong to either one of the three main religions practised in Nigeria - Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

This belief and view of prosperity has brought about negligence of other important aspects of prosperity, thereby causing havoc of moral decadence, injustice, and inequitable distribution of resources and wealth in the society. This betrays the essence of politics and governance. The resultant effects of this are violence, untold hardship from poverty, unfair dealings in interpersonal relationships, and so on. This is what this paper seeks to address from the religious perspective with focus on the Christian theological dimension. This research

work is built on Justin Ukpong's Enculturation hermeneutics (also called enculturation hermeneutics hermeneutical theory and reconstruction hermeneutics. enculturation hermeneutics targets at reading the biblical text, being conscious of the reader's socio-cultural, as well as socio-political background and the challenges associated therewith, in view of addressing them respectively using the biblical text. In this wise, the biblical text becomes much more meaningful to the people. Reconstruction hermeneutics or theology on the other hand is the theological articulation of the ideals of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The aim of this theology is to address the socio-economic, political, religious, cultural and moral crises facing Africa today.

### Conceptual Clarifications

#### Politics

It is ideal to take a brief look at the term politics in its ancient and modern sense. In Plato's Republic, as well as in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and politics, in its traditional Greek sense, is employed to refer to that quest for what is good in the governance of the polis – the city or the society (Akinwale, 2000). For the Aristotelian, there was a thin string between politics and ethics. Ethics meant for the citizen the religious rationalization of the best way to live in the polis; that is, what constitutes a society as a whole – its governance, its culture, its economy (Manus, 2006). The foregoing suggest that politics and ethics, which is concerned with the question of right and wrong, good and bad, are inseparable, and the political player – the statesman (politico) must be a good individual, an objective and morally upright person who acknowledges the weight of the universal moral principles innate in him/her as well as in the other persons being ruled.

In the contemporary age politics is vied from different dimensions. It is either seen as an art or science of governance or competition between different interest groups or individuals for the control of power and leadership in the polity. In the Nigerian contemporary society, the politicians have ditched the ethical dimensions and responsibilities of politics that the Greek civilization bequeathed to the world. There are many people in Nigeria today who have begun

to regard politics as the complex of good or bad relationships between the ruling class and the ruled in the society or within a political party / organization (Manus, 2006). This suggests there is abrasion of relationship and lack of confidence and harmonious coexistence between the ruling class and the ruled. Obviously, what brought about this abrasion and lack of confidence as well as harmonious relationship between the ruling class and the ruled is perceived injustice, unfairness in the sharing of State's resources and wealth.

The politicians compete for powers and control of resources for selfish interest rather than for the overall good of the polis or society. In essence, the politicians are unconcerned about life or existential crisis, and or are bereft of sympathy and the philosophical and social dimensions of all the aspirations and yearnings of the Nigerian society. For a fulfilled, happy and prosperous society, Aristotle's (384-322 B.C.E.) assertion in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, cannot be overemphasized, when he describes the happy life intended for man by nature as one lived in accordance with virtue, and, in his *Politics*, he described the role that politics and the political community must play in bringing about the virtuous life in the citizenry (CClayton, 2023). This entails that to Aristotle, for a society to be holistically prosperous, the people must prosper not only economically but also in virtuous life and the rulers must champion in this virtue.

#### Politics, Governance and Religion

We have already established that there is a nexus between religion, politics and governance. Politics is the medium through which the society is organized for governance for the overall good of the members. We have also established that one of the major hallmarks of governance is to bring about a better, prosperous, peaceful and harmonious society. This is done through harnessing resources, improved human potentials and social relations, and social relations, good social relations are built on moral uprightness/righteousness, justice, fairness and equity. Religion upholds these tenets hold them as virtues. The three main religions of Nigeria and politics are not mutually exclusive. They are intertwined and have everything to do with each other. This

connection between religion and politics or governance forms our concern here as we shall discuss below.

