

**AN EXPOSITION OF CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN TARABA
STATE**

By

Victor Terna Igbum, PhD

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,
Benue State University, Makurdi
Email:ternaigbum@gmail.com
Phone Number: +234036179781

And

Julius Lahbanyah Nyasi

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies,
Benue State University, Makurdi
Email:nyasi1963@gmail.com
Phone Number: +234039714538/081686501

Abstract

Taraba State's sociopolitical order is similar to Nigeria's governance and statecraft issues since independence. Due to high unemployment, citizens' welfare and lives have declined, causing civil unrest as youths (especially) engage in vices like kidnapping, thuggery, cybercrime, ritual killings, armed banditry, etc., amidst corrupt politicians who embezzle taxpayer money. Due of poverty and insecurity, elected leaders are legitimate. Some believe that without Christians actively participating in politics to fix the situation, it will never change. Christian political participation was examined in this paper. The research used qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data from oral interviews, books, journal articles, periodicals, and the internet. This study used explanatory, analytical, and evaluative methodologies. The expository method provided an overview of Christian participation in politics in Taraba State from 1999-2024, while the analytical method explained Christian, participation, politics, and political participation and examined Christian perspectives and controversies. The evaluation technique revealed the Church's stance on Christian political participation and its moral implications. Despite instability, Taraba State and Nigeria have terrible poverty, according to the report. The paper found that Christians are under-represented in Nigerian politics and have a negative opinion towards it. Christians should get involved in politics instead of critiquing. Thus, Christians should engage in politics and promote social justice and welfare as part of scriptural intersections. The paper implies that Christians will remain apathetic about politics unless the moral issues stated in it are addressed.

Keywords: Christian, Politics, Participation, Taraba State

Introduction

Democratic theory and practice emphasise citizen participation in politics. Unfortunately, Nigeria's low democratic culture, an essential part of political life, contributes to its future instability. Political, economic, social, and moral failures characterise Nigeria. Nigeria has abundant economic resources but has failed to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development. Lack of political will, corruption, poor coordination for sustainable development programs, and inefficient production and consumption have slowed Nigeria's progress. Christians feel compelled to help save the situation. Taraba State's Christian political participation reflects Nigeria's overall trend. Since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democracy, more Christians have become voters, candidates, or officeholders, according to Ojo Emmanuel in *Politics and Christian Participation in Nigeria* (67). This participation aims to influence policies that reflect Christian principles and address corruption, social fairness, and human rights.

Examining Christian political participation in Taraba State requires considering both the pros and downsides. Christian engagement can promote social justice and ethical governance. However, Kuka claims that it might cause conflict, especially in pluralistic societies where religious and ethnic groups compete for power (77). This seminar paper will cover these topics in detail. The paper will examine the significant yet complex role of Christian participation in Taraba State's political landscape and its moral implications through a literature review, case study analysis, and historical and contemporary developments.

Clarification of Terms of Concepts

This paper will explain the following concepts: Christianity, Politics, and Political Participation. According to Centre, Pew Research's "Global Christianity - A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," a Christian is someone who follows Christianity, a monotheistic Abrahamic religion centred on Jesus Christ's life and teachings. Christians are the world's largest religious group (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. 19 December 2011. Retrieved 7 July, 2024).

Participation is sometimes changed with adjectives to form community, citizen, people, public, and popular participation. Participation emphasises individual rights and choices (Obot and Johnson 15).

Politics: Scholars have defined and interpreted politics in many ways, reflecting its complexity. Politics is generally defined as groups making decisions, but this simplifies the complex dynamics and power connections involved. David Easton defines politics as “the authoritative allocation of values for a society” (129). Politics shapes society by determining and spreading values, as this definition shows.

Harold Lasswell defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how” (Lasswell 5). This perspective emphasises political competition by focussing on resource and power distribution. Lasswell's description helps explain politics' strategic and frequently contentious battles for power. Political power and governance are also examined. Weber defines politics as “the striving to share power or influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state” (78). This definition emphasises power dynamics and power contestation processes. Weber's notion of political conflict and negotiation is essential for understanding Taraba State's politics.

