

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

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The Political Dimension of the Church

Let me begin by thanking Pastor Poju Oyemade and the management of Covenant Christian Centre for inviting me to speak at this conference. We are at a critical juncture in the evolution of the church and conferences like this are most required. They create a platform for the broad sharing of knowledge across the spectrum of the church. The church is a spiritual federation. The architecture of the church is similar to that of the internet. There's no single point of failure. The gates of hell cannot prevail. The brand architecture of the church is what we will call endorsed brand architecture in my line of work. There are various forms of brand architecture but the one employed by Jesus is endorsed architecture. It means Jesus endorses each ministry franchise with his brand name. Pastors are franchisees. The franchise model allows for local variations and adaptations; it also allows for the personality of the pastor.

Our topic of deliberation is the political dimension of the church. It's hardly the kind of topic treated at a pastors' conference, but one that's necessary. There's a gross misunderstanding of the nature of the church, even by Christians. What I want to do in this lecture is dispel those misconceptions.

Of course you'd have noticed my language is not pastor-speak. Pastor-speak is the language of pastors. I am not an ecclesiastical executive so I don't speak pastor-speak. If I do jar your religious sensibilities as this lecture goes along please forgive. Indeed I implore you to forgive in advance.

And with that little house cleaning I think we can start.

I want to begin by sharing a particular experience I had. I do political consulting, which means I get to work on political campaigns. Our firm consulted on a particular presidential election campaign and our candidate won. This was many years back. Before the inauguration I left the state capital and came back home. The inauguration was the next day.

At about 10am on that fateful day I had a vision. It was so vivid I cannot tell if it was a dream or trance. It was incredibly real, and very frightening. I saw a horde of desert warriors arrive in the country. They seemed backward. They arrived on camels and horses. They had been travelling all week but finally arrived in the country. Just their look instilled fear in everyone. Politicians couldn't stand up to them, music and mirth died in the country. They were so vicious they ripped babies from the womb. And they asserted they were in the country based on a political nexus. They were here matter-of-factly. No one could challenge them. These were gruesome fellows.

I came out of that trance sweating profusely. I was most troubled. I didn't know what to do. This was not something you bind, or pray wouldn't come to pass. I was watching a livestream. Things were happening in real time. I placed a call to my pastor, shouting on the phone, "They have come, they have come!" As if I had been expecting them or had intimation of them. Soon after the trance the nation began to experience gruesome terrorism. And soon manifestations began.

I'll tell you another story. I had been invited to Sierra Leone by the Sierra Leonean ambassador to consult on an upcoming national election. In that regard I was scheduled to meet the President. As we turned off the road to climb the incline into the

presidential compound I saw a group of amputees, probably numbered twelve. They were huddled together, waiting for the president to pass. He was known to be generous and understanding. The amputees reminded me of the invalids at the pool of Bethesda as they waited for an angel to stir the water. I wanted to understand this story and one day my driver told me the story. It's the story of war. The central character was a villain called Charles Taylor.

Sierra Leone was founded by a coalition of anti-slavery interests who were mostly evangelical in persuasion. If you've ever heard of William Wilberforce or the Clapham Sect you will understand the history of Sierra Leone. They pushed through legislation in the British Parliament for the abolition of slave trade. The Clapham Sect were the brains behind the CMS brand. CMS is Church Missionary Society. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African bishop had landed in Sierra Leone after his slave ship was intercepted by the British naval squadron.

The Sierra Leone Civil War is a horrible story. That war lasted all of eleven years. It began March 23, 1991 and ended January 18, 2002. Over 50,000 souls perished. But the real horror of that war was generational. 10,000-14,000 children aged 8-14 were conscripted into the army by Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF was backed by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Those kids constituted 50% of the army.

To demonstrate their allegiance to RUF against their family some were asked to rape their mother in front of their father. They plied the children with drugs.

The RUF specialised in a brand of brutality. They loved amputating limbs. They would end up amputating tens of thousands of people ostensibly to prevent them from working in diamond mines controlled by government. You had to choose between short sleeve or long sleeve, which means you either have your limb cut at the wrist or at the elbow. The same principle applied to legs. Their favourite surgical tool was a machete. You don't need to be a mental health practitioner to know that whoever inspired that program is a psychopath. That war featured an extreme wave of looting, rape and murder. My stay in that country was a very sobering experience. It's not something you can understand until you pick your Bible and do a proper study of Paul's writing.

It often amazes me how Christians can pick their Bible, read the content and substitute what's there for what is not there. It's why many people cannot see the political dimension of the church. Yet it's apparent in the Bible.

One of the tragedies of Adam and Eve eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is that man began dimensioning everything along good and evil. It's why people imagine they can be saved by doing good. They imagine the numeric proportion of good deeds over bad deeds will earn them a ticket to heaven. Many prominent religions teach this.

