

## **“God Would Himself Raise Up a Nation out of Africa”: God’s Covenant, The Church of Pentecost and Ghana’s Public Sphere**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, I discuss the trajectories of religion and politics in Ghana, which have been extensively analysed, focusing on the role of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in shaping the country’s public sphere. Given the burgeoning contestation over Ghana’s public sphere, focusing particularly on the CoP’s visible presence in the country’s sphere as providers of social services and vanguards of the country’s moral rectitude, this paper concentrates on answering the questions: what accounts for the conviction and boldness of the CoP shattering the boundaries of religion and politics? How is the church reorienting its members to conform to its moral reforms? My questions chime with the debate between the often glossed-over and blurred lines of demarcation between religion and politics. As a methodological approach, I deploy critical reading of Ghana’s socio-political histories and the ideas of secularism to argue that the CoP, currently Ghana’s largest Pentecostal denomination, has revitalised the premodern logic of state-religion relations, based on its intermeshing of covenantal relationship with God since the 1930s and oral theology, to stage itself as an important player in Ghana’s public governance. The CoP’s perception of itself as God’s chosen church rationalises its efforts at choreographing Ghana away from Western cultural influences. Thus, both religion and CoP’s covenant are prior to the state, and the church seeks to guide the public sphere and governance of Ghana so that the country can fulfil its calling as God’s end-time chosen nation from Africa for global evangelism.

**Keywords:** Church of Pentecost, Covenant, LGBTQ, Secular, Ghana

### **Introduction**

“PENTECOST Church” to build a new prison” Got to love GH. The govt builds a cathedral and the church builds prison. Only in GH.”<sup>1</sup>

The above vignette was not just a mockery but an imagined contradiction between church and state relations that the Ghanaian comedian and satirist, Kwaku Sintim Misa, known in the showbiz industry as KSM, laughed off. The statement was triggered when the Church of Pentecost (CoP) announced the construction of prison facilities. As part of the CoP’s five-year vision labelled, “Possessing the Nations” agenda, the church has re-enforced its visibility in Ghana’s public sphere through providing social services. It has built roads, bus stop sheds, boreholes, clinics, and police stations. During the outbreak of the current coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ghanaweb (July 29, 2019), ‘It’s only in Ghana churches build prisons - KSM mocks’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/It-s-only-in-Ghana-churches-build-prisons-KSM-mocks-767557> (Accessed: June 3, 2022).

CoP offered its ultra-modern recreational and religious centre to the state to fight the pandemic. The church also donated a fleet of cars to the government to fight against the pandemic.

Before then, the CoP had invested heavily in building peace during elections, participating in massive regular clean-up exercises, nationwide planting of trees and incorporating traditional chiefs into Pentecostal practice and national governance. All these appear counter-cultural to the usual simplistic public framing of religion as worship and cultic practices. But of all these, perhaps the one that exasperated a section of the public, including KSM, to consider as an aberration and antinomy of religion and politics was the CoP's construction of prison facilities and the recent debate over LGBTQ+ rights.

Much as the CoP seeks to close the gap between religion, and social justice, the church has become the focus of the tiring, enlivened discourse over the nexus between religion and politics. On social media, some CoP members have accused the church of neglecting their members to demonstrate populist showmanship of what a church member expressed as, “outside gentility, home cry.” Additionally, the CoP's involvement in the task of protecting Ghana's public sphere against the liberal sexual invasion from the neoliberal Western world has been a subject of critique. Pro-LTGBTQ+ campaigners have profiled the CoP and the religious community for reinforcing hatred against a minority group.<sup>2</sup>

