

PERCEPTION ENGINEERING IN CHRISTIANITY AND ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: PERSPECTIVE OF LUKE 23:13-25

Ayodele Samuel ADEYEYE & Fortunatus Godwin Pontifex ALABI Ph.D
Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy,
Faculty of Humanities, Redeemer's University, Ede.
ayodele4eva@yahoo.com
07067281117

Abstract:

The social order, justice, and prosperity possible in a nation depend on the kind of leadership and the electioneering processes that produce them. Elections in Nigeria have usually been fraught with irregularities both in concept and practice, such that the electorates' perception is skewed to elect incompetent and failure-bound leaders who were never the best to lead the rest of the nation. This study compared and contrasted the historical, political, and religious factors that shaped the perceptions of the Jews in Luke 23:13-25 to prefer a seditionist and slaughterer to a social crusader and saviour. This study used comparative analysis of primary data from the hermeneutical exegesis of Luke 23:13-25 and the secondary data from published works and elections in Nigeria to describe important factors that should guide the electioneering process in developing nations. This study has proven that Christian values can inform perceptions that guide electioneering through which credible leaders can emerge in a democratic nation like Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, Nigeria, Luke Perspectives.

Introduction:

Democracy and Christianity both seek to address social issues such as liberty, equality, justice, sovereignty, and peace. Democracy achieves this through electioneering, while Christianity is through the preaching of the Gospel of redemption and divine moral ethics. Elections are the processes through which political parties and their candidates emerge as legitimate leaders in a democratic government (Iyayi, 2004). Christianity and politics are two different entities that help in the growth and development of human existence, both have parallel practices, but they share common goals which are useful to human beings. This statement implies that politics and Christianity can be complementary rather than contradictory in a way Christian values can form the moral ethics of the political processes.

Perception is a multilayered interdisciplinary concept that involves and describes how issues are understood, interpreted and responded to (Freeman, 1991). Perception engineering uses the interplay between several factors to influence voting patterns among electorates. Such perception cuts across the social spectrum from class to religion, ethnic groups, race, language, vocation and gender, engineered during the electioneering process as tools for political campaigns in support of a specific ideology or policy (Javaid and Elahi, 2014).

Tutu (2017), citing Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist, said, “Christianity has its ability to influence how people understand their place in the world and also to impart meaning to the actions they undertake into heavenly kingdom.” Against this background, this paper sought to examine, through the lens of Luke 23:13-25, the factors responsible for the election of a convicted criminal and the rejection of a social reformer in the courts of Pilate by the Jewish religious leaders and its implication for electoral processes and participation by the Christians in Nigeria. This paper would guide scholars in religious education on how to respond to the dearth of political correctness and sound judgement among Nigerian electorates under the influence of corrupt Church leaders and the exploitation of the same by morally bankrupt politicians acting as their political conspirators.

Christians’ Participation in Elections in Nigeria

An election is legitimized in the New Testament through the choice of Mathias via the casting of a lot in Acts. 1:21-26, among others. Herbert Macaulay, the grandson of the foremost Anglican Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, formed the first political party in Nigeria named NNDP in 1923. Elections in Nigeria have taken place considering religion, ethnicity, and aristocracy, neglecting the principles of power-sharing, sustainable policies, competencies, and fair representation. The Church is also an accomplice in this failed electoral system in Nigeria because she promotes incompetent candidates, is influenced by financial inducement from corrupt politicians, and has failed to be the conscience of the State, an unbiased umpire, and set standards for measuring fairness, competence and performance in subsequent elections.

The large followership of Christianity in Nigeria, almost half the population, can be positively influenced by the Church to perceive elections as legitimate means to produce leaders who shall ensure social transformation, development, and economic advancement for all. In truth, a few Christians, usually technocrats than politicians, have historically contributed to the nation's political transformation. This paper examined how the Church should engage in elections and shape human perceptions for national advancement through historical and exegetical analysis of Luke 23:13-25.

