

The Bible and Public Theology in African Christianity

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the place of the Bible in the search for theological insights and perspectives for Public Theology in African Christianity. The paper argued that the acceptance of the application of the Bible to human experiences in African societies offer Africa Public theologians the opportunity to apply biblical and theological perspectives to cultural, social, economic, political, and public-policy issues. The study observed that the Bible has been used to promote social justice, advocate for human rights and confront corruption and other forms of oppression. African theologians have developed perspectives on these issues that draw on the biblical teachings of justice, compassion, and stewardship of the earth. The Bible has been a relevant tool for African Christians to engage with public issues, promote social justice, and advocate for the common good. The study concluded with the recommendation that African Christians must engage the social, political, and economic issues that affect their communities, and work for the liberation of all people from the forces that oppress them with Christian teachings and insights. Public Theology in African Christianity must be grounded in a deep commitment to the presence of God in the world, the transformation of society, the liberation of the oppressed, and the contextualization of the Christian faith to the African context. The gospel message has relevance for all aspects of life, including social, political, and economic issues. Theological insights and perspectives that must inform Public Theology in African Christianity include the incarnation, righteousness, social justice, human dignity, Christianity identity, contextualization, and the common good.

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity was introduced to Africa through the Bible and the teachings of the early Christian missionaries.¹ African Christians have since used the Bible to shape their theology, understanding of God, and social issues. It has provided African Christians with a framework for understanding the nature of God, and the purpose of human existence. It has served as a source of inspiration for their struggles against oppression and injustice.

¹ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992).

The Bible is viewed as a source of moral and spiritual guidance that facilitates navigating life and community challenges. It is believed that the Bible provides insights into the nature of God and the purpose of human existence. It is considered a primary source for reflections on social justice, human rights, and the common good. The Bible has been used to address issues such as poverty, hunger, corruption, and social justice, as well as to provide guidance on political and economic development as the author has expressed in another publication.² The Bible has further played a significant role in shaping beliefs and values in African Christianity on issues such as poverty, corruption, social justice, and human rights. African Christian leaders have used biblical teachings to promote reconciliation, forgiveness, and the common good, and to address the unique challenges faced by the continent. The Bible has played a central role in African Christianity, shaping theological perspectives and influencing the public discourse on various issues.

In many African countries, Christianity has been a transformative force, challenging traditional beliefs and practices while also providing a sense of hope and empowerment. The Bible has been used to promote social justice, advocate for human rights and confront corruption and other forms of oppression. Many African theologians have developed perspectives on these issues that draw on the biblical teachings of justice, compassion, and stewardship of the earth.

African Christians often interpret the Bible through their cultural and historical context, drawing on indigenous knowledge and practices to develop a unique African theology.³ Through their engagement with the Bible and their commitment, African Christians are playing a vital role in shaping the future of the continent as African Christianity involves using biblical teachings to address social, political, and economic issues affecting communities.

The Bible provides a rich and relevant foundation for teaching in African Christianity. Biblical teachings in African Christianity emphasize the importance of justice, human dignity, liberation, stewardship, and unity in the service of God and the common good. African Christianity has a unique perspective on African life as it has been shaped by the continent's history, culture, and context through its beliefs and values derived from the Bible.

METHODOLOGY

The study was quantitative in its approach to gathering information. It examined available information in libraries. It further paid attention to biblical and theological insights in the pursuit of theological insights and perspectives on Public Theology in African Christianity.

Jesus the Public Theologian

Christian public witness brings the church to the model of the ministry of Christ as a Public Theologian. Jesus presents God as the God of the public and he pursues his ministry as such. He preached and taught in the streets and engaged strangers. He presented himself as the Lord of all to both members and non-members of the church. Jesus offered the power of the gospel to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the people. He invited his hearers to the kingdom of God as well as responded to their other needs. 'And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,' (Matt 4:23, 9:35). He also responded to the material needs of people by offering healing to the sick. In the book of Acts it is noted that 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him' (Acts 10:38). Jesus preached the gospel about the kingdom of God to the multitudes.

² Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "Doing Public Theology in African Christianity: A Reflection on Communiques by Churches in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 7, no. 11 (November 15, 2021): 190–200, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20217111>.

³ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions: Perspective of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012).

The reception of the gospel was always the primary intention of Christ. He, however, cared about the physical needs of the people who received the gospel. He engaged his disciples in the provision of food for the people who had spent time with him. He was worried that if the people were not provided with food, they might suffer on their way back home. The disciples who did the economic analysis of the task of providing food for the huge numbers sought to discourage the effort of being responsible for the feeding of the people (Lk 9:13, Mat 15:33, Matt 14:13-21, Mk 6: 30-44). To maintain his model of public witness of balancing evangelism with social responsibilities, Jesus pursued the effort of searching for food for his hearers who spent time with him to receive the gospel about the kingdom of God.

The parable of the Good Samaritan was a response to the question of ‘who is my neighbour’. The Samaritan who was not considered as the desirable person for the expectation of such help was recommended for his willingness to identify with the suffering of the wounded man when others looked away. The pain and concerns of others including those who may not be members of the church both inside and outside the cathedral must be the concern of the church if the church wants to remain as brother and sister keepers (Lk 10:25-37).

Christian public witness invites the church to participate in both evangelism and social responsibilities. The church should never separate evangelism from social responsibilities if it wants to remain true to scripture and relevant. The separation of evangelism and social responsibilities is a strange thing for the church to do according to John Stott.⁴ The paradigm of Jesus’ public ministry must always guide the church to keep the balance. Evangelism and social responsibility have been intimately related to one another throughout the history of the church. Christians have often engaged in both activities quite unselfconsciously, without feeling any need to define what they were doing or why.⁵ Jesus told his disciples that Christian presence in prisons, hospitals, and with homeless people on the streets, will be considered on the judgement day Matt 25:36.

The church’s effort in public witness and advocacy must be guided and rooted in scripture and sound Christian theology without reducing the Christian message of hope to any social theory and developmental goals.⁶ Christian faith in the public space must remain confident and trust in God, in the content of Christian doctrine, in the teaching of Christian traditions, in a commitment to serve and share, in embodying a community of faith and practice, in common witness in words and deeds as opined by Tveit.⁷ Christian faith in public space takes its foundations from Scripture and theological traditions. According to Gustavo Gutierrez, ‘the Bible is the book of the promise, the promise made by God to human beings, the efficacious revelation of God’s love and self-communication; simultaneously it reveals humankind to itself.’⁸ The promise, which is at the same time revelation of God and Good News, is the heart of the Bible.

The Bible provides examples of individuals and passages that motivate involvement in public witness. The scriptures facilitate individual and social transformation. The Bible gives promise to individual salvation. However, individual salvation must lead to the salvation of others as noted by the Apostle Paul, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household’ Acts 16:31. According to John Stott, ‘evangelism is the major instrument of social change. The gospel changes people and changed people can change society.’⁹ Christian public witness is the effort to bring faith perspectives and values on public issues with the intention to effect social change and transformation.

⁴ John Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, (London: Marshall Pickering, 2006), 2.

⁵ Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, 2.

⁶ Opuni-Frimpong, “Doing Public Theology in African Christianity,” 190-200.

⁷ Olav Fykse Tveit, *The Role of Religion in Sustainable Development and Peace*. (Berlin : World Council of Churches February 17-18, 2016).

⁸ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, (New York: Orbis Books , 1988).

⁹ Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, 7.

The Public Witness of the Early Church

The public witness of the early church can be identified in the exploration of its major areas of spiritual disciplines as indicated in the early church in Acts 2:42-47. Their spiritual concentration includes *Kerygma*, i.e., the proclamation of the gospel. Proclamation which involves preaching and announcing the gospel makes the church a community that is tasked to offer a message of hope to the nations. The church paid attention to *Didache* i.e., teaching the followers the way of Christ. The members of the church were not expected to just keep a body of knowledge. They were trained as apprentices on how to translate the information received into daily living. Christian formation and training took a very important part in the Christian faith community. The Christian formation of the church remained lifelong from womb to tomb.