### **Islam**

Islam is one of the major religions in Nigeria. According to Okebukola (2012), Islam as a religion is inseparable from politics because the polity under Islamic control must practice theocracy. Okebukola (2012), continues that, political authority resides with the clerics; a political order of a secular nature cannot therefore exist. This is affirmed by Odunuga (1998), as he puts it that “in Islam, politics and religion are parts of a single alloy. It was said that the greatest achievement of prophet Muhammed (SAW) was the religious and political unification of Arabia. In Islam, the most functional political system is 'theocratic', in the sense that Allah is the only recognized authority (Kenny, 1999). Note the word “functional”. This connotes that there could be a political system in place that is not functional in that it does not serve the purpose of governance in its holistic sense, such that it does not affect and shape the economic, moral and justice system of the people thereby to make them holistically prosperous.

### **African Traditional Religion (ATR)**

In traditional African society, religion is regarded as a rallying factor. A ruler, in African traditional society is both a political ruler of his community as well as the Chief priest (Okebukola, 2012). According to Awolalu (1987), this phenomenon is prominent among the Yoruba people, where the *Oba* (King) is referred to as “*igba keji Edumare*”, that is, next in rank to the Supreme Being; and he is also regarded as “*Olori awon Aworo*” – meaning, leader among the priests. This implies that the *Oba* is both a political head and religious leader. The foregoing entails that religion and politics are interwoven in African traditional setting, as both have direct influence on each other. This tells why the king in most cases would do nothing until a word is received from the priest. Matters of community or society welfare are into the hands of these leaders, supposedly guided by the Supreme Being. One would not deny the fact that the aim is to give the society true peace and prosperity, which is holistic,

including justice, moral uprightness, fairness and equity.

### **Christianity**

Concerning interface between religion and politics and governance, the Christian religion is no different. Christians believe that God rules and that no leadership materializes without God's approval. A look at the *Tanakh* – the Old Testament part of the Christian canon, particularly the prophetic literature, and one would see God interfering in political affairs through the prophets. The prophets were a bridge between God and the rulers, and as well, served as a medium of communication between Himself and the rulers accordingly. The prophets received God's mind and revealed it to the rulers, based on good governance for the wellbeing of the people. This wellbeing was multidimensional, ranging from morality, religion, justice, fairness, equity as well as material. This is what was considered holistic prosperity. This doctrine of multidimensional meaning of prosperity is well captured and echoed in the prophetic corpus of Ezekiel and Amos, as well as other portions of the Christian canon, for example, the portion known as the Deuteronomistic History (DH). Even though other prophets noted the same tenets, we shall beam our focal light on the DH, Ezekiel and Amos, though others may be alluded to, as necessity demands.

### **The Concept of Prosperity in the Deuteronomistic History (DH)**

Deuteronomistic History (DH) is a modern theoretical construct holding that behind the present forms of the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (the Former Prophets in the Hebrew canon) there was a single literary work. In the late 19th century, some scholars conceived of the DH as a loosely edited collection of works, written in reference to some of the standards espoused in the book of Deuteronomy (Gary, 2019). The architect of the modern theory, which holds to greater unity within the work, was Martin Noth who built upon older theories (Gary, 2019) Steven L. McKenzie supports adding that the Deuteronomistic History is the label used by scholars for the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the

First and Second Book of the Kings, as identified by Martin Noth (McKenzie, 2019). From the foregoing, the Deuteronomistic History is referred to the Hebrew canon (Old Testament books) of Joshua, Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings – also called former prophets and Deuteronomy, and it is unanimously agreed that Martin Noth is behind the theory.

The theory, Deuteronomistic History has been explained, and it has been established that the Old Testament books of Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings and Deuteronomy make up the Concept. The Deuteronomistic Concept of prosperity is one that is crucial and fascinating. The Deuteronomist (Dtr) uses two key words - (*tatz·li·ach*) and (*tas·kil*) to describe prosperity. The former means to: break {out}come ({mightily}) go {over}be {good}be {meet}be {profitable}{cause {to}{effect, prosperity, prosperous..., and the later means: intelligent: - {consider expert, instruct, prosper, deal prudent(-ly)}, give skill ({-ful}) have good {success}...(make to) understand (-ing) {wisdom}({be}behave {self} {consider}make) wise ({-ly}) guide wittingly (Strong's Bible and Concordance, n.d). The two words appear throughout the Deuteronomistic History. For instance, Joshua 1:8:

*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (King James Version – KJV)*

The word translated here as “prosperous” is תִּשְׁכִּיל, and “good success” is תִּצְלִיחַ. These same words appear in Judges, Samuel and Kings, depicting success in one area of endeavour or the other, and it is a clear indication that the Deuteronomist's concept of prosperity is not one-sided and limited to material acquisitions, but suggests stretches to embrace prosperity or success in other areas such as wisdom or to be wise, skills, being good, and so on. This is portrayed in 1 Samuel 18:14:

*And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. (KJV)*

In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him (NIV). The word used here and translated “he behaved himself wisely” by the King James Version and “he had great success (prosperity) by the New International Version (NIV) is the Hebrew word תִּשְׁכִּיל. Also, in 1Kings 2:3, the same word תִּשְׁכִּיל is used and the King James Version translates it as being prosperous:

*And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest.... From the foregoing and by all indications based on the diversity of meanings of the word, this passage:*

מִן־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ , לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָּיו לְשֹׁמֵר  
 חֻמֹּתָיו מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְעֲדוֹתָיו , כְּכַתּוּב  
 - בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה -- לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל , אֵת כָּל -  
 אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה , וְאֵת כָּל - אֲשֶׁר תִּכְנֶנָּה , שָׁם

Could as well be translated:

And keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statues and His commandments, and His judgement, and His testimonies as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper/  
*behave (yourself) wisely* in all that you do....

Translating the word תִּשְׁכִּיל in the above text as “behave (yourself) wisely” may not be out of place seen the nuances regarding the meanings of the word and the Deuteronomist's diversified concept of prosperity. Of course, having wisdom and putting it to use and behaving wisely is an achievement and at the same time the road to all-round success. It is when people are wise that they avoid fraud and shun getting rich through fraudulent means, it is when people are wise that they do not betray the trust of those who entrusted their resources under their care, it is when people are wise that they consider the good of one another, it is when people are wise that they deliver the word of God exactly as the Creator would have them do; it is when people are wise that they deliver justice and see it as a sine-qua-non and seek righteousness; and of course, it is when justice prevails that the society is at peace and it is when there is peace that there is meaningful

development in the society which brings about successes and prosperity as well as better life for the members.

It is without doubt that the Deuteronomistic Concept of prosperity is a diversified one. It does not limit it to material wealth, even though it is not against it. To heed God and keep His statutes is being wise. And to heed God is to avoid fraud and let justice and righteousness reign.

### **The Concept of Prosperity in Ezekiel**

Ezekiel proclaimed judgments of the Lord to the Israelites because of various sin related issues and the abominable condition of Jerusalem (Web, n.d). The people had indulged in series of atrocities ranging from idolatry, social and economic vices. Ezekiel 18:5-9 notes a range of cultic and moral actions, both righteous and wicked. These actions become the principles by which a person is said to "live" or "die." Four of these actions are related to work: restoring a debtor's pledge, providing for the poor, not charging excessive interest, and working justly. Failure to uphold just and righteous standards - or even worse, shedding the blood of another person indiscriminately - will incur the "death penalty" (Ezek. 18:13), (Joel, 1995). Ezekiel 22 further highlights several sins the Israelites indulged in.

Idolatry, oppression of the less privileged, and failure to return what they took in pledge for loans were rampant; robbery, perversion of justice, breaking laws (both social and religious) and adultery and fornication were evident. Furthermore, the people had no sympathy. Failure to consider the good and welfare of one another and extortion from the feeble and helpless glared in abundance. Yet, the people had forgotten the reasons for the cataclysm and calamity they suffered. And according to Mason, this made the Jewish community of exile in Babylon, to be preoccupied with two questions: "Has God been unjust to us?" and "What did we do to deserve this?" The desolation of these exiled Jews is captured well in Psalm 137:1-4: "By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps.

