

# Ghana Shall Be Saved: A Theological Reflection on Two Ghanaian Prayer-Songs

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## Abstract

*This essay reflects on the symbiotic relations between the Ghanaian church and state. It examines two Ghanaian prayer-songs, namely, the National Anthem and a local Pentecostal song with the aim of distilling from them inherent theological ideas for developing a humane national consciousness. In this way the paper seeks to evaluate and formulate a Christian theology that responds to the Ghanaian search for meaning in the public space. Accordingly, the paper aims at challenging the Ghanaian church to appreciate its prophetic role in the realization of the Ghanaian dream of freedom and justice. This paper stresses the need for appreciating and taking advantage of the Ghanaian religiosity for the fulfillment of national aspirations.*

## Introduction

It is said that religion exerts a comprehensive influence on the thoughts and actions of the African person.<sup>1</sup> Religion plays a prominent role in Ghanaian life. It penetrates every facet of the Ghanaian life. Ghanaians fill their lives with God-talk that is often expressed through their songs and prayers. Both Ghanaian religious songs and prayers are rich reservoirs of the Ghanaian understanding, anticipation and interpretation of life. Hence the question we seek to answer in this paper is: Are there theological ideas inherent in Ghanaian prayer-songs that can be used to help Ghanaians realize the national dream of freedom and justice for a meaningful and fulfilling life?

For the Ghanaian, authentic religion necessarily means making sense out of life. It is a state and condition of ensuring that life moves from 'sacred' spaces into the 'profane' public life. This leads to a consideration of the Ghanaian perception and quest for meaning in this life as expressed through their prayer-songs. This also calls for a consideration of the role of religion in Ghanaian national life. These issues are significant in the sense that today we can still talk about a nation in conflict; a nation with various forms of disparity in its socio-economic, cultural and political fabric. For example, the gulf between the rich and the poor is still widening while there is every reason to believe nepotism and corruption reign supreme in Ghana's inter-personal relations. How should Christianity and Christian theology be transformational

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Co., 1996), 3.

in the face of these socio-economic and political imbalances? Are there tools available for developing a humanizing theology to offset the apparent imbalances in the Ghanaian society? We propose that one way of doing this is by examining Ghanaian socio-religious songs to see how Ghanaians express their fears, hopes and expectations, and then formulating a theology to deal with them. It is for this reason that we seek to examine and evaluate in this paper the theological ideas inherent in two Ghanaian prayer-songs for the realization of the Ghanaian dream of a better tomorrow.

### Theology and Ghanaian Prayer-Songs

Theology is “a disciplined reflection on the reality of God and God’s relation to the world, whose intention is to clarify God’s purposes and actions and, in this light, to evaluate the faith and practice of those who claim to know God.”<sup>2</sup> Significantly, apart from an academic and systematic approach, theology may also be constructed from people’s experiences with God expressed in their prayers, songs, liturgy, conversations, etc. In this kind of theology, or popular theology, the ‘embedded text’ may be decoded to unravel the text’s ‘otherness’.<sup>3</sup> This paper will seek to show that God’s sovereignty transcends and pervades the ecclesial and ‘secular’ spaces of Ghanaian life, and that there is a symbiotic relation between the church and society that must be exploited for national cohesion. It will achieve this by examining, evaluating and systematizing some theological ideas inherent in two Ghanaian prayer-songs: The National Anthem and a Pentecostal patriotic song entitled *Oman Ghanaba tow ahurusi ndwom* (Sing a joyful song, O citizen of Ghana).

As we shall see, these songs, one secular and the other religious, are nationalistic in tone and perspective. This present version of the Anthem uses the music of the original Anthem composed by Philip Gbeho adopted upon independence in 1957. The current lyrics that have been in use since the 1970s were written by a student, Michael Kwame Gbordzoe, within the framework of a national competition. The current text was chosen some time after the 1966 coup in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> The replacement of the old version with this new version apparently reflects the feelings of ‘new liberation’ that the nation had experienced. The nation had just emerged from the ‘dictatorial oppression’ of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?: Theological Explorations* (London: Darton Longmans and Todd, 1999), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gary A. Phillips, “The Ethics of Reading Deconstructively, or Speaking Face to Face: The Samaritan Woman Meets Derrida at the Well” in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. Mcknight (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 289.