Perceptions and Perspectives in Christianity towards Politics

Divergent historical and theological developments of Christianity have shaped how Christians perceive, participate and shape political electioneering processes. These views greatly impact how Christian ethics can be mobilized to enhance credible elections in Nigeria. Political participation is the citizen’s political consciousness and being involved in the process of governance, such as voting in elections, joining or forming a political party, standing as a candidate in an election, joining a pressure group, or participating in a demonstration (Fayomi and Adebayo, 2017). Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (2018), in their book, “Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology,” and other literature sources, offer insights into perspectives that have influenced Christians’ perceptions of participating in political processes. They include:

1) **The Theocratic Perspective:** Theocracy, derived from two Greek words *theos* and *cratis* meaning divine rule, is a system of government ruled according to religious laws in which religious and political authority are merged as one (Künkler, 2012). Rawls describes theocracy as a form of government under which people try to live according to a conception of the good that is strictly binding, comprehensive in range, and religious (Schoelandt and Gaus, 2019). Swaine

(2007) reported that Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian, around A.D.100, described Judaistic theocracy as adherence to a Mosaic legal code circumscribing "the whole conduct of life" that place all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God rather than affirming popular, constitutional, or individual sovereignty. Christianity developed from this concept of Judaism, a religious covenant relationship of ancient Israel with Yahweh. Ancient Israel's social, ethical, civic, and cultural structure was rooted in a theocracy, a system of government in which the rule of law is directly originated and administered by God, usually through His chosen king, priest, or prophet (Psa. 22:28).

Swaine identified two types of theocrats: the ambitious and the retiring. The ambitious theocrat participates in politics to change the society around them, while the retiring is withdrawn, secluded, and reluctant to participate in the political or public process. Examples of theocracy in contemporary history are the Church of England after the Reformation in England, the English Puritans when they reached the New World, The Roman Papacy, and the Christianization of Europe, to mention a few. Theocracy's disadvantages are encystations, radicalism, intolerance, extremism, and dogmatism. Theocracy does not align with the pluralistic and, most recently, liberal ideals of the modern or post-modern world.

2) The Messianic Perspective: This arose as a sub-component of Judaism and became pronounced in Israel during the Greco-Roman occupation of Israel, where the nation was subjected to taxation and oppression by Rome-appointed rulers. This perspective was drawn from the Prophetic Writings of the promise of a religious military-styled Messiah who would deliver Israel from Roman oppression. Even, the Apostles in Acts. 1:6 asked Jesus when their Messianic estimation of him would translate to leading a revolution against the Roman occupation. This impacted the Jewish attitude toward the Roman governors, as evident by the various revolts recorded in the scriptures (Luke 13:1; Mar. 15:7) and historical accounts. In this light, Jewish tax collectors tagged as publicans were considered siding with the oppressors (Luke 19:1-8). The Sanhedrin Council of the synagogues was an organized religious leadership under the oversight of the Roman government that championed the expectation of a Messiah that would lead a revolution against Rome. The Messianic perspective is somewhat of a liberating ideology that resulted in a defiant culture that produced radicalized rebels like Barabbas (Luke 23:18-19). Israel became misaligned with the global civilization pursued under the Roman government, which considered and demanded worship of the emperor as a deity.

3) The Apostolic Age and Apocalyptic Eschatological Perspective: The apocalyptic eschatological perspective is a separatist antithetical political ideology grounded in the expectation of the promised Kingdom of God that Jesus preached and the imminent passing away of the present age taught by the early Apostles and held by the members of the early Church. This view was characterized by a countercultural, sectarian, nonconformist approach based on the principle of Acts 5: 29 that "*we must obey God rather than any human authority.*" This perspective threw up the concept of a Kingdom where Jesus Christ is Lord and King over all, a people separated from the Greco-Roman culture but united as a community of worship according to Galatians 3:28, where "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.*" They were a movement comprising mostly of commoners who suffered martyrdom because they were perceived to threaten the political ideology that deified the Emperor. The effect of this perspective was a futuristic, encysted, and hostile Church that failed to engage the

immediate culture and thus failed to make any transformative impact within the sphere of its existence. Soon, the Church became perceived as a cultic sect ostracized by society, hunted and persecuted by Rome.