For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,

'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?". The exiled Jews' question, what did we do to deserve this? That question comes out of the mistaken belief that they were being punished for their ancestors' actions rather than their own. We see this in the false proverb they quote: "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). God rejects this accusation. "The issue at stake is the exiles' refusal to take responsibility for their predicament, blaming it on the sins of previous generations", (Kathryn, n.d). God makes it clear, however, that each individual will be evaluated according to his own actions, whether righteous or wicked. The metaphor involving a righteous man (Ezek. 18:5-9), his sinful son (Ezek. 18:10-13), and his righteous grandson (Ezek. 18:14-17) illustrates that people are not held accountable for the morality of their ancestors. God holds each individual "soul" accountable.

According to McCain, "individual responsibility is the prominent and significant feature of prophet Ezekiel's message", (McCain, 1996). This is as opposed to the Israelite and Jewish idea of corporate punishment and responsibility of the covenant community which passed off punishment as being the result of the sins of their ancestors as seen in Ezekiel 18. The Jews believe on the proverb or saying that in effect presented God as being unjust in punishing their generation for the sins of their ancestors and by so doing could not realize their own mistakes, (Umeanolue, 2014). Ezekiel is thus met with the task of correcting this impression and establishing to the people that God holds each individual responsible for their own sins and as well as met out the deserved retribution accordingly.

The same culture of blame shifting for woes suffered as consequences for sin and failure in human obligations that characterized Ezekiel's day in ancient Israelite society is not limited to the Israelites, it is also present in present-day Nigeria. Ikenna Umeanolue, 2014), with a careful observation and concern, expresses that, the idea of imposing blame on others for the problems of the present day Nigeria is a question of great concern as it was to Prophet Ezekiel during the exile, (Umeanolue, 2014). A critical observation has shown that

many people do not like to be associated with failures and blames. Hence, the constant commonplace attitude of blame shifting for failures associated with the Nigerian leaders and other office holders to their predecessors. Nigerian leaders and other critical office holders keep shifting blames for lack of performance to the past administrations. The devastating consequences of this are economic downturn and abject poverty and suffering as well as retarded growth and development.

Umeanolue (2014), supports saying that in the Nigerian society today, the economic condition is too poor that a common man can hardly afford three square meals per day. Our leaders today keep on talking about the past administration and leaders as being the mastermind of this poor economic situation. He continues that they (the leaders and other public office holders) lay the blames on Babangida and Obasanjo administrations as the brains behind all the corruption in Nigeria today, and according to him this allegation is false because after the administrations of Babangida and Obasanjo, Nigeria has witnessed different forms of corruption on the paths of our present day leaders. They siphon the money meant for public usages into their own personal accounts. Over the past recent years, some ex-governors have been accused by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) for allegedly diverting the government money into their own pockets.... Our political leaders see their offices as the way to dupe the people, (Umeanolue, 2014).

In the words of Okwueze, (1996), "the public servant and the traditional ruler diverts money meant for public uses for their own selfish interest, the business man sells water as injection, the pastors blindfold the worshipers in order to dupe them, the police man on the road collects bribe" This statement lucidly portrays the rate of moral deficit in the Nigerian society. Many people are out for themselves, and any given avenue is an opportunity to enrich themselves; hence, Umeanolue (2014), concludes that an average Nigerian especially those in political offices today is a potential criminal willing to do anything for an extra naira that makes differences between death and survival.

The culture of blame shifting and refusing

to own up to responsibility has also pushed many Nigerians into certain atrocities. For instance, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, the Punch Newspaper reported of a man from Bayelsa State, Nigeria, who killed his two sons over witch craft and cause of his illness and therefore lack of success and frustration in life. The Punch Newspaper reported thus:

*The Bayelsa State Police Command has arrested a 42 -year -old father, Sunday Otasi, for allegedly killing two of his sons with a poisonous substance, identified to be 'Sniper', over suspicion of witchcraft. The third son, however, narrowly escaped death and is in a critical condition after he escaped from the bush where his father and his younger brother had tied the three of them to trees.... He was said to have tied them to trees with the help of his younger brother, Levai Ayah, and forced them to drink the poisonous substance (Web, 2019).*

This was a man who saw his children as threats to success and pushed all the blames for his failures and predicament to them. As far as he was concerned, his children were obstacles to his success and the best way to deal with it was to eliminate them. He failed to own up his inadequacies and wake up to his responsibilities.

