# PERCEPTION ENGINEERING IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract**
Nigeria is a nation that is morally and spiritually sick and her democracy is bedevilled with moral, social and political disorders. This paper examined the perception engineering in Christian Religious Education and politics. The aim was to appraise the politics, political process and system within a Christian paradigm, to relate it to current democratic practice in Nigerian. It was to explore the roles of Christian Religious Education in promoting democracy through the ideals and religious values. To achieve these tasks, the paper employed the descriptive, comparative and evaluative methods, questionnaire was used to collect data, and the analysis was done using frequency count and percentages. The finding revealed that many people in the position of authority misunderstand the political authority and abuse it, thus Christian Religious Education is an ideal tool that enhances the democratic institutions and process, that politics and Religion are independent variables that are inseparable. The paper concludes that Biblical 'servant – leadership' style is the ideal pattern that can guarantee good governance; it therefore recommended that leaders should have the fear of God in the position of authority.

**Keywords:** Christianity, Governance, Political process, servant-leadership.

## 1. Introduction

Politics is one of the factors responsible for deterioration of Nigeria, which has given rise to poverty and public outrage due to the lack of political will to deal decisively with the social evil that has plagued the society. The background of corruption in human societies seems traceable to dirty politics, but the consensus seems that man is at the centre of it. The excruciating pains of oppression, exploitation, injustice, inequality, poverty, disease, homelessness, conflict, unemployment, ignorance and crises are axiomatic experience of human life in Nigeria (Fredrick, 1966).

The relationship between the rich and the poor within and among nations has raised a disturbing concern of every right-thinking member of the Nigerian society. The menace of corruption also leads to slow movement of files in offices and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities among others. Even the mad people on the street recognize the havoc caused by corruption. Thus, it is believed by many in the society that corruption is misfortune of Nigeria. In response to this, Christian Religious Education has been offered as the sure way to the amelioration of these social evils affecting Nigeria society (Ezeani, 2003).

**Christian Religious Education**

Christian religious education is defined as the process whereby Christian learning takes place. It often involves "teaching which enables the Christians to adopt and deepen their Christian belief, values and dispositions to experience and act in a Christian way. It depends to a greater extent on how this process is adopted and practised in different churches. The liturgical aspect is of paramount importance in the Trinitarian belief and practices in that it serves as introduction to what Christianity is all about. This is where the process of Cognitive learning takes places, it involves the worship service where hymns are sung, lessons extracted from the books of the bible are read, sermon often punctuated with exhortation, admonishment and instruction in righteous living is delivered and prayers said. It also involves the celebration of the holy Eucharist which Jesus Christ himself, recognized as the head of the church, initiated based on experience acquired in the worship service (Adeoye, 2008).

Christian education is an important aspect of youth development. For Christian education to be explored, generation of today should be brought into contact through various practices. In the early centuries, reformers emphasized and trusted true faith and doctrines to change and reform behaviour as the only solution for salvation in Christian Religious education. Christian School Movements proved a challenge as a messenger to convey God's given mission and honour God. Ottuh (2007) posited that Christian Religious Education is the quality of human existence depending on the perspective and the responses to what life is. Contentment, happiness and joy are not so much the produce of existence, but are the products of responses to human existence. From culture people inherit an essentially secular and humanistic world-view which at many points clashes with the gospel. As Christians, one must reject the powerful secular view of ethics and the purpose of life (epitomized in statement like, if it feels good do it, and "you only go around once, so grab all the gospel you can") and embrace truly biblical concepts (Wilholt, 1991).

In Christian Religious Education, Christians need to learn to describe and evaluate life's experiences from a biblical perspective. Viewing a particular experience from a Christian stand point can be truly liberated. The Christian is able to see point as a time of potential growth, death as a new beginning and the injustice in this world as ultimately being set right. Few new non Christians are able to rise above their circumstances in the way that Christian can. A true Christian perspective on life helps free one from circumstances (Amolo, 2007).

