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CONSPIRATORIAL POLITICS IN JESUS' MINISTRY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS IN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of conspiratorial politics during Jesus' ministry and its implications for contemporary Christian engagement in political spheres. By examining key Gospel narratives, including the plots against Jesus orchestrated by religious and political authorities, this study reveals the intricate interplay between power, secrecy, and manipulation that defined the socio-political context of first-century Judea. It argues that Jesus' approach to these conspiratorial dynamics, characterized by a commitment to truth, justice, and radical inclusivity, provides a vital framework for contemporary Christians navigating an increasingly polarized and conspiratorial political landscape. This study aims to critically examine the role and influence of conspiratorial politics within Jesus' ministry and explore its implications for understanding political dynamics in religious contexts, as well as its relevance to Christian involvement in contemporary politics. The study further discusses the need for Christians today to critically assess contemporary political narratives that often rely on conspiracy theories, misinformation, and fear-mongering. By drawing parallels between Jesus' experiences and present-day political challenges, this study emphasizes the importance of cultivating a culture of accountability, transparency, and truth in Christian political activism. Ultimately, it calls for a renewed commitment among believers to embody the values of the Kingdom of God, resisting the seductive allure of conspiratorial thinking while promoting justice and reconciliation in their political interactions. This study contributes to the broader discourse on faith and politics, encouraging a responsible and principled approach to civic engagement among Christians.

KEYWORD: Conspiratorial, Politics, Jesus, Ministry, and Christians

INTRODUCTION

Conspiratorial politics refers to the dynamics of power, secrecy, and manipulation that underpin political behaviour and decision-making (Borg, 2006). In examining the ministry of Jesus, one can observe the interplay of such dynamics as he navigated the complex socio-political landscape of first-century Judea. Jesus' interactions with various religious and political authorities not only reveal the mechanisms of conspiratorial politics but also offer profound implications for contemporary Christians engaged in political life. Borg (2006) said, "Jesus was not just a religious figure; he was also a revolutionary who challenged the social and political norms of his time. His ministry had profound implications for how we understand power and justice." This exploration is particularly pertinent in an age marked by increasing polarization and scepticism toward political institutions.

The ministry of Jesus, as depicted in the New Testament, unfolds against the backdrop of Roman occupation and the intricate relationships among Jewish sects, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. These groups often engaged in conspiratorial tactics to undermine one another and to manipulate public perception and loyalty. Jesus, in his teachings and actions, confronted these dynamics by advocating for a radical reorientation of power, emphasizing humility, justice, and the kingdom of God as a counter-narrative to prevailing political ambitions. Crossan (1994) affirmed that "Jesus' message was inherently political. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God as a direct challenge to the empire, advocating for the marginalized and oppressed." This confrontation with established authorities not only led to his crucifixion but also set a precedent for the role of faith in political discourse.

For contemporary Christians, analysing the conspiratorial elements present in Jesus' ministry raises critical questions about the nature of political engagement. How should believers respond to the pervasive influence of power and manipulation in modern politics? What lessons can be drawn from Jesus' example regarding integrity, advocacy for the marginalized, and the ethical implications of political allegiance? By investigating these questions, this study aims to elucidate the relevance of Jesus' ministry for Christians today, providing a framework for understanding their role in a complex political landscape characterized by both opportunity and challenge. Horsley (2003) opined, "To understand Jesus is to understand his confrontation with the imperial powers of his day. The implications for Christians today involve not just personal faith but active resistance against systemic injustices." Ultimately, this inquiry seeks to bridge the historical context of Jesus' ministry with contemporary political ethics, fostering a deeper understanding of the intersection between faith and civic responsibility in the modern world.

During the birth of Jesus, there were two-tiered systems of political government: the system of power in which the family of Herod the Great grew to prominence, and the Jewish leaders who combined religion with politics to exercise control of the land under Roman government. At the birth of Jesus, Herod the Great was the appointed Roman King over Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and this kingdom was a police state, a vast kingdom of the Jews. The book of Matthew initially looked into the multiple ways the image of Jesus has been viewed as a political personality. This ascertains the Gospel narrative of his political career and reveals how Jesus is rightly portrayed as a politician and religious leader. "Jesus embodied a radical vision of God's kingdom that subverted the existing order. For Christians today, engaging in politics means aligning with that vision, advocating for justice and compassion" (Wright, 2011).

