



Prophecies and the Implications for the Future of Nigerian Democracy

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ABSTRACT

The transition to civilian government from 1999 to date has witnessed six presidential elections. Each election has been accompanied by various prophets making predictions and foretelling the outcome of the elections. In spite of the consistency of periodic elections in Nigeria, the experience has been a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly; especially, spiritualizing politics and politicizing spirituality. Regrettably, the political climate not only become tensed up with this development, but in reality create a public perception of blur lines between objectivity and neutrality, a situation where consideration of the wisdom, ideological soundness, manifestoes, foresight and personality of the political contestants become totally irrelevant and rendered so by divine intervention and choice from above. By and large, the threat of this phenomenon to democratic consolidation is heart-wrenching as candidates and their supporters are swayed or forced to affirm these prophetic declarations with dire consequences. Thus, the study adopted Webber's functionalist theory, focusing on the social and psychological functions that religion has for a heterogeneous country like Nigeria. Descriptive research method was adopted, using formative evaluation. However, the study concluded that unguided prophecies has the potency to jeopardize Nigeria's democratic consolidation.

Introduction

In many parts of the globe, religion not only provides people with social solidarity and firm sensation of belonging (Phau & Kea, 2007); it also legitimizes the forms of social order, many a times through shared identities (Light, etal, 1989). Nigeria's religious identities and practices are a crucial lens for understanding its social relations and other national phenomena. By and large, religious beliefs, identities and practices are sensitive markers that influence everyday behaviours and interactions of many Nigerians. The manifestation of this is conspicuously visible and can be seen in many social events and official meetings. A firm belief in a divine being who determines fortunes and outcomes as well as apportioning rewards and punishments (Akinpelu, 2020). By extension, religious teachings, particularly associated with various Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, is stringent on material prosperity, which is believed to be a direct consequence of their faith in God (Obadare, 2018). Therefore, success in politics, career, life generally and material wealth are typically viewed as divine rewards. But then, the exponential growth of Pentecostal movements in Nigeria over the decades has deepened religious beliefs (Eriksen etal, 2019) and has ever since been a dominant factor in Nigerian politics.

In whichever way one sees religion in Nigeria, the fact cannot be denied of its inseparability from politics. This is why Nigeria is one of the most active religious countries with catalogues of prophets who without restraint give God's revelation on social issues, and often predict what they see may likely happen to the future of any Nation. This is why the obvious interplay between religion and politics in Nigeria continue to generate reactions (Kukah, 1993, 1995; Kasfelt, 1994; Enwerem, 1995; Kukah & Falola, 1996; Falola, 1998; Loimeier, 2007; Nmah, 2007; Imo, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Adebaniwi, 2010;

Sodiq, 2009; Onapajo, 2012; Obiefuna, 2018). Contemporarily, it is crucial to note that there is a firm believe that politics and prophecy are Siamese twins, a belief deeply entrenched in a supreme being, especially when such prophesy is tied to the aspiration of the beneficiaries.

However, many of the prophecies have misled people because of the emerging population of the prophets of this nature. On the one hand, the contention here is the question of who the unsuspecting public should then listen to. When available fact revealed that the historical line of politics in Nigeria is incomplete without recourse to prophecy, which represents the imaginary template for victory. For instance, according to Gbadebo (2022), prior to the 2015 general election, several clerics prophesized the emergence of President Muhamadu Buhari, one of them was the famous Rev.Fr. Ejike Mbaka. On the other hand, who can prophesy? A close study of the Bible shows that every act of God is first made known to man through revelations and prophecies, hence the realm of the prophetic is of great value for man to know the mind of God. The book of 2Peter 1:20-21 forewarned us that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” because “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (NKJV). Therefore, a prophecy is not meant only for prediction or correction, but as Paul has equally stated prophecy is also for “edification, and exhortation and comfort” (1Cor. 14:3). By extension, a prophet’s prophetic word must, therefore, bless, edify, confirm, plant and build. But then, what is a prophecy?