As Ghana's public sphere goes through rising contestation over the boundary between religion and politics in public governance, church activities in public have become a subject of intense debate. Specifically focusing on the CoP's visible presence in the country's public sphere as key agents in providing social services and vanguards of the country's public ethics, this study accounts for the CoP's assertiveness in deconstructing the superficial boundaries of religion and politics. How is the church reorienting its members to conform to its moral reforms? As I respond to these issues, my study contributes to the debate between the often simplistic lines of demarcation between religion and politics. In this article, I discuss the trajectories of religion and politics in Ghana – which has had extensive analysis,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A Group of Ghanaian Citizens, ‘Press Conference on Memorandum to Parliament of Ghana Against Passage of the “Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021’, <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ANTILGBT-BILL-PRESS-STATEMENT.FINAL-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 3, 2022); Essien, Kwame and Aderinto, Saheed, ‘“Cutting of the Head of the Roaring Monster”: Homosexuality and Repression in Africa’, *African Study Monograph*, 30, 3 (2009); 121-135.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Prempeh, ‘Religion, Social Media and the Discourse on Prisons: An Analysis of the Responses to the Church of Pentecost (CoP) Prison Project in Ghana’, *Prison Service Journal* 256 (2021): 38-43; Opoku Onyinah, ‘Distinguished Church Leader Essay: The Church of Pentecost and Its Role in Ghanaian Society’, in Philipp Ohlmann, Wilhelm Grab and Marie-Luise Frost (eds.), *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development*, 183-194 (London/New York: Routledge, 2020);

focusing on the role of the CoP in shaping the country's public sphere. I will argue that the CoP, currently Ghana's largest Pentecostal denomination,<sup>4</sup> has revitalised the premodern logic of state-religion relations, based on its intermeshing of covenantal relationship with God since the 1930s and oral theology, to stage itself as an important player in Ghana's public governance. The CoP's perception of itself as God's chosen church rationalises its efforts at choreographing Ghana away from Western cultural influences. Thus, both religion and CoP's covenant are prior to the state, and the church seeks to guide the public sphere and governance of Ghana so that the country can fulfil its calling as God's end-time chosen nation from Africa for global evangelism.

Methodologically, I anchor my argument on a contextual reading of Ghana's socio-political trajectories and ideas of secularisation. Similarly, I leverage my own immersion as a member of the CoP, having been baptised in 1997, to indicate my appreciation of the socio-cultural and historical nuances of the church. Nevertheless, to ensure that my own biases do not slip into and mar my analysis, I approach my analysis from the perspective of my training as an academic, with a speciality in the Humanities (African Studies) as a guide. Broadly, the rest of my article is structured as follows: The CoP's covenant with God and the church's identity, Ghana's trajectories with religion and politics, and CoP's engagement with the country's public sphere.

### **The CoP's Covenant with God since the 1930s**

The history of the CoP goes back to the 1920s with a group of Gold Coasters (now Ghana), the majority of whom belonged to the Christ Apostolic Church in Asamankese in the Eastern Region of the country.<sup>5</sup> The group made up of Brothers J.S. Gyimah, S.R. Asomaning from Akroso, S.W. Dufour and S.H. Ankama of Atonsu-Mampong, led by Peter Anim, sought the power of God's Holy Spirit to rejuvenate Christianity.<sup>6</sup> It was through this earnest desire that Pastor Clarke helped the group to establish the Faith Tabernacle. Since then, the group prayed and studied the doctrines of Christianity, especially about the New Birth, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the resultant gifts. As part of the evolution of the group, led by

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Opoku Onyinah and Michael Ntumy, *God's Faithfulness to the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2019); Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, 'Pentecostals and Contemporary Church-State Relations in Ghana', *Journal of Church and State*, 54, 4 (2015): 640-657.