Christian Participation

The term “Christian participation” encompasses a wide range of activities in which individuals who identify as Christians actively engage in various spheres of life, including social, political, and economic arenas. This participation is often guided by Christian values, principles, and teachings, reflecting the desire to integrate faith into everyday actions and societal contributions. Recent scholarship in Politics highlights different facets of this concept, offering varied perspectives on its definition and scope. According to Banks and Ledbetter, Christian participation involves the application of Christian ethics and values in public and private life, emphasising the integration of faith into all aspects of society (22). This definition underscores the holistic nature of Christian engagement, where faith is not confined to personal spirituality but extends to influence broader societal structures and processes.

Christians Political Participation in Politics in Taraba State from 1999-2024

Notions and counter notions exhibit the assertion that religion and politics are somewhat related. In another excerpt, Abogunrin opines that "Christianity and politics are two inseparable institutions in the human social psyche and structure. He equally asserts that earthly governments are mere agents of God's theocratic governance of the physical and the

spiritual world"(84). He, however, points out that the ideals of Christianity is a good guide to better political conducts, but the practices of such ideals are usually influenced by the socio-cultural institutions in the society, including politics.

Christian participation in politics in Taraba State from 1999 to 2024 has been characterised by active engagement across various levels of governance. Since the transition to democratic rule in Nigeria, Christians have increasingly sought to influence policy decisions and governance structures in the state. This period has witnessed the emergence of Christian politicians who have contested for and held positions in both state and local government bodies, reflecting a desire to integrate religious values into public policy (Ojo72).A notable example is the election of Christian governors and legislators who have advocated for policies aligned with Christian ethics and values. For instance, during the tenure of Governor DanbabaSuntai, a Christian, there was a focus on initiatives aimed at improving education and healthcare services, areas traditionally prioritised by Christian advocacy groups (Bitenja Johnson, OralInterview). This highlights how Christian political leaders in Taraba State have sought to address socio-economic disparities through legislative and executive actions.

Furthermore, Christian participation in politics has extended beyond elected offices to include activism and advocacy. Christian civil society organisations and grassroots movements have played pivotal roles in shaping public opinion and mobilising communities around issues such as religious freedom, social justice, and ethical governance (BawaSafina, OralInterview). These groups have leveraged their religious networks to influence policy debates and hold elected officials accountable, demonstrating the broader impact of Christian participation beyond formal political roles.However, Christian involvement in Taraba State politics has not been without challenges. Ethical dilemmas often arise when Christian leaders navigate the complexities of partisan politics and governance. The tension between religious principles and political expediency has occasionally led to accusations of compromise and opportunism (BawandoBooli, Oral Interview). For example, controversies surrounding the allocation of state resources or the enactment of legislation perceived as contradicting Christian teachings have sparked public debates and scrutiny.

In response to these challenges, Christian leaders and organisations have emphasised the importance of integrity and ethical leadership in public service. There has been a growing movement among Christian politicians in Taraba State to promote transparency,

accountability, and inclusive governance practices (Bawando Booli, Oral Interview). This commitment reflects a broader effort within the Christian community to uphold moral standards while actively participating in political processes. Looking ahead, the future of Christian participation in Taraba State politics remains dynamic and critical to the state's socio-political development. As Taraba continues to face challenges such as economic inequality, security concerns, and infrastructure development, Christians are expected to continue playing significant roles in advocating for policies that address these issues from a moral and ethical standpoint. The ongoing dialogue between Christian leaders, political stakeholders, and civil society will be essential in fostering a collaborative approach to governance that respects religious diversity while advancing the common good.