Another area of concern is the nonchalant attitude of some Nigerians towards their civics and social duties. This is grossly manifested in the way many fail to protect the environment and handle public properties. For instance, many are in the habit of dumping refuse and garbage on water ways and the gutters. This blocks the channels and results to serious flooding of the cities and towns, which destroys many properties and human lives as the case may be, when there are heavy downpours. These same people many times turn around and blame the government for their self-inflicted ordeals and heap the responsibility of shelter and food on the government for relief. This keeps a recycle of same activities over the years instead of engaging in other ones and moving forward.

This is because the ones that are already in

place are not being taken good care of and the government would therefore; have to continue to put same in place. On this note, Umeanolue, (2014), concurs that this retards the growth of a nation. Nation building consists in all activities which bring positive improvement in a society. Thus, individual responsibility is an indispensable part of the activities which bring development in a nation. The theme of 'individual responsibility' in Ezekiel is to be found in three passages of the book (Ezek. 14:12-23; 18:1-32 and 33:10-20). In Ezekiel's time, the Israelites tried to shy away from their individual responsibility when things went wrong. They believed that it was primarily because of the sins of their ancestors that they were suffering in exile. Ezekiel advocated individual responsibility to avoid fatalism.

Surely, the situations of the Israelites during the Prophet Ezekiel's time and contemporary Nigeria are interrelated. The Israelites kept on blaming their ancestors and forebears for their suffering forgetting their sins and irresponsibility; also in the Nigerian society today, we witness economic meltdown. The Nigerian leaders and many other people holding the public opinion still engage in bribery and other means of corruption for the good and wellbeing of Nigerian society. Some other citizens also engage in other forms of irresponsibility. For this reason, Ugwueye (1995), opines that So many Nigerians seem to enjoy as they recklessly blame the ills of the society on government, leaders, colonial masters or any other person which may suit the occasion. Of course, up to a point, the individual shortcoming and responsibility may credibly be blamed upon externalities. However, the line must be drawn and individual must be prepared to face the consequences of his or her action. What is needed is a rejuvenation of the spiritual standing of the entire citizenry to uphold godly virtues and a reorientation in one's character that will enhance a good relationship with God and our fellow men for the overall good of the society and humanity.

### **Amos' Theology of Prosperity**

Prophet Amos is widely associated with justice and called the Prophet of Justice. He spoke much on social justice and advocated fairness in dealings of members of the society, particularly

between the rich and the poor. Amos 'theology of prosperity goes beyond material wealth and centers more, on the need to prosper in morals, righteousness and justice as the ideal success. This however, does not suggest in anyway, that the prophet was against material wealth and acquisitions as he lived during a time Israel experienced peace and great economic upsurge and lived in affluence, yet, did not condemn the boom. His concern was mainly on the people's religiosity and how the wealth was acquired and distributed – the religious, social and economic injustice in the land, hence, his words:

*וַיְגַל כְּמַיִם, מְשֻׁפָּט; וַיַּזְדַּקְהָ, קְנֻחַל אֵיתָן  
But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like a mighty  
stream (5:24)*

The above verse begins with the conjunction "but" or "and" (Allen, 2007). Going by former "but" which is a contrast, it suggests something other than what has been thought, done or said. This means that in juxtaposition, Amos held a contrary opinion to what the people believed and thought to be success and prosperity, for their religiosity was void of righteousness and their dealings with the less privileged of treachery, wickedness and taking advantage of the poor to their gains. The prophet therefore, fittingly exerted "but" which suggests his words to the people to be "contrary to your idea of success and prosperity, let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

The other meaning of the conjunction וַיְגַל which is "and," means to "add to" (something which is already existing [emphasis mine]), according to Merriam Webster Dictionary. This suggests that, the prophet saw a flaw in the people's idea and sense of success and prosperity, he saw an incomplete sense of success, he saw a religiosity devoid of righteousness – what they boasted to be their best offer to Yahweh and therefore, perhaps, urged them to add to their non-holistic idea of prosperity and incomplete religiosity. This way, the reading would then be "and let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream". Either way suggests the prophet saw a lack and there sought to establish the ideal based on the will of Yahweh.

