

# Spirituality in Ghanaian Politics: The Paradox of Curses and Prophecies

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## ABSTRACT

Globally, politics and religion and for that matter spirituality have co-existed throughout history in different forms and at different levels. In Ghana, spirituality in politics in general and elections in particular is not only becoming rampant but it is also assuming a peculiar dimension. What is probably unique is the fact that spirituality in politics has manifested itself in the form of uncontrolled curses according to traditional religion and unrestrained prophecies in the outcome of election results. The objective of this research article was to look at the implication of this phenomena on governance in Ghana. Qualitative research method was used and the main data collection instrument was questionnaire/one-on-one oral interview of governance experts and opinion leaders. The conclusion drawn was that prophecies in elections can ironically be dangerous to our democracy since it raises question mark on the legitimacy of government. It also has the potential not only to create political instability but also to kill the faith of Christians who believe in prophecies. On the issue of curses, the article concluded that if it is institutionalized and expanded it could go a long way to help in reducing corruption and abuse of office by public office holders.

**KEYWORDS:** *Judeo-Christian, legitimacy, prophecy, spirituality, politics*

## INTRODUCTION

Politics and religion/spirituality had been seamiest twins until the advent of the western modern democracy whose principles and practices do not leave room for culture and religion. The need to reconsider the role of culture and religion and mainstream them in politics at both national and international levels had been strongly made by the existence of religious extremism and transnational terrorism (Huntington, 1997).

According to Aristotle, every man is a political animal by nature (Mulgan, 1974). A statement made in the 4<sup>th</sup> century has echoed through history and stood the test of time. The Bible in 1Thessalonian5:23 also makes it clear that man is made up of soul, spirit and body. This presupposes that both politics and spirituality are all natural part of man and society.

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The issue now is determining where the two interface, the extent that each can go and how does spirituality manifest itself and its implication on the future of the state.

Even though Ghana is a secular nation, religious interference in our politics in general and the invasion of unorganized spirituality in political/electoral activities is becoming so prevalent that it cannot be swept under carpet. In Ghana, spirituality in politics manifests itself in the form of curses and prophecies regarding the outcome of impending elections.

This article examines the extent to which spirituality has been involved in politics in Ghana and its implications on our socio-political and spiritual life.

## MANIFESTATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN POLITICS

**Prayers:** One common ground where politics and spirituality interface is in the form of prayer. All over the world, prayers have been part and parcel of all political activities. People of different faiths pray to their God or any superior power they believe in at different levels of our political/electoral endeavor. At public gathering, prayers are said by the three major religious groups, namely Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religion for for long life, stability prosperity etc.

**Word of God:** As elections are approaching, many are the politicians who will choose and quote profusely pieces and bits of the word of God as and when it suits their agenda. This is to portray to the electorate that they (the politicians) are God fearing people who have the spirit of the God in them and that they will lead the citizens according to the directions of God if they are given the mandate.

This, no doubt is a campaign strategy that works sometimes to an extent, for after all who doesn't want to have God-fearing men or women to be their leaders?

Spirituality in our electoral politics in this form does not do any harm despite the elements of deception in there because many a time, the word of God they preach does not reflect in their actions.

## CURSES AND PROPHECIES

Of late, what seems distinctive and rampant in African and for that matter Ghanaian politics are the curses and prophecies in political and electoral activities. In Ghana, hardly will an electoral race take place without it being interlaced with one form of curses and prophecies here and there.

**Curses:** Every observers of development in Ghanaian politics will attest to the fact that curses in politics are becoming very rampant. We have seen constituency executives of the same political party invoking curses against their own regional and national executives for imposing candidates on the constituency against the will of the local people. We have heard individuals using curses to deny allegations made against them in the media. We are also witnesses of some political parties invoking curses against the security agencies and even the election administrators as the means of preventing cheating in impending electoral exercise.

**Prophecy:** Another area where spirituality is exhibited in politics is in the form of prophecy in elections. Prophecy in itself is not bad. It is its abuse and the deception associated with it that are problematic. It has been part and parcel of Judeo-Christian tradition since time immemorial. In Ghana

now, it has become a common phenomenon where the so called prophets and men of God prophesying the results of elections, claiming that the results have been revealed to them by God in advanced.