Controversies Surrounding Christian Participation in Politics in Taraba State

There have been some objections to Christian participation in politics over the ages coupled with some biblical verses that need to be pointed out. First of all, Christians perceive that politics is a 'dirty game' as it is marred by fraudulent practices. This development degenerates to elimination of human lives and property. The attitudes of politicians scare 'true' Christians away from participating in politics. Some even express apathy towards it. Perhaps, according to Falaye, Most Christians' proof that it is very wrong to get involved in politics is because of Jesus' refusal to be made king by His followers. They go on to tell any would-be Christian politician that the Christian task is evangelism, not politics that being involved in politics will cause a distraction from the Christian task of bringing lost sinners to Christ. Generally, Christians trying to get into politics are usually criticized: going into politics is going to be very tough; the pressure will be immense, one would find himself frequently walking a tight rope between remaining faithful to one's Christian principles and breaking down misunderstandings generated by popular negative perceptions against Christianity, etc. However, one concludes that it is too hard to be involved in politics, that means the whole arena of leadership and governance is surrendered to the hand of Satan.... (3).

Affirming Falaye, Osei-Acheampong also observed that: "The early missionaries distant Christianity from politics especially in some African countries and this made some Christians registered displeasure towards politics, and they transferred the wrong notion of politics to their children where the children overlooked the importance of politics to human existence"

(165).Hitherto, some Christians shy away from politics thinking that it is too mundane to bring about salvation. This attitude is peculiar to the Catholic Church that was badly influenced by the emperors' roles in the early life of the Church. The pagan emperors at the infancy stage of the Church used political powers to victimize the early Christians. No wonder Christians from the beginning associated politics with paganism and mundane things of the world, and as such believed that political activities lead to damnation. This influence affected the clerical order to the point that it was enshrined in the revised 1983 Code of cannon law. Cannon 287 is clear about this: that any cleric involved in partisan politics was outlawed (*Anathema sit*). In other words, to make sure that the clerics were forbidden from active participation in politics, it was enshrined in the Codes of Cannon Law governing the lives and conducts of the clerics (Omegoha 29). More closely, Christian participation in politics in Taraba State has been marked by various controversies, reflecting the complex interplay of religion, politics, and social dynamics.

The Clergy

The term "clergy" refers to ordained leaders within the Christian church, including priests, pastors, bishops, and other religious officials who perform spiritual and religious duties (Akintola 22). The clergy hold significant influence over their congregations, providing spiritual guidance and leadership. Their involvement in politics, however, has sparked numerous controversies, particularly in Taraba State, where the intersection of religion and politics is deeply entrenched in societal dynamics.

One notable controversy involved a pastor, a prominent clergy member who openly supported a gubernatorial candidate in the 2007 elections. The pastor's endorsement led to a split within his congregation, with some members supporting his political stance while others felt it compromised the spiritual integrity of the church (Danladi Bello, Oral Interview). This incident highlights the delicate balance clergy must maintain between their spiritual roles and political engagements, as overt political support can polarise congregations and undermine religious unity. In 2011, a Bishop's participation in political rallies for a local government candidate further ignited debates. Critics argued that his actions blurred the lines between church and state, potentially violating the principle of religious neutrality in politics (Danladi Bello, Oral Interview). Supporters, however, contended that his involvement was necessary to advocate for moral governance and ethical leadership. This controversy

underscores the ongoing tension between maintaining religious impartiality and pursuing political advocacy.

The 2015 elections saw another significant controversy when Reverend Peter, a well-respected clergy, ran for a state assembly seat. His candidacy was met with mixed reactions; while some praised his willingness to bring Christian values into governance, others questioned the appropriateness of a clergy member seeking political office (Dongamu Beauty, OralInterview). The ensuing debate highlighted concerns about the potential conflicts of interest and the risk of clergy becoming entangled in partisan politics. During the 2019 elections, several pastors were accused of using their pulpits to campaign for specific candidates, prompting allegations of partisanship and ethical breaches. One high-profile case involved Pastor Emmanuel, who was reported to have dedicated multiple sermons to promoting a particular political agenda (Deega Bello, Oral Interview). This led to a broader discussion on the ethical boundaries of religious influence in politics and the potential repercussions for church-state relations.

