

A New Testament View on Church and State Relations in the Modern World: Challenges for the Contemporary Baptist Church in Nigeria

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Abstract

Church and state relationship was not oblivion in the New Testament. Jesus and Paul addressed it in the New Testament. Using the expository method, this paper aimed at doing an expository study of the New Testament view on Church and State relations in the modern world and how it poses a challenge to the contemporary Baptist church in Nigeria. From the biblical text explored in the New Testament, particularly Mark 12:17 and Romans 13:1-7, it showed that the church cannot be totally separated from the state in the sense that the church depends on the state for certain things she cannot provide for herself. It also showed that the state government was instituted by God. Being that the Baptist church is situated within a dynamic state and having similar polity, it presupposes that the church and state are interdependent, though separated in terms of self governance.

Keywords: Church, New Testament, State

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ recognized separation of spiritual and temporal powers when he told the Pharisees: Pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God (Mark 12:17, Lk. 20:20-26). This notwithstanding, the church and the temporal authority, epitomized in the state, collaborate in several areas as the church participates in some matters that are practically of the temporal order, a fact that seems to contradict her spiritual nature and challenge her neutrality in secular affairs (Udaigwe 2007, 73-94). Societies of the world are becoming more dynamic and complex by the day. This could be as a result of new results from research. For example, those who have mental ill-health were called lunatics but in the modern society, it is a criminal offense to arrogate such name to them. Presently, they are called mentally challenged people and as such, they deserve being treated as citizens and human beings. This and other types of developments in the society in which the Baptist church is situated in Nigeria are responding to corresponding changes especially government policies. In this type of development, can the Baptist church in Nigeria afford to remain primitive and un-responding to the changes around her in her milieu? This is a dilemma to the Baptist church that intends to stand on her heritage of total separation from the state while she is situated in the state. Can this total separation be visible in a changing and dynamic society like Nigeria? This is the puzzle that propelled this paper. The methodology explored in this paper is the expository approach. The expository approach according to Nordquist (2013) is a pedagogical term for any form of writing that conveys information and explains ideas as one of the four traditional modes of discourse. Nordquist explains further that the expository approach may include elements of narration, description, and argumentation, but unlike creative writing or persuasive writing, its primary goal is to deliver information about an issue, subject, method, or idea. It is within this understanding that this paper raises the question of how the contemporary Baptist church can be totally separated in a contemporary state like Nigeria.

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Conceptual Clarification

The Nigerian Baptist: The Baptist church in Nigeria is registered with the cooperate commission affairs of Nigeria with the name Nigerian Baptist Convention. Each Baptist church in Nigeria operates a congregational system of church polity yet members of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The word Baptist as it is used in this work refers to the Nigerian Baptist Convention or the local Baptist Church.

Church: The word church in the New Testament usage is *ekklesia* and it means the assembly of people summoned by a herald (Acts 19:32, 39, 40). Moreover, it means the congregation which the living God assembles about His Messiah Jesus (Robinson, 2004: 123-126). Thus, the church is the spiritual family of God, the Christian fellowship created by the Holy Spirit thorough the testimony to the mighty acts of God in Christ Jesus and as such, it is the sphere of the action of the risen and ascended Lord (O'Brien 1993, 123-131). The church in this context of this work could be used to mean baptized believers in Christ who profess their faith in Jesus Christ as a one who died for their sins, was buried and resurrected on the third day. The Baptist church in Nigeria is part of this church in both universal and local senses.

State: The Encarta Dictionary (2008) defines the term state in the following forms: mostly autonomous region of federal country, that is an area forming part of a federal country such as the United States or Australia with its own government and legislature and control over most of its own internal affairs; a country or nation with its own sovereign independent government and; a country's government and those government-controlled institutions that are responsible for its internal administration and its relationships with other countries.

