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AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN OSUN STATE'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of the Church on civic education and democratic development in Osun State, Nigeria, from 1999 to 2020. Recognizing political leadership as a foundational component at all governance levels, the paper focuses on the limited engagement of Christians in Osun State's civic and political landscape. A primary cause of this disengagement is identified as misunderstandings regarding Biblical teachings. Through qualitative analysis, the study assesses the educational responsibilities of Christians in enhancing democratic participation, examined through doctrinal, moral, and educational lenses. The study outlines three core areas of responsibility for Christians: duty to God, duty to the State, and duty to society. The findings highlight critical educational implications for moral issues facing the Church, including clergy limitations, political corruption, godfatherism, and security deficiencies. The study concludes that the current disengagement of Christians from political participation hampers democratic and civic education in Nigeria, emphasizing that active engagement aligned with scriptural values could foster social justice and educational reform. It recommends the Church's deeper involvement in civic education to inspire Christian engagement in governance, thereby promoting informed citizenship and policy advocacy.

Keywords: Church, Civic Education, Osun State, Governance, Democracy, Social Contract Theory.

Introduction

Osun State, officially established on August 27, 1991, following its separation from Oyo State during General Ibrahim Babangida's administration, has had a notable trajectory in Nigerian politics and civic education. This journey began with Chief Bisi Akande, who, in 1999, became the state's first democratically elected governor under the Alliance for Democracy (AD) party. Although Chief Akande's tenure ended when Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) assumed the governorship in 2003, Oyinlola's term was later interrupted in 2010 when a court ruling declared Rauf Aregbesola of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) the winner of the 2007 election. Aregbesola's administration marked a milestone as he completed

two terms and, in 2018, passed leadership to Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola (Osun State Government, n.d.).

Since its establishment, Osun State has predominantly functioned as a two-party system. The AD and PDP initially competed for influence, with the AD's Chief Bisi Akande winning the 1999 election, only to be unseated in 2003 by the PDP's Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola. Subsequent transformations saw the AD evolve into the Action Congress (AC), later the ACN, and ultimately the All Progressives Congress (APC). In a pivotal shift in 2010, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola from the ACN ascended to power, establishing the APC's dominance, which has persisted to the present day (Durotoye, 2014).

Throughout Osun State's elections, additional parties frequently emerge, often serving as platforms for candidates unable to secure nominations from either the PDP or APC. Although these parties seldom win, they influence the electoral dynamics, typically to one party's advantage. For instance, in the 2018 gubernatorial election, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Action Democratic Party (ADP) fielded candidates formerly affiliated with the PDP and APC, respectively, highlighting the shifting political alliances in the state.

Osun State's legislative body, the Osun State House of Assembly, operates as a unicameral legislature with 26 members representing 30 local government constituencies. This assembly has maintained a collaborative relationship with the executive, often showing unwavering loyalty to the governor. Under Rt. Honourable Timothy Owoeye's leadership, the seventh House of Assembly consisted primarily of APC members, with a shift in the eighth assembly to a majority of PDP members under a PDP governor. The entire assembly held APC seats from 2011 to 2015 during an APC-led administration.

In a democratic context, Jegede (2013) posits that effective governance necessitates transparency, accountability, and freedom of expression, supported by independent civil society institutions. His research underscores democracy as a system that respects religious freedom and inclusivity, addressing the persistent marginalization of Christians in Nigeria's political environment. The primary focus of this study is to explore the Church's role in promoting civic education and Christians' participation in Osun State's political and democratic processes, a crucial factor for achieving inclusive governance, civic engagement, and equitable public resource management. The discourse around Christian involvement in politics and democratic governance resonates significantly within the socio-political spheres of many developing nations, including Nigeria. Within certain communities, there exists a perception of marginalization of the Church in Osun State's political arena. For instance, since the fourth republic's inception in 1999, the state only saw its first Christian Speaker in 2019. Moreover, Olagunsoye Oyinlola (2003–2010) stands as the lone Christian governor during this period, contrasting with his Muslim successors (Folorunso, 2021).