DEFINITIONS OF CONSPIRATORIAL POLITICS AND ITS ELEMENTS

Politics has been understood differently by different people and within different traditions. Politics is the art of governance. It is the art of organizing men and women in society to live and interact with one another for the realization of their social nature (Awojobi, 2022:12). Politics are made up of three elements: reality, utopia, and dystopia. These are three schools of thought with parallel opinions of politics, namely, hyperrealism, utopian, and dystopian concepts of politics (Bowes, 2023). This study will be the monopoly of political ideas if only the biblical context is mentioned. The general concept of politics was explored to allow for the balancing of ideas. The general ideas of politics were briefly studied to make the knowledge a springboard for further research. The biblical concepts of politics comprise the ideas in both Old and New Testaments of the Bible; our concentration is on Jesus' Ministry in the New Testament. Conspiratorial politics refers to a mode of political thought and behaviour characterized by the belief that events, policies, and social changes are primarily shaped by hidden agendas, secretive groups, or conspiracies rather than by transparent processes or widely accepted explanations (Stojanov and Halberstadt, 2023). Conspiratorial politics can shape how individuals and groups understand and engage with political realities, often complicating democratic processes and public trust. This perspective often involves the following elements:

i. Distrust of Official Narratives: A scepticism towards mainstream media, government institutions, and established political authorities, which are often seen as complicit in hiding the "truth."

ii. Belief in Hidden Agendas: The assumption that powerful actors (governments, corporations, or secret organizations) operate behind the scenes to manipulate events for their benefit.
iii. Focus on Alternative Explanations: A tendency to prioritize alternative theories that explain political or social phenomena in terms of conspiracy rather than through more conventional analyses.
iv. Community and Identity: Conspiratorial politics can foster a sense of belonging among those who share these beliefs, often creating communities that reinforce these views.
v. Impact on Political Behaviour: Such beliefs can influence political engagement, voting behaviour, and public discourse, sometimes leading to polarization or radicalization (Bowes, 2023).

(a) **Hyperrealism Politics:** Tiffin John and Terashima Nobuyoshi in their work titled "Paradigm for the third-millennium Hyperreality" assert that, "Hyperreality is a concept in post-structuralism that refers to the process of the evolution of notions of reality, leading to a cultural state of confusion between signs and symbols invented to stand in for reality, and direct perceptions of consensus reality" (Bowes, 2023). Hyperreality is viewed as the situation in which fiction and genuine experiences are interwoven. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, who contributed to a scholarly tradition in the field of communication, propounded the theory of hyperrealism. The theory is enacted to minister directly to larger social concerns. Jean Baudrillard in his theory of Hyperrealism, said, "Postmodernism was established through the social turmoil of the 1960s, spurred by social movements that questioned preexisting conventions and social institutions (Bowes, 2023).

(b) **Utopias Politics:** Rhiannon Firth in her book titled, Utopian Politics Citizenship and Practice, said, "Utopianism is a particular type of political analysis (for example, Marxism and anarchism) that constructs a model of an idealized future society to develop a critique of contemporary society" (Stojanov and Halberstadt, 2023). Utopias were formulated to give liberty to people and expand the potential of humanity to increase vision and achieve self-realization. This is part of the political structures that are embedded in the study. Firth explained further that, there are different types of utopias from political points of view.

BACKGROUND TO JESUS' MINISTRY

Immediately after Jesus' birth, concerned with the agenda of politics and the related issues of power, status, and right relations, Herod would not wait for the newly born king to grow to affluence, he ordered the execution of the babies born between the age one to two, this culminates the record of babies martyred in the history of humanity. Matthew 3:13-17 is within the overall context of Matthew 1:1-4:11, which serves as an introduction to the book of Matthew. Matthew's intentional placement of certain periscopes around the kingdom of Herod and religious sects is unmistakable. Attention to the geographical movement of Jesus in his infancy, early childhood, and adulthood signals a reenactment of the nation's transitional events. His observers did not view him as less than an astute politician and religious leader. Tatum (2000) stressed that "The political aspect of Jesus' teachings calls Christians to a prophetic engagement in the public sphere, urging them to stand with the disenfranchised and to challenge unjust systems."