## THE PARABOX OF IMPLICATIONS

As a Christian, I know that prophecy is good because at least it reveals the mind or the intention of God; what He is about to do to his people. As pointed out earlier, Prophesying in itself is not bad in every endeavor of life. After all, who doesn't want to know the mind of God? It is rather its abuse in politics which is dangerous spiritually and politically due to the following:

- 1. Creating doubt about sincerity of God:** we have instances in Ghana where different so called men of God prophesy victory for different candidates in the same presidential election in which only one winner is expected. This puts many minds in dilemma as to whether God is not truthful or what? This can affect the faith of many people in God.
- 2. Legitimacy of government affected:** Legitimacy is one cardinal pillar on which any true democratic government rests. When it is damaged the government has no root to support it nor any reason to exist. It is considered a basic condition for governing (Dah,1971). The legitimacy in this sense emanates from the will of the people which is represented by the choice of the voters. To create an impression, directly or implicitly, that the citizens have been denied of their choice is very serious and dangerous to the health of our democracy and should not be taken lightly.
- 3. Denting the credibility of election management body:** what is even worse is the fact that when the falsehood of those doubtful prophecies are exposed with time instead of the 'men of God' to eat a humble pie by accepting that their prophecies have turned out to be untrue, they rather embark on face-saving exercise at the expense of the credibility of election managers. They claim the verdict has been stolen instead of accepting that they did not get it right.

In their efforts to shift the blame and the shame on to the election management body by going the easy way – simply claiming that the election has been rigged, they end up denting the credibility of the only constitutional body mandated to conducts public elections and referenda in the country. The danger of this situation rests in the fact that trust in the election management and confidence in the electoral process which constitute the precondition for incontrovertibility and acceptability of election results are destroyed

4. **Recipe for violence:** At this point, it does not require an expert in conflict to tell us that the cumulative effects of all the scenarios discussed above is violence especially in the environment of gullibility and fanaticism as ours.

Dear reader, I believe the irony of prophecies in politics has dawned on you now: The prophecy we all hitherto knew as a good thing has turned out to be the most dangerous element to be entertained in our democratic politics.

### CURSES

According to Oxford Languages, a curse is solemn utterance intended to invoke a supernatural power to inflict harm or punishment on someone or something.

In African Traditional Religion, it is sometimes used to purge ourselves of an accusation. It can also be used to prevent the occurrence of crime/sin and bring about fairness.

Looking at the trend of curses in Ghanaian politics, it is almost always in two forms:

1. To show ones' innocence in allegation of corruption or something bad.
2. To put fears in people so that they will not get involved in an expected or likely sin or in an activity that will not be in the interest of society.

The two examples above presuppose that curses will help in preventing crime/sin and also bring about honesty and good comportment on the part of the public office holders. For example, if somebody pronounce a curse that anybody who will involve in any electoral malfeasance should die, that fear can help us bring about credible election. Or if somebody curses that anyone who will steal my money or property should be struck by thunder that will protect the property.

Looking at the way we reverse curse as people and the purpose for which we invoke it, it seems to me that we can expand and institutionalize its use for the benefit of the nation as whole in the following ways:

1. Before elections, we can designate somebody as a national priest who will invoke curse on anybody who will intentionally go contrarily to the set rules or will intentionally do anything that will disturb the peace of the nation.
2. After the elections, curses should be involved on the winners who are now going to occupy public offices to use their offices only in the interest of the nation as part of the swearing in and induction into office ceremony.

This should not substitute the laws and institutions mandated to do that but rather as an additional measure to avoid the abuses of office that has become rampant in the country. Why not if we can allow pouring of liberation in state functions? I think this will bring to the barest minimum corruption that has become a canker in our governance system.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study was that spirituality has been part of our political system. It takes the form of curses in accordance with the believes and practices of our traditional religion and prophecies as practiced and believed by a section of the Judeo-Christian community. Neither of them is institutionalized and controlled. The study established that these prophecies have the potential of creating a problem of legitimacy which is the foundation for every government according to (Dah, 1971, pp124-188).

On the other hand, the curses can be institutionalized and harnessed for the control of the behavior of public office holders to reduce abuse of office and corruption.

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