Despite this, the Executive Council has reflected a fair religious distribution, with Christians frequently appointed to cabinet roles. Nonetheless, an examination of leadership positions such as the governor and Speaker of the House of Assembly reveals an evident imbalance in representation. This disparity points to the influence of powerful individuals within the political structure who often shape policy preferences. Consequently, the Church has emerged as a prominent force in shaping civic participation, aiming to foster democratic values and improve political education in Osun State (Folorunso, 2021).

Church Participation and Democratic Process

The involvement of the Church in political processes has been a focal point of concern for scholars in political science worldwide. This apprehension is rooted in the perception that the Church is gradually diminishing in influence, attributed to the rapid advancement of modernization, privatization, and the increasing Islamic population, particularly in Europe. However, counterarguments refute this assumption, asserting an ongoing integration of the Church with significant political events globally. Historical instances, such as the American Revolution, the civil rights movement, the end of apartheid, and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, provide substantial evidence supporting this perspective.

It is imperative to note, within the context of this investigation, that the designation of a Christian extends beyond mere attendance at church services on Sundays or other weekly activities. Identification as a Christian based on geographical location in an area predominantly inhabited by Christians, as seen in the example of an Igbo individual in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone, overlooks the diverse religious affiliations within the Igbo ethnic group, including Animists, Atheists, Muslims, and others. Operationally defined, an individual is considered a Christian when embodying Christ-like qualities—a genuine reflection of Christ (Acts 11:26). Consequently, a Christian's demeanor should align with that of Christ Jesus (Phil 2:5 GNT). Leadership is construed as primarily guiding and overseeing others, with a responsibility to caution against deviations (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7). Hence, a country's leadership bears responsibility when it falls short in its duty as a guide to the public (Ezekiel 33:6). Leadership effectiveness is realized through political participation, ranging from grassroots engagement to federal levels. Consequently, it is imperative to assert that the vitality of any society revolves around politics, democratic governance, and the principles of good governance.

The recent surge in political liberalization across Africa, commencing in the 20th century, has ushered in substantial and transformative shifts in the political terrain of the region. Primarily characterized by calls for free and equitable elections, this wave seeks to establish democratic governance. Elections, both in Africa and globally, have become pivotal benchmarks for evaluating and fostering citizen participation in democratic politics and governance (Onah, 2009, p.1). However, the historical trajectory of elections in Nigeria reveals a disheartening pattern, challenging the reliability of elections as a credible means for Nigerians to install leaders of their choice and, consequently, alter their socio-economic conditions. The electoral landscape in Nigeria has been tarnished by pervasive incidents of electoral malpractice (Ezeani, 2004, p.144). Despite Nigeria's claim as the giant of Africa, this assessment is often questioned, with doubts arising regarding its qualitative leadership rather than mere quantitative considerations based on population.

In collaboration, the discerning observer cannot ignore the reality that Nigeria, often hailed as the giant of Africa, faces significant challenges, as articulated by Chioke and Mbamalu (2020, p.389). The nation's inability to exemplify leadership excellence has contributed to a pervasive sense of disenchantment and political apathy among Christians and followers of various religious beliefs. This investigation focuses on the diverse perspectives regarding the involvement of Christians in Nigerian politics and democratic governance, giving rise to two contrasting schools of thought: one in favor and the other staunchly opposed. Political participation, encompassing activities like campaigning, voting, electoral representation, and holding offices in the cabinet, is closely linked to the concept of power-sharing and various components of the political process (Hamzah, 2021, p.273).

The prevalence of apathy among Christians, who find themselves marginalized in Nigeria's political landscape, has hindered the actualization of democratic governance. Limited Christian

participation in national politics is observed, possibly influenced by moral considerations and misinterpretations of scriptural teachings. The perception of the state as an institution ordained by God, with its rulers viewed as divine emissaries on earth, contributes to the hesitancy among Christians to fully engage in the political affairs of Nigeria (Abonyi, 2005, p.43). This study sought to critically examine the areas of responsibility related to Christian political participation in Nigeria from doctrinal and moral perspectives, as this aspect has not been empirically explored in existing literature. It addresses the civic responsibilities regulating the relationship between the state and its citizens, rooted in the social contract theory. Beyond these established civic duties, there are limited areas specifying Christian political engagement responsibilities.