It is not easy to instill this perspective. In fact, developing a mature Christian world view takes a life time. It requires teachers who would not only be sensitive to the student's situation of the clearest presentations of the importance of teaching life but encouraging concept in Christian Religious Education. Donald (2016) argued that learning the "big ideas" of the Christian faith (e.g. the nature of God, human kind, sin, salvation and the world should be a major concern of Christian Religious Education). Both will shape people's view of the world, and become focusing on the big ideas that make good sense educationally.

Educational research has taught that unattached facts have a very short life, as Joy (1991) observed that a fact in isolation is almost doomed to extinction, but if it can be filled with related material it stands a fair chance for survival. A teacher can help a student attach a piece of information to broader concept, its likelihood of being remembered increases dramatically (Olowookere, 2006). Further, it will then play its own small part in shaping the students world

view. Christian Religious Education programmes which emphasise traditional schooling and place a high value on the retention of information as following a transmissive approach, but taken as a whole, the Bible, advocate education which goes beyond the transmission of religious information, or the shaping of behaviour. Christian Religious Education should empower person to live responsibly before the Lord and in the society (Kehinde, 2012).

Christian Religious Education must not support an educational consumerism in which students, being unable or unwilling to satisfy their own basic spiritual needs and those of others; simply consume the spiritual truths imparted by a teacher. Christians are not just to partake in spiritual nourishment; they are to use it to strengthen their ministry. Christian Religious Education must teach not just knowledge or skills but service of God through responsible actions. Wolterstorff (1980) pointed out that "education must aim at producing alterations in what students tend (are disposed, are inclined) to do. It must aim at tendency learning. Christianity must touch all areas of a person's life, thinking, feeling and doing.

Christians obey the call to responsible action not simply because responsible living is more satisfying than self indulgence or hedonism, but because loyalty to Christ requires it. He desires that Christians work and walk humbly before him. Christians live responsibly because they have declared that "Jesus is Lord", which speaks of complete surrender and obedience to him. Christian Religious Education must take advantages of the aesthetic dimension of human kind, the dimension that is marked by stories, song, music, drama, imagination and beauty (Owolabi, 2013).

## 2. Significance of Christian Religious Education

Christian Religious Education emboldens the believers to face difficulties and problems of life with confidence. Agun and Imogie (1988) highlighted the following significance of Christian Religious Education; Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals, Faith and Man's ability to make rational decisions, morals and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations, shared responsibility for the common good of the society, Respect for the dignity of labour and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children. In other words, Christian Religious Education facilitate changes in a person's relationship to the ultimate meaning of his existence and his environment. The youths are given a fair, appreciative, intelligent understanding of the religion and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Also, Christian Religious Education has helped the Christians and non Christians to understand themselves better, it educates the Children even youth and adults emotionally, as feeling or emotions are involved in Christian religion. Christian Religious Education makes people to have lesser complexity in technology. It makes people to naturally believe that the process of nature and the success of human endeavours are under the control of the Supreme Being. Christian Religious Education changes the morality of people and gives them new orientation to life, it offers some solace to people especially in times of difficulty, stress and woes and throes at life, it relieves people of the frustration, and trouble, danger that make people turn off God (Reginald, 2008).

Furthermore, Christian Religious Education inculcates in people the virtues such as quality of truth, honesty, purity, self control, fortitude, perseverance, humility etc. It also brings moral and social sanity to the societies, and gives orientation to such social concepts as tolerance,

acceptance of other person's opinions, dialogue and mutual cooperation among men of different religions. The teachings of Christian Religious Education can reduce, if not eradicate the social vices find in the society today (Walter, 2003). It brings one into the knowledge of what is right or wrong and the reward in doing either, it serves as source of guidance, security and motivation for the Christians. The society has become politically infested that everyone thought that politics is the only way to successful life, thereby, making religion a common activity. The effective teaching of Christian Religious Education is likely to educate the society that politics is not the means to an end.

Moreover, Gidigbi (1974) opined that Christian Religious Education helps to direct the feelings towards their proper target liturgy and guide youth in their ways of life. It imparts believes and practice of Christian faith to the people; it has helped the youth to express the understanding of God's love and God's will in work and worship in their day to day living together. Similarly, it is the aim of Christian Religious Education to bring man as religious being in contact with his maker; foster mutual, inter-personal co-existence and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society through honest attitudes, hard work, patriotism and spirit of nationalism. It is clearly noted, even Nigerian history that the well behaved are those soundly taught and groomed in Christian faith (Daniel, 2015).