There's an inherent illogicality in such proposition. Sin is a capital offence it is not a civil liability. The wages of sin is death. Good deeds cannot answer to capital offence. Imagine someone arraigned for murder asking to be set free because he gave alms to the poor. That is an absurdity. The Christian faith says salvation is predicated on the substitutionary sacrifice

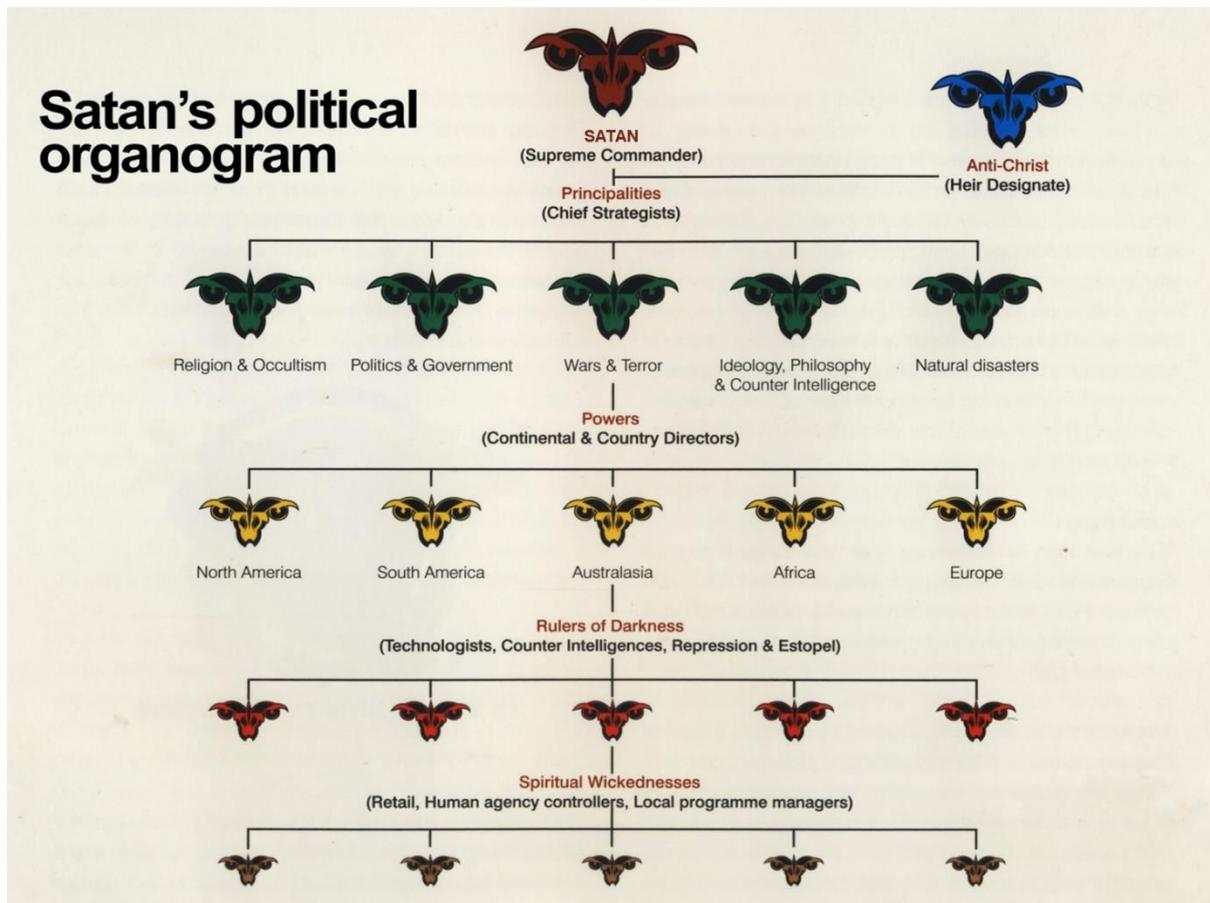
of Jesus, that because we're genetically modified sinners salvation must necessarily lie outside of man, hence Jesus had to come into the equation. A sinner lacks essential qualification to save himself.

The unfortunate thing is that this good versus evil paradigm is then extended to Satan. You can't dimension Satan on a moral axis. He's beyond morality. He's a thoroughbred sociopath with a trinitarian objective: to kill, to steal and to destroy. John 10:10. All Satan has ever been interested in, all he's ever wanted is political power. You can't understand Satan or the stuff you read in your Bible outside this paradigm. He has never made allusions about his lust for power. He's very direct about it. From the revolution he fermented in Heaven, to the political crisis in the Garden of Eden, to the temptation he placed before Jesus, one thing and only one thing is apparent – Satan wants political power. Wickedness is nothing but a tool of political subjugation.