Jesus' focus was on reaching people for the Kingdom of God, but in a highly political climate like Israel, any gathering apart from the assembly of worshipers in the temple or synagogue was categorized political initiative. There are several reasons for the Jews and the Roman officials to think this way. His outreaches attract people of various societal classes because of the dynamism of his ministry. As against the Communal religious worship of other sects, Jesus' methods of ministry were unique and dynamic. It all started with the calling of his disciples, the delegation of authority, his wholistic ministry, and the triumphant entry.

a. The calling of the disciples: No disciple exists before his encounter with Jesus without presuppositions or convictions, and this includes politics, culture, and view of God and country. There are potential things that can drive a person's identity, politics ranks among the top, so Jesus committed to disciple-making cannot be ignorant or indifferent in helping each disciple understand civic responsibilities, caucus, and political involvement. The spectrum of political and religious parties was wide and multifaceted during Jesus' ministry, including the Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, Sadducees, and even tax collectors. When Jesus called his disciples, he entered this political fray.

b. Delegation of authority: Delegation is the act of empowering others to accomplish a task. In the first-century Roman world, there were various religious, philosophical, and political leaders who all had a committed group of followers. In Judaism, dedicated apprentices followed a rabbi. From the many who followed him,

Jesus of Nazareth formed a special teacher-student relationship with twelve men. Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. They were able to come back to him for feedback and debriefing (Luke 9:1-10, 10:1-24) when he sent out the twelve disciples and when he sent out seventy-two of his disciples, the scenarios were political.

c. The wholistic ministry of Jesus: Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. The ministry of Jesus was wholistic, he met both the spiritual and physical needs of the people. For the fact that several people were fed free meals in the Johannine account, they sought to make him their king (John 5:15). Food is a basic need of life that politicians must proffer to rule the people. The people view Jesus from a political perspective.

d. Triumphal entry: Jesus' ministry and passion for the kingdom of God caused friction between him and the authorities. His public activity began after the arrest of his predecessor and forerunner, John the Baptist, by the Rome-appointed ruler of Galilee (Mark 1:14). Conflict dominates his story throughout the Gospels. Jesus also used political means, most dramatically in public political demonstrations in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, which symbolized a kingdom of peace in which the weapons of war would be banished. In the process, he publicly indicted the people using the temple as "a den of robbers" because it had become the centre of collaboration with Roman imperial rule and taxation (Matthew 21:1-17). Emmanuel O. Malomo (2024) in his Doctoral Thesis submitted to Kwara State University, opined that "The definition and the rudiments of politics from biblical perspectives can better be understood through the concept of Jesus Christ's political teachings. Other biblical concepts of politics in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, are anchored on the teachings of Jesus Christ on politics."

JESUS' POLITICAL STATEMENTS AND EARLY CHRISTIANS' COMMUNISM

The Christian New Testament instead begins with the story of Jesus who had both the Jewish Priesthood and Roman Imperial Authorities to contend: At least, to outward appearances, Jesus was at the periphery of political life and power in the

Roman province of Judea. Nevertheless, several political currents appear in New Testament writings. For example, Jesus' political statement was taken into cognizance as follows:

(i) The political statement of Jesus Christ is noticed, "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God, the things that are God's." The three Synoptic Gospels are portrayed clearly as stated in Mathew 22:21, Mark 12:17, and Luke 20:25.

(ii) John 18:36 gives another political utterance of Jesus Christ when he responded to Pontius Pilate about the nature of his Kingdom when Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting; that I might not be delivered over to the Jew. But my kingdom is not of the world. John 18:36.

