PERCEPTION ENGINEERING IN CHRISTIANITY AND DECLARATION OF ELECTION RESULTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Without politics there can be no election, and in any election there must be the declaration of results of the winner to make such an election a conclusive one. The success of any election depends on efficient planning and its conduct by the electoral body that has been saddled with these responsibilities by an act of the government. How far the electoral umpire has been able to perform the responsibility of conducting free, fair, and credible elections that culminated in the declaration of the result of any particular election is a food for thought especially by Christians in all of Nigeria's post independent elections. Primary and secondary data of Nigeria's post independent election was adopted in forming the position of this paper. Politics helps the populace to know once right, it educates us on a fundamental part of our society and has helped to understand that if we engage in political processes of which election declaration is part of the processes, then every individual really does have the opportunity to change the world. Therefore Christians should not shy away from politics to the point of election declaration.

Keywords: Nigeria Politics, Electoral body, Elections, Collation, Declaration of results.

Introduction
Periodic credible, free and fair elections constitute one of the most significant institutions of liberal and participatory democracy. Elections involve a democratic process of choosing who governs a particular group, society or state. As a critical aspect of democracy, elections can take different forms depending on what the polity in question deem appropriate for use (Robert & Obioha, 2005). The beginning of Electoral bodies in Nigeria can be traced to the period before independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established to conduct 1959 elections. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) established in 1960 conducted the immediate post-independence Federal and regional elections of 1964 and 1965 respectively.

The electoral body was however dissolved after the military coup d'état of 1966. In 1978, a new Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was constituted by the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. FEDECO conducted the elections of 1979 which ushered in the second Republic and also conducted the general elections of 1983. The election that FEDECO conducted in 1983 was the last as another military *coup d'état* truncated democracy on the eve of 1984. In 1991, General Babangida established the National Electoral Commission (NEC) which was dissolved in 1993. Another electoral body National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) was established by General Sanni Abacha which also conducted another set of elections; from Local Government Councils to National Assembly.

In 1998, General Abdusalam Abubakar's Administration dissolved NECON and established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) the electoral body that still sees to electioneering activities till date. In the absence of politics, there can be no election and in any election there must be declaration of results else, election exercise without result declaration is an exercise in futility. The success of any election depends on efficient planning and its conduct i.e. accreditation of voters, vote counting, collation and declaration of results.

Nigeria constitution empowered the creation of Electoral body to see to the conduct of free, fair and credible election that will produce the winner of the election. As stated above, any election that can be said to be credible, free and fair must have gone through processes. Failure to complete the collation and transmission of election results in a quick, transparent, and accurate manner can jeopardize public confidence and the credibility of the elections and will mostly affect whether candidates and political parties accept the final results. There are situations when the integrity of a well-run electoral process is severely compromised because of problems experienced during collation and declaration of result, which are therefore critical moments that require proper care and attention of all and sundry. This is the final step in the elections. It is the official announcement of election results by the electoral administrators. The announcement of results is a mandatory legal requirement of the electoral process. To safeguard integrity, the results must be accurate and reflect the total votes, taking into consideration decisions on disputed ballots.

Conception of religion
Religion is a shared collections of transcendental beliefs that have been passed from believers to converts that are held by adherents to be actively meaningful and serious and based on (1) formally documented doctrine (organized religion), (2) established cultural practices (folk religion) and has been defined by different people based on their philosophy, background and faith. For the purpose of this paper, religion is defined in five broad ways. Religion is a belief in God and spiritual beings, the life of God in the human soul and as an awesome and attractive mystery. Religion is living a good moral life and accepting all our duties as divine commands. It is what a man does with his/her solitariness, what a person does in relation with his or her being that is outside of the person and a person's ultimate concern (Streng, Lioyd & Allen 1973). Religion is seeking comfort in a world of terrifying wilderness, as some kind of profound inner experience and as a universal obsessive neurosis. Religion is the opium of the people and as conservation of values. No adequate definition has been found for religion as any definition is an experience.

Perception Engineering in Religion.
Perception engineering in religion examines the degree of religiosity of student, teachers and their nationalism and scientific background. Religious belief, whether Christian or Muslim or indigenous religion has significant impact. The more religious a man is, the greater weight he puts on culture and society versus science, and their support of the freedom of inquiry and of the tentativeness of science declined. It has been confirmed that Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world. Therefore it should not be a surprise that Nigerian elections will be greatly influenced by religion. The politicians seek the prayers of religious clerics to win elections, that the influence of religion has negative impact on Nigeria elections is clear and cannot be disputed.