The central problem under consideration is scrutinising these areas of duty surrounding Christian political participation in Nigeria, scrutinizing them from doctrinal and moral viewpoints. The study aims to investigate whether Christians have been actively involved in critical aspects such as problem identification, prioritization, implementation, monitoring, and supervision in state politics despite the prevailing challenges of segregation and exclusion in Nigeria's democratic landscape. Doctrinal and moral questions play a pivotal role in understanding instances of Christian apathy, disenchantment, and reluctance to engage in political processes, especially among those conscientiously aware of their heavenly goals and other doctrinal precepts. Consequently, this paper endeavors to unravel the moral and scriptural/doctrinal inquiries surrounding Christians' political participation.

Biblical Position of Church-State Relation

In the Old Testament, democracy started during the reign of David. David was chosen and elected as king of Israel. People saw the good qualities in David and popularly chose him as their king. Another element of democracy seen in the reign of David was his popular choice by the people of the Northern Kingdom as king. In the New Testament, it begins with the Sermon on the Mount. It could be inferred that Jesus Christ was advocating socialism in Matt. 5:42. The democratization process was used in choosing Stephen (Acts 6). The Democratic process was used to resolve the issue of whether or not the uncircumcised could be accepted into the Church (Act 15). The New Testament socialism and democracy practiced by the early Church leaders helped to build an egalitarian Christian Society. Democracy was not established as a government of any country in the Biblical era. However, elements of democracy permeate through their activities or actions. The contemporary Church is confronted with issues that were never explicitly dealt with in scripture. For example, how should believers behave in a multicultural democracy where they have duties as voters and citizens? In addressing this issue, one cannot simply cite statements made in biblical times without regard to the context in which they were made. It is essential to look for broader principles that are implicit in the Bible and allow these to guide one's thinking about the relationship between the Church and the state. There are a lot of biblical injunctions that support Christian participation in politics. Both the Old Testament and New Testament testify to the close relationship between the Church and the state. In (Genesis 1:28f) man was created and made to dominate all creatures. (Genesis 19:5-6) this is where God promised Abraham to be a father of nations. Prophet Daniel says God put the best men in authority (Daniel 4:13-17) so that the living may know that God rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He wills. Amid unbelieving and rebellious citizens, we still have some prophets who actively participated in the governance of kingdoms and performed creditably. Daniel was a Jewish exile who became a statesman and distinguished himself above all the other statesmen during the reign of kings Darius and Cyrus of Persia and Babylon.

Darius, as a prime minister in Babylon, was jealous and held in great esteem by the unbelievers (Prov. 8:14-16, Dan. 2:21, Matt. 28:18). Daniel, at the corridor of power, refused to compromise with corrupt influences to the point of casting him into the lion's den. (Dan. 6) We have an example of Esther, a Jew, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua, who said that the people of God should not run away from politics. In the case of Joseph, he was a God-fearing man of destiny and mature experience; he became a ruler in the government of the Egyptians according to God's design. (Gen. 41:39-44) When the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt after the death of Joseph, they called upon God, who heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Ex. 23:25). God sent Moses to deliver his people from Egyptian bondage.

Joshua was commissioned to lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land after the death of Moses. God commanded Joshua to be of good courage, not to be frightened or dismayed, for He would be with him wherever he went. God warned Joshua to meditate on the book of the law (the word of God); day and night, he should be careful and do according to everything written. By doing it, he would make his ways prosperous and shall have good success (Joshua 1:8-9). These words of God serve as weapons: Joshua led Israelites to cross the Jordan River, invaded Jericho, and fought the battle of Ai. He eventually led the people to the Promised Land and renewed the covenant between God and his people. God made Samuel a priest, seer, judge, kingmaker, mediator, and religious reformer. The Ark of God, which was taken away from Shiloh into the Philistine's territory, would have saved the lives of King Saul and Eli if Samuel's warnings had been heeded (1 Sam. 3:4). David and Solomon, his son, were kings in Israel. They put their trust in God, which led to David's victory over Goliath, a Philistine giant (1 Sam. 17). From this conquest throughout the period of his reign, David trusted that his strength was in God.