(iii) Evidence that Christianity has a concept of politics; hence the first set of Christians had all things in common. As described in the Acts of the Apostles, the first Christian communities were organized along the principle of communal ownership of goods (Acts 2:44-45 and Acts 4:32-37). Here all the early Christians were together; had all things in common, sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need.

The revelations from the above points show that the ideal Christian society is like modern political ideas of socialism or communism. They are part of the inspiration for practical currents such as Christian socialism and Christian communism. Some of the modern legislation and governance procedures emanate from the bible. Politics is scriptural from its antecedents; unity of purpose can only be achieved in a peaceful atmosphere.

THE AGENTS OF CONSPIRATORIAL POLITICS IN JESUS' MINISTRY

At the inception of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels, some Jewish religious sects and political groups mentioned in the New Testament became hostile to Jesus. This study focuses on the hostilities between the Pharisees and the Herodians, but other sects and political groups contributed to the hostility that eventually led to the politically motivated crucifixion of Jesus. There is a need to mention some of the religious sects and the political groups in Israel during Jesus' earthly ministry.

i. The Sadducees

A Jewish political-religious sect opposed to the Pharisees' ideas. The name is probably derived from the High Priest Zadok (2 Sam 8:17) and might have

originated at the time of the Hasmonaeans and stood for the interests of the priestly aristocracy and the rich. James O. Adeyanju (2015) affirmed that the Mishnah explains that the name is derived from Tseduqim (the righteous ones) On another hand, J.E.H. Thompson (2013) said that the Sadducees did not descend from Zadok of the period of Israelite's monarchy, rather he presents the tradition found in the work of Rabbi Nathan (ca. 1000 A.D.) which states that Zadok, from whom the Sadducees derived their name was different to the Priest that served in the time of David. This sect of the Jews was the Aristocrats and their point of conflict with the Pharisees does not undermine that they also agree with the monotheistic nature of God. But they detested with passion the teachings of Jesus Christ.

ii. The Scribes

They were not a religious group as such but rather a professional class. Their occupation, which first belonged to Ezra, was taking copies of the Torah and the Old Testament when the scrolls were overused, studying and teaching the law. In this vein, they become experts in the law and in the legal administrations that they a permanent place in the Sanhedrin. Members included Pharisees and a few Priests, and they were equally in opposition to Christ. Adeyanju (2015) again explained that they were held in high regard by fellow Jews in the sense that, when a Scribe passed, they rose and maintained a standing posture to show regard and respect for them, and chief or dignified places were reserved for them in occasions (Matt. 23:6-7).

iii. The Zealots

The origin of this party is unknown, but they were a religious and political group always called the Jewish party of revolts. According to Josephus, 'they were followers of John of Gischala who, after resisting the Romans in Galilee, escaped to Jerusalem. Charles Guignebert (1959) expressed that, "The zealots were a large body of men in Palestine who while they were closely akin to the Pharisees being like them, legalists, pietists, Messianists, and nationalists, were intolerant of the double scandal of the godlessness of many of their compatriots and the subjugation of God's people to the yoke of the goyim."

iv. The Essenes

This is a Jewish ascetic sect, mentioned neither in the bible nor in the Talmud, but referred to by Philio, Josephus, and Elder Pliny. The name probably means the 'pious one; it seemed to have originated in the 2nd Century BC and come to an end in the 2nd Century AD within the limits of Palestine. They wore white garments, living a communal, simple life on the shore of the Dead Sea. They observe strict discipline,

keeping the Jewish laws of purity and ceremonial washing. Admission was open to men only, who must pass their test and a period of probation. They, like the Pharisees, believed in the Kingdom of God to be inaugurated by the Messiah, resurrection, and the judgment day. It has been strongly suggested that John the Baptist was probably a member of the Essenes (Taylor, 2001). This sect of the Jews evolved from the Hasidim, as was pointed out in previous discourse in this study. Adeyanju (2015) added, "The Essenes were an ascetic community who formed cells of monastic communities in the ancient Mediterranean world."

v. The Hasidim

Howie (2012) in his work titled, Between the Testaments: The Creative Era, opines that "This sect is also referred to as 'pious ones' or 'Hasideans". They were a set of individuals who were seen as godly and religious people of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. They were simply a set of devoted Jews whose belief is established in compliance and abiding with the complete Mosaic law." Russell (1994) also asserted that "The Hasidim were seen to have utilized the book of Daniel, a book which expresses the faith in the speedy triumph of the purpose of God and also serves the purpose of encouraging the Jews during the time of their suffering in the strange land, where they were encouraged to hold firmly the law and the covenant made by God with their forefathers. This served greatly in their push to actualize their desire during the Maccabean revolt."