<sup>4</sup> See Africanus Owusu Ansah, “All Die be Die”, *Daily Guide* (March 10, 2011), 20.

<sup>5</sup> For more the background see John S. Pobe, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana-1949-1966* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988); Ebenezer Obiri Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1999).

On the other hand the religious song *Oman Ghanaba* was sung during the early days of national independence. It was composed by Pastor Anaman of the Ghana Apostolic Church (known today as Church of Pentecost). Pastor Anaman was very instrumental in the secession of James McKeown's Ghana Apostolic Church from the parent church, Bradford's Apostolic Church in 1953. During the ensuing conflict it was Pastor Anaman who was nominated as the chairman of the unity Ghanaian Apostolic church proposed by President Nkrumah's government.<sup>6</sup> It would seem Pastor Anaman was as nationalistic as he was religious, which would explain the lyrics of his song. For the purpose of this paper I have chosen to examine the first stanzas of both the Anthem and *Oman Ghanaba* because I consider those stanzas as sufficient to provide the raw data for this paper.

### **A Nation Cries to God: God *must* be Ghanaian**

There are a number of insights that reveal how Ghanaian religiosity is connected with secularity. There is no *conscious* separation between the religious and the secular as far as the Ghanaian is concerned. The Ghanaian longing for blessing is directed God-ward. God is the key factor in national and personal aspirations. This is what informs the lyrics of the National Anthem printed below:

God bless our homeland Ghana,  
And make our nation great and strong,  
Bold to defend forever  
The cause of Freedom and of Right.  
Fill our hearts with true humility  
Make us cherish fearless honesty,  
And help us to resist oppressor's rule  
With our will and might for evermore.

In this Anthem there are two main themes that call for our attention. They are the recognition of divine providence and the importance of individual and corporate responsibility in nation building. The song is a cry for the building of a sovereign, self-reliant nation whose greatness and strength lie in the selflessness of its citizens. In this song there is also recognition of the ubiquity of evil in the world. Here evil is conceived in terms of lack of freedom and privation of rights. Oppression and injustice are made possible through intimidation, fear and sycophancy. These social evils inhibit the development of a great and strong nation, the very aspiration of the new nation-state of Ghana. To negate this, Ghanaians must determinedly and boldly become personally responsible in defending the nation. This demands two positive

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<sup>6</sup> David Tenobi, *A Short History of the Apostolic Church in Ghana* (n.p., n.d), 22-23. See also Opoku Onyinah. "The Man James McKeown" in Opoku, Onyinah (ed.), *The Church of Pentecost: 50 Years of Sustainable Growth*; James McKeown Memorial Lectures (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2004), 68-69, and E.K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: CPCS, 2001), 212-213.

attitudes: humility of heart and fearless honesty. It means a willingness to be sacrificed on the altar of truth. This makes willing martyrdom consequential to a resistance to oppression.

Oppression thrives on dishonesty. Oppressors love to be praised. Their callousness is fueled by narcissistic sycophancy. Sycophants do not think about others but only about themselves alone. They love to tell their benefactors only what the latter love to hear: the oppressor is always right; he/she is loved and adored by all; the people are not worried by the wicked and obnoxious laws. Sycophants go to great lengths to gossip, malign, vilify, blackmail, undermine and betray others to achieve their selfish goals. Their attitudes, intentions, actions (covert or overt) and speeches affect not only their individual targets but also derail national development and prosperity. In Ghana, as in many parts of Africa, sycophancy has become an acceptable part of the social fabric.

Actually sycophancy undergirds “the sponsorship game”, a political tactic. In this game the individual attaches him/herself to his/her boss or someone with power. Typically individuals attach themselves to someone who is on the way to power. The sponsor is a power base. Some of the power of the sponsor tends to rub off on the sycophant or client. Some rules involved in this game are that the sycophant must:

1. show commitment and loyalty to the sponsor;
2. follow each sponsor-initiated request or order;
3. stay in the background and give the sponsor credit for everything and
4. be thankful and display gratitude to the sponsor.