The Church and Democracy

The Church and the State cannot be separated. This was so because, during colonialism, the Church was one of the instruments used. Due to military involvement in politics, shortly after some African countries became independent, the Church's lifestyle changed in the post-colonial period, even though the Church actively participated in the struggle for independence. Ethiopianism epitomized the spirit of nationalism within the Church during the colonial period in Africa. The term "Ethiopianism" is used in Church history scholarship to denote Africans' opposition to foreign domination within the Church. Ayandele describes "Ethiopianism" as "African nationalism expressed through the medium of the Church". For example, in West Africa, Ethiopianism seemed to acquire a different meaning from that prevalent in South and Central African settings. In these territories, Ethiopianism was fundamentally racial, given the colour-bar policy of the white rulers during the pre-independent era. Isaac Phiri (1996) delineates the significant contributions made by churches in certain African nations to establishing democratic governance within their respective states. He meticulously scrutinizes the involvement of the Church in the democratic initiatives of nations such as Zambia, Malawi, and Kenya. Phiri lauds the positive influence of the Church in facilitating the transitions to pluralistic systems in these countries. The impact of the Church on Nigerian politics, and vice-versa, from 1960 to 1998 has engaged many researchers' pen. Thus, the scope and emphasis of this paper will be limited to the Church in Osun democratic experiment from 1999-2020. The role of the Church in contemporary democratic governance is an oversight that has been admitted by the proponents of democracy all over the world. From the Church's historical significance, many never consider it to have a meaningful relevance in politics. We should admit with candor, given the controversy that arose

from religion-related issues during the process of constitution drafting prior to the 1000 general elections, that religion has constituted the most severe threat to the existence of democracy in Nigeria.

The foundational principle of democratic constitutions emphasizes the separation of Church and State, a concept that originated during the Renaissance period. This idea emerged in response to the dominant influence of the Roman Catholic Church in global affairs, encompassing both secular and religious realms. The prevailing sentiment was to establish a tolerant and democratic government. Religious convictions should not play a role in shaping national policies. The acceptance of this concept was further reinforced by the diverse religious landscape in many democratic societies, including India, South Africa, and the United States, whose Presidential system of government serves as a model for Nigeria. In the United States, the population comprises Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and other religious groups, highlighting the diverse religious composition within democratic frameworks.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

To provide meaningful insights into political participation, it is essential to first clarify the concept of 'politics.' Adetoyese (2023) defines politics as the pursuit and utilization of power with the consequential creation of government. Ewuim (2008, p.41) affirms this interdependence, stating that politics gives rise to government, and in turn, government is sustained through politics. From the social interaction perspective, Abonyi (2005, p.4) characterizes politics as a set of social interactions between individuals and a centralized institution tasked with making and implementing decisions for the collective benefit of society. This view underscores the inherently social nature of politics, emphasizing the need for multilateral decision-making involving various relevant institutions within the general system.

Abonyi (2005, p.45) further emphasizes that the modern State aims to be the sole authority and the predominant power within a defined territory. Achieving this necessitates multilateral meetings and decisions, rejecting unilateral actions rooted in egocentric interests. The study aligns with Harold Dwight Lasswell's definition of politics as determining "who gets what, when, and how," emphasizing the allocation of national resources. In Nigeria's political context, financial allocations, determined by the legislature, often face challenges such as diversion and misallocation, contributing to a disconnection from socioeconomic reality. Transitioning to political participation, the term is used interchangeably with political involvement. It involves eligible citizens actively seeking, acquiring, and consolidating political office at various government levels or influencing leaders at different tiers. Political participation extends to influencing government decision-making processes, aligning with Huntington and Nelson's (1976, p.3) definition of private citizens' activities designed to influence government decision-making.