Furthermore, a theory holds that the Hasidic movement began in the post-exilic period, as against the first position stated. This theory is based on the argument that there was an increasing emphasis on the vitality of piety and righteousness before Yahweh in the succeeding period of exile among the Jews. H.N. Holder (1962), who was one of the lead proponents of this view in a work titled, The Intertestamental Period, expressed that, "This kind of piety is contained in the Books of Esther and Malachi emphasizing that the Jewish community made efforts to restore this worthy and true Jewish faith in and rebuild their community after the exile. As such, the Hasidim in carrying out this great task became vital agents in enforcing this Yahwistic piety."

Though these two varying positions are very close in their emphasis on the piousness of the Hasidim, the first proposition appeared more plausible according to Adeyanju (2015). This is because, though the Jews were seen to be pious in their dealings after the exile, they were not immediately confronted with a socio-religious crisis that undermined their historic culture and religion like the one that was recorded in the Maccabean revolt. The Hasidim were recorded to have sided with the Hasmonaean family to oust the Hellenizing policies and decisions and the rule of

Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Adeyanju further stressed that they went from one place to another with passion and enforced the act of circumcision for those who had not held the rite and they pulled down foreign altars across various places and massacred those who took part in the pagan sacrifices (Adeyanju, 2015).

vi. The Sanhedrin

The origin of this assembly is traced in the Mishna to the seventy elders whom Moses was directed (Numbers 11:16-17) to associate with him in the government of the Israelites, but this tribunal was probably temporary and did not continue to exist after the Israelites had entered Palestine. The Greek word "sunederion" means "a council- chamber" commonly but correctly Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ and earlier. The ancient Jewish system was called the Sanhedrin. The great Sanhedrin was the supreme religious body in the land of Israel during the time of the Holy Temple. Philip (1963) in his book entitled Introduction to Tractate Sanhedrin of the Mishna, explained that there were also smaller religious Sanhedrin in every town in the land of Israel, as well as a civil political democratic Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin existed until the abolishment of the rabbinic patriarchate in about 425 B.C. In 70 A.D., the great Sanhedrin lost its authority after the temple was destroyed, and so was the great Sanhedrin (Adeyanju, 2015).

vii. The Pharisees and the Herodians

It is important to state that the two groups here were not sects or political groups of common interest. The Pharisees are a religious sect, while the Herodians were a political group; both have nothing in common. It is very strange to see the essence of hostility meted out to Jesus by both groups. They viewed Jesus as a common enemy too big for a group to conquer; this is the reason behind the conspiratorial politics they played with the intention to trap Jesus with a question about the imperial taxes.

a. The Pharisees

The Pharisees are called the separated ones. This is a Jewish religious group that came into being during the era of the Maccabean kings in the 2nd Century B.C. The name occurs in Josephus and the Rabbinic source. The New Testament also mentioned the group. It is, however, not certain if the 'Perushin' who were attacked by Rabbinic Sources as a separatist sect, is to be identified with the 'Pharisaiol' of Josephus and Religiously, they accepted the Pentateuch that is the five books of Moses which includes the law, with the additions and interpretations to the written law as claiming equal status. They believed in the angels and spirits, the Kingdom of

God through the Messiah, resurrection, and the day of Judgment, from those they thought did not measure up to their standard. Politically, they hated foreign rule but would not support an armed revolt against their oppressors. Absolute adherence to the law and divine intervention were necessary for liberation and restoration.