The political sponsorship game underpins what Paul Gifford has noted about African politics, namely, neo-patrimonialism which thrives on clientelism.<sup>7</sup> It is that state of affairs where sycophancy ‘scratches the hands’ of sponsorship. It is a negative mutuality.

Interestingly, sycophancy can turn into betrayal especially when sponsorship fails to satisfy sycophants’ expectations. Ghanaian history is replete with this. Daily we see how sycophants and sponsors backstab each other and the consequences of this are always disastrous. For instance, President Nkrumah arrested his own ministers for being responsible for his near-death in the Kulungugu bomb attack. Ace Ghanaian journalist Kwesi Pratt’s hypercriticism of and hardened opposition to the New Patriotic Party (NPP) could best be interpreted against the plausible failure of the party to ‘scratch the back of his hand’ after its 2000 electoral victory. In recent times one Lucky Mensah’s song, *Uncle Tawiah, gye nkratoō yi* (Uncle Tawiah, get

<sup>7</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 1998), 5-6. In neo-patrimonialism, the political sponsor or patron uses the powers of his public office for his own benefit and the benefit of his sycophants or clients who in turn give him their support.

this message) clearly displays his disappointment at President Atta Mills' government's failure to 'appease him' for helping them to win the 2008 elections. Lucky was one of the musicians whose songs were successfully appropriated by the then opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) in its electoral campaign against the NPP government.

Hence the national anthem poetically expresses aloud what all honest and patriotic Ghanaians fear and abhor - dishonesty that leads to oppression in Ghanaian society. Therefore like all patriots Gbordzoe disavows any form of oppression, injustice, and privation. This is important when we consider the role of the national anthem as an expression of the Ghanaian dream of freedom and justice. Freedom and justice are two disadvantaged and endangered species in African life. While injustice and oppression are global diseases, it is among Africans that they are most deadly. To correct their debilitating and terminal effects many sacrificed themselves to resist them. Some even chose the barrel of the gun to oppose dishonesty and oppression. However, after some five decades Africans have learnt the hard lesson that the revolutionary 'messiahs' are more self-seeking than their criminalized victims. Oppressed people in Africa today have used the methods of democratic elections and popular protests to fight for freedom and justice. In both methods, though, the hard truth is that some people sacrifice their blood because of the selfishness of those in power.

And yet Gbordzoe does not despair. He looks up to God as the source of the nation's deliverance. This is no fatalistic withdrawal from reality, nor is it evidence of passivity. Truly life in this world is full of troubles, sufferings and evil, but Gbordzoe can confidently look up to God to save the nation. Salvation here is seen as blessing, a word that encapsulates all the aspirations and dreams of the *good* Ghanaian. It is in this sense that the Anthem is a cry for divine help in the midst of wickedness. This makes the Anthem a national prayer that must be said with conscious realisation of dependence on God for individual and national victory over everything that might intimidate and dehumanize the *new* Ghanaian. The prayer must be uttered in full expectation of divine assistance. Consequently, the Ghanaian is to eschew any form of despondency but rather embrace the hope of a blessed nation. And yet the realization of such a hope also demands our individual and concerted effort so that there is divine-human co-operation.

### **God Responds Through the Church: I Am the Maker-husband**

Until recently Ghanaian Pentecostals were noted for their apolitical tendencies. They stood on the political sidelines rather than become 'muddy in the waters of politics'. This is changing. Today, a number of Pentecostal church leaders and pastors are involved in politics on the local and national fronts. Some serve as parliamentarians on both sides of the House. Notwithstanding their apolitical past we can still find nationalistic and patriotic themes in some Pentecostal songs, like *Oman Ghanaba*. The English

translation of the first stanza is below. The *Akan* original is found in the appendix.