The Composition of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

According to the constitution of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1994:50-51), the followings are the composition of the Nigerian Baptist:

The Local Baptist Church: The local Baptist church is a Baptist church located in a particular geographical area. She can bear any name of her choice provided there is Baptist attached to it and then the Nigerian Baptist Convention. For example, Faith Baptist Church of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Uyo, etc. The Local Baptist Church is autonomous in terms of authority and polite but cooperates with the Nigerian Baptist Convention based on mutual and documented terms of understanding. No single individual dictates to a local Baptist Church. The local Baptist church governs herself democratically (although, controversially called pneumatocracy). Decisions are taken by simple majority vote (O'Donovan, 1995:170). The local Baptist church has a Church Council (CC) which reports and recommends to the Church in Conference (CIC) which is the highest authority for all decisions making. The local Baptist church chooses her own pastor trained from the Baptist Seminary. The Local Baptist church pastor is the chairman of both the Church Council and Church-in-Conference. The local Baptist Church officers form the Church Council, while all the baptized members of the church form the Church in Conference (business meeting).

Association: This refers to at least six organized Baptist Churches in a particular geographical area for the purpose of fellowship and missions. It is the local church that forms the association. A moderator is usually elected by the churches at a given day place and time. The moderator presides over the meeting of the association when they gather but does not have authority over the pastors nor the churches. The appointment is tenured for three years or more depending on the policy of that association.

Conference: This is made up of a minimum of six associations, either within a state or two states or within a very big city. For example, Lagos Baptist Conference, Ogbomosho Baptist Conference. Every state can have a conference. If two or three states decide to merge and be a conference they can but associations that conforms to the constitution of the Nigerian Baptist Convention can form a conference within a state. The conference has a nominal chairman and the apex leadership is called conference president. While the ceremonial chairman presides over the executive meeting, the conference president runs the day-to-day administration of the Conference. Decisions are made during annual sessions, with representatives from all the associations under the Conference.

Convention: This is made up of all the churches cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention both in Nigeria and beyond. But churches are recognized under the conference they belong. The modern Nigerian Baptist convention has its apex leadership as Convention President.

The officer who presides over the executive committee meeting is called chairman. The convention president runs the day-to-day administration of the whole body and assisted by the rest. The role of all the officers are spelt out in the constitution of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Nigerian Baptist Convention meets once in a year in any chosen conference and decisions are made by representatives from all the conferences under the Nigerian Baptist Convention by way of majority votes.

Church and State Relations: A Historical Approach

In the 11th century, during the reign of Henry III as Holy Roman emperor, the split between East and West was formalized when the pope at Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other. Division had existed for centuries, but this was a formal break that still remains. It has had major political consequences throughout history. More recently, the East-West divide of the Cold War arguably had some of its roots in the church split of the 11th century. Additionally, the ethnic conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s goes back to ancient religious rivalries (Rhodes, 2013). Rhodes affirmed further, thus: A major struggle between Germany and Rome was started by the Lateran Council of 1059, which decreed that future popes would be elected by a college of cardinals, removing the influence of the emperor. This was to have a long-lasting effect and was a portent of conflict to come. The crowning of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III in A.D. 800 had led to a close alliance between church and state, which can be likened to a marriage. The church at Rome was considered the spiritual authority over men's lives, whereas the emperor was the head of the political organization to which men submitted. The church taught the people that they must obey the emperor, whereas the emperor enforced the authority of the church over the people in spiritual matters. It was the emperor's job to ensure religious conformity and the unity of the faith, with force when necessary. Between them, they controlled most of the peoples of Europe for centuries. Only with the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century was any progress made toward religious freedom. Pope Leo XIII, late in the 19th century, summed it up this way: "The Almighty has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, the other over human things." He also said: "Church and State are like soul and body and both must be united in order to live and function rightly." But harmony between the two was rare. Pope Gregory VII came to the throne in 1073 and declared that "the Pope is the master of Emperors!" His proof for this was that the popes were the ones who crowned the emperors, not the other way around. Emperor Henry IV (1056-1106) clashed with the pope on the issue of lay investitures. For centuries the secular leaders appointed bishops and abbots, investing them with spiritual authority. The pope wanted this to end, so that only he could make such appointments.