In recent years, the involvement of clergy in political appointments has also been contentious. For instance, in 2022, the appointment of Reverend James as a special adviser to the governor sparked debates about the appropriate role of religious leaders in government (DeegaBello, OralInterview). Critics feared that such appointments could lead to preferential treatment of religious groups and undermine secular governance. Supporters argued that the clergy's moral authority could help guide ethical policymaking. Another layer of controversy involves the clergy's role in addressing social justice issues through political engagement. In 2023, Bishop Anthony's vocal advocacy for land reforms and equitable resource distribution faced backlash from political opponents who accused him of overstepping his religious mandate (Edu Peter, OralInterview). This situation illustrates the complexities clergy face when addressing socio-political issues from a moral standpoint, navigating both religious and political criticisms.

The repeated involvement of clergy in politics has also led to internal church conflicts. Different denominations within Christianity hold varying views on political engagement, resulting in factionalism. For example, the differing political endorsements by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) during the 2019 elections created rifts within the Christian community, weakening collective political influence (Edu Peter, OralInterview). These internal disagreements further complicate the clergy's role in politics. Moreover, the clergy's

involvement in politics has sometimes led to increased scrutiny and public backlash, impacting their reputations and that of their congregations. In 2020, Pastor John faced significant criticism after he was seen attending political fundraisers and engaging in activities perceived as partisan. This resulted in a notable decline in his congregation's attendance and financial support, reflecting the potential personal and institutional costs for clergy engaging in political activities (Ezekiel Paulina, Oral Interview). Such incidents underscore the delicate nature of clergy participation in politics, where actions can have far-reaching consequences for their ministry and community trust.

The broader implications of clergy involvement in politics in Taraba State also touch on the integrity and impartiality of religious institutions. When religious leaders are seen as aligning too closely with political entities, it can erode the perceived spiritual authority of the church. For example, in 2018, a controversy erupted when several church leaders were accused of receiving financial incentives from political candidates, leading to accusations of corruption and betrayal of religious ethics (Ezekiel Paulina, Oral Interview). This controversy highlighted the risks of compromising the church's moral standing and the need for clear boundaries between religious duties and political engagements. Additionally, the clergy's political activism has often intersected with broader social issues, such as advocating for human rights and social justice. In 2021, Reverend Mary's outspoken support for anti-corruption measures and her criticism of government policies on social media drew both praise and criticism. While some lauded her for taking a stand on important issues, others felt that her political activism detracted from her primary religious mission (Job Peace, Oral Interview). This illustrates the ongoing debate within religious communities about the appropriate scope and focus of clergy involvement in political matters.

Therefore, the involvement of the clergy in politics in Taraba State from 1999 to 2024 has been fraught with controversies. These include ethical dilemmas, accusations of partisanship, potential conflicts of interest, and internal church conflicts. While some argue that clergy participation can promote moral governance, others believe it compromises the spiritual mission of the church. The ongoing debate highlights the need for a careful balance between religious leadership and political involvement, ensuring that the clergy's role in politics remains both ethical and effective.

Laity

The term "laity" refers to the ordinary members of a religious community who are not part of the clergy or religious officials. These individuals often form the majority of the congregation and are typically involved in various secular professions while also participating in the religious activities of their community (Job Peace, Oral Interview). In the context of Christianity, the laity plays a significant role in spreading religious teachings, participating in church activities, and, increasingly, engaging in political processes. Christian participation in politics, particularly by the laity in Taraba State, Nigeria, has been a contentious issue since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. One of the main controversies revolves around the perceived separation between religion and politics. Many argue that involving religious beliefs in political decision-making can lead to biased policies favoring one religious group over others. For instance, in the early 2000s, the Taraba State government faced criticism for allegedly prioritising projects and policies that seemed to benefit the Christian community more than other religious groups (Jonah Audu, Oral Interview).