The Pharisees were adherents of the law, which implied that they were part of the people earnestly anticipating the coming Messiah. They were disappointed in Jesus when he revealed his identity as the Messiah to them. They were expecting a political Messiah who would liberate the nation of Israel from the oppression of the Roman Government. They objected to the payment of Tax because the Roman Emperor viewed himself as a god and his image was on the coin; this was seen as idolatry by the Jews. Meier (1996) notes that Jesus' actions often placed him in direct opposition to both religious and political authorities. The Pharisees became the enemy of Jesus because what they believed and were teaching was in alignment with the principles of Jesus, but they had contrary interpretations of certain concepts; their interpretation was incorrect.

b. The Herodians

The Herodians were seen as a sect of the Hellenistic-Jewish group twice mentioned in the New Testament. Gospels according to Matthew 22:16 and Mark 3:6 show they were in Galilee; Mark 12:13 and Mark 22:16 also prove they were at Jerusalem as a group hostile to Christ. They supported the Homan rule as a guarantee of national independence and prosperity. Luke T. Johnson, in his work entitled, *The Writings of the New Testament,* said, “The Jews in this party were shameless opportunists as they used this base to secure influence and affluence (Johnson, 1986). In Matthew 22:15-22, the Herodians connived with the Pharisees to attack Jesus; the two Sects were too much recognized and prominent in the issues about payment of taxes. But Jesus’ message centred on loving and honouring God, which is of greater importance.

As opponents of Jesus, they probably appeared to be either a political party or a religious sect. The Herodian formed one of the Jewish influential parties in support of Herod, who ruled over their land. The Sect worked to favour the policies of King Antipas, who was the tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea from 4 BC to 39 AD. Antipas was the pagan Herod who was a strong adherent of Hellenistic Religion, which was the Greco-Roman way of worship in Palestine. The Herodians did not believe in the messianic hopes. Taylor (2001) contributed to the article entitled, “The Essenes,” in W.A. Elwell (Ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd Edition, that “The Pharisees, on the other hand, taught scrupulous observance of the Mosaic Law and opposed the Roman occupation.”

CONSPIRATORIAL POLITICS TO TRAP JESUS

The conspiracies to trap Jesus were well calculated and coordinated by the Pharisees and the Herodians. The two opposing groups came together against a common enemy in Jesus. The political and religious leaders had one goal: to get rid of Jesus of Nazareth. Vermes (1973) suggests that Jesus' Jewish identity was a fundamental aspect of his political and religious opposition. If this meant cooperating with a lifelong enemy, any means would be justified. So, the Pharisees, who opposed Rome and its intrusion on the Jewish way of life, and the Herodians, who were supporters of Herod the Great, joined forces.

Crossan (1994) argues that "Jesus was not just a religious figure but a revolutionary challenging the socio-political status quo." These groups of Jews, especially the Pharisees and the Herodians, came together and agreed that Jesus should be lured into the problem. The Pharisees became the most bitter and hateful enemies of Christ, and the Herodians also showed their hatred of Jesus in taking part in his conspiracy. The Herodians believed that Jesus must have been a politician, if not, he must have been a fundamentalist. They played a vital role in Jesus' days by forcing the poor and the entire nation to pay the imperial taxes to the Roman Empire. Bock (2002) emphasizes that "understanding the historical context of Jesus helps reveal the political ramifications of his teachings." The Pharisees and Jews wanted to kill Jesus for the following reasons:

(1) Jesus healed on the Sabbath - this work was outside their religious traditions. He told them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. In that, he restored the true, biblical, divine reason for the Sabbath, so he did not break the Law. But their tradition had become clearer to them than God's original intention. Because they were so afraid of breaking the Law, over time they changed it and lost the true meaning. This was a parapet, or wall, far from the edge of law-breaking that kept them "in bounds." Jesus challenged them so that they would be restored to the heart of God, but it made them so angry, they wanted to kill him.

(2) Jesus claimed to be God and to be sent by God. He claimed to represent God, but he did not fit their preconceived notion of what the Messiah would look like. They expected the Messiah to be a political conqueror, in the guise of David, not a humble carpenter's son from Nazareth. Their preset notions caused them to miss God's Anointed. They had decided how God would work, and when someone came claiming to work differently, they could not accept him as God. They missed God's greatest work because they already had a readymade box for how God was to do things! (Van Frame, 1976).