When you take time to study the transcript of the encounter between Eve and the serpent it is obvious the serpent was channelling someone, and that someone is very familiar with God, has a long history with God. In that encounter the ideology of class warfare was introduced to earth - the idea the ruling class was oppressing the human class with ignorance. That ideology would eventually be modified into communist ideology. The central tenet of communism is class warfare.

Satan's organisational organogram is unbelievably political. The titles on that organogram are crudely political – Principalities, Powers, Rulers of Darkness, Spiritual Wickedness in High Places... There's no subtlety whatsoever. What could be more political than labelling an executive "Ruler" or "Power."

This is what the organogram looks like:



It's the same stuff you read in your Bible I've just presented it diagrammatically to bring it into the 21st century: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12.

At the very top of the organogram are the principalities. The word, "principality" is the Greek word, "arche." It means "cause." The verb is "archo". It means "first." In other words the principalities occupy pride of place. They're Satan's inner circle. They have causative responsibility. They're the strategists and

program designers. Call them the brains. They're the ones who come up with blueprints.

Next in line are the Powers. The word "power" is the Greek word, "exousia." It denotes executive power. The word is linked in meaning to governments. In other words the principalities create the blueprint, the powers execute at policy level. They influence government policy. Wars, coups, economic meltdowns, insurgencies and insurrections are coordinated by the Powers.

Let me show you how productive they are.

Between 258 BC and 1988 they executed 52 wars in Vietnam alone. Between 1220 AD and 1945 they executed 70 wars in Europe. Between 1006 AD and 1994 they executed 135 wars in North America. In Africa the number is 126, between 1868 AD and 2009. In total we're talking approximately 717 wars all over the world. I detailed this information in my book, *Of Madmen, Senators and Ambassadors*. Think of the sheer carnage. The earth is constantly subjected to war. No respite.

Next in hierarchy are the Rulers of Darkness. The word "darkness" is the Greek word "skotos." It means to stop or restrain as through an instrumentality. Sin, misery, ruin, unhappiness, ignorance and error are deeply associated with the Rulers of Darkness. The troubling thing about those words is that they're also closely associated with pastors. The Rulers of Darkness create domestic and personal trauma. They're the ones who trouble marriages. They're also the ones responsible for errors and heresy.

The last rung on Satan's organogram are the Spiritual Wickednesses. The word "wickedness" is the Greek word, "ponerai." It means a malicious person who is not only evil but expresses malice and so affects others. Now you know who's responsible for that rumour in your church. A pastor called me the other day telling me someone was spreading vicious gossip about him in church. We know who's responsible!

I want you to note something: there's no mention of witches and wizards on this organogram. It means they're of no strategic value, just local nuisances. In fact Paul categorises witchcraft as a work of the flesh, at par with sexual immorality. (Galatians 5:19-21). Unfortunately the church pays inordinate attention to witches and wizards. It's counterintelligence strategy by Satan. As long as you're chasing after witches you can't concentrate on the principalities and powers. And it's the principalities and powers who define political context. The church operates in a political sphere. The church is subject to political context. The manner in which Satan has constrained the church through the centuries is via the instrumentality of the state. As a Christian you ignore politics and governance at your peril.

But the bigger reason Satan unleashes the state against the church is because Christianity is a political concept. Jesus repeatedly spoke about his kingdom. Kingdom is political. He didn't talk about a religious commune.

Jesus is not a religious figure. Jesus is a political figure. The 7th century prophecy by Isaiah concerning Jesus dimensioned him politically: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the GOVERNMENT shall be upon his shoulder: and his

name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his GOVERNMENT and peace there shall be no end, upon the THRONE of David, and upon his KINGDOM, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV.

The reason Jesus is called wonderful, everlasting and mighty is because he must be adulated. He is a king. Kings are adulated. His system of governance is a monarchy. It's the reason we do praise worship in church. You praise a king, you worship a king, just as we praise and worship the Oni of Ife or Oba of Benin. If God were a democratic president there will be no praise worship in church. All that will happen is that his presence will be announced as he steps into the auditorium. Then the order of business will commence.

Jesus wasn't crucified as a rabbi. He was assassinated as a political figure. It's why the charge on the vertical beam of his cross read, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." Matthew 27:37. It was Rome that wrote that not the Jews. The Jews wanted a different inscription. They were more interested in labelling him a fraud. Which was why they wanted the charge sheet to read, "This man claimed to be king of the Jews." John 19:21. But Rome crucified him as an insurrectionist and revolutionary who challenged the authority of Caesar.