A religious experience
A religious experience is a subjective experience which is interpreted with a religious framework. The concept originated in 19th Century, as a defense against the growing Nationalism of Western society. Some religious and mystical traditions see religious experience (particularly the knowledge which comes with them) as revelations caused by divine agency rather than ordinary natural process. They are considered real encounters with God or gods, or real contact with higher order realities of which human are not ordinarily aware. Skeptics may hold that religious experience is an evolved feature of the human brain amenable to normal scientific study. This philosophical theory has been categorized by scholar as (commonalities and differences between religious experiences across different culture). Different kinds of methods and technology have been used to have credible elections in Nigeria.

Election: the use of technology in Nigeria elections

Nigeria's elections have witnessed the use of different technology in order to conduct a credible election that will be free and fair to her citizens. The latest being the Bimodal Verification Accreditation System (BVAS). The BVAS Machine largely use to carry out accreditation of voters but failed to carry out real transmission for accurate results to be declared.

1. INEC has started using BVAS (Bimodal Verification Accreditation System) in the General Elections. It has replaced the Smart Card Reader used in previous General Elections and this has significant effect on the electoral process and the integration of technology into various elements of the Electoral System Value Chain.

2. It means before anyone with a PVC is allowed to cast his vote – the person must be accredited with the help of the BVAS Machine. If the person is not accredited, he will not be allowed to vote.

3. The BVAS accreditation will be through thumbprint or facial expression. It means, once a voter's thumb is placed on the machine and approved such person's information on the INEC portal will pop up. If the thumbprint doesn't work, the BVAS machine will be placed across the person's for facial recognition by the machine, the person's information will pop up and such voter will be accredited to vote.

4. The advantage of the BVAS is that it reduces rigging and electoral malpractices considerably. Now, a voter must be verified that he is the owner of the card before he will be accredited to vote. It is now one man, one vote.

This BVAS Machine has been used in different bye and state elections i.e. Delta State, Anambra State Gubernatorial Elections 2021, FCT Council elections in February, and the recently concluded Ekiti State and Osun State Gubernatorial Elections in June and July 2022 respectively.

Major problems with the BVAS machine

Running through research on the functionality of the BVAS Machine through the reports received from the places it has been used so far for elections. This issue affected particularly the aged people and those whose PVCs were given in 2010/2011, 2014/2015. The BVAS couldn't successfully connect their present images with the ones uploaded years back during the registration processes.
Those that registered for PVC twice or more also had challenge, because the portal will after several trials bring one out of many for them. There is need to put a preventive measure in place so that our people won't be disqualified in the 2023 General Elections.

Those whose cards were given 2010/2011, 2014/2015, 2018/2019 were to do revalidation which means they should upload their current images on the INEC Registration Portal. The voter's Card 2010/2011 does not expire it is permanent. No new card would be given after revalidation, voters were only required to upload recent picture for accreditation purpose in the coming elections. Nigeria is undoubted one of the most religious countries in the world. Christian and Muslim are the two dominant religions in Nigeria with a population of over 200 million. Nigeria is also the most populous black nations (Pew research centre 2010) reported that 49.3 percent of Nigeria's population was Christian 48.8 percent was Muslim and 1.9 percent were followers of indigenous and other religious or unaffiliated.

Elections in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria can have many risks accompanying it such as violence, corruptions, intimidation and deceit. History has proved it right that Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world; it is therefore not surprising that its elections will be greatly influenced by religion. There are strong evidences that it is not only corruption, violence and intimidation that have negative influences on our politics and politicians, the influence of religion in Nigeria elections cannot be disputed.
Nigeria being the ninth most religious people in the world (Onabajo, 2016), these religious groups are mostly Muslims dominated in the North and Christians dominated in the Southern regions of

Nigeria (Sampson, 2014). According to (Adamo 2015): "Religion has been a potent force in Nigeria society. It is, therefore incontrovertible that it must have been a serious factor in every state of Nigeria elections. Religion has had some inputs whether covertly or overtly"

Definitely, all aspects of society are influenced by religion e.g. marriage, home, business, institutions, educational institutions and others; these institutions have cleared the misunderstanding that religion is only limited to contact of the supernatural forces, cosmic forces and expression of the deity (Familusi, 2012). Before the evolution of political parties during the colonial period, selection had been in practice in what we call Nigeria today. Nigerians has not been writing much on religious influence on Nigeria elections.

