

On Truth, Propaganda, and Lies in Philippine Political Life

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Introductory Question

Is there any biblico-theological frame of reference wherein the issues prompted by the title above could be assessed of its value?

Definition of Terms

This essay tells the following definitions as guide provided in the Webster Dictionary except for the phrase “Political Life”:

Political life may be understood in either technical or general sense. In technical sense, Political Life is the conduct of leadership, administration, governance, policy-making and implementation involving logistics, maintenance, and sustainability for national, regional, or local governments; and in general sense, it is governance for the common good that penetrates the various departments of Filipino way of life.

Truth “is the state of being the case: FACT. The body of real things, events and facts: ACTUALITY.”

Lie is “an assertion of something known or believed by the speaker to be untrue with intent to deceive: an untrue or inaccurate statement that may or may not be believed true by the speaker.”

Propaganda is “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.”

The Truth

Politics as governance is of itself a positive way of life. For a community life to survive there is the need of style or form or administration that should balance, guide, dispose, protect, and control the various societal conditions especially what is good for the greater populace.

Running for an elective post is a healthy enterprise. The need and choice for a political party has its important role in the systematic handling and team-playing in the vast network of services on the national, regional, and local government units.

Platform of government addressing relevant issues and conditions is as relevant as a framework where both politicians and the voting constituents offer and see the priorities involved, the schema that should be tried and the implementation to take effect.

Campaigning for the government post is equally important so that the electorate would know the platform as well as the people running for the particular government post. This practice enables the people to meet and consider the personalities and issues involved.

Election time gives the opportunity for the electorate to choose the candidates of their own choosing. This is the fundamental tenet of a democratic society when the majority of people are being heard; who and what their choices are that should run their government. Public service is the very essence of public trust given to those who win the elections. Elected public officials and the electorate are bonded by the constitution and whose faithfulness is expected to be expressed. Paramount than anything else is the aim to serve the people, work on their common good and well-being in terms of socio-economic, religious, educational, cultural, commercial, business,

and all departments of living which address the totality of human needs.

Providing for the basic needs, opening other opportunities for progress and advancement, addressing the juridical, moral, spiritual concerns of people, protecting their human rights, and giving them equal opportunity to better their lives are areas encompassing what a healthy political exercise must primarily take care of as primary concerns.

The Right to Correct Information

It is a human right to have the access to right and accurate information. It is an inalienable right to be rightly informed of conditions that could affect every citizen in his/her need to know the events surrounding his/her circumstance. The political system must prove these avenues to correct information and protect that this right is not violated, distorted, taken away, or that its privacy be intruded.

Correct and accurate information held the citizen to locate him/herself in the wide order of things and events around him/her and the world. Through this he/she could make necessary adjustments of his/her life, actions, and struggles in relation to diverse conditions that demand continues adjustments, reforms, or changes from time to time.

The Lie

The fact of living, however, does not have the monopoly to just one aspect. There can be lies lurking every other side of the truth.

Negative things are just as real as the positive ones. Politics also carries with it the other side of the coin.

Embedded in the human psyche is the desire to be comfortable and be abundant than the previous. While the human democratic society proves everyone equal

opportunity, there are imbalances in the course of the struggle to advance.

Competition places a toll in the struggle to improve one's condition in life. Along with this is the greed for power and wealth, the pride to be looked up, to become popular and respected, or to desire to be perpetuated in power to enjoy the comfort and abundance provided by the status quo. One avenue in achieving this end is politics.

No wonder why in the Philippine political history, the landlords have the easy access to political leadership due to their logistical capabilities. Many of these politicians launched their political career with hope to remain in power so as to protect their selfish interests, or advance their exclusive agenda in the guise of "serving the people and country."

The strong insistence to hold oneself active in the political arena could be motivated by the promise to enjoy the greater opportunity in the accessing of funds, whether or not these come in form of taxes, the good opportunity to benefit out of probable business investments, or have a good chance of sharing funds from international sources amounting to millions.

Business profitability could also be the motive behind what may look as a sound political agenda. Many bills in Congress have been passed designed to either promote or protect business interests. One could just imagine the lobbying for or against a draft resolution to promote or deter these bills. Both money and prominence are used in order to influence these draft resolutions so that these either would take off or not in the second and final reading, or win approval in plenary sessions.

For certain, whether for money, popularity, power, or sexual motives, the true political agenda is hidden behind a sound party platform carried by a misleading propaganda.

Propaganda in Philippine Politics

As our definition above suggests, “propaganda” has the elements of either “helping or injuring.”

For our political language, propaganda is launched to “help” those who belong to the same party affiliation. The effort to promote each other’s partisan interest is made in the campaign trail. Quite naturally one could validate this: it should be so, provided that the said information is placed within the parameters of truth who and at what capacity the person running for a public post is really qualified.

Yet, propaganda is injurious when the distortion of truth comes to play injudiciously. This type of propaganda does not merely injure the sound political exercise founded on truth, but most importantly, false or irresponsible propagandizing violates the right of every voter to right and sound information.

False promises carried by propaganda makes an immoral means of information. This is especially when the other party is morally injured and the voting population is denied the true picture of things where they will base their judgment. Propaganda bearing scandalous information, maybe out of polemics or out of “hate,” also deceives the electorate once these information do not bear substantial evidences already proven as true or facts established out of jurisprudence.

Although in some ways propaganda helps people in identifying important features as situationers, giving them the proper insight or reliable perspective in making decisions. Irresponsible propaganda on the other hand hurts the moral, ethical, spiritual, even the sociological principles respecting the individual’s right to correct and correct information.

Relevance of Pauline Sin-Death Configuration

In the introductory part of this essay we raise the question “Is there any biblico-theological reference wherein ‘Truth, Propaganda, and Lies in Philippine Political Life’ could be assessed of its values?”

Yes, there is. In Romans 7:15-25 the two conflicting principles are subjecting Paul to difficulty. He said: “When I want to do good, evil is right there with me...For in my inner being I delight in God’s law but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members” (7:21-22).

Human sinfulness is inherent in man’s personality. Nothing that man does, even if it is well-intentioned, is without the presence of evil. For Paul, human condition “is a prisoner of the law of sin at work within...” their body parts.

So that, even in the Philippine political scenario there is the presence of the seemingly “true side” of this issue or that yet falsity just lurk behind. Thus, the seemingly “good” appearances the Philippine politics were showing have been proven for their “bad” effects later.

Conclusion

As a whole, “Truth, propaganda, and lies” in the Philippine body politics, if viewed from the Pauline sin-death configuration – doesn’t amount to anything but a perpetual repetition of the vicious cycle of selfishness, misery, and death.

Paul’s prescriptive answer to his rhetorical question “Who could deliver me from this body of death?” is this: “Thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus Christ is the key, the answer – with whom assurance of deliverance is made available through His death sealed by His resurrection – the eschatological reality.