4) The Patristic Perspectives from the Early Church Fathers to the Medieval: The Constantinian model was a State-Church relationship that followed the State-sponsored persecution of the Church during the second and third centuries of the early Church. Emperor Constantine converted and legitimized all forms of religions, ended persecution, and declared Christianity as the religion of the State. The ascendancy of Constantine as the Emperor led to the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth century and authorized the Church with a newfound political power for social actions where the Church romanced and co-ruled with the Roman government. This union was exercised as a loose eschatological realization of the promised Kingdom of God. This period led to wide-scale syncretism, where the Christian faith became known for pagan symbols, rites, and rituals (Eusebius, 1973). The Church soon became congealed into an institution from a movement, developing dogmas and structures that voided her identity. The Church became corrupted and became a political ally and tool in the hand of the State.

Augustinian “Two Cities” Perspective arose as a result of the church-state crisis after the fall of Rome in 410 A.D. following the reign of Constantine. Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430CE) wrote “*The City of God*” and “*The City of Man*” in challenge to the reigning Constantinian paradigm of his day by seeking to recover and improve upon the earlier Christian traditions that taught Christians to live a radically different life from the culture and to exist in fundamental antithesis to those who rejected Christianity (VanDrunen, 2020). Augustine's thesis held that there is no overlap in love between the City of God comprising of believers who love and serve God with the unbelieving egocentric City of Man that does not glorify God. He upholds a commonality between the City of God and the City of man but also argues a "no common ground" for interdependence. This perspective echoes the apocalyptic view of the apostolic age.

Aquinas's Aristotelian Perspective held that the State was "natural" and originally essential for human fulfillment in his treatise *Summa Theologica*. He held that moral laws are a derivative of natural law, and the two are a subset of the divine law. Thomas believed that any rightly ordered society would welcome and promote the Gospel as the laws of that society, and by that, He argued that unbelieving rulers should be denied authority over believing subjects.

Gelasius's (494AD) “Two Swords” Perspective was documented in his treatise “On the Bond of Anathema” and held that the Church and State have swords of authority bequeathed by God while the sword of the Church is spiritual, that of the State is physical. It held that there exists an interdependent harmony and independent cooperation between the Church and the State with a concern that sharp institutional distinction exists between civil authorities and ecclesiastical powers. It held that as the State fulfills its purpose in governance, she must be prohibited from violating the Church’s jurisdiction while they both serve each other.

5) The Papal Imperial Perspective: The “Two-Sword Theory” was the central doctrine of the State-Church relationship during the late patristic to medieval periods. This perspective held that the Church and State are divine institutions given to set or restore social and divine order, as

expressed by Pope Gelasius I in his letter to Emperor Anastasius in 494 and later by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. During his response to the power tussle with the French king Philip IV, Pope Boniface claimed that the “Two Swords” belong to the Church and asserted that the Church reigns supreme over all things, including civic functions, though admittedly, through delegation. This principle formed and sustained the Papal imperial perspective of the medieval, which led to holy wars for land conquest, political domination, and expansionist agenda in the guise of Christianity.

6) Hermeneutical Perspectives: Several hermeneutical circles that have developed over the centuries as regards the Church-State relationship are:

Lutheran “Two Kingdom/Government” and “Natural Law” Perspectives: developed from a millennium-old Christian sociopolitical thought from Augustine’s “Two Cities” in the early 16th century. Luther recognized the State and the Church as two distinct but separate authorities. He relied on Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 to interpret the relationship between the Church and the State. Luther distinguishes between the “secular” and the “sacred” but maintained that God ordains both. Luther’s position was a reaction to the abuse of power by the religious order of the Roman Catholic Church and its reduction of faith to rituals and dogma. Luther’s theological insights into Galatians 4:7 eroded the Church’s traditional view of the established hierarchy, leading to a new idea of individualism and democratic notions of authority. This led indirectly to rebellion against instituted authority, and therein the seed of democracy was sown with the concept of individualism concerning faith and worship of God. Unlike Augustine, Luther held a pacifist worldview, using Romans 13 and Matthew 5 to restrain Christians from reacting against tyrant rulers.

Anabaptism: emerged in Switzerland in the early 16th century and was driven by an ideology of a true and authentic first-century church that sought to enforce Christianity through politics using an indirect and negative approach against the dominant state powers, social structures, and processes (Jooste, 2013). The Anabaptists see the Church as an instrument for social change, with Jesus as the model of radical political action in a world governed by a corrupt state, thereby politicising the cross (Hunter, 2010). They championed independence from the State to avoid the so-called Constantinian error by disobedience to authorities, civil rules, and dissociation from anything by the State. Anabaptists denied the divine legitimacy of the State as held by Lutherans and used the idea of Christian liberty as a pretence for civil disobedience.