<sup>4</sup>Amos Jimmy Markin, *Transmitting the Spirit in Missions: The History and Growth of the Church of Pentecost* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF & Stock, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Michael K. Ntumy, 'Covenant Renewed', in D.K. Noble-Atsu (ed), *Tell the Next Generation: Lectures Notes on the Annual Themes of The Church of Pentecost Vol. I 1988-2002* (Accra: The National Literature Committee, The Church of Pentecost, 2007), 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Anim, they renamed their Faith Tabernacle Church, The Apostolic Faith Church in 1930.<sup>7</sup>

According to the CoP’s history, in 1931, as the group prayed at the base in Akroso, God made a covenant with the church in the form of a prophetic message. This message was mediated through Rev. J.S. Gyimah. The covenant has received extensive discussion from several CoP church chroniclers, so I will in this article focus on the portion that claims that:

God would Himself raise up a nation out of Africa that would be a spearhead and light to the world, heralding the Second Coming of Christ Jesus the Lord. For that matter, Ghana has been chosen to fulfil this eternal will and purpose of God.<sup>8</sup>

The text of the covenant brings out several issues for discussion. First, it recapitulates the nature of the Middle Eastern covenant where tutelary deities go into special relations with their people.<sup>9</sup> The same is true of pre-colonial ethnic groups in Ghana, where some tutelary deities served as the patron force of their people. Second, the covenant brought to the fore, the old narrative of “chosen-ness”.<sup>10</sup> Extrapolation from the CoP’s covenant, I argue that the covenant gives the church an idea of having a unique identity with an extraordinary mission. As the CoP profiles itself as the chosen church of God, it concurrently considers itself the vector of reforming Ghana’s public sphere.

To ensure the fulfilment of the covenant, which is so central in carving an image for the CoP, the church undertook the following measures:

1. It was the general consensus that every first Wednesday of each month be set aside as Missionary Day for prayers and offerings to be made for the expansion of mission work.
2. It was generally agreed that the Women’s Movement should set aside every first Tuesday of the Month to pray for the growth and expansion of the Church spiritually, morally, financially, and numerically. The slogan of the Women’s Movement has been “Holiness Unto the Lord” because of the covenant of holiness.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J.N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East: Part 2: Text, Notes and Chromograms* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Reuven Firestone, *Who Are the Real Chosen People?: The Meaning of Chosenness in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub., 2008).

3. All calls and elections were to be confirmed through divine intervention and the general consensus of the people.<sup>11</sup>

Concretising the above measures largely shaped CoP's missiological strategy, including the founder's (James McKeown) creative cultural adaptability.<sup>12</sup> Occasionally, in light of seismic shifts and periodic socio-cultural changes, certain covenant-fulfilling measures of the church can lead to inter-generational conflicts. This phenomenon has been thoroughly examined by one of the church's distinguished scholars, Christian Tsekpoe. He investigated the effective transgenerational mission strategies that the Church of Pentecost has adopted since the beginning of the millennium.<sup>13</sup> Merging the above in public life, the church has, since the 1980s, exerted more influence in Ghana's public sphere. More recently, in 2019, the CoP openly declared a ban on pre-marital photos that it is considered morally irreconcilable with the church's holiness practices.<sup>14</sup> In all this, I will also discuss how orality is a major feature of the Pentecostal movement in transmitting social values,<sup>15</sup> the CoP is investing in creative songs, as part of oral theology, to reorient public political discourse and moral lives.

The CoP's pervasiveness visibility in public with "conservative" moral values has raised concerns for a section of its youthful members and the public about the church transgressing the marital choices and itinerary of its members and public morality. But making sense of this seeming contradiction and its implications for church theology and orthopraxis requires a contextualised reading of politico-religious history since the 1930s. The 1930s in the history of Ghana (then the Gold Coast) was saturated by religious nationalism – emblematic of the rising influence of the African Independent Churches (AICs) and indigenous tutelary deities. Historically, the CoP largely damned the AICs' conflation of indigenous cultures and elements of Christianity as syncretistic. Additionally, Onyinah argued that the absence of strong moral ethics in the AICs was one of the reasons for the decline in the growth of such churches.<sup>16</sup> As the church records, the 1930s nationwide popularity of *Tigare* was a major blot on the influence of missionary Christianity on

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<sup>11</sup> Ntumy, 'Covenant', 21.