The concentration on *Koinonia* kept the church together in fellowship and as a community life of Christ. They ensured that there was nobody in need among them. The poor and needy were taken care of. *Diakonia* refers to the role of a servant. The washing of feet by Christ was a demonstration of the church as a body to provide service. *Diakonia* keeps reminding the faith community that it is a body to serve in love as Jesus demonstrated. The call to service of the church transcended the church community. The service of the church was extended to the people who were outside the faith community. The early church was a community of *Liturgia* offering worship to God. They came together literally to do the work of the people. They broke bread together and offered worship to God together as a family.

The Christian Identity in the World

The Christian identity of the church and its members is amply established in the Scriptures. The claim of Jesus on the fullness of life has remained a motivation in Public Theology. In John 10:10 Jesus reveals that 'the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.' The fullness of life responds to the offering of forgiveness to the sinner, healing to the sick, food to the hungry, and dignity to the downtrodden. The church flowing from the example of Christ brings meaning and fullness to the environment within which it serves. The fullness of life is expressed in terms of meeting the basic needs of life that make life meaningful as indicated in the works of Kwamena-Poh,¹⁰ Noel Smith,¹¹ and Hans Debrunner.¹² Poverty, disease, unemployment, civil wars, hunger, and environmental degradation are considered detriments of life. The church therefore contributes to the fullness of life by supporting policies that support social interventions and therefore is pro-poor as indicated by Peter Schweizer.¹³

The call for the church to serve as the light of the world continuously demands that Christians must participate in social matters. The world is in darkness. Christians who have experienced Jesus Christ the light of the world are required to bring their faith and lifestyles as a demonstration of God's love to the society. In the Gospel of Mathew followers of Christ's identity in the world are revealed as '*you are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven*' (Matt 5:14-16).

The world is in darkness, Jesus implied that Christians are to be its light. The world is decaying, but they are to be its salt and hinder its decay.¹⁴ The world which is in darkness needs the Church to reflect the light of Christ to make life meaningful. The world must find light in its darkness as a result of the presence and participation of the church in public matters.

¹⁰ Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828-1978)*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011).

¹¹ Noel Smith, *The Presbytery Church of Ghana 1835-1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966).

¹² Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967).

¹³ Peter A Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana* (Smartline Pub., 2000).

¹⁴ Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, 66.

Jesus presents God in the Family/the Lord's Prayer as the father in heaven (Matt 6:9-13). In his fatherhood, God has consistently shown interest in the affairs of humanity by sending messengers of hope to make interventions for deliverance and prosperity. Biblical personalities like Moses, Esther, Amos, Nehemiah, and many more keep reminding the church to take a preferential interest in the affairs of the needy and the poor. The fatherhood of God demands that the church must participate in matters of public interest. God is a father who will want the best for his children. He has interest and pleasure in the well-being of his children an example that the church is called upon to emulate. The church is a community of hope. In all members of the church resides the power of mission and of ministry. The identity of Christian identity in the world must constantly be informed and shaped by Christian beliefs and values.

Seek the Peace and Prosperity of the City

The people of God became prisoners of war in Babylon. The treatment they received while in exile should have made them bitter, passive, and full of hatred. They were denied the freedom of worship. They were forced to worship unknown gods and eat food dedicated to gods. Knowing the true God who they have worshipped from childhood, Daniel and his friends determined to keep themselves pure to the most-high God. The effort to be true to God should have been celebrated as a good example of maturity and sincerity in matters of faith and spirituality. Contrary they suffered for their dedication. They were dumped in the fire and the den of lions.

In such tormenting moments the good, all-knowing God instructed his people as to how to live and relate in foreign lands. They were instructed to seek the peace and prosperity of the hostile city, 'seek the peace and prosperity of the City to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because in its peace you will have your peace' (Jer 29:7). The divine command may seem strange, unnatural, and unfair in human terms. Followers of God must however know that his ways are not their ways. His love is towards all humankind.

The party in government may not be the party one voted for. Moreover, the performance of a government may be so unsatisfactory to the point of not deserving the intercessions of the church. Christian faith in the public space does not suggest that the Christian community is in agreement with all government policies, interests, and directions. The call is for the church to seek the prosperity and peace of the city. All efforts in capacity building, support systems, and interventions must be made. The fact remains that the peace and prosperity of the people of God are closely tied to that of the city, ungodly as it may. Commitment in Public Theology has virtually nothing to do with an individual's affiliations or otherwise with a ruling government.