Calvinist and Neo-Calvinist “Two Kingdom” Perspective: arising in the 16th century from John Calvin and 19th century by Abraham Kuyper is a Reformed Theology doctrine rooted in Augustine of Hippo’s hermeneutical circle. Central to this approach is the idea that Christianity is not world-fleeing but world-transformative and world-formative. Calvinism holds that the Church and the State are two different institutions ordained and governed by God with different jurisdictions and authority. While natural laws govern the latter, the former is governed by the scriptures to serve different purposes towards differing ends (John Calvin: Institute of Christian Religion, 2006). Certainly, Calvinism holds that the Church and the State have contrasting ethics by which they cannot violate each other’s jurisdiction. Ernst Troeltsch (1931) describes Neo-Calvinism as a systematic endeavour to mould the life of society as a whole on the principle that the Church ought to be interested in all sides of life, including politics. Chris Gousmett (1999) summarised Neo-Calvinist’s view as the task of the Christian to see the grace of God shape the

society and overcome the effects of human sin in the sense that redemption is not simply personal but comprehensive to include the restoration of all that has been distorted and abused by humankind, whether persons, or social structures, or systems of thought.

An “Accommodationist” Perspective: focuses on Romans 13 and interprets apocalypses in reading the New Testament. Accommodationists are found among the Protestants of the United States, following the American Civil War, regarding the separation of State and Church, that the government should “accommodate” religious needs and the desires of religious institutions whenever they form a majority within a given locality. In contrast, the government is prohibited from forming a national Church.

7) Modernist, Post-Modernistic, Liberal and Humanistic Perspectives: Modernism is rooted in the 18th century Enlightenment that offered liberation from all forms of tyranny, whether in politics, economy, or religion, over the human mind. Humanity in modernism seeks to engender a liberal society that promotes free, open, tolerant, and pluralist social order in speech, religious orientation, free economy, the rule of law, and democratic political process. This ideology holds that a limited common morality exists within religious pluralism to the end, generating tension between idealism and relativism. This view holds a “separatist” view that the Church must be separated from the State.

Exegetical Understanding of Luke 23:18-25

The Gospel Narratives and the Historical Background of the Trial of Jesus: The Gospels agree on the historical accounts of the trial of Jesus described from varying perspectives. The Gospels, through Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:1-15, to John 18:28-40, agree with Luke 23:6-25 on the trial of Jesus and the significant events that happened that night. The Gospels all agree that Caiaphas (the high priest) and the Sanhedrin ultimately condemned Jesus for alleged blasphemy. When Jesus was cross-examined before Caiaphas about whether he claimed to be the Messiah, he answered, "*I am*" according to Mark 14:62; "*You have said so*" in Matthew 26:64; "*If I tell you, you will not believe*" in Luke 22:67-8; and "*You say that I am*" in John 19:7.

Mark describes two separate proceedings, one with the Jewish leaders and the other before Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect for Judea. Matthew and John's accounts support Mark's two-trial version, but only Luke added a third proceeding where Pilate transferred the hearing to Herod of Antipas, citing jurisdictional reasons. Non-Christian surviving historical accounts of the late first century were that of the Roman historian Tacitus, who wrote, "Christus (Jesus) suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of Pontius Pilate." Another was by a Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who wrote that "Jesus, a wise man, performer of marvellous feats and a teacher who attracted many Jews and many Greeks and called the Christ was sentenced to die on the cross by Pilate having been urged to do so by the noblest of our citizens."

Distinctive in Luke's Account of Jesus Trial: Luke's account is entirely distinct from the other Gospels while nearly allied to them in substance. In a few points, it approaches John closely, as evident between Luke 23:17-18 and John 18:39-40. Only Luke attempted to report the political manoeuvre between Pilate and Herod Antipas (Luke 23:5-7), establishing *prima facie* to interpreting Luke 23:13-25 in the light of political discourse.