<sup>12</sup> Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana: 3,000 Churches in 50 Years: The Story of James McKeown and the Church of Pentecost* (Chichester: New Wine Press, 1989); Walker, O. Daniel. 'The Pentecost fire is Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost' (PhD Dissertation Submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Christian Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Graphic Online (January 27, 2019), 'Pentecost Church Bans Amorous Pre-Wedding Photos', <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-pentecost-church-bans-amorous-pre-wedding-photos.html> (Accessed: June 3, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Opoku Onyinah, 'Pentecostalism and the African Diaspora: An Examination of the Missions Activities of the Church of Pentecost', *Pneuma*, 26, 2 (2006): 216-241.

<sup>16</sup> Opoku Onyinah, 'African Christianity in the Twenty-first Century,' *Word & World*, 27, 3 (2007), 307.

the Gold Coast.<sup>17</sup> Busia, therefore, assessed that Christianity had a thin veneer impact on the cultures of the people of the Gold Coast because it was either superficial, alien or both.<sup>18</sup> The alienation of Christianity and the popularity of tutelary deities were threats to the emerging nation as God’s covenanted nation – Hence, a rationale for CoP’s retelling of God’s covenant severally after 1931.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, the struggle for independence during the decade, especially after the end of World War II, fractured the nation among several interests. Kwame Nkrumah and his group advocated for unitary government, and Asante royals pleaded for a federation.<sup>20</sup> Shortly after independence, Ghana was expressed as “God Has Chosen Nkrumah Already” in support of Nkrumah’s political ambition to perpetuate and consolidate himself in power.<sup>21</sup> The context that involved a merging of the deities and a political figure in the contest for the “soul” of Ghana provided a socio-political and theological justification for God’s covenant with the CoP. All of these bled into the contours of postcolonial politics, where religion and politics complexly merged in defining Ghana’s constitutional status. The next section, therefore, discusses religion and politics and the idea of secularism.

### **Religion, Politics, and the Idea of Secularism in Ghana**

Religion and politics have interplayed to shape human lives for centuries.<sup>22</sup> In the precolonial era, chiefs and monarchs were not just political leaders; they also mediated between the tutelary deities and the state.<sup>23</sup> Thus, before the birth of Western enlightenment – the secularisation of politics in the eighteenth century – chiefs and monarchs derived their authority from religion.<sup>24</sup> All this was because religion and politics were not considered irreconcilable categories. The word religion was hardly used as an academic category to reflect a distinct metaphysical aspect of life from their mundane life until the nineteenth century.

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<sup>17</sup> Tigare deity and the shrine were one of the numerous anti-witchcraft religious cults that were influential in the 1940s, spreading from the Northern Regions to the Akan areas of Ghana (See: Dovlo, Elom. “New religious movements in Ghana.” *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 4, no. 1 (2002): 1-34. Ntuny, ‘Covenant’, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Kofi A. Busia. ‘Has the Christian faith been adequately presented?’. *International Review of Mission* (1961): 88.

<sup>19</sup> WideSOFT Hannover (April 4, 2021), ‘God’s Covenant With The Church of Pentecost – Prof. M.K. Yeboah’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUUug6b-v-0>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUUug6b-v-0> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

<sup>20</sup> Yao O. Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950-2013): The Experiences of a Non-Conformist* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Personal conversation with my late father Anthony Prempeh.

<sup>22</sup> Steve Bruce. *Politics & Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> K.A. Busia. *The Position of the Chief in Modern Political System of Ashanti: A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Change in Ashanti Political Institutions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

<sup>24</sup> Maurice Keen. *The Penguin History of Medieval Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 1968).