Standing in the Gap

To stand in the gap is to expose oneself for the protection of something; to take the place of a fallen defender or supporter. Scripture shares numerous examples of people standing in the gap for others. In Ezekiel 22:30 the Lord says, *'I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.'* The world picture painted in this verse is that of a wall with a hole or a gap in it. A wall was the best means of protection in ancient times. A breach in the wall would let the enemy through. If there was a breach in the wall, defenders would have to swarm to that location and hold the breach. The gap would need to be repaired as soon as possible. If a breach was left unattended to or unrepaired, the city would fall.

While the Jews were living in exile, they were making idols for themselves and murdering one another (Ezek 22:1-6). Further on in chapter 22, God's people were committing adultery, fornication, lewdness, and pornography. Incest, usury, and murder for hire were common (Ezek 22: 7-12). The people had turned their eyes away from God. Even the priests were violating the law. It was precisely at this time that God was looking for that person who will stand in the gap for the people. He was looking for the Abraham that stood in the gap for Sodom. He was looking for the Moses who pleaded

on the Israelites' behalf. God however found no one and he brought down his judgment upon his beloved people. The original story of Moses standing in the gap is found in Exodus 32:9–14:

‘I have seen these people,’ the Lord said to Moses, ‘and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.’ But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God. ‘Lord,’ he said, ‘why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘it was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever. Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.’

To stand in the gap is to intercede and plead for God’s mercy. In Ezekiel 22:30, God used a language that reminded the people of Moses’ actions centuries before. At Moses’ intercession, God had relented of His wrath in the wilderness. In Ezekiel’s day, there was no Moses. No one interceded for Israel. No one understood the danger God’s people were in. With no intercessor to stand in the gap, the destruction of Israel was carried out. In biblical times, there was a wall built around cities. This wall was a fortification; used for protection. When a hole was found in the wall, it was of grave importance for it to be repaired. During battles, defenders would have to swarm a hole, or breach, in the wall to protect the citizens of the town. A breach in the wall that was not repaired or defended would mean the city would fall. God’s people had a hole in their wall. Sin had breached the wall and the people were falling.

When Ezekiel shared the words, God had spoken, he was telling the people that God was prepared to send down his wrath and destroy Jerusalem. Judgment was coming. In the modern world, there are no walls surrounding cities. However, there are spiritual walls. The wall of protection for the people is God’s love. When Christians stand in the gap for others, they are asking God to help them when they cannot help themselves. They are asking God to protect, care for, and assist others when all seems lost. When Christians stand in the gap, they are working to accomplish God’s will for his people. Christians may not want to see others hurt, scared, or hopeless. They desire, like God, to see people come to know the saving grace of the Lord. They want no one to spend eternity in hell. Accomplishing this goal means believers must protect the breaches in the wall. Standing in the gap means working for the kingdom. Seeds of the spirit are planted so the Holy Spirit can work in hearts. Fields are tended, so that no one leaves this earth without Jesus. There is a constant preparation of others for a harvest that will gather in heaven.

God in his sovereignty is able to do whatever he wants to do with or without human participation. He however will not do anything among men without their involvement. Christians are called to be co-labourers with God and ambassadors of Christ. He makes them honourable vessels for his own use. God, therefore, is always seeking the availability of well-equipped useful tools. In Ezekiel God was in the assignment of searching for servants to perform divine tasks. There were temples in Israel with seers, prophets, and priests. Among them, God did not find someone to fulfil the task of standing in the gap. It is one thing being available and another thing being useful. It is also possible for useful people not always be available for service. The Bible does not speak as to whether the issue was availability or usefulness. The fact remains that God did not get someone among them to stand in the gap, a phenomenon that should not be said of any church, Christian association, and minister of God.

Theological Perspectives for Public Discourse

Theological resources and perspectives provide a foundation for Public Theology in African Christianity. They suggest that the Christian faith is not just a private matter, but has important implications for public life and the common good. African Christians believe that their faith calls them to engage with the social, political, and economic issues that affect their communities, and to work for

the liberation of all people from the forces that oppress them according to Robert Schreiter.¹⁵ The theological basis for Public Theology in African Christianity is grounded in a deep commitment to the presence of God in the world, the transformation of society, the liberation of the oppressed, and the contextualization of the Christian faith to the African context.