Another controversy is the fear of religious polarisation. The involvement of Christians, especially the laity, in politics has sometimes led to tensions between religious communities. For example, during the 2015 gubernatorial elections, accusations were leveled against Christian politicians for allegedly using religious rhetoric to garner votes, which heightened religious tensions in the state (Jonah Audu, Oral Interview). This polarisation not only affects the political landscape but also the social fabric of the state, leading to distrust and occasional conflicts between different religious communities.

Furthermore, the involvement of the laity in politics has raised questions about their dual roles as religious adherents and political actors. Critics argue that this duality can lead to conflicts of interest. For instance, Christian politicians in Taraba State have been criticised for using their political positions to further their religious agendas. This was evident in the case of a prominent Christian politician who, in 2019, was accused of allocating state resources to church projects, raising concerns about the misuse of public funds for religious purposes (Joshua Vivian, Oral Interview). The participation of the clergy in politics has also been a source of controversy. While the clergy is expected to remain neutral and focus on spiritual guidance, instances of clergy members' actively endorsing political candidates or even running for political office have been reported. In 2023, a well-known pastor in Taraba State declared his intention to run for a political office, sparking debates about the

appropriate boundaries between religious leadership and political ambition (Joshua Vivian, OralInterview). This move was seen by many as blurring the lines between spiritual guidance and political power.

The laity's involvement in politics has also led to debates about religious influence on policy-making. There have been instances where Christian politicians in Taraba State have pushed for policies that align with their religious beliefs. For example, the introduction of certain moral laws that reflect Christian ethical standards has been met with resistance from non-Christian communities who feel marginalised by such policies (KwamburuBakoshi, OralInterview). This has raised concerns about the inclusivity and fairness of the political process in a religiously diverse state. Despite these controversies, it is important to acknowledge the positive contributions of Christian laity in politics. Many Christian politicians have been instrumental in advocating for social justice, fighting corruption, and promoting development projects in Taraba State. For instance, a Christian politician who served as a member of the House of Assembly from 2011 to 2015 was praised for his efforts in improving healthcare and education in his constituency (Usman 84). These contributions demonstrate that while there are challenges, the involvement of Christians in politics can also lead to positive outcomes for the community. The participation of the Christian laity in politics in Taraba State from 1999 to 2024 has been marked by significant controversies. Issues such as the separation of religion and politics, religious polarisation, conflicts of interest, and the role of the clergy in political processes have all contributed to the ongoing debates. However, it is also clear that Christian politicians have made meaningful contributions to the development of the state, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of their involvement in the political arena.

The Church's Position on Christian Participation in Politics

The Church's position on Christian participation in politics in Taraba State, Nigeria, reflects a complex relationship between religious principles and civic engagement. Historically, the Church has played a significant role in shaping public opinion and guiding the moral compass of its members. In recent decades, as democracy has taken root in Nigeria since 1999, the Church's stance on political involvement has been a topic of debate and scrutiny (KodanjaGasana, Oral Interview). Initially, the Church emphasised the importance of moral leadership and integrity in politics. Leaders within the Church often urged Christians to

engage in politics as a means of promoting justice, fairness, and ethical governance (Okoro 27). For instance, in the early 2000s, bishops and prominent clergy members in Taraba State publicly supported Christian candidates who advocated for policies aligned with Christian values, such as anti-corruption measures and social welfare programs (Amos 39).

However, the Church's involvement in endorsing political candidates has not been without controversy. Critics argue that such endorsements blur the lines between religious and political spheres, potentially compromising the Church's neutrality and fostering divisions among congregants. In 2015, the Catholic Church in Taraba State faced backlash when some parishioners accused clergy members of favoring certain political candidates during the gubernatorial elections, leading to internal tensions within the faith community (Ibrahim 45).