Below are the Charts showing declaration of some Election results
Election results in Nigeria 1993 – 2011
(Source: https://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html)

12 June 1993 Presidential Election

Candidate (Party)	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (SDP)	8,341,309	58.36%
Bashir Othman Tofa (NRC)	5,952,087	41.64%

*Soon after the Presidential Elections, the Babangida administration annulled the election results. This led to his resignation after widespread protests and an Interim National Government, led by Ernest Shonekan took over power.

25 April 1998 National Assembly Election

Party	Senate	House of Representatives
	Number of Seats (80)	Number of Seats (282)
United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP)	61	229
Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN)	9	39
Congress for National Consensus (CNC)	6	6
Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM)	2	4
National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN)	2	4

*These elections were held during the military regime of General Sani Abacha in which all political parties participating were affiliated with the government. The results above are based on figures released by the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) and are likely incomplete. Voter turnout was extremely low and the result was soon afterwrds annulled by the authorities.

20 February 1999 National Assembly Election

Party	Senate		House of Representatives	
	% of Votes	Number of Seats (109)	% of Votes	Number of Seats (360)
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	56.4%	59	57.1%	206
All People's Party (APP)	31.2%	29	30.6%	74
Alliance for Democracy (AD)	12.4%	20	12.4%	68
Vacant/Undeclared Seats	-	1	-	12

27 February 1999 Presidential Election

Candidate (Party) [Coalition]	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP)	18,738,154	62.78%
Olu Falae (AD) [AD-APP]	11,110,287	37.22%

12 April 2003 National Assembly Election

Party	Senate			House of Representatives		
	Number of Votes	% of Votes	Number of Seats (109)	Number of Votes	% of Votes	Number of Seats (360)
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	15,585,538	53.69%	76	15,927,807	54.49%	223
All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)	8,091,783	27.87%	27	8,021,531	27.44%	96
Alliance for Democracy (AD)	2,828,082	9.74%	6	2,711,972	9.28%	34
United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP)	789,705	2.72%	-	803,432	2.75%	2
National Democratic Party (NDP)	459,462	1.58%	-	561,161	1.92%	1
All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)	429,073	1.48%	-	397,147	1.36%	2
People's Redemption Party (PRP)	204,929	0.71%	-	222,938	0.76%	1
Others	641,535	2.21%	-	587,082	2.01%	-
Vacant	-	-	-	-	-	1

19 April 2003 Presidential Election

Candidate (Party)	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP)	24,456,140	61.94%
Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP)	12,710,022	32.19%
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (APGA)	1,297,445	3.29%
Jim Nwobodo (UNPP)	169,609	0.43%
GaniFawehimi (NCP)	161,333	0.41%
Sarah Jubril (PAC)	157,560	0.40%
Ike Nwachukwu (NDP)	132,997	0.34%
Christopher Okotie (JP)	119,547	0.30%
Balarabe Musa (PRP)	100,765	0.26%
Arthur Nwankwo (PMP)	57,720	0.15%
Emmanuel Okereke (APLP)	26,921	0.07%
KaluIdikaKalu (NNPP)	23,830	0.06%
Muhammadu Dikko Yusuf (MDJ)	21,403	0.05%
YahayaNdu (ARP)	11,565	0.03%

Abayomi Ferreira (DA)	6,727	0.02%
Tunji Braithwaite (NAP)	6,932	0.02%
IheanyichukwuNnaji (BNPP)	5,987	0.02%
OlapadeAgoro (NAC)	5,756	0.01%
Pere Ajuwa (LDPN)	4,473	0.01%
MojisolaAdekunle Obasanjo (MMN)	3,757	0.01%