Theological perspectives for Public Theology in African Christianity are rooted in several theological concepts and principles that shape the way African Christians understand their faith and its implications for public life. The theological perspective for Public Theology in African Christianity is diverse and draws from a variety of perspectives and traditions. At its core, however, African Public Theology is grounded in the belief that the gospel message has relevance for all aspects of life, including social, political, and economic issues. Theological perspectives that have informed Public Theology include the incarnation, righteousness, social justice, contextualization, the common good, and stewardship.

Incarnation

African Christian theology emphasizes the importance of the incarnation or the idea that God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. According to Andrew Walls, the emphasis on the incarnation has led African theologians to see the importance of God's presence in the world and the need for Christians to engage with the world in order to be agents of God's love and justice.¹⁶ African Christians emphasize the idea that God became human in Jesus Christ and entered into human history. This concept has profound implications for how African Christians understand the relationship between faith and public life.

It suggests that God is concerned with the concrete realities of human existence and that Christians have a responsibility to engage with the cultural, social, political, and economic issues that affect their communities as indicated in the works of Busia,¹⁷ Williamson¹⁸ and Bediako.¹⁹ African Christianity places a strong emphasis on the incarnation, the belief that God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. The doctrine underscores the value of human life and affirms the importance of social justice and human rights. African theologians have used the idea of the incarnation to argue that Christians have a responsibility to work for the common good and promote social justice in the world.

The Kingdom of God is not just a future reality, but also a present one that can be experienced through the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. Christians, therefore, have a responsibility to work for the common good and promote social justice in the world. In the New Testament, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). All human beings are created in the image of God, and therefore have inherent dignity and worth. This theme argues for the protection of human rights and the promotion of human flourishing. In the creation story in Genesis, God creates human beings in his own image and gives them the task of caring for the earth and its creatures (Gen 1:26-28).

Liberation and Social Justice

Social justice is a key subject in the Bible. There are stories about liberation in the Old and New Testaments as a model for their struggles against oppression and injustice. The emphasis on liberation has led to the development of various liberation theologies in African Christianity, which seek to empower marginalized communities and promote social justice. The Bible tells many stories of

¹⁵ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985).

¹⁶ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996).

¹⁷ Kofi Abrefa Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

¹⁸ S.G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1965).

¹⁹ Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*.

liberation, including the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt and Jesus' liberation of people from illness and demon possession. These stories facilitate the Christian efforts of the liberation of oppressed communities in Africa, particularly from colonialism and other forms of domination.

The African continent has a rich history of biblical interpretation and application that address issues of social justice, poverty, and any form of dehumanization as indicated by Paolo Freire.²⁰ One of the most influential African theologians who used the Bible to address social and political issues was South African theologian and anti-apartheid advocate, Desmond Tutu. Tutu's theology was rooted in the Bible, and he used its teachings to challenge the apartheid system in South Africa. He believed that the Bible provided a framework for social justice and that Christians had a responsibility to work for the liberation of all people as noted by Gutierrez.²¹ African Christian theology also emphasizes the theme of liberation, seeing the Bible's message as a message of liberation from oppression and injustice. This emphasis on liberation has led to the development of various forms of liberation theologies, which seek to empower marginalized communities and promote social justice according to Gutierrez.²²

The Bible emphasizes the importance of justice and righteousness in society. The subject supports the effort for social justice and human rights. In the Old Testament, the prophet Amos speaks out against the oppression of the poor and calls for justice to roll down like a river (Amos 5:24). In the New Testament, Jesus speaks about the importance of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick and imprisoned (Matt 25:31-46).