According to Strong (1986) “prophecy is the designation for the revelation of God’s words or plans (either for the present or the future) to others.” Strong went further to say that the term can be used, “with reference to prophetic activity (Rev. 11:6), to the gift of prophecy or prophesying (Rom. 12:6, 1Cor. 12:10), or to the utterances of prophets (that is, the prophecies themselves) whether they be Jewish (Matt. 13:14) or Christian (Rev, 1:3, 22:7, 10, 18, 19). According to Vine et al (1984, p. 893), prophecy means “speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God.” Although in the OT, prophecy was purely predictive, it is not necessarily nor even primarily foretelling. Rather, it is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means.

However, this brings to fore, who then is qualify to prophesy or what qualifies a man to prophesy? Simple, as long as the person has the Spirit of God in him because according to Rev. 19:10, we are told that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” This implies that a person does not need to be a prophet before he can prophesy; non prophet can also prophesy as long as he has the testimony of Jesus in him. In furtherance of this, Vine et al (1984, p. 894) succinctly explained that, a prophet is “one who speaks forth or openly, a proclaimer of a divine message.” Derived from the Greek word */prophetes/*, it initially meant an interpreter of the oracles of the gods. In the Septuagint, the word */roeh/* which is translated as ‘seer’ (1Sam. 9:9) meaning “the prophet who had immediate intercourse with God,” and */nabi* or *nabhi/* which translates as “one in whom the message from God springs forth or to whom anything is secretly communicated,” are translated as prophet.

Thus, a prophet in this instance then connotes “one upon whom the Spirit of God rests (Num. 11:17-29), or one to whom and through whom God speaks (Num. 12:2, Amos 3:7-8). A cursory look at the prophets and the prophetic in both OT and NT shows certain notable differences. For instance, in OT, the prophetic messages were largely limited to the proclamation of the Divine purpose of salvation and glory to be accomplished in the future whereas in the NT, the prophets were notable for both preaching of the Divine counsels of grace already accomplished and the fore-telling of the purposes of God in the future. It is important to note that the Bible is not unaware of the existence of those to whom the Greek word */pseudoprophetes/* refers to - a false prophet. Worthy of mentioning, references to their existence is as much in the OT (Luke 6:26, 2Peter 2:1) as it is in this present age since Pentecost (Matt. 7:15, 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Acts 13:6 and 1John 4:1) and particularly as supporters of the ‘beast’ at the close of this age (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

As it relates to the narrative of this paper, it is instructive to note that presidential election periods in Nigeria has become characterized with various prophetic declarations and utterances, mostly often verging on the absurd. It seems that certain prophets and spiritualists have taken it as their primary vocation to make pronouncement as to who will win or lose election. This phenomenon merely signifies the increasingly role religion now plays in the country leading to spiritualizing politics and politicizing spirituality. It is also a non-coincidence that most of these prophets have a large followership and

membership who could be swayed by their prophecies to vote for the one thus, indirectly nominated by their spiritual leaders.

Thus, the spiritualization of politics and the politicisation of spirituality have now turned the attention of the electorates from the conventional process associated with acquiring state power and electing political leaders to the ability of the prophets, with the electorates rather focusing on the prophet's or religious leader's ability to preach, teach, dogmatize, and lead congregations. Nigeria, a heterogeneous plural society, turbo-charged by several fault lines among which is violent struggle for state power, this phenomenon may portend serious implications for the democratic process. As acclaimed prophets, lined up behind different political contenders from same or different political parties. Regrettably, the political climate not only become tensed up, but in reality create a public perception of blur lines between objectivity and neutrality. More importantly, is the threat of this phenomenon to democratic consolidation, whereby, candidates and their supporters may be forced to affirm these prophetic declarations with dire consequences regardless of the actual outcomes of the elections.

However, the study adopts Webber's functionalist theory, with focus on the social and psychological functions that religion has for a group or a person especially in Nigeria. In simple terms, this theory sees religion as "performing certain functions for society. Although, this approach for many reasons tend to be static, but has some underpinnings of pivotal interaction and dynamic processes between religion and the rest of other relevant social and political engagements (Weber,1904). The research adopted descriptive research method, using formative evaluation. Formative evaluation improves what is being evaluated; by critically observing its delivery, the nature of its implementation, and the assessment of its organizational context, procedures, inputs, and so on. As noted by William (2006), evaluation is the systematic assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some policies, sectors, activity, and so on. All evaluation work involves collection and proper verification of data, making judgments on the validity of the information and of inferences we derive from it, whether or not an assessment is of worth or merit results. However, in doing justice to the trajectory of this paper, the study is divided into four sections, the first entails the introduction, theory and methodology, followed by operationalizing the concepts of democracy and democratization; the third is made up of the clash of prophecies both true and failed on 2019 presidential elections and its implication on Nigerian democratic sustenance, and closely followed by the conclusion.