21 April 2007 Presidential Election

Candidate (Party)	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (PDP)	24,638,063	69.60%
Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP)	6,605,299	18.66%
AtikuAbubakar (AC)	2,637,848	7.45%
Orji UzorKalu (PPA)	608,803	1.72%
AttahiruBafarawa (DPP)	289,224	0.82%
ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu (APGA)	155,947	0.44%
Pere Ajuwa (AD)	89,241	0.25%
Christopher Okotie (FRESH)	74,049	0.21%
Patrick Utomi (ADC)	50,849	0.14%
AsakarawonOlapere (NPC)	33,771	0.10%
Ambrose Owuru (HDP)	28,519	0.08%
Arthur Nwankwo (PMP)	24,164	0.07%
Emmanuel Okereke (ALP)	22,677	0.06%
Lawrence Adedoyin (APS)	22,409	0.06%
AliyuHabuFari (NDP)	21,974	0.06%
Galtima Liman (NNPP)	21,665	0.06%
Maxi Okwu (CPP)	14,027	0.04%
Sunny Okogwu (RPN)	13,566	0.04%
IheanyichukwuNnaji (BNPP)	11,705	0.03%
OsagieObayuwana (NCP)	8,229	0.02%
OlapadeAgoro (NAC)	5,752	0.02%
Akpone Solomon (NMDP)	5,664	0.02%
Isa Odidi (ND)	5,408	0.02%
AminuAbubakar (NUP)	4,355	0.01%
MojisolaAdekunle Obasanjo (MMN)	4,309	0.01%

*The figures in the table are based on final results announced by Maurice Iwu, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 23 April 2007. Final results were also published on the INEC website, but the figures differ from those in the table above. A side-by-side comparison of the two sets of election results can be found.

21 April 2007 National Assembly Election

Party	Senate	House of Representatives
	Number of Seats	Number of Seats (360)

	(109)	
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	87	263
All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)	14	63
Action Congress (AC)	6	30
Progressive People's Alliance (PPA)	1	3
Accord Party (ACCORD)	1	-
Labour Party (LP)	-	1

April 2011 National Assembly Election*

Party	Senate	House of Representatives
	Number of Seats (109)	Number of Seats (360)
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	45	123
Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	13	47
All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)	7	25
Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	5	30
Others	4	9

*Preliminary (incomplete) results, as posted on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) website.
*Due to logistical problems, elections in 15 Senatorial and 48 House constituencies took place on 26 April 2011.

16 April 2011 Presidential Election

Candidate (Party)	Number of Votes	% of Votes
Goodluck Jonathan (PDP)	22,495,187	58.89%
Muhammadu Buhari (CPC)	12,214,853	31.98%
NuhuRibadu (ACN)	2,079,151	5.41%
Ibrahim Shekarau (ANPP)	917,012	2.40%
Mahmud Waziri (PDC)	82,243	0.21%
NwadikeChikezie (PMP)	56,248	0.15%
Lawson Aroh (PPP)	54,203	0.14%
Peter Nwangwu (ADC)	51,682	0.14%
IheanyichukwuNnaji (BNPP)	47,272	0.12%
Christopher Okotie (FRESH)	34,331	0.09%
Dele Momodu (NCP)	26,376	0.07%
Solomon Akpona (NMDP)	25,938	0.07%
Lawrence Adedoyin (APS)	23,740	0.06%
EbitiNdok (UNPD)	21,203	0.06%
John Dara (NTP)	19,744	0.05%
Rasheed Shitta-Bey (MPPP)	16,492	0.04%
YahayaNdu (ARP)	12,264	0.03%
Ambrose Owuru (HDP)	12,023	0.03%

| Patrick Utomi (SDMP) | 11,544 | 0.03% |
| Christopher Nwaokobia (LDPN) | 8,472 | 0.02% |

Collation and Declaration procedures

The collation and declaration of election results were done at the following levels depending on the type of election:

    (a) Registration Area – (Collation for all Results).
    (b) Local Government Area – (Collation for all Results).
    (c) State Constituency – (Collation and Declaration of State House of Assembly Election).
    (d) Federal Constituency – (Collation and Declaration of House of Representatives Election).
    (e) Senatorial District (Collation and Declaration for Senatorial District Elections).
    (f) Governorship (Collation and Declaration for Governorship Election).
    (g) Presidential (Collation and Declaration for Presidential Election).

In determining the Electoral two third (2/3) requirement for candidates contesting for Executive positions, such as the Presidents, Governor of a State, Chairman of Council (in case of the FCT), the returning Officer was guided by the approved computation template for calculating the Electoral two third (2/3) for the Constituency.

Declaration of election results

This is the final step in the elections. It is the official announcements of election results by the electoral administrators. The announcement of result is a mandatory legal requirement of the electoral process. To safeguard integrity, the results must accurately reflect the total votes, taking into accounts the total votes and disputed ballots. A candidate for a contested election to any political office would be declared a winner by the provision of Electoral Law Act 2022 (as Ammended). Results are declared at various stages depending on the type of election.