Advocacy and Human Rights

The Bible frequently speaks about the importance of human rights, particularly for the poor and oppressed. Proverbs 31:8-9 states, 'speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' The Bible addresses issues such as poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, and political oppression. The Bible encourages the right of people to association, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, access to medical care, and the right to self-determination. Biblical teachings advocate for social justice and economic empowerment for the poor and marginalized. It provides the foundation for addressing social and political issues and advocates for human rights and human dignity as opined by Emmanuel Asante.²³

The book of Proverbs for example teaches that 'justice makes a nation great' (Prov 14:34), while the book of Micah exhorts, 'act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God' (Micah 6:8). The Bible challenges unjust social structures, oppression and exploitation. The Bible is a source of Christian advocacy, human dignity, and human rights and must be used to advocate for the rights of the people. The Bible continues to inform pastors and theologians to use the Bible to address contemporary social issues such as poverty, hunger, corruption, violence, human rights abuses and pandemics like HIV/AIDS.²⁴ Practical solutions to social challenges must be sought while also promoting a deeper understanding of God's love and justice. The Bible provides a foundation for African Christians to address social issues and promote human rights, human dignity, and social justice.

²⁰ Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2000).

²¹ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*.

²² Gutierrez.

²³ Emmanuel Asante, *Theology and Society in Context: A Theologist's Reflections on Selected Topics* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2014).

²⁴ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "Christian Advocacy Ministry in African Christianity: The Nature, Prospects and Challenges in Ghana," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 3, no. 4 (November 5, 2021): 57–67, <https://doi.org/10.38159/motbit.2021351>.

Contextualization

According to Bediako, African Christianity has developed a strong tradition of contextual theology, which seeks to understand the gospel message in light of the cultural and social realities of African societies.²⁵ This theological approach provides a framework for African Christians to engage with public issues and respond to the needs of their communities in culturally relevant ways. There is the need to respond to the European-value setting for non-Europeans in Christian missions in response to the Gospel and African cultural tension that exist among African Christians. Christian teachings and theologies must be developed with the intention to bridge the Gospel and African culture gap through the development of contextual and indigenous theologies that take into account the cultural traditions of African societies while remaining faithful to Christian teachings. Christianity must be relevant to the social, political, and economic realities of African societies. Contextualization must lead African theologians to develop Public Theologies that are grounded in the specific social and political contexts of African communities.

Christian Unity and Cultural Harmony

The Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of unity among believers, regardless of their social, ethnic, or economic backgrounds. Galatians 3:28 states, 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' Pastors, theologians, and other Christian leaders must pursue the effort for greater unity and cooperation among the diverse peoples of Africa. In Galatians 6:2, Christians are called to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' African Christian theology thus places a strong emphasis on community, seeing the Christian faith as a communal faith that calls for the transformation of society.²⁶ This emphasis on the community must lead African theologians to argue for the importance of the idea that the Christian faith should be applied to public life and social issues. African theologians must emphasize the importance of building strong communities that support the well-being of all their members.

The Common Good

Christians have the responsibility to work toward the common good and promote social justice in their communities. African Christians must consider themselves as part of a larger community and bring their faith to inspire the people to work for the common good. The Bible provides a framework for addressing poverty in Africa, and Christians had a responsibility to work for economic justice. Through biblical interpretation and application, African theologians and pastors must be able to offer a unique perspective on the challenges facing the continent and advocate for a more just and equitable society. The theological insights and perspectives must facilitate the work of social and political transformation as an important part of the mission and ministry of the church. They must lead to the development of strong Christian advocacy among African Christians, who are well-equipped and available to play important roles in credible general elections, wealth creation, human rights, democratic consolidation, and interfaith harmony across the continent.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that the Bible has been used to promote social justice, advocate for human rights and confront corruption and other forms of oppression. African theologians have developed perspectives on these issues that draw on the biblical teachings of justice, compassion, and stewardship of the earth. The Bible has been a relevant tool for African Christians to engage with public issues, promote social justice, and advocate for the common good. It is therefore recommended that African Christians must engage the social, political, and economic issues that affect their communities and

²⁵ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

²⁶ James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 Years of the Christian Council of Ghana, 1929-2009* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2009).

work for the liberation of all people from the forces that oppress them with Christian teachings and insights.

Public Theology in African Christianity must be grounded in a deep commitment to the presence of God in the world, the transformation of society, the liberation of the oppressed, and the contextualization of the Christian faith to the African cultural context. The gospel message has relevance for all aspects of human life, including social, political, and economic issues. Theological insights and perspectives that must inform Public Theology in African Christianity include the incarnation, righteousness, social justice, human dignity, Christianity identity, contextualization, and the common good.

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