What is Democracy and Democratisation?

Perhaps more than any other thing, the concept of democracy means more than just another political format, a method of conducting government, of making laws and administering a state by means of popular suffrage and elected officials. Rather, it includes within it the best means for realising human relationships and the development of human personality. The importance of democracy over other forms of government is the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living populace. Thus, universal suffrage, recurring elections, responsibility of those who are in political power to the voters and other factors normally associated with democratic government are means that have been found expedient and necessary for realising democracy as the truly human way of living.

As Saliu and Agara (2018) have pointed out, no matter the failings of democracy as a political format, the idea and principle on which it rests are still accepted as better than all other political formats. The foundation of democracy rests in faith in the capacities of human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative co-existence. The underlying idea and principle is that no man or set of men is wise enough or good enough to rule others without their consents. Implicit in this idea is that everyone is affected by the social institutions of the state and therefore must have a share in producing and managing them. Democracy also rests on the doctrine of equality, not equality of natural endowments but equality as a legal and political doctrine. It is under this belief that democracy guarantee equality of treatment under the law and in its administration. Every individual within a state is therefore expected to be affected equally in quality even if not in quantity by the institutions of the state and should have equal right to express his judgment. Given the possibility of natural and psychological inequality and the potency of this to become means of oppression of the less gifted, democracy sets the law of equality

of opportunity which allows for every individual to contribute and it is the value of each contribution that is assessed in the final pooled intelligence constituted by the contributions of all. The appeal of democratic government and the democratic faith is that every individual has the chance and opportunity to contribute depending on his capabilities and the value of his contribution is decided by its place and function in the organised total of similar contributions and not on the basis of prior status of any kind whatsoever.

In spite of the attractiveness of democracy, there is not universal consensus on how to best define it. However, in order not to join in the polemics it may be necessary to distinguish between two types of conceptualisations of democracy – the minimal and the more elaborate definitions. The minimal definition alludes to the fact that all modern and complex democracies are ruled by the elites (Verba et al, 1971, and Barnes et al, 1979). The implication of this is that government by the people is anachronistic, that the making of effective policy decisions is actually confined to a narrow segment of the population and that only a small fraction of the total population of modern political system possesses the requisite skills, knowledge, basic information and interest required for effective participation in political process and decision making. Also, Lijphart (1984, p. 1) has also agreed that a nation is democratic to the extent that it acts “in accord with the people’s preferences”. Combining these two minimal definitions, democracy can then be conceptualised in terms of elite responsiveness to the needs and demands of the people.

On the other hand, Schumpeter’s (1950, p. 269) definition is a more elaborate one; that democracy is the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. In explaining further, Schumpeter sets out four explicit conditions for the success of democracy in any country. These are (1) that the human material of politics (that is, the elite) should be of sufficiently high quality, (2) the effective range of political decision should not be extended too far, (3) government should be able to command the services of a well-trained bureaucracy of good standing and tradition, and (4) there should be democratic self-control (that is, the competing elite should tolerate each other’s rule and should resist the offerings of crook and cranks while the electorate, having made its choice, should refrain from interfering incessantly in the political actions of its representatives).

Following the Schumpeterian tradition, therefore, Diamond et al (1988, p. xvi, and 1995, pp. 1-57) have argued that for a political system to be truly democratic, it must exhibit certain features which include (1) periodic competition among individuals and organised groups, (that is, political parties) for effective government positions, (2) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the process of leadership selection through an electoral process that does not exclude any social group, and (3) a level of civil and political liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations, sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.