Analysis of Selected Commentaries on the Periscope of Luke 23:1-25: Four Commentaries were chosen for this study because of the diverse approaches from which they exegete the text, their representation within various hermeneutical circles, and the reading of the periscope within the political context. This study relied on the historical, contextual, literary, and critical hermeneutical approaches of Greek Testament, Critical Exegetical Commentary by Henry Alford, Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry, Bell's Commentary by Brian Bell, and Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. The authors' varying theological schools of thought seem to converge on the exegesis of Luke 23:13-25. The Commentaries exegete the text against the political background of the event, the persons of Pilate, Herod, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish mob, Jesus, and Barabbas as thus:

The Political Background: Jewish historian Josephus and Philo of Alexandria recorded that Emperor Tiberius appointed Pilate in his thirties as governor in A.D. 26 over Judaea and Samaria, almost half of the whole of Israel. Pilate fell out with the Jews when he attempted to erect Tiberius insignia in Jerusalem and the forceful hijack of temple collections to build an aqueduct against which the Jews rebelled. The resulting riot recorded in Luke 13:1 resulted in a great massacre. The Jews under Roman occupation had a fair degree of religious freedom of self-government led by the Sanhedrin, comprising Jewish religious leaders from the high priest to the rabbis and elders of the synagogues. However, death sentences could not be carried out without the permission of the Roman governor.

Pilate and Herod Antipas: While Pilate was Roman, Herod Antipas was Jewish and a grandson of Herod the Great, who killed infant male children. Herod's antecedent was immorality and cruelty manifest by the seizing of Herodias and the beheading of John the Baptist. Pilate was a rash corrupt politician who would do anything for power, position, or popularity; the reason for his weak defence of the innocence of Jesus before the blood-thirsty Sanhedrin. These two men were adjudicated in the trial of Jesus, and it is worthy of note that being sworn enemies, they soon became allies in the trial of Jesus (vs. 12-16). Herod displayed a diplomatic maneuver common with politicians when he declined the hearing of a Jesus case that fell within his jurisdiction in Galilee but referred the same to Pilate in Judaea (Luke 23:5-7). Herod Antipas considered Jesus's kingship claim a treasonable offence but sought Pilate's sentencing to kill Jesus. Herod Antipas decided to transfer Jesus' trial to Pilate because he desired to acquit Jesus, an action that would make him instigate a petition to Rome to see him deposed and his domain supposedly handed over to him. Three times, Pilate sort to acquit Jesus (vs. 4, 15, 22) for he found no offence in him.

The Sanhedrin: was the highest ruling authority presided over by the high priest. Josephus recorded that they had seventy-one golden thrones in the Temple court from where they administered religious and social customs over the nation. Their charge against Jesus was that of religious blasphemy that he claimed to be the Son of God and that of a political seditious man that incited the people to reject pay taxes (vs. 2, 10-14). The high priest saw a threat in Jesus that undermined his wealth, comfort, and power of his aristocratic rule over the nation and his collaborationist agenda with the occupying Roman government. They played the ethnic game of referring to Jesus as a Galilean before Pilate, for Galilee was known as the bed of seditious men (vs. 5-6). The Sanhedrin influenced the perception of the Jewish mob, as they *stood and vehemently accused him* (vs. 10), to see Jesus as offensive to customary and religious traditions

and also pressured (vs. 23 - insistent – *epikeimai* –the pressure of a violent tempest or to press upon) Pilate that they would petition him at Rome as an enemy to the Emperor if he failed to accede to their request (John 19:12).

The Jewish mob (vs. 1, 4, 13, 23): The mob’s violent insistence on executing an innocent man broke Pilate’s convictions. He *gave a sentence that it should be as they required* (Luk. 23:24). This depicts the power of the people's will. This suggests strongly that the ideology that predominates in a society determines the force and belief towards which the people drift. The mob’s worldview is as neutral as the perception projected on them through the ideological position of the Sanhedrin. This strongly suggests how leadership impacts and forms followers' perception of right-wrong, normal-abnormal, or good-bad. Cambridge Commentary noted that if the phrase (*all at once*) in verse 18 written as *plethei* is read as *pamplthei* as in Matthew 27:20, it will be interpreted as ‘*they (the priests) called aloud to the multitude.*’ This implies that the choice of Barabbas by the mob was not spontaneous; the religious leaders premeditated it. Therefore, the guilt of Christ's condemnation and crucifixion should be cast on the Priests because it was solely due to their influence on the mob, according to Mark 15:11.