Moreover, the Church has been vocal about condemning practices that contradict Christian teachings, such as corruption and injustice in governance. Clergy members have used their platforms to denounce unethical behavior among political leaders and advocate for reforms that uphold human dignity and social justice (Eze 51). This advocacy often extends to addressing systemic issues like poverty and inequality, which are prevalent in Taraba State and other parts of Nigeria. The Church's stance on political participation also intersects with broader socio-political issues, including religious freedom and interfaith relations. In instances where policies or laws potentially infringe upon religious liberties or marginalize Christian communities, the Church has mobilised its members to advocate for their rights within the democratic framework (Suleiman 63). This activism underscores the Church's role as a defender of religious pluralism and fundamental freedoms in Taraba State. However, challenges persist regarding the Church's influence in political matters. Critics argue that the Church's interventions in politics can sometimes be perceived as partisan, particularly when addressing contentious issues such as family planning or LGBT rights. Such controversies highlight the delicate balance between upholding moral values and respecting the diversity of opinions within the broader society (KodanjaGasana, Oral Interview).

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church's position on Christian participation in politics is rooted in its social teachings and ethical principles, which emphasize the responsibility of Christians to engage actively in public life while upholding moral values and promoting the common good.

This stance is articulated through various papal encyclicals, doctrinal statements, and pastoral letters that provide guidance on political participation within the framework of Catholic social doctrine. Central to the Church's teaching on political engagement is the concept of "integral human development," which Pope Paul VI described as the goal of ensuring that all aspects of human life—social, economic, political, and spiritual—are harmoniously developed (Paul VI 23). This principle underscores the Church's belief that politics should serve the well-being of all individuals, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized in society.

The Church encourages Catholics to participate in politics as a way to promote justice, peace, and solidarity. For example, in Nigeria, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently advocated for policies that address poverty, inequality, and corruption, which are prevalent issues affecting the country's socio-economic development (John Paul II 36). Catholic leaders have called on politicians and policymakers to prioritise the needs of the poor and marginalized communities in their legislative agendas. Moreover, the Church's stance on political participation includes a commitment to defending human rights and dignity. This involves speaking out against injustices such as human trafficking, discrimination, and violations of religious freedom (Benedict XVI 42). In Taraba State and beyond, Catholic bishops and clergy have been vocal in condemning practices that undermine human dignity and advocating for legislative reforms that uphold fundamental rights.

The CRCN

The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) has articulated a distinctive position on Christian participation in politics in Taraba State, Nigeria, reflecting its evangelical mission and theological convictions. Rooted in its understanding of Scripture and the role of Christians in society, the CRCN emphasizes both the rights and responsibilities of believers to engage actively in political processes while upholding biblical principles of justice, compassion, and integrity. One of the central tenets of the CRCN's position is the call for Christians to be salt and light in the world, as mandated by Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Matthew 5:13-16). This biblical mandate underscores the Church's belief that Christians have a moral obligation to participate in politics as a means of promoting righteousness and addressing societal injustices (CRCN Synod 2018, 30). For instance, CRCN leaders have encouraged their members to support political candidates and policies that align with

Christian values, such as honesty, accountability, and respect for human dignity. Moreover, the CRCN emphasizes the importance of good governance and ethical leadership in politics. Leaders within the Church have called on politicians in Taraba State to prioritise the welfare of their constituents and to govern with transparency and fairness (CRCN Synod 2020, 42).

UMCN

The United Methodist Church in Nigeria (UMCN) holds a nuanced position on Christian participation in politics in Taraba State, emphasising ethical engagement and the promotion of social justice within the democratic framework. Rooted in Wesleyan theology and Methodist principles of social responsibility, the UMCN encourages its members to actively participate in political processes while upholding moral integrity and advocating for the common good. One of the foundational aspects of the UMCN's stance on political engagement is its commitment to social justice and human rights. Drawing from John Wesley's emphasis on caring for the marginalized and promoting social holiness, the UMCN encourages Christians to engage in politics as a means of addressing systemic injustices and advocating for policies that uplift the poor and vulnerable (UMCN Discipline 25). For instance, Methodist leaders in Taraba State have been vocal in advocating for policies that improve healthcare, education, and social welfare programs, reflecting the Church's concern for the welfare of all people.