McCallum (n.d, p.1) expands the conceptualization of political participation to cover electoral representation, presence in ministerial cabinets, and ordinary citizens' involvement through voting. The society's political development, meeting 21st-century human needs, hinges on ensuring that citizens, including Christians, freely participate in all three categories. Adetoyese (2023, p.3) distinguishes direct political involvement from indirect forms, such as voting and staying informed about current issues. Every form of political participation in Nigeria is considered direct, with no concept of indirect political involvement. The prevailing misconception that political participation is limited to holding political office is challenged, asserting that participation encompasses broader aspects. The argument is made that Christians

in Nigeria might exhibit political apathy due to the dominance of Muslims in leadership roles, particularly under President Muhamadu Buhari.

"Political participation encompasses a variety of expressions, including holding public or political office, running as a candidate in elections, participating in political campaigns, attending political rallies, contributing financially to party activities, engaging in political discussions, and displaying party affiliations through badges and stickers (Oyediran et al., 2002, pp. 68-69). Engaging in any of these forms signifies involvement in politics. Moreover, political participation embodies the right or freedom to express views, assemble, and associate with others. The pinnacle of political participation is often seen as actively participating in the conduct of state affairs by holding public or political office.

Shifting the focus to democracy, the term originates from the Greek words "Demos," meaning "the people," and "Kratia," meaning "rule." In a broad sense, democracy describes a governance system where ultimate power or sovereignty rests with the people, distinguishing it from other forms of government where decision-making authority lies with an individual (monarchy) or a small group (aristocracy). According to the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) (2006, p.2), democracy, as defined by Abraham Lincoln, is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is characterized by a society in which people collectively form the government, emphasizing the supremacy of majority voices while protecting minority interests. Democracy extends beyond elections to include how elected leaders make decisions (Munck, 2014). Okafor (2013), as cited in Eze (ed), differentiates democracy as both a system and a process. As a system, it implies that the emergence of administrative and authoritative institutions of the State should be determined by popular sovereignty, ensuring that decisions, character structures, and processes reflect popular interests. As a process, democracy involves mass activity, influencing the outcome of governance through mass awareness, consciousness, and involvement in decision-making. This process encompasses elections, referendums, plebiscites, opinion processes, etc. In essence, democratic governance involves public administration grounded in the ideals and principles of democracy. This sets the stage for a brief examination of the theoretical framework of this paper.

Social Contract Theory

The theoretical foundation that underlies the discourse and scope of this paper is the Social Contract Theory, a moral and political philosophy originating from the Enlightenment era that critically questions the legitimacy of the state's authority over its citizens (Gough, 1936). It is imperative to underscore that the essence of the Social Contract Theory centers on the idea that the legitimacy of government should be rooted in the consent of the governed, a consent acquired through active political engagement, as opposed to the prevalent political disinterest often observed in African nations, such as Nigeria, where the influence of political godfathers within the ruling party prevails.

At the core of the Social Contract Theory is the fundamental concept that moral, social, and political practices, along with the institutions and principles governing social relationships, are deemed acceptable by fully rational individuals under the condition that they either fulfill utility or align with their interests (Etieyibo, 2018). Within this theoretical framework, the Social Contract Model serves as a valuable instrument for scrutinizing the moral obligations of citizens who consciously agree to be members or stakeholders of the state. Social contract theorists assert

that the distinction between political institutions enjoying this consent and those that do not is of paramount importance and should undergo legal reconsideration for refinement (Stone, 2018). When applied in practical terms, the Social Contract Theory offers insightful elucidations on the relationship between the state and its citizens. It enables the researcher to explore and accentuate the aspects of civic duties from both doctrinal and moral perspectives, particularly in the context of Christians in Nigeria. Furthermore, the theory facilitates an examination of doctrinal and moral inquiries pertaining to the political involvement of Christians and the democratic process in Nigeria within the framework of social contract philosophy.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the perceptions, interpretations, and experiences of Christian spiritual leaders in Osun State regarding civic education and political engagement. This design was chosen because phenomenology focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences, providing insights into their attitudes, beliefs, and motivations. This approach is particularly suited for a study deeply rooted in personal and spiritual experiences.