Wayne (1992) highlighted some Scriptural facts where the Bible says that the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the larger body of Jews wanted to kill Jesus and why:

i) Matthew 12:1-14 - They were upset that Jesus healed on the Sabbath. He did good work, but not according to their traditions.
ii) Matthew 12:22-24 - Jesus healed, but the Pharisees thought it must be Satan. Jesus responded to them very logically in verses 25-37.
iii) Luke 4:14-30 - The people were upset because Jesus was saying that salvation was going beyond the Jews. They would not have an exclusive claim on God anymore. Salvation was for everyone who believed, even dirty Gentiles and outsiders. This made them mad enough to try to kill Jesus.
iv) John 5:16-18 - Jesus healed on the Sabbath and claimed to be equal with God.
v) John 7:30-32 - They tried to arrest him because he claimed to be sent by God.
vi) John 8:58-59 - Jews wanted to stone Jesus because he claimed to be God.
vii) John 10:22-33 - Again, they tried to stone Jesus because he claimed to be God.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS IN POLITICS

The exploration of Jesus' ministry through the lens of conspiratorial politics reveals several implications for contemporary Christians. Funk (1993) emphasizes the need to discern between the historical Jesus and the theological constructs that emerged later. This will help contemporary Christians to navigate with caution and alertness the potential conspiratorial politics in their party of choice. Snyder (2014) argues that "The narratives surrounding Jesus reflect broader themes of conspiracy and resistance in society." Taylor (1996) also examines how early Christians navigated the political landscape shaped by Jesus' teachings. The ministry of Jesus was highly wholistic. He identified with the grassroots people and the less privileged in society. Moo (1996) reflects on how Paul's writings reflect the implications of Jesus' life for early Christian communities facing persecution to ascertain the need for Christians in politics to be sensitive to conspiratorial politics in their domain. The following areas are to be considered for clarity:

a. Advocacy for Justice: Jesus' ministry emphasized the importance of justice for the marginalized. Christians are called to engage in political activism that upholds social justice. Horsley (2003) opined, "To understand Jesus is to understand his confrontation with the

imperial powers of his day. The implications for Christians today involve not just personal faith but active resistance against systemic injustices." In the same vein, Wright (1996) claims that "Jesus' mission was inherently political, aimed at restoring justice in a corrupt society."

b. Challenging Power Structures: Just as Jesus confronted the powers of his time, Christians today are encouraged to critically assess and challenge unjust political systems. Horsley (2003) states that "Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God was a direct challenge to the Roman Empire's authority." Brueggemann (1978) asserts that prophetic voices, like Jesus, must confront systems of injustice and political oppression.
c. Promoting Peace: Jesus' teachings on love and reconciliation can guide Christians in advocating for peace in a politically divisive world. Horsley posits that Jesus' revolutionary message has enduring implications for Christians today. Bockmuehl (2006) emphasizes that "understanding the political dimensions of Jesus' ministry can reshape Christian engagement in modern politics." Christ is the prince of peace. He did not tolerate oppression and abhorred iniquities. Crossan (1994) notes that Jesus' parables often contained subversive political messages aimed at challenging authority.
d. Community Engagement: Jesus' focus on community and relationships can inspire Christians to work collaboratively in their political efforts, fostering unity and cooperation. Wright (1996) suggests that the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus serves as a model for Christians engaging in political discourse today.
e. Moral Integrity: The character of Jesus serves as a model for ethical leadership, urging Christians to uphold integrity and accountability in political practices. Uscinski, J. E., & Parent, J. M. (2014) said that "In the heart of Jesus' teachings lies a radical call to challenge the status quo, urging Christians to engage in the politics of justice and mercy," which will enhance moral integrity as against self-aggrandizement.
f. Honesty: It is a virtue; this implies that the honest Christian must possess other character and actions. Emmanuel O. Malomo (2016) lists out these virtues: visionary, trustworthiness, courageousness, humility, inspiration, wisdom creativity, firmness, fairness, and Patriotism, among others. Honesty is also hinged on the principles of integrity, consistency, credibility, and authentic and sound moral

ethics. Honest visionary Politicians are those who believe that today's dream will become tomorrow's reality. It can be said that politicians are those who keep their promises, whose yes is yes, and no is no; they are those who are the same on the inside as they appear on the outside, and this comes as a result of having the fear of the Lord in their hearts.