The Acquittal and Election of Barabbas versus Jesus: Luke 23:25a - *He released to them that for sedition and murder, he was cast into prison.* Barabbas, a sociopath and a villain, won an election against Jesus, a social crusader and reformer in the courts of Pilate. This is the mockery of common sense, an aberration of social norms, and a misappropriation of the civic power of the people. Ultimately, it becomes obvious that the people will always get the kind of leader they deserve (vs. 25a...*him they had desired*). The mob rejected the saviour, philanthropist, and deliverer (...*delivered Jesus to their will* – vs. 25b). Pilate expected that the mob would submit to reasoning and critical thinking to prefer Christ to Barabbas. Hence, he would have been more resolute, but the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes to demand Barabbas' acquittal and Jesus' condemnation. This is typical of developing nations where reasoning does not always prevail in any given election above sentiments and biases. This remains an ironic reality that Nigeria experiences every election year, except for a few.

Analogical Exegesis of Luke 23:13-15 and Nigeria Christians’ Perception in Elections:

Most commentaries and theologians have traditionally read the redemptive work of Jesus into the Gospels records of the trial of Jesus. However, the selected commentaries agree that there is a political twist to the trials and eventual execution of Jesus by Pontius Pilate. It was a contest between the rule of law and morality versus the hegemonic political interest of religious elites with the weak electoral system led by an indecisive corrupt umpire. The voting masses were influenced to elect the notorious criminals whom the Gospels rendered as a man of unworthy reputation – a robber, murderer, and seditionist (Luke 23:19, John 18:40). Sharp similarities, therefore, exist between the elections staged in the court of Pilate and most elections conducted in modern democratic nations. This study draws this analogy along the following contemplation: Pilate and Herod represent the two faces of the same coin. Pilate is a symbol of an incompetent, corrupt electoral system set up by Herod, a symbol of an insincere insecure political ruling class who sought to pervert justice and perpetuate themselves in elected offices. Pilate is the electoral officers who overturn elections for the greed of illicit gains to the desire of their cronies who appointed them. Herod is the politician who has mastered the craft of visiting religious leaders during the election campaign to mobilize unsuspecting Christians who religiously follow the

opinions of their leaders. As repeatedly observed, these politicians fail to deliver on their promises and will never return to the Churches or listen to the religious following their successful elections until another time of electioneering campaigns.

The mob represents the masses who determine the kind of leadership they deserve through their voting choices. Largely because religion is fundamental to human reasoning, and as a more likely emotional issue such as voting in an election, the masses are easily swayed by popular opinions, especially religious leaders with whom they share sentimental biases. The masses are unlikely to see through the shenanigans of the Church leaders' unholy romance with the political elites or their selfish interests projected to influence their followers' perceptions. The masses are vulnerable to misrepresentations and misgivings of the political actors, who are masters at their craft of shaping public perceptions, and here comes the sacred duty of the Church leaders and Christians' participation in the electioneering processes.

The Sanhedrin represents Christianity and the Church today. While the Church in its entirety may not be a representation of Christianity, she holds a vantage position as the representation of Christ, the conscience of the State, and the soul of the society. The Sanhedrin were overtly egocentric and aristocratic to protect their political interest. Thus, they were threatened by the rising popularity of Jesus at the expense of the welfare of the masses. They stopped being shepherds but sided with robbers to fleece the flock, and they sided with the oppressors to keep their followers bound under the yoke of the tyrants. They were selfish leaders who cared only about their political correctness but cared less once their interests and positions of influence were secured. They recalibrated the truth to mislead their sheepish followers. Church leaders have traded the truth for political expediency and garbed their appetite for filthy lucre with empty religious rituals.

Barabbas and Jesus represent the Two Cities or the Two Kingdoms concepts espoused by Augustine and John Calvin. Notably, the City of God/Kingdom of God is eternal, divine, and spiritual, and the source of the City of Man/Kingdom of this world is temporal, earthly, and natural (Luke 23:3, John 19:10-11). Even though Barabbas would likely triumph in elections held in the courts of wicked men, Jesus, the truth, must contend in integrity and loyalty against the worst possible wicked leadership of the nation. As Jesus withstood the wicked Jewish rulers (Luke 22:52-53) and loaned a lone voice amid voices against the truth, in the same vein must the Church stand as the vanguard of truth to herald wholesome perspectives that can form how the masses are guided towards elections.