In elections, all voters collectively decide on a person to fill an office. An election is a process which includes registration, nomination, voting, and the manner in which the votes are to be counted and the result made known. The electoral body overseeing elections counts all ballots cast and certifies the results of an election. The electoral body after completing the canvass of the election returns determines and declares the results of the elections. The result must be declared on the date and at the hour and place specified in the notice of election.

The canvass of election returns consists of the opening and examination of ballots. A statement return shows the result of the election within the territorial unit composed of the smaller units. The canvass is made by the electoral body, where the result can be officially known. The term canvass means to examine in detail. The election process is subject to scrutiny or investigation. Usually, the county canvasing board and the state board of elections canvassed the returns of the primary election.

The declaration of the election result conveys to the voters the person they have selected for the office. Additionally, through declaration all elected candidates know that they are entitled to the offices. An election declaration constitutes conclusive evidence of the election and title of the holder to the office until reversed or set aside by a court.

The legislature provides the manner in which the result of an election should be determined and declared. When a statute provides the process by which to hold an election, the stature is to be strictly obeyed. The statutes impose on the board of canvassers or other designated officer the duty of declaring the result of election. Additionally, the board of canvassers issues a certificate of election. Usually, state laws prescribe the form by which to declare results. A certificate of election is a formal document that grants the holder the rights and privileges of holding elected office.

The form of certificate is generally laid down in each statute. However, irregularity in form is not a sufficient ground to declare an election void. Such declaration should be in writing and should be signed by at least a majority of the members of the board. A declaration must bear the date of the day upon which it is made. Additionally, the board must post a copy of declaration in a conspicuous place in its office. The board shall keep such copy posted for a period of at least five days. The particulars regarding the form and particulars differ with each state.

The duty of declaring the result of an election and of issuing a certificate of election officials rests with the electoral body. A certificate of election is conclusive as to the result of an election until set aside or vacated by law. However, the declaration of the electoral body of the result of an election as judicially determined and the certificate issued are not conclusive. The declaration is taken as *prima facie* accurate. The certificate of election is merely *prima facie* evidence as to the result.

In a proper proceeding, the authorities may go behind the certificate and ascertain the real facts. Moreover, in the case of a direct contest of proceeding, the relator can go behind the certificate. The court is empowered to correct mistakes of the canvassing officers. However, court cannot go behind their returns and receive evidence as to identification of voters. The declared result is known to the public by promulgation. Promulgation is to make known or to announce officially and formally the result to the public.

One of the most important goals of process philosophy is to integrate the truths of science with the truths of religion. It is now widely held in intellectual circles that religion is not a truth providing enterprise. Religious beliefs are held to be either non-cognitive meaning that they are neither true nor false because they do not really intend to make any factual assertions about reality or simply false. In either case, religious beliefs would not provide any truths to be integrated with the truths provided by science. The main reason for assuming that religious experience provides no distinctive truths about the nature of reality is, as we have seen, the acceptance of naturalism.

Going down memory lane, any election declaration that does not go down well with the electorates and that the peoples language through the ballots are doctored either by the electoral body, the security agents or the government in power normally resulted to violent and the attendant loss of lives and properties. This violence can be from the polling unit, ward level, local government level, state level and federal level. Examples of these violence abounded in 1964, 1966 regional elections. Also the post independence elections 1983, 1993, 2011 elections to mentioned but few that witnessed nationwide violence.

Recommendations and Conclusion
Politics is not to be taken as dirty games by Christians any longer because it is not the act that is dirty, but the practitioners who stained the system. If Christians join politics not as political crowd but as practitioners and also practice it as it supposed to be, supervising role will be given to clean the dirtiness of the system. Christian should jettison their apathy to politics as dirty game. Church leaders should step up their enlightenment efforts for their congregation on the need to join the grassroots politics. It is high time that Christians should be involved in all processes of elections in the country. Politics is a game of number, the church has the numbers in the congregation to change the game of politics and election as the congregations are large enough to vote in a credible candidate that will change the game. The electoral umpire can also help in instilling sanity into the system by not being bias in the discharge of their functions as stated in the constitution of the land. Christian voters also should follow their votes and its transmission to the end as this is not the time to cast their votes and abandon it. Vote casting is not the end of electoral process, there still remains collation, counting and declaration. This step will be enough evidence in their custody to challenge any act of infringement by the electoral body or the corrupt politicians either at the tribunal or the court of law as stated in the Electoral act of the land.

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