Agara and Okokhere (2011) have, therefore, identified certain salutary effects which democracy of the Western Liberal type has. First is that it increases the probability that government will follow or be guided by the general interest. This is because, “how governments act is affected by the constitutional systems through which they emerge...and democracies will ensure that governments pursue policies in the general interest or for the common good” (Lively, 1975, p. 111). Thus, the dictates of democratic system therefore requires that government should submit itself to periodic assessment and renewal of mandate. Within the framework of alternative choices, this implies that the government in power and which wishes to retain power must be responsive to the wish of the governed. Second, the liberal democratic form of government also imposes some restraint on the state. The state’s right is limited by certain constitutional provisions that assure the rights of individuals and groups in the society. Thus, in this regard, the “temptation of the political leadership to wield absolute power is restricted by the competitive nature of democracy” (Perry, 1969, p. 145). This probably provides us with one of the reasons that endeared liberal democracy to the bourgeoisie, and this is that it protects them from arbitrary state interference in their pursuit of and acquisition of wealth. Third is that competitive democratic system compels attention not just to the form of government but also to the substance of politics in as much as political parties compete on the basis of what they have to offer to the electorates.

A fourth one is that, democracy provides the citizenry with more opportunities to get involve in political decisions. The literature on mass society and political participation suggest that citizens' participation in decision can be either as individuals or members of groups. It is only in this sense that representative democracy encourages "a belief by the masses that they exercise an ultimate self-determination within the existing social order...a credence in the democratic equality of all citizens in the government of the nation" (Anderson, 1977, p. 30). Finally, the primary concern of democracy with the formal political equality of all citizens, majority of whom are economically disadvantaged, provides for the economically advantaged and powerful groups to dominate and often times hijack the system thereby undermining the notion of political equality. Perhaps more than any other reason, this particular advantage made democracy quite attractive to the bourgeois. As Nairn, (1977, p. 13) has rightly observed; "the representative mechanism converted real class inequality into the abstract egalitarianism of citizens, individual egoisms into an impersonal collective will, what would otherwise be chaos into a new state legitimacy". However, the institutionalization of mass participation in politics has thrown up what Przeworski (1986) has called the "institutionalization of uncertainty".

If we then accept with Osaghae (1999) that democracy is a process of continuous struggle and engagement to make the state (ever) more responsive and accountable to the citizenry which, in fact, makes the institutional requisites and processes more purposive and meaningful, then it follows that (1) democracy cannot be divorced from democratisation and (2) democratisation of the state is at the core of democracy. Viewed from this perspective therefore, democratisation becomes the process of establishing and consolidating a democratic government where it did not previously exist, or deepening democracy where it already exists. Thus, democratisation is a process of continuous renewal of democracy. For the purpose of space, we shall limit our discussion to the post-independence attempts at democratisation. It is interesting to note that post-independence attempts at democratisation and constitution making had taken place under the military regimes. It was not until 1999 till date (2010) that Nigeria had ever experience a civilian transition to another civilian government.

Clash of Prophecies or Had God not Spoken?

To date the country has had six presidential elections, since the emergence of democracy in Nigeria (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019) and each election has been accompanied by various prophets making predictions about and foretelling the outcome of the elections. In spite of the consistency of elections in Nigeria thus far, the experience has been a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly; the ugly been the emerging tendency of spiritualizing politics and politicizing spirituality. As Ayantayo (2009) has noted, the spiritualization of the presidential election linked election outcome to spiritually determined result, thereby forging a link between political events which cannot be isolated from the socio-cultural setting and the supernatural realm. This, therefore, creates an impression that success at the polls is not limited to nor is it tied to the wish or actions of the electorates but rather divinely predetermined at the supernatural realm to which only the prophets have access; thus, a recourse to the period of divine kingship. An atmosphere is thus generated where consideration of the wisdom, ideological soundness, manifestoes, foresight and personality of the political contestants are irrelevant and rendered so by divine intervention and choice from above.

This has become a basic characterization of the political climate in Nigeria, a situation where politicians now prefer to seek for divine nomination and rely more on the power of prayer and prophetic utterances to win elections. This has truncated the entire political process as known and practiced in the civilized world thereby nullifying established and accepted democratic process that culminates in the election and selection of political leaders. The result is that reliance on the democratic process has been eroded and not given the level of seriousness and adherence necessary by both the politicians and the electorates. So, regardless of the level of sophistication that characterize an election, and/or the level of persuasion of the manifesto of the political party or its candidate, a contrary enabling environments is created where everything sacrosanct to the democratic process is of no value since the outcome has been settled in the spiritual realm. A wrong impression is thus generated that electoral issues are better settled spiritually through prayers, manipulation of angelic beings and the use of magic and occult, than relying on the outcome of elections. Contrary to accepted norms of democratic process, a number of

politicians now exhibit more reliance on the power of prayer or magic to win election than on good performance while in office (Channels Television, 2015 & Sahara Reporter, 2015).