When the Arab and European colonisers visited the shores of Africa, Africans already held onto a non-binary worldview that informed socio-political institutions for the insurance of social order. Islam and Christianity, therefore, did not find a religiously *tabula rasa* society or a society bereft of a complex understanding of the interface between religion and politics. Given the non-binary composite worldview of Africans, the Europeans struggled to separate African cultures from religion as both were hardly separated – leading to their wanton bastardisation of African cultures as pagan before the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> All the same, at the time of late colonialism, religion was already firmly established in precolonial Africa. For this reason, given that Britain had significantly secularised its politics during the colonial era, the British did not unnecessarily interfere with the religious regime of the colonised Gold Coasters.<sup>26</sup>

The relative tolerance of the British to the interface between religion and politics persisted into the postcolonial era. As the colonialists left Ghana deeply fractured on “the Abrahamic religions” alongside indigenous religions, during the struggle against colonialism, Nkrumah deployed majority Christian motives to advance partisan politics. He inverted the Christian text, Matthew: “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all others shall be added.”<sup>27</sup> While his inversion of Jesus’s statement drew criticism from Christians, it helped Nkrumah to invest in religion for counterhegemonic purposes.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Nkrumah *sacralised* politics to appeal to the increasingly enchanted public sphere of Ghana. Nkrumah merged his discursive interaction with Ghana’s multi-religious heritage in his philosophy of *consciencism*, which advocates for a fusion of Indigenous beliefs, Islam, and Christianity in supporting human flourishing.<sup>29</sup> A section of Ghanaians also read Nkrumah as overly ambitious in canonising himself as a lifelong president – partly explaining his overthrow.<sup>30</sup>

After Nkrumah’s overthrow by the army and police in 1966, nearly every single leader of Ghana has, in one way or another, appropriated religion for several purposes.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of the use of religion by the political elites, religion is strongly featured in nearly every public event. Ghana could, therefore, hardly be called a

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<sup>25</sup> Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> John Dun and A.F. Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>27</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1967), 47.

<sup>28</sup> Rupe Simms, “‘I am a Non-Denominational Christian and a Marxist Socialist:’ A Gramscian Analysis of the Convention People’s Party and Kwame Nkrumah’s Use of Religion”, *Sociology of Religion*, 64, 4 (2003): 463-477.

<sup>29</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophical and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1964).

<sup>30</sup> Peter T. Omari, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Anatomy of an African Dictatorship* (London: C. Hurst, 1970).

<sup>31</sup> John Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991).

secular state. That Ghana is hardly a secular state remains highly debatable. This debate involves two contradictory claims: on the one hand, Muslims argue that the state should disentangle itself from all religions – as they seek to contest Christian hegemony in the public sphere. On the other hand, the highly vocal Christian majority claims the country is a Christian nation as part of enforcing Christian hegemony in the public sphere. These polar stances reinforce my argument about the need to nuance the usual overly simplistic profiling of Ghana as either “secular” or “Christian”.

Since the 1990s, the Muslim call for the hijab to be accepted in public and Christian efforts at protecting the frontiers of Christian practices as a shared heritage in historic Christian mission schools draws out the contradictory claims of Ghana’s perceived secular status.<sup>32</sup> A recent example was the alleged instance of the administrators of the historic Methodist Senior High School, Wesley Girls, proscribing a Muslim student from fasting in the month of Ramadan.<sup>33</sup> Apart from these religions striving over the “soul” of Ghana’s public sphere, the religious edifice that signals Christian broadening and extension of their influence over the public tends to draw the religion’s “non” into the controversy over Ghana’s religious-politics constitutionality. This may explain why the proposed state’s involvement with a National Cathedral continues to polarise Ghanaians over the issue of secularism. It may also explain the brouhaha over Achimota’s initial refusal to admit two Rastafarian students because of their locked hair in 2021.<sup>34</sup> The religion-politics nexus even gets more complex when the CoP’s building of roads and especially the prison facility considered by a section of the Ghanaian public as an infraction of Ghana’s secular status. Nevertheless, both Muslims and Christians, as part of a shared “Abrahamic origin”, tend to share the same moral vision of sexual purity that informs their denouncement of the Western extension of LGBTQ+ rights in Ghana – possibly explaining the national Chief Imam’s moral and financial support for a Christian National Cathedral.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Prempeh, “‘Hijab Is My Identity’: Beyond the Politics of the Veil: The Appropriations of the Veil in an Inner-City Muslim Area of Accra (Ghana) Since the 1980s’, *Journal of Africana Religions*, 10, 1 (2022): 20-46.