Generally, church and state according to Walter H. Stowe 1980:422) "is a term that refers to the relationships between churches and governments". These relations have been an issue at least since the time of Christ. In the early times according to Stowe, the ancient Greece and Rome, closely related bodies handled both religious and governmental affairs, so that controversy between them did not arise. The problem first became serious in the later days of the Roman Empire, after Christianity became the state religion about A. D. 380. the position of the Christian church then became an urgent question. Historians believe that Pope Gelasius I, who reigned from A. D. 492 to 496, first formulated a doctrine of equality and coordination between the Church and the civil government. The fusion of the state and Christian religion was made possible by Emperor Constantine who was a Christian convert. In A. D. 313, he made Christianity a recognized religion in the whole of the Roman Empire (Robert D. Linder, 1997: xiii). Many historians feel that the acceptance of Christianity during the fourth century as the official state religion seriously damaged spirituality as Christian leaders became confidants of emperors. Others interpret this period as the fall of the church from its apostolic purity as the beginning of a new era in which the issue of the right relationship between church and state had to be resolved (Linder 1977: xiv).

Stowe further explains that in the middle age there was a struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and Various European rulers. At the light of Papal Supremacy, Boniface VIII, Pope from 1294 to 1303, issued a bull (papal decree) called *Unam Sanctum*. This controversial bull declared that the pope should have a voice in civil, as well as religions affairs. This bull angered King Philip IV of France an forced the next Pope Clement V, to move the papal court to Avignon, France, in 1309. the later caused the great schism of the west. On the other hand, in the 1950's radical changes took place in the church-state situation. There were now several Christian Churches, not just one. The conflict over spiritual authority led to religions wars in many countries. Lutheranism made the prince of a country the head of the church, that is, the ruler of a country should determine the religion of his subjects, if the King and parliament shared ruling power, they would both decide. The disagreement in England in the 1600's resulted in civil war. In the 17000's many democratic nations maintained the separation of state and the church.

For example, the United State's constitution recognized the church as a private association subject to the law of the country but essentially free to teach what they wish.

The Contemporary Baptist Church in Nigeria and State Relations: Challenges

Revd. Jefferson Bowen brought the Baptist Mission to Nigeria in 1850 and in 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates; the Nigerian Baptist Convention was inaugurated. Hence, she is called the Nigerian Baptist Convention, meaning the Baptist Church that is self-governing in Nigeria. The Nigerian Baptist being an offshoot of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA operates the Universal heritage of the Baptist, viz: individual soul competency, separation of church from state, autonomy of the local Baptist Church, baptism by immersion, congregational polity, priesthood of believers and thorough study of the book (the Bible). In the case of democracy as form of church government in the Baptist denomination in Nigeria, we can say to some extent that she has some similar polity with that of Nigeria political polity. For example, in the modern Nigerian Baptist, the President elect in the Nigerian Baptist Convention is an executive president like that of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Although, the Bible has a nomenclature for church leaders such as bishop, pastor, elder, etc, the Baptist church still prefers use of president for the nomenclature of the apex leadership. This raises the question if the Baptist church in Nigeria can deterred from relating with the Nigerian state.

Baptists all over the world believe in the separation of church from state. The Nigerian Baptist Convention is not an exception to this believe and practice. The founding fathers of the Baptist where probably disdained by the abuse of the fusion of the church and state. One of such abuse is cohesion. This was so pronounced when the founding fathers of the Baptist (the separatists or Anabaptist) were severely persecuted by the Church of England and the state (Geoffrey Hanks, 1992: 139). Under the leadership of Robert Browne, the Congregationalists (or independents as they were later known) believed that each local congregation must be independent and founded upon a covenant which the believers make with God, and one another. They also felt that the church should be separated from the state because the Church of England then was too inclusive and comprehensive. Another reason they may have necessitated the move of separation of church from state could be the fact that whenever there is a disagreement between the church and the state over issues, the state persecutes the church and many a times war use to break out and the church suffers a lot. Another case could also be that the state was always trying to formulate policies for the church and lord it over the church (S. M. Houghton, 1980:144-148). The idea of separation of church from state is simply saying that the church nor the government should not govern each other. Each should govern herself as an entity. But this ideal constitute some challenges to the contemporary Baptist church in Nigeria in the sense that the contextual milieu in which the idea was conceived is different from that of Nigeria. The challenges include:

i. The Extent of Separation. Can the Church be totally separated from the state? First of all, the Nigerian Baptist recognizes the fact that the church is physically established in the state. The Baptist church recognizes the state government as God's own institution according to biblical injunctions and as such, the Baptist church in Nigeria must be law abiding and prayerfully support the government (Romans 13: 1-7). The Baptist in Nigeria also belief that the state and the church need each other but should not dictate to each other. While the church preaches against evil, the government punishes evil. While the church cannot physically convict and condemn an evil doer, the state does. In this understanding, Maurice Wiles (1966: 155) states: "state and church each had their particular responsibilities". While the church depends on the state to protect her against external aggressions; the state depends on the church for spiritual and moral supports. All these they do at their disposals none forces each other.

ii. Autonomous Organization of the Baptist Church. The Nigerian Baptist believes and practice autonomy of each local Baptist Church. It is believed by the Baptist that the New Testament Organization of the church is autonomous. The New Testament church did not operate ecclesiastical grades in the ministry of the churches by which there may be created an ascending series of rulers who shall govern the churches merged into one vast ecclesiastical organization called "the church". So, also we are in position to see that there is no warrant for an ascending series of courts which may review any case that originates in a local church. The Baptist see on the contrary, that each local church has been committed by Christ the management of its own affairs; and that she had endowed every church with ecclesiastical competency to perform every function that any ecclesiastical body has a right to perform (Forrester 1943,655). As the churches are not to be dominated by any external ecclesiastical authority, so they are not to be interfered with, in their church life by civil government or papacy.

But the Nigeria Baptist being a church in an African soil, has devised a means of settling crisis. The church must not take her matter to the court but how do they deal with those who are not members of the church? Also when there is a problem, the local Baptist church has the authority to solve her problems without the interference of external bodies, but if the Local church cannot solve it, she on her own refers it to the association of Baptist churches in that area and if the association could not handle it, it goes to the conference and if the conference cannot, it goes to the convention (otherwise known as the Nigerian Baptist Convention). Whatever the convention says at this level becomes final (the constitution and bye-laws of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1994:51-53). This is a challenge to the autonomy of the local Baptist Church in the sense that it is a contradiction of the autonomy of the Baptist church. Being that the Baptist church in Nigeria adopted the autonomy of the local Baptist church, it becomes difficult to unanimously accept the public representation and opinion of anyone speaking on behalf of the church in a state function unlike the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Nigeria which operate Episcopal system of church polity. On the other hand, the local Baptist church and even the Convention go to court for justice if she feels oppressed or if her right is been encroached by external forces. This also raises the question: can the church be totally separated from the state.

iii. The Priesthood of Believers. The Baptist believe that all those who have Jesus Christ as Lord and personal saviour are all priests. Therefore, no particular person is designated as priest among the local congregation. The pastor of any Nigerian Baptist church is regard as a nominal overseer not a priest like those churches that practice Episcopal church polity. By implication, the pastor of a local Baptist church does not have the final say in matters of decision making. He leads and guides the congregation in decision making. He can influence the decision making of the church to a very great extent. This is another challenge in the sense that the pastor cannot speak for the church or represent the church in state functions without permission from the church. This can hinder free and easy relationship between the church and state. This understanding could be responsible for the less recognition accorded the Baptist church in Nigeria today especially when it comes to speaking for the church and accepting religious function in the state schedules.

iv. similarities in polity. While the Nigerian state government operates democracy as her system of government, the Baptist church in Nigeria does the same but with the understanding that whatever decision that is taking is directed by the Holy Spirit hence modern Baptist call the this polity pneumatocracy (the government God through the Holy Spirit-through the people). While the Nigerian Baptist church claims total separation of the church from the state, she seems to operate a similar polity with the state in the following areas:

- a. While the Nigeria government uses federal system of government in which power is shared between the federal, state and local government respectively, the Nigerian Baptist constitutes her structure contiguously within the Nigerian system of government, that is, Convention (national level with a secretariat at Ibadan), Conference (state level or contiguous 12 associations church) and the Association or states and Association (6 contiguous local Baptist churches).
- b. While the Nigerian Baptist believes in the priesthood of believers, that is, all Christians are priests before God the state operates the equality of citizens before the 'rule of law' of the state. When a Christian sins he has the right to go to God through Jesus Christ directly. On the other hand, when one is accused of crime before the court of law he has the right for fare-hearing.
- c. While the Nigerian Baptist preaches against sin the state preaches against crime. The two preach morality. While the church does not condemn sinners the state condemn criminals if convicted by the court of law.
- d. While membership of the Nigerian Baptist is by baptism by immersion, the citizenship of the state is by birth and adoption.
- e. While the Nigerian Baptist operates religious independence, the state operates political independence.
- f. While the Nigerian Baptist members voluntarily pay tithes to the church, civil servants and business organizations pay tax to the state.
- g. While the Nigerian State uses the presidential system of polity, the Nigerian Baptist uses Parliamentary authority. This is a system whereby local Baptist churches, association, conference and the convention operate her meetings by way of representatives and parliamentary procedure called **ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER**. This is what the Nigerian Baptist operates in all their church councils, executive, conference and ministerial meetings. This Systems is operated in the Nigerian state and national houses of Assembly. This implies that the Baptist church has a relationship with the state even though their decision is not influenced by the of the state.

While the state must not dictate to the Baptist church in Nigeria, the Baptist church on the other hand must not disobey the laws of the state. Considering the above challenges enumerated above, how can the Baptist church in Nigeria claim total separation from the state when its polity is similar with that of the state and her some of her members are political office holders? This is challenge to the Baptist heritage of total separation of the church from the state. At this point, it is plausible to admit that the modern Baptist church Nigeria should be separated from the state but she cannot exist in the state without relating with the state.

Church and State Relations: A New Testament Perspective

In the Old Testament, there was fusion of political and religious polity. Although, in the religious and political aspect of Israel's society, there were separation of power and functions between the King, priest/prophet there was no separation between the monarchical system of government and the monotheistic religion of Israel. While the King was saddled with the responsibility of political governance, the priest/prophet was saddled with the responsibility of guiding the king with the instructions of Yaweh. It was the duty of the priest/prophet to speak the mind of God to the king and the people without any fear or favour. The king and the people of Israel were expected to follow the direction of the priest/prophet. In the New Testament the Jews understanding of the coming of Jesus Christ was that of a messiah who will deliver them from the domineering Roman power but to their greatest disappointment, Jesus made them to understand that His kingdom transcends the physical one not the earthly type of Davidic kingdom. He declared that the salvation He came to give Israel and the entire world is spiritual and total not merely a political one. There are some passages in the Bible that portray the relationship that exist therein between the state and the church. Some of these scriptural passages could be found in the New Testament. Here two different passages shall be considered from the New Testament.

i. Mark 12:17-And Jesus answering said unto them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. The Greek phrase *apodidomi Kaisar* gives the understanding that there is something to be given to Caesar. The Greek word ἀπόδοτε as used in the passage is middle verb imperative aorist active indicative second person plural and it means to deliver, to give away one's own profit, to sell, to pay off, discharge what is due, to requite, etc (Fuller 2002, 104-108; Vine 1996, 158-159). The person to be paid here was a government official called *Καίσαρι* (Caesar). *Καίσαρι* was the surname of Julius Caesar which was adopted by Octavius Augustus and his successors afterwards became a title and was appropriated by the Roman Emperors as part of their title (Maddox 2008). Here, while Caesar represents the state Jesus represents the church. The Bible does not articulate a full-blown doctrine of the separation of church and state. Yet, its seeds are clearly present. Jesus at least foreshadowed the concept when he said that taxes be paid to the Emperor. Jesus' behaviour here was consistent with his words. He never took a coin from Caesar or sought the help of Herod in his ministry and mission. In many places, the New Testament outlines the contours of the separate realms of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar. The church is given the tasks of spreading the gospel (Acts 1:8), teaching doctrine (Matthew 28:20), and discipling believers (Ephesians 4:11-13). The state is divinely ordained to resist evil (Romans 13:3) and keep order (1 Peter 2:13-15). Although these realms sometimes overlap and do not necessarily clash, the New Testament bears witness to a two-kingdom world; each with separate duties and each engendering different loyalties.

ii. Romans 13:1-7- This passage reads thus:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them-- taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due (NRSV). The concept of church and state obligations were juxtaposed by Paul in the above passage. Here, he postulates that the government of the state is instituted by God just as that of the church was instituted by God also. As such, Paul argues that Christians should render their civic obligation to the government of the state and failure to do so amounts to disobedience.