The spate and practice of prophesying the winners of elections has highlighted the salience of religion as inclusive of the basis, a source and reason for mass mobilization to either gain or retain state power (Ezeibe and Ikeanyibe, 2017). The salience of religion becomes so pronounced that it captivates the political class and its hold and influence becomes all-embracing that as Toyin Falola, had opined, “no one can aspire to or hold political office in Nigeria without pretending to be religious” (Tar and Shettima, 2010, p.11). The situation in Nigeria today is such that religious influence in the polity is well entrenched through the instrumentality of spiritual tools such as: prophecy, prayers, fasting, magical incantations etc. (Edewor 2008). Ojeifor (2016) has actually isolated the primacy of prayers and fasting as important to winning elections; overtaken only by prophecy. Prophetic declarations have thus become so frequently used and perhaps abused in Nigerian Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements that virtually every pastors are now self-acclaimed prophets and quite a number of presidents in Africa have emerged through this in the 2000s (Yong, 2014, para.4).

In particular, the build-up to the 2019 presidential election witnessed many prophetic statements and utterances even when the Independent National Electoral commission (INEC) was yet to release the timetable for the election. Quite a number of the pastors and prophets had predicted the eventual winner and loser of the yet to be conducted presidential election. Of over seventy-three political parties that fielded candidates for the election, the bulk of the prophecies were focused on President Muhammad Buhari (APC) and his opponent, Atiku Abubakar (PDP). Many of the prophecies were as scandalous as to cause an uproar and ignite ethnic conflicts. For instance in 2017, an Igbo, Prophet Emmanuel Chukwudi of King of Kings Deliverance Church announced the demise of the President even before the date of election. His declaration were so worded as to show the true intent of his declaration; to make him infallible, patronized and seek popularity and attention.

Long time ago, I asked all to pray for their master, that he needed urgent prayers to avert the calamity of death at Aso Rock, but they were lazy.

No one has bothered to reach me, now see what is happening. They don't want come for prayers. Things will get worse. I said he will be president, today he has become president, I said he will die, see what is happening (Ogbeche, 2017) (Emphasis Mine).

Various prophets used the president's failing health as the basis of their prophecies, thereby expanding an already explosive and contentious issue; particularly when he went for medical treatment in London for 104 days and the political leaders were loudly silence amidst various speculations about his health. Thus, rather give Nigerians hope, the various prophecies concerning it further threw the entire country into jeopardy and the contestants to the throne into a frenzy that added to the already palpable tension for democracy and its consolidation. The prophecy that the president may not recover from his sickness and would result eventual into his death put a great strain on the budding democracy and the resultant struggle for succession was likely to split whatever agreement may had been reached among the various contenders for the throne. In a rather pessimistic tone, Prophet Chuckwudi further stated that the vacuum thus created would lead to a scramble for power between the Vice-President and the military over who will succeed the president. This prophecy which was triggered by the failing health of the president and the aftermath led to people wondering whether the prophet actually heard from God or was manipulating the situation and preying on the fear of the people. Whatever, the reason, it succeeded in heating up the political environment and the many conjectures that followed. In rather quick succession, others were quick to take advantage of the situation and the predicament which the country was thrown into to make more predictions as the Table below shows.