General Political Participation by the Church

The general political participation by the church, particularly in Taraba State, Nigeria, presents a complex interplay between religious duties and civic responsibilities. The participation of Christians in politics in Nigeria has historically been low, influenced by doctrinal teachings that often emphasise a separation between the spiritual and the political. However, political participation is a critical aspect of governance and societal development, which necessitates the involvement of all citizens, including Christians. In Nigeria, political participation broadly includes activities such as voting, holding public office, participating in political campaigns, and engaging in political discussions. This underscores the complex nature of political engagement, which goes beyond mere electoral activities to include various forms of civic involvement (KodanjaGasana, OralInterview).or Christians in Taraba State, this means that their participation in politics should not be limited to voting but should

also encompass more direct forms of engagement, such as running for office and influencing policy decisions.

The low participation of Christians in politics can be attributed to several factors, including the perception of politics as inherently corrupt and morally compromising. Political corruption in Nigeria, characterised by vote-rigging, the falsification of election results, and other illegal activities, has led many Christians to view political engagement with suspicion (Konke Hyacinth, Oral Interview). This perception is particularly strong in Taraba State, where political corruption has been a significant barrier to effective governance and civic engagement.

Theologically, the church's involvement in politics can be justified by the biblical mandate to seek the welfare of the community and to act as stewards of justice and righteousness. This perspective aligns with the social contract theory, which posits that citizens have a duty to participate in the governance of their society to ensure the common good (Amoke 201). In this context, Christian political participation is not just a right but a responsibility that contributes to the overall health and stability of the state. While the participation of Christians in politics in Taraba State has been historically low, there is a clear need for greater engagement. Overcoming barriers such as political corruption, godfatherism, and doctrinal misunderstandings is essential for fostering a more inclusive and effective political system. By embracing their civic duties, Christians can play a pivotal role in promoting good governance and social justice in Taraba State and beyond.

The Moral Implications of Christian Participation in Politics

The researcher's emphasis in this work is that the interest of Christians in politics arises from the common boundary the church shares with the state and the urgent need to address the challenges that children of God go through. Whereas, the state is the place democracy takes place, the church by way of suggestions and sermons provides the morality for the play of politics. This is rightly articulated by Skutch (qtd in Ngwoke 36). Meanwhile, to Omegoha, for the present, it is enough to recognize three activities, or three attitudes, appropriate to our dealings with the three grades of being: art, for the exploitation of things that we deem inferior to our selves: morality, for regulating our relations with things on the same plane as ourselves, and religion to place us in the proper relationship with whatever we regard as

higher than ourselves. Only when we achieve such a relationship do things most precious to us seem secure (30).

Omegoha's thought heralds the moral implications of Christians' participation in politics. Flowing from this thought, it is essential to note that politics is natural to man and does not belong to the mundane world as erroneously held by the early Christians. Reverend Fr. Moses OrshioAdasu shared the view of the Synod Fathers, that politics and religion are interwoven, and they are expected to give man ultimate services. In an interview with the National Concord Magazine, Adasu further elucidated that, "They (Politics and Religion) are interwoven. They are integrated. Once you leave religion out there and go into politics, it can never work. That is why Nigeria is bad. That is why we are where we are" (qtd in Omegoha 28). Corroborating this assertion, the Nigeria national pledge also ends with "So help me God."