Wehmeier (2000), defines justice as the fair treatment of people. To Noel Woodbridge and

Willem Semmelink (2013), the Christian understanding of justice is based on divine justice, as depicted in Jeremiah 9:24: 'I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth' (Jer 9:24, ESV). Divine justice implies that rather than showing favouritism, God treats all persons fairly and impartially. It also entails compassion, especially for the less fortunate (Grenz and Smith, 2003).

Social justice focuses on the common good of the community, as manifested in areas such as the fair and equal distribution of goods and benefits, as well as respects for the rights of others (Grenz and Smith, 2013) this exactly, was what was lacking in the ancient society of Israel of Amos' day. There was no fair distribution of resources, neither was there respect for the rights of others, particularly the poor. Amos therefore, lunched a polemic against the ills, calling for – *mishpat* (justice) and - *tsedaqah*, (righteousness) and urging the people:

*יִגַּל כַּמַּיִם, מוֹשֶׁפֶּט; וַיִּצְדָּקָה, כְּנַחַל אֵי תָן*  
*But let justice roll down like waters,*  
*and righteousness like a mighty*  
*stream (5:24)*

Amos' finely put words: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream” are an indication of how ceaselessly God wants justice and righteousness to flow among His people, for these are God's own inherent characteristics. He Himself is the God of Justice and righteousness. His prophets were well aware of this. No wonder the prophet Zephaniah reiterated: Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness; seek humility (Zeph. 2:3, NKJV). The Psalmist added and confirmed saying: The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love (Psalms 33:5, NIV). Thus, the politicians and rulers, like the river never ceases to flow, must always let justice and righteousness flow and reign both in their social and economic affairs, they must lead in making laws that will uphold the virtues of justice, fairness and equity as well as moral uprightness. They must guide the people and champion the cause of virtue. This is what true and holistic prosperity is all about.

### Conclusion

It is without doubt that religion and politics are interwoven and therefore, interface together, and the role of religion in leadership and growth of the society cannot be overemphasized. If religion is well harnessed in politics, and the theory of inculturation hermeneutics is applied and taught by the religious groups to their adherents, in order to address the socio-political and socio-economic challenges, the society will witness a massive turnaround in morals, justice, equity and righteousness which will translate into economic growth and development for the overall good of the society. There will be equitable distribution of wealth, and there will be fair dealings among members of the society. This is good and true prosperity.

### Recommendations

Having seen the nature of politics in Nigeria and Africa in general, as well as from the theological perspective, and the need to redefine it for better.

1. The political class must stop seeing politics as a job or 'career' but rather as an opportunity to serve and make positive impacts on the society.
2. The wealth of the nation as Amos portrayed is meant for the benefit of all and sundry, thus, those elected into political offices in the country should focus more on fair distribution of this wealth and not for personal aggrandizement.
3. Those who manipulate elections through bribe and usher in leaders of dishonest character do so at God's wrath and impending judgement just as prophet Amos warned. They must therefore desist from selections of cronies as leaders, but allow the people to elect their preferred leaders.
4. Concerned just citizens in high positions of reckoning must arise to fight unjust corruption being perpetrated in government offices, so as to ensure prosperity for all.
5. Religious Bodies and teachers of Christian, Islamic as well as ATR Religious doctrines must place the orientation of honesty, integrity and good conduct as virtues that must be imbibed by their adherents so as to ensure a prosperity



secured future for all.

6. Last but not the least, political office holders must realize that people are better and more important than material things, as can be seen in the theology of Jesus Christ (Mark 2:3-5), where He did not condemn the people for breaking a rooftop in order to have a human being healed. The politicians likewise must prioritize the peoples' lives and comfort above material acquisitions for their selfish aggrandizement.

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