Sing a joyful song, O citizen of Ghana  
 God has redeemed you  
 Been gracious to you and blessed you  
 Extend your tent left and right  
 The gracious Lord has been merciful to you

**Chorus**

Your God will answer (now)  
 All your petitions for you  
 Your maker and husband  
 His name is the Lord  
 You who once suffered a lot of storms  
 The gracious Lord has been merciful to you

According to Anaman, Ghanaians should celebrate God's redemption. This redemption is not to be taken for granted but is to be seen as a gracious blessing from God. Celebration entails expansion in all spheres of life. It is the kind of unrestricted expansion that embraces all aspects of life: political, economic, social and religious. God wills this because he has granted his mercy to each 'citizen of Ghana'. Actually, there is a double reference in Anaman's use of the phrase 'citizen of Ghana'. It has a personal reference to the individual Ghanaian who enjoys divine benevolence. And yet its corporate reference applies to the whole nation. Both the individual and the nation are to embrace God as their maker and husband.

The maker imagery connotes the idea of creation. Creation here does not imply that God's interest in Ghana ceased at the time of independence. Rather, it includes God's continual interest and involvement in the making of a new nation and person. Creation also includes divine provision, care, protection, attention and love. Therefore God is not only Ghana's maker but also her husband. The song calls to mind the following encouragement from the book of Isaiah.

*Do not fear; for you shall not be ashamed, nor shall you blush; for you shall not be put to shame; for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called (Isaiah 54: 4-5 NKJV).*

This passage of Scripture provides the backdrop for *Oman Ghanaba*. It is against this backdrop that we may interpret the divine assurance of protection in stormy times to Ghanaians. Actually, it seems that each Ghanaian (and the nation) have already passed through the storms and will never see them again. The storm imagery draws heavily on Isaiah's eschatological assurance to Israel with regard to its future remaking. In this new Israel there will be no

suffering; it will be a time of peaceful unity and development. It is with this understanding that we may appreciate that according to the chorus the new Ghanaian nation, like the daughter of Zion, is to rejoice in God.

Significantly, Anaman chooses female imagery because nations are typified as women. The female imagery is significant for us because, being often more vulnerable, women go through many more troubles than men in Ghanaian society. They are abused and abased economically, culturally, sexually, socially and politically. Therefore, full of sorrow, they often resort to God for spiritual succour. Hence as symbolized in the Isaianic text, God seeks to console them. Now they have God to defend them. Women's vulnerability is not God-ordained or created but is artificial and culturally-conditioned, but through Christ they can scale all obstacles. In much the same way, the new Ghanaian nation must trust in God to scale all man-made impediments to freedom and justice.

A careful observation of the song shows an appropriation of Isaianic assurances mixed with nationalistic feelings (Isaiah 54:1-5). The book of Isaiah gives Israel a special hope for the future. It affirms that though Israel will not be spared for her disloyalty to Yahweh<sup>8</sup> the Lord will eventually comfort her and restore her back to her homeland. Thus the prophet spoke of the nation's forthcoming deliverance that will comfort Israel (40:1-11).<sup>9</sup> The salvation the prophet spoke of was to be understood by the people as emanating from the love of God, conferred upon them "only by grace, by the power of God, the Redeemer, rather than by the strength of man or the good works of the flesh."<sup>10</sup> Thus God chastises and purges Israel to "make them fit to participate in His programme of redemption."<sup>11</sup> That is why as a holy God, he does not permit any character defect in his covenant people to remain unchallenged.<sup>12</sup>

Since *Oman Ghanaba* was given to a Pentecostal church one would think that Anaman had the Pentecostal believer in mind. However, considering the inherent nationalistic tendencies, one is obliged to think he had the 'new Ghanaian' in mind. From this we may infer that he was calling on the newly independent Ghanaian to celebrate his/her redemption. Thus redemption had a double meaning. Anaman gave spiritual redemption a nationalistic meaning so that political freedom was tied to spiritual redemption from sin. It was political emancipation that he interpreted as a divine blessing and to which the new Ghanaian must respond by extending his/her tent. "Extend your tent left

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<sup>8</sup> J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 347.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel J. Schultz & Gary V. Smith, *Exploring the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 167.

<sup>10</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 326.

<sup>11</sup> James D. Smart, *The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man* (London: The Epworth Press, 1965), 116.