<sup>33</sup> Ghanaweb (May 5, 2021), ‘Wesley Girls’ No-Fasting Rule Faith-Blind, Non-Discriminatory – PTA’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Wesley-Girls-no-fasting-rule-faith-blind-non-discriminatory-PTA-1252165> (Accessed: June 2, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Ghanaweb (June 2, 2021), ‘Rastafarian Students Saga: Achimota School Freezes Decision to Halt Admission of Marhguy, Nkrabea’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Rastafarian-students-saga-Achimota-School-freezes-decision-to-halt-admission-of-Marhguy-Nkrabea-1277200> (June 2, 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Ghanaweb (August 26, 2021), ‘Chief Imam Donates GH GH¢50,000 Towards the Construction of National Cathedral’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Chief-Imam-donates-GH-50-000-towards-the-construction-of-National-Cathedral-1341961> (June 3, 2022).



Given the vexatious debate that tends to characterise Ghana's perceived secular status, I argue that the issue is more about a conflation of secularism as a concept than as a practice. In other words, secularism, which has had discursive socio-historical construction since the eighteenth century, was/is meant to manage a religiously plural public sphere as opposed to marginalising religion from the public sphere.<sup>36</sup> This is because no space is "secular" in terms of the absence of a form of religious belief – as is already evidenced in the recent tension between Evangelical Christians and liberal politicians over the moral revolution issues in the United States of America. But, perhaps, the issue is also because of the scholarly or public attempts at defining religion as decidedly metaphysical, based largely on a belief in God. Usually, when the word religion is used in public discourse, several minds consciously and/or unconsciously avert to God, raising an eyebrow about a religious invasion of the public.

Notwithstanding the public's convoluted view about religion, for which reason some scholars such as Harvey Cox and Peter Berger belatedly in the 1960s, thought science and technology would peripherise religion,<sup>37</sup> religion has surged. Regardless of the prediction about religion's decline, religious politics surged back in the 1970s. Since then, Berger and Cox, who predicated the marginalisation of religion, have recanted their position.<sup>38</sup> The surge in religion granted an assumption that the secularisation thesis failed for several reasons, including the absence of clear contra-religious secular values.<sup>39</sup> As to whether the secularisation thesis failed is a complex debate. But what could hardly be glossed over is that religion is now practised by individuals who tend to have more deterministic rights over what they believe than, say a century ago.<sup>40</sup>

The secular debate is complex, but Ghana's public remains highly enchanted in shaping CoP's covenantal identity and role. Since the 1980s, the country's public sphere has increasingly become an epicentre of religiously informed ideological contentions – which could be situated within the country's socio-economic history of the 1980s. In the 1980s, for various reasons, including colonial legacies of underdevelopment, corruption, and Western African citizenship politics of

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<sup>36</sup> Talal Asad, *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Berger, L. Peter, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Faber, 1969).

<sup>38</sup> Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999); Cox, Harvey, 'The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of Secularization', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 23, 1/2 (2000): 1-13.

<sup>39</sup> Meera Nanda, 'Secularism without secularisation: Reflections on God and Politics in US and India,' *Economics and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan. 6-12, 2007): 39-46.

<sup>40</sup> Daniele Hervieu-Leger, 'The Twofold limit of the notion of Secularization' In Linda Woodhead (ed.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, 112-126 (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 112.

deportation, Ghana’s economy atrophied.<sup>41</sup> Concurrently, the international financial institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – imposed neoliberal policies on the country. The neoliberal policies, which involved the state’s removal of subsidies from education, agriculture, and health – key sectors of the economy – impoverished several Ghanaians.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it was during this period that the CoP reinforced the social aspect of its covenanted relationship with God by recuperating the Pentecost Social Services (PENTSOS).<sup>43</sup>