In similar vein, all oaths of allegiance in the Nigerian Constitution ends with "So help me God". These all point to the fact that politics, democracy or governance is not devoid of religion. Of course the performance of administrative duties invokes the spiritual and invites the aid of the Supreme Being, God to interfere and intervene. Thus, the state in her political activities (no less than the Church) owes man an ordered society which is a stepping stone to heavenly glory. According to Pescke, "The Christian is called to fulfill his temporal duties responsibly and to cooperate in the progress of the world, as much as he is called to adore God and to worship Him" (295). This understanding should motivate Christians to change the position of the Church concerning politics (especially in Nigeria). Christians have a moral duty to addressing actively and pragmatically the challenges that citizens go through. Through their examples, and as role models, they would preach the gospel in their acts.

Recommendations

From the foregoing analysis, it is found that Christian participation in politics in Taraba State plays a significant role in shaping governance and societal dynamics. Thus, this study recommends that:

1. Christian leaders and clergy members maintain a delicate balance between their spiritual roles and political engagements to avoid potential conflicts within congregations and uphold the integrity of religious institutions.

- i. Political stakeholders in Taraba State should engage in ongoing dialogue with Christian leaders and civil society to foster a collaborative approach to governance that respects religious diversity and promote the common good.
- ii. There is a need for continued advocacy for policies that address economic inequality, security concerns, and infrastructure development from a moral and ethical standpoint, with Christians playing a key role in advocating for social justice and human rights.
- iii. Christian politicians and policymakers should prioritize initiatives that align with Christian ethics and values, promoting justice, peace, and the well-being of all citizens in Taraba State.
- iv. Educational programs and workshops should be organized to enhance the ethical engagement of Christians in politics, emphasizing the importance of upholding Christian values while contributing to the public good and promoting ethical governance in Taraba State.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a comprehensive appraisal of the moral implications of Christian participation in politics in Taraba State. The analysis has highlighted the complex interplay between religion, politics, and societal dynamics, showcasing the significant role that Christian leaders, politicians, and civil society organisations play in shaping governance and advocating for social justice. Despite challenges such as political corruption, godfatherism, and doctrinal misunderstandings, there is a growing recognition of the need for greater Christian engagement in politics to ensure inclusive governance and societal development. The study underscores the importance of maintaining ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability in public service, emphasising the role of Christian values in guiding political actions and policy decisions for the common good of all citizens in Taraba State.

Moving forward, the future of Christian participation in Taraba State politics remains dynamic and critical to the state's socio-political development. As Christians continue to navigate the complexities of partisan politics and governance, it is essential for them to uphold moral standards, promote integrity, and advocate for policies that address pressing

issues such as economic inequality, security concerns, and infrastructure development. By embracing their civic duties and actively participating in political processes, Christians can contribute significantly to promoting good governance, social justice, and ethical leadership in Taraba State, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective political system that respects religious diversity and advances the well-being of all members of the society.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

SN	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE	DATE
1.	Bitenja Johnson	Male	56	Pastor	Gogwe	17/03/2024
2.	BawaSafina	Female	34	Prophetess	Lassandi	11/04/2024
3.	BawandoBooli	Male	59	Priest	Pupule	13/04/2024
4.	Danladi Bello	Male	47	Laity	Donkolon	27/04/2024
5.	Dongamu Beauty	Female	38	Civil servant	Da-Dong	23/05/2024
6.	Deega Bello	Male	60	Priest	Booli	24/05/2024
7.	Edu Peter	Male	52	Teacher	Nyaja	24/04/2024
8.	Ezekiel Paulina	Male	42	Police Officer	Mayo Gwoi	24/05/2024
9.	Job Peace	Female	39	Businesswoman	Kwenzang	24/05/2024
10.	Jonah Audu	Male	53	Welder	Kwaji	10/06/2024
11.	Joshua Vivian	Female	32	Farmer	Sankadinding	14/06/2024
12.	KwamburuBakoshi	Male	68	Retired civil servant	Malum	19/06/2024
13.	KodanjaGasana	Male	54	Farmer	Kpanti Napo	19/06/2024
14.	Konke Hyacinth	Male	54	Student	Lambong	19/06/2024