<sup>12</sup> Smart, *The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man*, 116.

and right”, an abbreviation of Isaiah’s “*Make the place of your tent larger, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings. Do not spare, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes*” (Isaiah 54:2 NKJV). Thus Anaman’s use of religious language echoes Nkrumah’s call to Ghanaians for nation building. According to Anaman, the Ghanaian was so positioned as to have his/her petitions answered by God who doubled as his/her maker and husband. The song thus assured Ghanaians that God was in charge of the new development in the nation and he had chosen to stand with them (“*Your maker and husband*) through “a lot of storms”. These were the stormy days of the colonial period when Ghanaians had no identity except that of the colonial master. But God had been merciful to them by liberating them and so restoring their lost identity. Anaman echoes the Pan-Africanist call for a new African identity.

In contemporary times also some Pentecostal songs have played significant roles in Ghana’s politics. A few months into the 2000 elections that brought the NPP to power, a Church of Pentecost gospel singer sang a song that was appropriated by the NPP’s election campaign. The title track of Cyndi Thomson’s album *Cyndi’s Messiah* was the song *Ewuradze, kasa* (Lord, speak) which pleaded with God to speak into her situation. This idea was transposed into the Ghanaian political situation and capitalised upon by the NPP. Many believe the party’s astute appropriation of the song was in large part responsible for its electoral victory over the then incumbent NDC. The song became hugely popular as many Ghanaians associated its piteous lyrics with what they considered to be socio-economic and political oppression and depression under the NDC.

Like *Oman Ghanaba*, an analysis of Cindy’s song must be placed within the context of the *new freedom* most Ghanaians hoped to gain from the NDC government of President Jerry Rawlings, the former Flight Lieutenant. The NDC was the new form of the erstwhile Provisional National Development Council (PNDC) in 1992. The proclaimed purpose of Rawling’s coup in 1979 was to salvage the nation from socio-economic and political injustice and inequities. By the early 1990s Rawlings’ popularity had waned. The confidence many had reposed in him since 1979 had seriously diminished. By the mid-1990s most Ghanaians were calling for his political exit. They wanted a more capable leader to take over and lead the nation out from under the government’s political repression and the accompanying economic recession. In the view of the NPP, Ghanaians deserved a new leader who could deliver them from life’s harsh conditions. Consequently, their electoral slogan, *Hwē wo asetena mu na to wo aba* (“vote according to your socio-economic and political conditions”) became an instant success.

### **Stretch Out Your Faith**

A number of ideas emerge from the two song-prayers we have looked at. There is a genuine concern for a better future. It is clear that this hope is seen to come from God and demands religious affirmation. This is where the



church, represented in Anaman, comes in with assurance that all hope is not gone; God has a wonderful plan for the nation. He is interested in what concerns Ghanaians and so hears and answers them when they pray. As such Ghanaians are not to bury their heads in the sand of despondency but rather to trust in God's merciful power. Such divine responses are never deferred. The moment one prays, God answers. This emphasis on God's immediate response to prayer contradicts the popular perception that one needs to keep repeating oneself over and over before God hears and comes to one's aid. We often pray expecting a deferred answer and without passion. Often the remaking and remoulding actions that are required to build a better future are left up to God to achieve without human participation. This is what the church must help the nation to correct. Ghanaians must respond to God's new work in the nation. God's continuing presence with the nation demands that Ghanaians 'stretch out their tent' to the right and left. They must open up and co-operate with God to see this new thing that has come to pass.

The church has to affirm, motivate and help the state to fulfill its divine imperatives. To do so, the church should assure the nation of the reality of the Lord's peace. The peace of the Lord is unlike the world's conception of peace. It is peace that is not dependent on present circumstances or conditions, or on the number of difficulties. It is peace that encourages steadfastness in the face of seeming hopelessness. The church's duty is to assure the nation of Christ's guiding and comforting hand as it charts a new course for its citizens. It must assure the nation that God will eventually deliver the faithful. God is able to overcome life's spiritual and physical problems. The church must help the nation to develop an attitude of trust in and dependence on God. Ghanaians must learn to appreciate the sovereignty of God in all their endeavours.