Samples of Failed Prophecies				Samples of True Prophecies		
S/N	Name	Prophecy	Source	Name	Prophecy	Source
1.	Apostle Johnson Suleiman	Tell Nigerians who wish to see democracy sustained, to pray for our leaders and work for peace, tell the leaders to pray and be honest with the people they are serving, otherwise, elections may not hold in Nigeria in 2019. That is what God has shown me.	The Vanguard, 2018. '2018: Prophet Omale gives 'Prophecy' on Buhari, Atiku, PDP, Others', https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/2018-prophet-omale-gives-prophecy-buhari-atiku-pdp-otherthe	Primate Elijah Ayodele	PDP will find it difficult to wrestle power from President Buhari come February 2019 election because they refused to do the right thing from the beginning. Unless they put heads together and do the right thing, APC will still come back.	Rasaq Adebayo 2018. ' Primate Ayodele makes fresh Predictions on winners of 2019 elections'. https://dailypost.ng/2018/12/23/primate-ayodele-makes-fresh-predictions-winners-2019-elections/
2.	Prophet Onyekachukwu Okoli	I, Prophet Onyekachukwu Okoli, prophesied that a Yoruba man will emerge as the president of Nigeria in 2019.	Jannah, 2017. '2019 Election will not Hold"- Apostle Suleiman says in Fresh Prophecies', http://dailypost.ng/2017/09/20/2019-election-will-not-hold-apostle-suleiman-says-fresh-prophecies/	Prophet TB Joshua	The election will be closely contested between the two leading political parties but I see Muhammadu Buhari winning	Fikayo Olowolagba 2019 'Buhari vs Atiku: How TB Joshua, Mbaka, Iginla, other's Prophecies on 2019 Presidential election came to pass', https://dailypost.ng/2019/02/27/buhari-vs-atiku-tb-joshua-mbaka-iginla-others-prophecies-2019-presidential-election-came-pass/3
3	Prophet Emmanuel Omale	I see a lot of challenges with the candidacy of president Mahamadu Buhari, as his acceptance requires a lot prayers...God says another Northern a current Governor and serving Minister amongst his close confidants will have a better acceptance.	Akubuiro, 2017. 'Yorub'll Emerge President in 2019- Prophet', http://sunnewsonline.com/yoruba-all-emerge-president-in-2019-prophet/	Pastor Chris Omatsola	President Muhammadu Buhari is God's mandate for 2019. God said he is giving President Buhari another opportunity to make History. Here is his opportunity to leave a legacy as he has always desired in his heart that Nigerian will never forget him	Ibid
4.	Prophet Wale Olagunju	APC should forget about winning 2019 election for another government will emerge that will probe their government. God says 2019 election will be tougher than the 2015. God says should Atiku Abubakar contest the 2019 election, he will defeat	Ogbeche, 2017. '2017 Prophecy: Atiku will defeat Buhari in 2019; Nigeria will Split into 5- Prophet Olagunju'. http://dailypost.ng/2017/01/02/2017-prophecy-atiku-will-defeat-buhari-2019-nigeria-will-split-5-	Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka	Among all the Presidential aspirants, Buhari stands in the best position in winning the presidential election...In all this, we urge Nigerians to vote President Buhari in order to complete his eight years tenure and after which he will hand over to younger candidate	Ifreke Inyang (2019)'Atiku vs Buhari: Fr. Mbaka finally reveals presidential candidate he will support', https://dailypost.ng/2019/01/02/atiku-vs-buhari-fr-mbaka-finally-reveals-presidential-

		Buhari hands down.	prophet-olagunju/			candidate-will-support/
5.	Pastor Samuel Akinbodunse	Please Nigerians warn Buhari that he is going beyond his boundary. That the Lord said his tenure is once and not twice. If not, he will not see the election o...if he made (makes) a mistake to campaign for elections, before they vote, he will die.	Adeniyi & Omogbolagun, 2019. 'Failed Prophecies on Buhari, Atiku Presidential Poll Contest', https://www.punchng.com/failed-prophecies-on-buhari-atiku-presidential-poll-contest/			
6.	Pastor Simeon Akorede	God revealed to me that the incumbent president Muhammadu Buhari is not given the grace to govern Nigeria for a second term	(ibid)			
7.	Prophet John Ogundele	You may be calculating in your mind that if Buhari doesn't become the president, then it will be Atiku because Obasanjo supports him. Let me tell you as a prophet of God that among Obasanjo, Atiku and Buhari and those who you think are influential (in the country), God said He had withdrawn power from them. None of them will get on to the seat of power.	(ibid)			

Source: Adapted from Ikem and Edafe (2019)