The primary data collection method was key informant interviews conducted with six carefully selected Christian spiritual leaders in Osun State, chosen to represent a range of denominations, including African Indigenous Churches (AICs) and Orthodox churches. Among the interviewees was a former chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Osun State, providing insights from both a leadership and denominational perspective. This selection strategy aimed to capture diverse viewpoints within the Christian community, ensuring that insights reflected a broad spectrum of doctrinal interpretations and civic attitudes. The use of six interviewees aligned with Morse's (1994) recommendation for phenomenological research, aiming to capture diverse perspectives. Interview schedules were developed to guide the discussions, focusing on themes related to Christian civic responsibilities derived from key biblical texts and doctrinal teachings. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted in a conversational format, allowing interviewees to elaborate on their interpretations of verses such as 2 Corinthians 6:14 and Matthew 22:21 in relation to political participation. The questions were designed to prompt reflections on Christians' perceived roles and obligations in governance, including the duty to promote social justice and engage in public service.

The study also utilized document analysis as a secondary data collection method, focusing on Bible verses, textbooks, journal articles, and other relevant sources. This desk review was conducted thematically, with materials categorized by their focus on theological, moral, or civic principles related to political engagement. The analysis aimed to contextualize the interview findings within a broader doctrinal and educational framework, highlighting specific doctrinal positions on civic engagement within the Christian tradition. Data from the interviews were analyzed thematically, focusing on common themes and patterns across the responses. The responses were transcribed and categorized into the three primary areas of Christian duty identified in the literature—duty to God, duty to the State, and duty to neighbors. Document analysis supplemented the thematic insights from the interviews, with findings from religious texts and academic sources reinforcing or contrasting with the views expressed by the spiritual leaders. This dual approach strengthened the validity of the results by providing a well-rounded understanding of Christians' theological and civic expectations in governance.

Findings

1. Duty to God

Interviewees emphasized that Christians are obligated to model leadership based on ethical principles. One spiritual leader noted, "Christians are not just called to be passive observers; they are to be lights in society, guiding others through example." This perspective aligns with Ezekiel 33:7, where leaders are depicted as 'watchmen' responsible for safeguarding society's moral integrity. Chioke (2023) corroborated this view, underscoring the biblical expectation for Christians to engage in governance as a form of divine service.

2. Duty to the State

The participants agreed that Christians must fulfill their civic responsibilities as part of the social contract. Echoing the teachings of social contract theory, interviewees argued that civic duties, such as voting and public service, are integral to fostering a just and accountable government. One participant explained, "Christians are citizens; they owe it to the State to participate actively, ensuring that policies uphold biblical values of justice and equity." This notion was further supported by findings from Chioke (2023), highlighting the civic obligations embedded within Christian teachings.

3. Duty to Neighbors

The duty to neighbors was frequently mentioned, with leaders stressing the importance of love, compassion, and equity. The Church's social duty to alleviate suffering and advocate for the underprivileged was a recurring theme, as one interviewee articulated: "Our responsibility to our neighbors goes beyond charity; it includes ensuring that the policies we support reflect Christ-like compassion." This view aligns with doctrinal perspectives that emphasize the moral imperative for Christians to advocate for policies that uplift marginalized communities.

The interview findings revealed a consistent concern regarding the systemic challenges within Nigerian politics, including corruption and divisive leadership. This, coupled with a doctrinal stance that sometimes discourages political involvement due to fears of moral compromise, has fostered a sense of apathy among Christians. The spiritual leaders acknowledged the necessity of reorienting the Christian community's perspective on civic engagement, suggesting that enhanced education and awareness within the Church could effectively address this apathy.

Doctrinal Perspectives on Christian Engagement in Civic Education and Governance

Doctrine encompasses the beliefs upheld and taught within church denominations and the broader Christian community, influencing Christians' conduct in both personal and public spheres. Two central scriptural interpretations are examined to address critical biblical and doctrinal questions that affect Christian involvement in civic education and democratic governance.

Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 6:14

The verse, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers..." is frequently referenced by Pentecostal churches in Nigeria to justify the reluctance of Christians to engage in politics and governance, viewing such involvement as an unequal fellowship with non-believers. The leaders interviewed held varied views on this issue, ranging from complete avoidance to cautious engagement and, in some cases, active participation. A segment of church leaders advocates a stance where Christians should cautiously engage, emphasizing the role of Christian "light" to counteract political "darkness." However, this verse has often been misinterpreted and misapplied, resulting in widespread political apathy among Christians. There is an urgent need

for reorientation and education to correct these misunderstandings, emphasizing the potential for Christians to positively impact governance and civic education through active participation and moral leadership.

Interpretation of Matthew 22:21

In Matthew 22:21, Jesus advises to "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God," many Christians interpret this as a directive to keep politics and religion separate. For some, this means avoiding political involvement altogether to avoid moral compromise and corruption. Others, however, argue that politics is not inherently corrupt but suffers from the actions of unethical individuals. These diverse views reflect a broader dilemma: while some Christians advocate for sincere engagement in governance, others are cautious, focusing on a distinction between civic duties and spiritual pursuits. Understanding these scriptures and the political landscape is essential to address the current disengagement, highlighting that Christians can contribute to public life in a way that aligns with both divine principles and societal responsibilities. This analysis reveals biblical interpretations' profound influence on Christian attitudes toward civic education and political involvement. To bridge the gap between doctrinal teachings and practical civic responsibilities, it is essential to reorient Christian perspectives, encouraging an active yet conscientious approach to political participation. The historical biblical context also supports the view that God has always been interested in selecting and appointing leaders, indicating that a divinely guided approach to governance is consistent with Christian principles.

Moral Considerations Impacting Christian Participation in Civic Education and Governance

The ethical challenges impeding Christian involvement in politics and democratic governance in Nigeria are multifaceted. One significant factor is the perceived failure of some clergy members to embody the moral leadership expected of them. The dichotomy between genuinely committed clergy and those who exploit their position for personal gain is evident as religious institutions increasingly face challenges related to accountability and authenticity. Numerous religious congregations, sometimes masquerading as churches, use political engagement to elevate individuals who lack the qualifications or genuine calling for public service. This trend is fueled by "stomach infrastructure politics," where politicians manipulate vulnerable communities through immediate material incentives, depriving citizens of their right to make informed electoral choices. This phenomenon exacerbates the disparity between the Nigerian electorate and its leaders, with clergy imposters disproportionately benefiting from these conditions.

Furthermore, doctrinal teachings, often communicated in sermons, can contribute to a culture of political apathy among Christians. The prevalence of dogmatic interpretations reminiscent of the Pharisees' teachings fosters an environment where Christians become disengaged from political life. Unqualified individuals in clerical roles, motivated by self-interest, are often sycophants to corrupt leaders, especially during elections, thereby perpetuating a misleading narrative of political efficacy. This failure of clergy leadership is a pressing religious and doctrinal issue that requires urgent correction to foster a more informed and engaged Christian electorate. Government failures at both the central and state levels also contribute to Christian apathy, as unfulfilled campaign promises and disillusionment with the political process discourage Christians from active participation. Many perceive politics as synonymous with deceit, leading to a reluctance to engage in what is seen as a morally compromised arena. The level of Christian

participation is thus often tied to state policies, where government failures can amplify apathy and, in extreme cases, foster environments conducive to social unrest.

Political corruption remains a significant deterrent to Christian engagement in governance, as the politicization of bureaucratic systems, particularly since military interventions, has fostered an environment rife with malpractices. Electoral manipulations, including vote-rigging and falsification of results, further undermine Christian values, making it difficult for religious individuals to engage without compromising their doctrinal beliefs. This systemic corruption is detrimental to societal progress, reinforcing citizen apathy and eroding faith in the democratic process. The influence of "godfatherism," prevalent in both religious institutions and Nigerian politics, further deters Christian involvement. Often presented as mentorship, godfatherism exerts control over young ministers and diverts them from authentic teachings. In Nigerian politics, godfatherism frequently involves occult affiliations, negatively impacting governance, transparency, and democracy. This phenomenon is especially off-putting to Christians, particularly those from Pentecostal backgrounds who prioritize holiness and strive to avoid associations that could compromise their principles in the political and governance spheres.