Reflections on Luke 23:13-25 and its implications for Elections and Religious Education in Nigeria

- Christianity is beyond the communal living of the believers within the Church but about influencing the culture with ethics of God's kingdom in Christ Jesus. In relating with the State, Christians are to practically demonstrate the peace and order of God's Kingdom as an alternative to the politics of wickedness and oppression.
- The Church should profess and project the moral ethics enshrined in the life and teachings of Jesus that espouse selfless leadership, equity, equality, compassion for the poor, and humanity especially among the religious educators who shape the moral fibre of the society.

- Christianity can engage the culture through civic platforms such as sensitisation of adherents and citizens at large towards ethical and political processes that can engender national formation, integration, development, and transformation especially through religious education platforms.
- **Recommendations**
- Christians are to see participation in the socio-political activities of the nation as a God-given responsibility in obedience to the great commission of influencing the earth with the Gospel of Jesus and, more importantly, as partners with God in rebuilding the earth. As Jesus paid the ultimate price, Christians should be willing to confront injustice and malpractices before, during, and after electioneering processes as the conscience of the State.
- Christians must identify the dichotomies between the sacred and secular only in the light of the common good and what is fitting for life because the God we worship is the source of life itself. Christians must not attempt to Christianize the State like Wilberforce during slavery abolition, Desmond Tutu during post-apartheid reconciliation, Martin Luther King against racial discrimination, or Nelson Mandela against the apartheid movement of South Africa.

References

- Alford, H. (1863-1878). *Commentary on Luke 23: Alford's Greek Testament Critical Exegetical Commentary*. Retrieved from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/hac/luke-23.html>.
- Barclay, W. (1956-1959). *Commentary on Luke 23:4: William Barclay's Daily Study Bible*. Retrieved from <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dsb/luke-23.html>.
- Bell, B. (2017). *Commentary on Luke 23: Bell's Commentary*. Retrieved from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/cbb/luke-23.html>.
- Calvin, J. (2006). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Retrieved from The Library of Christian Classics Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. (1896) *Commentary on Luke 23*. Retrieved from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/cgt/luke-23.html>.
- Ernst, T. (1931). *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. New York: Macmillan.
- Eusebius, (1973). *Ecclesiastical History II, trans. J.E.L. Oulton*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Gousmett, C. (1999) *Christianity and Politics: A Reformational Perspective*. Retrieved from www.alloflifereedemed.co.uk/Gousmett/CGChristianityPolitics.pdf
- Henry, M. (1990). *Complete Commentary on Luke 23: Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers, ISBN 9780943575322. Freeman, W. J. (1991). The Physiology of Perception. *Scientific American*, 264(2), 78-85.
- Javaid, U. and Elahi, U. (2014). Patterns of Political Perceptions, Attitudes and Voting Behaviour: Influence of Media. *Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 29(2), 363-378.
- Künkler, M. (2012). "Theocracy" in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, Princeton University Press, 547-549.
- Fayomi, O.O. Adebayo, G.T. (2017). Political participation and Political citizenship in Olorunfoba, S.O. and Falola T. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development*, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95232-8_32, Springer, ISBN 9781349952328, 537-580.

- Hunter, J. D. (2010). *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Iyayi, F. (2004). "Conduct of Elections and Electoral Practices in Nigeria." Paper delivered at the NBA Conference in Abuja.
- Jooste, S. M. (2013) *Recovering the Calvin of "Two Kingdoms"? A Historical-Theological Inquiry In The Light Of Church-State Discourse In South Africa*. Dissertation presented for Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University.
- Peter, S. and Cavanaugh, W. T. (2018). *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 2nd Ed. Wiley, ISBN 0-119-13373-4.
- Schoelandt, C. V. and Gaus, G. (2019). *John Rawls's Political Liberalism* in Becker, K. and Thomson, I. D (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy (1945–2015)*, Cambridge University Press, 287 – 296.
- Tutu, O. D. (2017). *Biblical Perspective on Christians Participation in Politics*, Worldwide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, e-ISSN: 2454-6615.
- VanDrunen, D. (2020). *Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World*. Zondervan Academic, ISBN: 0310108845.