When you have an understanding of the political dimension of Christianity you will never see church the same again. When we gather in church it's a political assembly. God is greatly to be praised in the assembly of the saints. Psalm 89:7.

It's because church is a political assembly that you can present your petitions and ask for justice against your enemies. That's the function of the state, God is not mafia. When you plead for judgment against your enemies during service you're appealing to God's constitutional authority as government. Only government can execute vengeance. It's why you can't take revenge. Only government can execute judgment. It's why the state can execute criminals. The Bible says the king wields not the sword in vain. Romans 13:4. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, says the Lord. Romans 12:19. He's talking as government.

It's because church is a political assembly you can appeal for mercy. Mercy is a prerogative of the state. There's something called prerogative of mercy in law.

It's because the church is a political assembly that Satan can come to church just as he goes for political conferences in Heaven. Satan is an angel. He has inalienable rights as an angel. He can attend political gatherings God presides in. Sometimes he requests for side meetings, just like they do in the United Nations. It's how the discussion about Job came up. Angels and demons come to church. They come to learn about God's strategic intent. Ephesians 3:10. You have to get rid of that antiseptic notion of church. If the church were antiseptic none of us will qualify for church service. There will be no demonic manifestations in church. Church is a political assemblage.

Salvation is a citizenship program. It has constitutional dimension and it has legal dimension. God does a legal manoeuvre every time someone gets born again. This is what he does. He attaches the punishment due to you to the old person you were, the guy who is dead in sin. He's dead so it

really doesn't matter. He creates a new you, generates a new identity for the new you in Christ. That way you have a new social security number and BVN. Your records are clean. There's no outstanding criminal warrant against you. You're free because no one can punish you for what the old guy did. That would be travesty of justice. The technical name for all this is what we call righteousness. Righteousness is a brilliant legal manoeuvre. The charge sheet attaches to the dead man. So you can start a new life. Old things are passed away. You're a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The reason you can decree a thing and it shall be established unto you is because you exercise political authority. Otherwise you cannot cause state actors like principalities and powers to obey your decrees. Everything changes once you understand the political dimension of the church.

To show that the church is a political entity God adopted secular political titles for the church. The word "bishop" does not refer to a guy who wears a tall mitre and colourful vestment. It's not a "spiritual" word. It's derived from the Greek word "episkopos." It means supervisor. Bishops were Athenian officials sent into allied cities to set up democratic constitution. Same with the word "apostle." It's derived from the Greek word, "apostolos." It refers to a person specially commissioned to a position or task, someone sent forth with a special commission to represent another. It can be a delegate, commissioner or ambassador. An apostle was a personal representative of the king. The title is political.

Let's bring things a bit home.

The church is politically weak. That much is evident. A number of reasons account for this, and some are attributable to pastors. And it starts with the order of the church.

We have inverted God's order for the church. What God had in mind was a centrifugal model whereas what we're practising is a centripetal model. It's why everything takes place in church, why everything is brought inside church. Deliverance takes place in church, salvation takes place in church, baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place in church, baptism in water takes place in church... Everything revolves around the pastor. But that's not what God had in mind. It's not efficient.

In God's conception the pastor is a human resource development executive. He's supposed to train the people to do the work of the ministry. Those trained individuals are supposed to go into the nooks and crannies of society and function in multilateral spaces - business, politics, culture, science, technology, NGOs...

Here's the challenge: because the pastor is the ministry the people are mere enablers. This prevents the church from responding appropriately to her political context. It's why our response to national crisis is almost always invariably a prophetic declaration from the pulpit. And then what?

The church hardly leverages her "secular" assets. Those assets are most times forced into non-strategic roles. They're un-purposed by turning them to pastors. Some of the people we made pastors should be in government. A calling is not always ecclesiastical. A calling can be in government.

Set your people free. Let them fulfil their potential and destiny. We need more people minding the nation than minding car parks in church. There are things which can only be solved at

the policy level. Christian social responsibility has limitations. You cannot eradicate poverty by doing good. It is a policy challenge. Without the instrumentality of state you're wasting your time. To eradicate poverty you must invest in social services – schools, hospitals, etc. The economy needs stimulation. Critical infrastructure must be in place – electricity, internet, roads, rail... These things are outside the purview of the church. Only government can deliver on them. Industrial scale social challenges require instrumentality of government. Feeding the poor is commendable but it can't eradicate poverty. It can only ameliorate hunger. Teaching the people to “sow” financial seeds in order to overcome poverty is a micro solution, it's not macro. The efficiency ratio is poor.

Please stop saying “Power must change hands” if you have no intention of going into politics or participating in governance. And anyway the only person who can say power must change hands is the Devil. Jesus said, “All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.” Matthew 28:18.

I want to thank you listening. It's been a pleasure talking to you.