The church's prophetic duty requires it to face the troubles that have and continue to beset the Ghanaian nation. Much of Ghana's fifty plus years have been spent trying to survive the socio-economic and political storms, a situation which seems to contradict the prophetic assurance in *Oman Ghanaba*. Nonetheless, such an understanding of Ghana's situation should not tempt us to believe that the cause of all the evil and suffering in Ghana comes from the domain of the spiritual. Oftentimes, evil and suffering result from human systems that tend to inhibit humanity from achieving anything close to ideal conditions in a country. Submission to the evils in human systems may be deemed expedient by the world's standards but the followers of Christ must choose to obey God rather than the 'earthly principalities'. The church is under divine orders to proclaim to the powers that the purposes of God have been fulfilled in Jesus (Eph 3:10). This means that those who wield power over the less privileged must be held accountable so that they rule faithfully, equitably and justly. This entails speaking out against unjust laws, practices, and acts, and denouncing inflammatory language from politicians and the media. It requires the church to refute unholy arguments and theories espoused in the name of human rights. This should be done dispassionately

without fear or favour. Of course this is possible only when the church cleans up its own stables and removes all the cobwebs of dishonesty, insincerity and nepotism from its own cupboards. Without moral housecleaning within the churches, Christians risk being condemned for practicing the same thing they criticize others for doing. It also demands that the church avoids playing into the hands of the powerful in a foolish bid for popularity and recognition.

Indeed, the church must appreciate that it is necessary that all human beings pass from less human conditions to more human conditions. Less human conditions are the oppressive social structures that inhibit the passage from misery over social scourges to the realization of peace.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the church must help the nation to realize true 'salvation'. Such salvation is not to be conceived only in terms of 'religious' or 'spiritual values' that fail to contribute much to everyday human life.

There is a deep-seated acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in Ghanaians. The church must take advantage of this religiosity to point Ghanaians to the virtues of honesty and humility, necessary ingredients for the development of national consciousness. An acknowledgement of this is a prerequisite for the nation to enjoy God's loving care as its shepherd. Ghanaians, like the Psalmist, look up to God to find satisfaction in their lives. Psalm 23 tells us that we lack nothing when God is our shepherd. The shepherd motif implies that it is God who determines human needs and provides for our enjoyment. This shepherd motif is so important that one cannot help but review it because the motif is absent from African concepts of leadership, whether religious, political, social, familial or economic.

### **God as the Shepherd of Ghana**

Paramount in the Ancient Near Eastern king metaphor was the idea of *shepherd*. Transposed into the socio-economic and political contexts this pastoral word connoted ideas of justice and protection rather than exploitation, violence, oppression and abuse.<sup>14</sup> Throughout Israel's history YHWH was perceived as the true King of Israel and, in later prophetic understandings, the entire world. Consequently, the later monarchical institution was deemed as "a concessive departure from that true sovereignty, God's own".<sup>15</sup> Davidic kingship was subsumed under the Sinaitic covenant which explains why in crucial passages David was called a 'prince' but not king (2 Sam. 7:8). "Yet to concede even princely rule to earthly David was to generate ... 'historic paradox'; it produced a tension that could be resolved only in the eschaton; there God's kingship would be restored at last".<sup>16</sup> Kings thus were to be

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<sup>13</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology Of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988), iii.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 122.

<sup>15</sup> James W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology, vol. II: Doctrine* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1994), 67.

<sup>16</sup> McClendon, *Systematic Theology*, 67.

humble servants of those they ruled. It is due to this deliberate failure that Ezekiel rebuked Israel's exploitative kings as bad shepherds. Instead of oppression, kings in the Old Testament were to have a preferential option for the poor, the weak and powerless.<sup>17</sup> After all, God's dominion "far from diminishing human freedom stood over against oppression by earthly rulers, its sway setting against injustice, true justice, against unlovingness, pure love".<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the essential nature of justice as conceived in the OT is not blind impartiality, but intervening to set things right, such that those who have been wronged are vindicated, the oppressed are delivered, the weak and vulnerable have their voices heard and their cases attended to.<sup>19</sup> Such an idea, according to Wright, is captured in Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV):