Here Paul made use of some themes to drive home his message. Such themes include: ὑποτάσσω-*hupotasso* (v.1), ὑπάρχω- *uperecho* (v.1), ἐξουσία-*exousia* (vv.1-3), διάκονός-*diakonos* (v.4) and φόρους-*phorous* (vv.6-7). The Greek word ὑποτάσσω-*hupotasso* means to subordinate, to arrange under, to submit, to obey, voluntary submission to authority (Strong 2002, 1539). In this context, Paul refers to the submission of all in the state. The preposition *pas* (everyone) as used by Paul insinuates that Christians are included among those who are expected to be ὑποτάσσω to the Government. Also, the Greek term ὑπάρχω-*uperecho*, means to have a hold over one, overtop, to rise above, to stand out. In function it means government or those who exercise leadership over people. Moreover, the Greek word ἐξουσία-*exousia* means power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, physical and mental power, the power of influence and of privilege, the power of rule or government (Strong 2002,1511). All of these understandings imply the power of him who every one must be subject to. The term διάκονός-*diakonos* means one who executes the command of another, a minister or servant (O'Donovan 1996, 172-173). On the other hand, the Greek word φόρους-*phorous* means tributes, especially the annual taxes levied upon houses, land and persons. Banks (1993, 131-137) says that investigation from exegetical, socio-historical and sociological works on Paul's perception on state and church relationship showed that Paul was a charismatic teacher who believe in church and state orderliness.

Implication of Church and State Relations for the Contemporary Baptist Church in Nigeria

- i. Mutual respect: while the church is separated from the state, they both respect each other's *modus operandi*. The state cannot dictate to church neither can the church dictate to the state. Mutual respect here also implies that both can collaborate in certain areas to make a better society. For example in Nigeria today, there is the state is calling on the church to help in the fight against corruption. No matter how perfect or strong the constitution of the state might be, it cannot totally stop some disgruntled elements among some people in the society. This usually leads to some instabilities in the society. This is another area where the church really needs to speak against injustice and balance it up with the message of righteousness both to those in government and citizens in general.
- ii. Preaching and addressing the evil in the state: The church must not keep quiet about the evil in government especially that of injustice and oppression of the poor and politically and economically disadvantaged people. Using the word of God, the church must tell the state concerning the mind of God about any issue or action that portray evil. Although, the church cannot force the state to accept her preaching, at least the church must not sit on the fence.
- iii. Separation in Functions but Similar in Objectives: even though the Church is separated from the state in polity and functions the objective is a common good of people. While the Church preaches holiness and righteousness from the Holy Bible, the state uses the instrumentality of the constitution of the state to deter citizens from being deviates in the society. The aim is to make sure the society is sane and save for the people.
- iv. Representing God in the affaires of humans: While the church represents the voice of God for the society, the government represents the interest of the people in a democratic setting. The Church lives and acts within the cultural situation of time and place. This does not mean that the Church changes as it adapts to overall cultural change in the society. The Church lives "inculturated" and inculturation is a positive thing. The farther the Church goes in adapting to the culture of the times, the greater the danger is that it will no longer be able to confront the culture of the time. It will only be able to speak the language of the culture of the day and not the radical newness of the message of the Gospel which transcends all cultures. Where this happens, then the life of the Church becomes a sort of civil religion, politically correct, but without the cutting edge of the Gospel. The Church does not have all the answers to the questions of the day because to claim that would be fundamentalism. On the other hand, the Church cannot simply adopt politically correct positions: to claim that would be conformism (Martin,2011). The Church must always have the internal freedom to take positions that are culturally unpopular. The message and the measure of the Gospel should challenge every form of conformism. It is important to remember that conformism can be an expression of narrow conservatism but that there is also conformism which thinks that it is truly progressive. We can become entrapped in positions on many sides of the overall cultural spectrum. The Gospel however should always foster free and fresh thinking (Ibid).
- v. Theocracy in democracy? A theocracy is a government which derives its power immediately from God. The government of Israel was a true theocracy. That was really a government of God. At the burning bush, God commissioned Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. By signs and wonders and mighty miracles multiplied, God delivered Israel from Egypt and led them through the wilderness and finally into the promised land.