### 3. Perspectives of Politics

A political system means a system of interactions. It is a platform for planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling and managing orderly interactions between individuals and social groups. Therefore, it performs the functions of adaptation, integration, allocation of human and material resources, resolution of conflicts and promoting mutual understanding and cooperation. A political system selects programmes and implements societal goals in order of priorities. Politics is a method of government. It deals with the form, organization and administration of a nation. It also includes a regulation of its relations with other nations and political principles, convictions, opinions and sympathies of citizen and parties (Enuwosa, 2009).

Politics requires a constitution as a body of principles and laws which authorizes specific form, organization and administration of a government. Principles here mean norms, standards or truths. Laws here mean rules. Principles and laws give proper directives and systematically control the affairs of government. The constitution provides structural arrangements (national status, states, local government areas, legislature, judiciary, etc) fundamental objectives (political economic, social, educational, foreign policy, etc.), condition for citizenship, rights, duties, powers, revenue, elections and other matters (Abogunrin, 2001). The constitution enforces responsibility and politics and political parties. Politics involves activities of political parties. A political party is a body of persons who are united in opinions and interest are so varied, it is necessary to organize them for the purpose of arriving at decisions. This is the function which parties perform in politics. They act as the brokers of ideas. Parties choose the principles which they think are most likely to be acceptable to the voters and take their stand upon them (Rivkin, 2008).

They promise to translate those principles (ideas) into laws (legislation). Generally speaking, parties are necessary for participatory and representative politics. All parties issue their representative programmes in which they state their objectives and the methods they have chosen to achieve the objectives. They explain why their own objectives programmes and methods are

worthy of public support. In their manifestos (public declarations of principles, policies, purpose and programmes), all parties make certain assumptions which are related to the needs of the electorate (e.g. food, water, health, light, housing, road, school, hospitals, transport, industries and wages). So, all parties stress that to vote them into government is to make the achievement of those objectives more certain than to vote for their opponents. To vote for their opponents is to make to the satisfaction of the people's needs impossible (Jackson, 2014).

Politics involves ideology, but this is not to say that every political system has an ideology. Ideology is the body of idea which prescribes a particular manner of thinking to his followers; it is a world view which provides a rationale for an existing state or society. It secures the legitimacy and the rightness of that state or the society, Yamsat, (2002) suggested that politics articulate a set of ideas, goal, methods to satisfying the needs of all the member of the society. An ideology interprets the past, explains the present and forecast the future; it provides a pattern of beliefs and a set of convictions which prescribe specific manner of thinking, style of behaviour, distinct identity and orientation in political matters. Ideology stipulates, reconciles, harmonizes and unifies perception, opinion and interest.

### 4. Politics in Nigeria

One common saying on the lips of many Nigerians is that "Politics is a dirty game." This appears to have sunk deep down into the blood stream of all and sundry, as popular as this claim may appear, there is a need for critical appraisal before admitting its validity or otherwise. To start with, a proper definition of politics will not only present its pictures, it will also expose those parasitic misconceptions that have formed a gap around it and painted it black. Before arriving at a workable definition of politics in this paper, several definitive opinions of scholars were considered (Akinbade, 2004).

In some quarters, politics is considered to be 'the distribution of wealth among contending groups.' This definition focuses on the resources and struggle for its possession. Secondly, politics is viewed to be the "conduct of public affairs for private benefit". The main idea of this view aims at personal gain. However, a more appropriate definition is that of Webster International dictionary which sees politics as 'art or science of government that deals with the regulation and control of men (and resources) in a society'. This definition has two major concerns namely; regulation of men and resources for the good of the society. This is in line with Aristotle's opinion about politics. According to him, Politics is all about "the discovering, pursuing and achieving the good for the use of the society" (Carr, 2011).

