

ABSTRACT

This study is about the relationship between religion and politics in Uganda. It discussed the interaction between the two variables and how they have impacted on society. It analysed the conflicts and tensions between religion and politics on one hand and religious leadership and politicians on the other hand. It examined how they functioned and influenced the spiritual and political lives of the people. To achieve this, it focused on Kigezi region in South-Western Uganda as the area of study and it covered the period from 1980 to 2007.

The study focused on the relationship between religion and politics in Uganda. The two had for a long time been considered as variables that could never be taken as interdependent constituents in society necessary for the good of people for holistic development and liberation, promotion and protection in all aspects of human living and socio-economically, politically, spiritually/religiously, culturally and so on. Uganda's history had made people take any discussion on religion and politics to be dangerous to friendship, national cohesion, development, peace and stability of the concerned countries, health and so on. This was due to negative or critical attitude which some people had developed towards the relationship between the two. Pursuant of the need to protect their personal interests and hegemonies, some people including prominent politicians and religious leaders either cautioned against any mixing of politics and religion or they vehemently condemned it. Consequently, they strongly discouraged religious institutions and communities from mixing or interfering with politics. Neither were politicians to involve in religious matters.

The study employed descriptive research design which falls under the qualitative method. Quantitative method was also used. The researcher carried out field-work and got information from primary sources (300 respondents). This was done through interviews, seminars, participant observation and debates. He also used the questionnaire. He also employed secondary sources using written materials in form of books, journals, magazines, documents, periodicals, position papers/seminar papers, Newspapers, reports and websites dealing with the phenomena of Religion and Politics from a general perspective to the national and local levels. He finally zeroed on Kigezi and the Banyakigezi. After data collection, the gathered data were processed, analysed and recorded.

The study found existence of numerous pre-colonial or indigenous religions and the imported ones. The indigenous religions included Nyabingi and Emandwa while the imported ones included Christianity, Islam and Pentecostal churches. These were sharing spaces with politicians and performing many functions-ecclesiastical/spiritual or mundane, the socio-political, personal control, administration and disciplinarian. They were not homogeneous in their work but were characterized by sectarianism that had created possibilities of causing confusion, conflicts, tensions, bewilderment, dissension and desertion. Some of them lacked commitment and paid lip-service to what they were preaching. There were similar teachings, ideals as well as differences between religious and political teachings, which were common to people of different religious and political backgrounds.

The study concluded that there was need to educate people in order to build bridges for peace and cooperation among all people and traditions, educate and build unity, love, peace, harmony, honesty, cooperation and mutual trust amongst themselves. These were some of the qualities which would free them and enable them to work for the common good of all the people. It recommended that religion should not be negatively politicised and neither should politics be negatively influenced by religion. It also recommended openness, transparency, fairness, objectivity, neutrality, justice, freedom and sociality as the main ingredients for attaining the common good and a just society.