There he ruled them by judges "until Samuel the prophet," to whom, when he was a child, God spoke, and by whom He made known His will. In the days of Samuel, the people asked that they might have a king. This was allowed, and God chose Saul, and Samuel anointed him king of Israel. Saul failed to do the will of God; and as he rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord rejected him from being king and sent Samuel to anoint David king of Israel; and David's throne God established forevermore. When Solomon succeeded to the kingdom in the place of David his father, the record is: "then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father" as recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:23 (<http://www.americanprophecy.com/separation-of-church-and-state.asp>). In the New Testament Paul also alluded to the concept of theocracy in democracy when he says that the government of people or humans are from God (Romans 13:1-7). This implies that God rules the affairs of men through men. These men may be elected by the people for the people yet it comes from God. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, we were told that God used a pagan king called Cyrus to help His people Israel. By this understanding, members of the church cannot contest election for elective position. They can be allowed by the church to work in state organizations or offices as government officials. It is at this we can say: the Baptist church cannot be totally separated from the Nigerian state.

Conclusion

The possibility of total separation of church and state poses a serious dilemma to the contemporary Baptist church in Nigeria in the sense that the church depends on the state to protect her right and privileges as a body registered and recognized within the Nigerian state. Moreover, some of the members of the church are public office holders and the church depends on the state for the provision of certain amenities which the church cannot provide for herself. This work has argued that the Baptist church in Nigeria cannot be totally separated from the state within which she is situated both the church and the state are interdependent. Although the church is spiritual in nature, it is situated within human cultures and structures. The biblical passage explored showed that, the Church should maintain good relationship with the State.

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Appendix

Some Quotes by America's Great Leaders on the Relationship between Church and State

George Washington (First President of the United States of America): "Every man, conducting himself as a good citizen, and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience." May 1789

Thomas Jefferson (Third President of the United States of America): "Almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His almighty power to do." Acts for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia, 1785 "I consider the government of the United States as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, disciplines or exercises." Words of Thomas Jefferson, Vol 5, pg 236

Abraham Lincoln (Sixteenth President of the United States of America): "Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. Familiarize yourself with the chains of bondage, and you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you." Speech at Edwardsville, IL, 1858

Ulysses S. Grant (Eighteenth President of the United States of America): "Declare church and state forever separate and distinct; but each free within their proper spheres." Seventh annual message, Congress December 7, 1875. "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school supported entirely by private contribution. Keep church and state forever separate." Des Moines, IA 1875.

James A. Garfield (Twentieth President of the United States of America): "Next in importance to freedom and justice is popular education, without which neither justice nor freedom can be permanently maintained. Its interests are intrusted to the States and the voluntary action of the people. Whatever help the nation can justly afford should be generously given to aid the States in supporting common schools; but it would be unjust to our people and dangerous to our institutions to apply any portion of the revenues of the nation or of the States to the support of sectarian schools. The separation of Church and State in everything relating to taxation should be absolute." Letter of Acceptance of Nomination for the Presidency July 12, 1880

Theodore Roosevelt (Twenty-sixth President of the United States of America): "I hold that in this country there must be complete severance of Church and State; that public moneys shall not be used for the purpose of advancing any particular creed; and therefore that the public schools shall be non-sectarian and no public moneys appropriated for sectarian schools." New York, October 12, 1915

Benjamin Franklin (Statesman, Inventor, Author): "When religion is good, it will take care of itself. When it is not able to take care of itself, and God does not see fit to take care of it, so that it has to appeal to the civil power for support, it is evidence to my mind that its cause is a bad one."