From these last two definitions, it is clear that politics is not dirty in itself, because its central motive focuses on the betterment of the society. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with Nigerian politics. This has been the result of certain misconceptions, some of which are put in metaphorical pictures. Some of these are; "Politics is a game". Many people consider politics as a game that must be played vigorously. It has behind it, serious competitive spirit of winning at all cost (Ademola, 2008). As a result, it is not a new thing to see politicians engaging in any kind of antics to win the political game. These include riggings, blackmailing and assassination etc. Secondly, some people consider politics as a war that must be fought with the last drop of blood. Those who do not share the same political ideology and party are considered as enemies that must be eliminated by any means. As a result, campaigns, rallies and newspaper pages are filled with inciting and derogatory statements of politicians against one another.

Another misconception is that "politics is food". As a result, politicians both old and new go into political arena with consumerist mindset. They set aside the mandate to seek to the betterment of people's lives. Rather, they are beclouded by personal gains. They keep on looting of public treasury, building and acquiring luxurious and exotic mansions. They keep fat foreign accounts while the masses are languishing in abject poverty (Wright, 2005).

All these erroneous perspectives about politics originate from one source. That is misplacement of emphasis. Politician's attentions have shifted from people to resources. Politicians are not only guilty, for this evil, the people they govern are not also helping the situation. They encourage politicians to steal and engage in illicit behaviour. It is now common to hear people saying to politicians to make use of their chances. They say to them. "This is your time, if you can't build mansions or buy cars; you will be a fool". Through such statements, politicians are spurred to hunt for ungodly wealth. These are the dirt that has been infused into politics that are producing many destructive effects (Wilholt, 1991).

## 5. Christians and Nigerian Politics

The disheartening picture of Nigerian politics has raised a serious concern, as there are two major schools of thought on what Christian attitude should be. The first school is the negativisms, who contend that Nigerian politics is too dirty for Christians to be involved in. As a result, they assert that no sincere Christian can be engaged in politics without being contaminated and compromising his faith. Therefore, they see politics as a devilish trap that must be avoided by Christians. On the other hand, are the group that believes that all the dirt in politics can be reduced to the barest minimum if Christians are actively involved in politics. As a result, these positivists are daily embarking on mass mobilization of Christians to join politics in recent time (Rosenak, 2011).

Consequent upon this development, the political arena has been witnessing increase in the number of Christian aspirants for different positions. Many Christians have been voted and appointed to various leadership positions. However, it is sad to note that the situation of Nigerian politics has not justified involvement of Christians in it. Those aberrations that ought to have been greatly reduced or eradicated are increasing by the day (Dzurgba, 2009). Instead of being good example to the people, many Christian politicians have opened doors of doubt in people's hearts about their faith. Such questions that readily come to people's mouth include, "Is he not a Christian?" "What kind of Christian is he?" etc. These questions aim at castigating and condemning Christians in politics. They are products of disappointment from Christian politicians (Moulin-Stożek, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

Politics is good if it is approached by right people with right attitude. Many aberrations that have characterized the political landscape of Nigeria are products of erroneous interpretation of the concept and aim of politics. Christian politicians must approach politics differently from their counterparts. They are to put their faith, conviction, and spirituality first in all they do, as they rely solely on the Christian Religious teachings on values and virtues. They must rid themselves of anything that can contaminate and disparage their spirituality and faith.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Christians should be vocal and denounce like Jesus, any hypocritical practice that is not constituent with the teachings, practice and doctrine of the scriptures. Also, Christians all over the world should be the light and salt of the earth to illuminate and preserve the environment they find themselves from collapsing or decaying.

Furthermore, the political administration should be overhauled for effective administration. For example, political appointments should be based strictly on the expertise of the appointees. Square pegs should always be put in square holes.

Political leaders should desist from messing up the politics of the nation, and be encouraged to focus entirely on their constitutional responsibility of defending Nigeria from external aggression, maintaining the territorial integrity, suppressing insurrection and assisting civil authority to restore order when called upon to do so.

Christian Religious Education should be oriented towards solving social problems of the nation, and be presented as the vehicle that could transform the country to full realization of her potentials in all spheres

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