The table above presents a mere diagnostic samples of the prophecies for and against the two major contenders and the result of the elections. The right hand columns of the table reflects some of the prophecies that eventual came true because the prophets claimed to have seen it as revealed to them by God. On the other hand, the left hand columns of the table reflects prophets whose prophecies came out as false, prophets who predicted that President Buhari was going to lose the election. While it may be clear that the result belied these prophecies, it also raised doubts about the veracity of the result released by INEC. For the believers in those prophecies, the prophecies must have 'failed' not because God did not say so or the prophets did not hear from God, but because the elections were rigged in favour of the incumbent. This raised the question; Is it possible for man to manipulate what God had enjoined, what God had decided? **The Bible says God is not man thatnor the son of man that He would.....Has He not said and bring it to pass.....** If we go by the infallibility of God's word (**forever, O Lord, thy word is settled on earth and in heaven**) that His decision will always come to pass irrespective of what man may do, then it behooves on us to conclude either that God had not spoken to these prophets, that it is a case of a lying spirit or the flesh speaking, not God. Could it

rather be the spirit of manipulation at work? The spirit of manipulation is the same as the spirit of witchcraft.

The implication of these prophecies is the drawback on the democratic progress and its consolidation. The numerous prophecies in favour of Atiku may have embolden him and his supporters to deny the result of the election thereby raising contentions as to its fairness which was contested in court. A further implication is the suspicion thrown at INEC, that the electoral body may not have been fair and neutral in the conduct of elections. Thus, in situation where the neutrality and trust in the body saddled with the conduct of election is in doubt, then democratic consolidation and democracy may be impaired. This and many others are the insidious effects of prophecies and prophets on the democratic process. People no longer rely on the outcome of elections as being fair but would rather rely on what the prophets have pronounced even if those prophecies sometimes always contradict each other. People would rather believe prophets and their prophecies rather than in the efficacy of the democratic process. It is frightful that no post-independence election ever conducted in Nigeria is devoid of rancor, court cases, contestations, wrangling, accusations and even violence. Violence has become an apparent condition for every elections in Nigeria.

Prior to the 2019 election, various prophecies have announced that the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan would win the 2015 election. However, this was not to come to pass. It may be safe to assume that the various prophecies toting Goodluck Jonathan as the eventual winner may have been responsible for and influenced the declaration by the leader of the Niger Delta militants, Asari Dokubo Tompolo that they were ready to declare war if the president was not declared the winner of the election. In addition, he threatened to cut off the oil and make governance problematic (The Nation Newspaper, January 25, 2015, Perhaps, if it were for the peace agreement signed between the outgoing Jonathan and incoming President Buhari and mediated by the Nigeria's National Peace Committee headed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the transition would have not been bloodless. This is the effect of prophecies on the democratic process and its consolidation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

What to make of this failed prophecies? In 1Kings 22, there is an interesting narration of two kings of Judah and Israel – Jehoshaphat and Ahab – who were preparing to go to war with Syria. During the preparation, the king of Judah asked that they inquired from the Lord the outcome of the endeavor. In vs. 6, the Bible says the king of Israel gathered about 400 prophets and inquired from them; “Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I forbear?” In one accord, all the prophets prophesied that the king should go to battle and “the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king” (vs, 6). However, the king of Judah was insistent that other prophets should be consulted to know the mind of God. Although the king of Israel was reluctant to consult the only remaining prophet – Micaiah – because he hates him; “for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (vs. 8), but at the insistence of the king of Judah, the Prophet Micaiah was sent for.

From vs. 15, we saw Micaiah before the kings and the same request was made to him; “shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall we forbear?” Interestingly, Micaiah prophesied as the 400 prophets had done but the king's answer to the prophet in vs. 16 carried certain implications. First, it seems that the king may have been aware that the 400 prophets were not of God or were not hearing from God, hence their prophecies could not be relied upon. Or secondly, by experience, he knew that Micaiah's prophecies have always been contrary to the other prophets and these have been coming true. Thus, on being adjudged, Micaiah prophesied and told the sequence of events that ensued in heaven from vs. 19-23. It is thus, Micaiah's narration of the events in heaven that constitutes the background of this paper, thereby drawing our attention to the fact that prophets may not prophesy truly and sometimes, God may permit a lying spirit to deliberately mislead in order to fulfill a certain purpose. Is it then a case of a lying spirit from God? This becomes problematic since spiritual matters cannot be subjected to scientific verification and exactitude, so what then to be done, particularly as we have highlighted, these unguided prophecies have the potential of jeopardizing and put a hold on the democratic consolidation in the country.

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