CONCLUSION

The examination of conspiratorial politics within the context of Jesus' ministry reveals a profound interplay between faith, ethics, and political engagement. Jesus' interactions with religious authorities and political structures underscore the complexities of navigating power dynamics while remaining committed to a message of love, justice, and truth. His approach challenges Christians to critically assess their involvement in contemporary political landscapes, encouraging a commitment to moral integrity over partisan allegiance.

The implications for Christians in politics are multifaceted. Firstly, they are called to discern the motives and actions of political entities, recognizing the potential for conspiratorial practices that undermine democratic principles and ethical governance. Secondly, Jesus' model of advocacy for the marginalized serves as a blueprint for Christians to champion social justice and equity, urging them to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable in their political endeavours. Lastly, the transformative nature of Jesus' teachings compels believers to engage in political discourse with humility, empathy, and a commitment to truth, fostering a culture of dialogue rather than division.

Ultimately, the lessons drawn from Jesus' ministry invite Christians to navigate political participation not merely to an end but as a reflection of their faith and values. In doing so, they contribute to a political landscape that aligns more closely with the principles of love, justice, and reconciliation that Jesus exemplified, thus fulfilling their role as agents of change in a world often marked by conspiratorial politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of conspiratorial politics in Jesus' ministry and its implications for Christians in politics, several key recommendations can be made for individuals and communities seeking to navigate the complexities of modern political engagement:

1. Promote Critical Political Literacy: Christians should prioritize education that fosters critical thinking and political literacy. This includes understanding the historical and cultural contexts of Jesus' ministry, as well as contemporary political mechanisms and narratives. Workshops, seminars, and discussion groups can be established to facilitate this learning process, encouraging believers to discern truth from misinformation.
2. Encourage Ethical Political Engagement: Churches and Christian organizations should develop frameworks for ethical political participation that reflect the values of Jesus' teachings. This can involve creating guidelines for political discourse and encouraging members to engage in advocacy that prioritizes justice and the common good over partisan politics.
3. Foster Community Dialogues: Establishing platforms for open dialogue within congregations and communities can help bridge ideological divides. These dialogues should focus on shared values rather than differences, promoting a culture of respect and understanding that mirrors Jesus' approach to confronting authority and dissent.
4. Support Social Justice Initiatives: Christians are encouraged to actively participate in social justice initiatives that align with the teachings of Jesus. This can include advocacy for the marginalized, involvement in grassroots movements, and supporting policies that promote equity and justice. Engaging in these efforts can help counteract the conspiratorial nature of political discourse by prioritizing transparency and accountability.
5. Model Integrity and Transparency: Christian leaders and laypersons should exemplify integrity in their political dealings. By demonstrating transparency in decision-making processes and advocating for honesty in public discourse, they can counteract the conspiratorial tendencies that often pervade politics. This commitment to integrity can inspire others in the community to follow suit.
6. Engage in Prayer and Reflection: Regular prayer and reflection on political actions and motivations can help Christians align their political engagement with their faith. Encouraging congregational prayer for leaders and political processes can foster a spirit of discernment and humility, reinforcing the notion that political involvement is not merely a strategy for influence but a form of ministry.
7. Cultivate a Global Perspective: Finally, Christians should strive to understand political issues within a global context. This involves recognizing the interconnectedness of communities and the impact of local decisions on global realities. Encouraging engagement with international issues through mission

work, education, and advocacy can help Christians develop a more holistic approach to political involvement, reflecting the universal scope of Jesus' ministry.

Christians can navigate the complexities of political engagement more effectively, embodying the principles of love, justice, and truth that are central to their faith while addressing the challenges posed by conspiratorial politics in contemporary society.

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