*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.*

Ghana's life and prosperity depend, in part, on the church raising its prophetic voice on socio-economic and political matters. The church can no longer distance itself from public issues. Otherwise it will stand condemned as being an apathetic form of Christianity. What this implies is that both the church and state become fellow travellers on the road of holistic salvation - a salvation that acquires socio-economic, political and religious character. It is a salvation that sees the Christ-event as inseparable from the renewal of politico-economic and social institutions. It is the kind of posture that rejects any attempt to divest Scripture of its social import by applying it exclusively to individual spiritual salvation. Similarly, it opposes the proposition of an eschatological utopia which oppressors deliberately and gladly use to tranquillise the suffering of the oppressed and to muffle their freedom.<sup>20</sup> Such a state of affairs where the oppressed acquiesce to the will of the oppressor is what Martin Luther King Jr. calls negative peace. Negative peace is the acquiescence to what otherwise is unacceptable to human wellness, but accommodated so as to avoid some kind of 'unwilling' hardship. However, positive or true peace is the presence of justice and brotherhood.<sup>21</sup>

The church and the state should co-operate on the national developmental agenda. This means there should be an ecclesial augmentation of the state's efforts in the realization of freedom for all Ghanaians. Such a realization is

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<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123.

<sup>18</sup> McClendon, *Systematic Theology*, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123-4.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology" in Itumeleng J. Mosala and Tlhagale Buti (eds.), *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Black Theology from South Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1986), 103.

<sup>21</sup> James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986), 51.

necessarily situated in the context of human responsibility. This is because human beings are not victims of fatalism. If fatalism rules then human beings are nothing but the product of biological, psychological and sociological conditions and prone to believe anyway. They would be the pawns and victims of outside influences or inner circumstances. But human beings are free moral agents. It is true freedom is restricted, and yet such "freedom is not freedom from conditions but freedom to take a stand toward the condition".<sup>22</sup> Consequently, "freedom is in danger of degenerating into arbitrariness" without human responsibility. Human beings possess potentialities in themselves. Nevertheless, "which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions". The church through its preaching and social concerns is to create in Ghanaians a new spirit of responsibility. Such responsible life must be both personal and national. The church must take a stand against irresponsible personal and corporate attitudes and tendencies that mitigate against national prosperity and growth. The church should challenge the state to clarify its role and duty towards the citizens and also define its developmental objectives. This way the church will be well positioned to monitor and direct the state towards its own agenda for national prosperity. Indeed it is part of the church's prophetic duty to speak against the misuse and abuse of individual and national properties, political deception, manipulation of the innocent and blatant refusal to heed the people's cry for freedom and justice.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I have sought to answer the question: "What theological ideas are inherent in Ghanaian prayer-songs for developing a meaningful Ghanaian public life?" The discussions have shown that the idea of secular atheism is alien to the Ghanaian person. As such any attempt to eject God from Ghanaian public life should be vehemently resisted by the church. The church does not have to distance itself from matters of state, and yet where the demands of the state conflict with the will of God, the church must obey God rather than submit to the state's demands. There is a strong felt need for deliverance in order to effect the full realization of humanity among Ghanaians. The Christian attitude is to propose God as the hope to the nation. Such a proposition seeks to underscore the human need for tranquility and peace. Conversely, it underlines the enormity of life's troubles that deprive Ghanaians of peace. It is the search for spiritual and material comfort that requires Ghanaians to look up to God. As John S. Pobee shows, unlike the Stoic teaching that accepted fate and fixed consequences, Jesus' beatitudes taught dependence on God's sovereignty and a reflection on his image that alone brings about inner calm and serenity and salvation. Hence "Blessedness comes from sharing God's life."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 135.

<sup>23</sup> John S. Pobee, "Preface", *Who are the Poor?: The Beatitudes as a Call to Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 5.

## Appendix

*Ōman Ghanaba, tow ehurusi ndwom*  
*Nyame agye wo nkwa*  
*Adom wo, ehyira wo*  
*Trē wo ntamada m' benkum na nyimfa*  
*Adom Ewuradze ehu wo so mbōbōr*

### Chorus

*W'ebisadze nyina, wo Nyame bēyē ama wo*  
*Wo yēfo nye wo kun*  
*Ne dzin enye Ewuradze*  
*Ōmandzehunyi a da bi ehum tuu wo*  
*Adom Ewuradze ehu wo so mbōbōr<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> S.A.K. Karikari & Kofi Sefa-Dwamena (compilers), *Pentekost Asōre Nnwom* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd., 2003), 192.

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