This analysis underscores the moral and doctrinal challenges hindering Christian participation in Nigerian governance. Addressing these challenges through educational and doctrinal reorientation could foster a more engaged Christian population, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to civic education, governance, and the democratic process.

The Contribution of the Church to the Development of Osun State

The Church's impact on society manifests in diverse ways, encompassing education, health, and poverty alleviation. There is a recognition that religion plays a crucial role in the economic integration of Yoruba land, instilling a sense of God-fearing values that encourages affluent individuals to assist the less fortunate through wealth-sharing initiatives. This communal approach, as a model for resource redistribution, could inform government policies, including effective taxation, land reform, subsidies, and technology transfer. As preached to its members, the Church's emphasis on peace promotion, love, and care is seen as a positive influence that the federal government could adopt to foster employment opportunities and allocate resources efficiently at the grassroots level in Yoruba land.

In Osun State, economic challenges are prevalent, with over 50% of households self-identifying as poor, according to the Federal Office of Statistics. Local government areas, such as Ayedire, Ejigbo, Ife North, Ife South, Ifelodun, Irewole, Isokan, Iwo, Obokun, Ola Oluwa, and Olorunda, face high poverty rates. The Church's historical commitment to assisting the needy and poor is highlighted, mainly through almsgiving, where designated individuals like deacons and widows attend to community members' needs. The Church's engagement in informal borrowing and mutual aid practices underscores its ongoing commitment to supporting the impoverished.

In contributing to Osun State's democratic process, the Church has played a pivotal role in education. Christian missionaries' introduction of Western education laid the foundation for subsequent educational development, with various religious and governmental entities establishing schools from primary to university levels. The Yoruba ethnic group's early embrace of Western education positioned them ahead in educational achievements compared to other ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Church's involvement in healthcare is also acknowledged, as early healthcare services were initiated by Church missionaries, including the Roman Catholic Mission, the Church Missionary Society (Anglican), and the American Baptist Mission. While Nigeria officially claims to be a secular state, the practical involvement of government officials at various

levels in religious activities challenges this secular status. Politicians' visits to Church leaders, such as Pastor E. Adeboye and Pastor Tunde Bakare, have prompted discussions on the Church's relevance in Nigerian politics. In conclusion, given the significant number of its members participating in politics, the Church's heightened interest in political affairs serves as a platform for encouraging positive governance changes in Osun State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In examining the Church's doctrinal, moral, and educational roles, this study finds that limited Christian participation in Nigerian politics has led to a gap in democratic education and governance. Addressing these issues is essential for a robustly democratic and educated society. Persistent challenges, such as corruption and the misuse of authority, hinder effective democratic governance. This study suggests that Christians, especially in Nigeria, should engage as stewards of civic education within their communities. Inspired by scriptural principles and the theoretical framework of civic duty, Christians should actively contribute to educating the public on their democratic rights, advocating for fair governance and policies aligned with social welfare and justice.

The paper also calls for collaborative reform efforts to address the issues raised during Nigeria's #ENDSARS campaign. Such initiatives, including educational and civic reform, could foster a more democratic and inclusive society by promoting accountability, reducing tribalism, and enhancing governance stability. Furthermore, Christians are encouraged to pursue servant leadership and to create environments conducive to educational development and democratic engagement, ultimately aiming to reposition Nigeria as a leader among African nations in civic and democratic education.

Implication for Practice

The practical implications of this study highlight that without addressing the ethical and educational challenges outlined, Christians may continue their disengagement from politics, leading to ongoing deficiencies in civic education and public administration. The findings suggest that political leaders must instill civic education values within Christian communities, cultivating a more informed electorate. The Church should prioritize educating its members about the consequences of political apathy and the importance of proactive civic engagement. This reorientation in Christian educational practices could transform societal attitudes toward politics, fostering a more engaged and democratically aware population.

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