It was also during this period that the international financial institutions rechannelled funding for the developmental project through local and foreign-originated non-governmental organisations – leading to some scholars referring to them as compradors.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, several Ghanaian students received financial sponsorship from the liberal West and international religious community to pursue further studies in Euro-America and the Arab world. Some of these students, returning as graduates, became the conveying channels of either the Western cultural revolution agenda or religious fundamentalism. The issues were complicated when, upon Ghana’s re-democratisation, the country became more open to diverse religious opinions than ever as the 1992 Constitution granted more freedoms. The freedom of religious conscience partly inspired the formation of local and internationally inspired humanistic and atheistic groups, such as Avraham Ben Moshe’s “Common Sense Family”. At the same time, the cultural revivalism at the end of the 1990s and entering into the millennium has inspired a revitalised Pan-African agenda of the Ghanaian political elites, inviting African diasporans to return to the country. Thus, whether Rawlings’ introduction of PANAFEST in the 1990s,<sup>45</sup> J.A. Kufuor’s introduction of “The Joseph Project” in the 2000s or more recently (2019), Akufo-Addo’s agenda of “The Year of Return” and “Beyond the Year of Return” (2020), the country’s public sphere has become the hub of multi-cultural expression.

Given the above complex mixture of religion, politics, and secularism, the next section discusses how the CoP has responded. More specifically, I discuss how the church reconstructs the secularisation thesis to wage a crusade against the impact of multicultural moral depravity on the Ghanaian public sphere. The church is even

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<sup>41</sup> Kwame Akonor, *African and IMF Confidentiality: The Unevenness of Compliance, 1983-2000* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Onyinah, ‘Distinguished Church Leader Essay: The Church of Pentecost and Its Role in Ghanaian Society’, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Yash Tandon (May 1, 2006), ‘African Perspective’, <https://www.tni.org/en/article/an-africa-perspective> (June 4, 2022).

<sup>45</sup> PANAFEST is an abbreviation of The Pan African Historical Theatre Festival that was engineered by Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian married to an African diasporan man, in the mid-1980s, but received state support in the 1990s as a means of reuniting the cultural bond between Africans on the continent and their counterparts in the diaspora.

empowered on this agenda because religion is anterior to the state – making religious rights more God-given for the state to protect than state-given that could be undermined with political intent.

### Contesting Ghana's Secularity: *ɔman Krɔnkrɔn*

The conflation over secularity does not rule out the fact that Ghana is overwhelmingly Christian in demographic terms. Popular discourse in Ghana assumes that the presence of “prekese”<sup>46</sup> in *only* Ghana and Israel means that these two countries are the desired earthly spaces of God. For the CoP, while the church does not seek to impose a theocratic regime on the country, the church profiles the country as God's country and positions itself as God's appointed with a divine mandate to evangelise the nation and beyond. The CoP's song *ɔman krɔnkrɔn* (A Holy Nation), which was composed by Eunice Addison, encapsulates this posturing by the church:

#### Song 9: Holy Nation

##### Twɛ Version

*ɔman, ɔman, ɔman krɔnkrɔn*  
*Yehowa ne man bɔn renntena mu*  
*ɔman krɔnkrɔn, nye eyi*  
*M'asem nye eyi*  
*De hom ndzi mu*

*Asɔr, Asɔr, Asɔr Krɔnkrɔn*  
*Yehowa n'asɔr bɔn renntena mu*  
*Asɔr krɔnkrɔn nye eyi*  
*M'asem nye eyi*  
*De hom ndzi mu*  
*Asɔr, Asɔr, Asɔr Krɔnkrɔn*

##### English Version

A nation, a nation, a Holy Nation  
Jehovah's nation, where sin will not dwell  
This is a holy nation  
This is my word  
That you should abide in it

A church, a church, a holy church  
Jehovah's church, where sin will not dwell  
This is a holy church.  
This is my word  
That you should abide in it.  
A church, a church, a holy church.<sup>47</sup>

This song profiles Ghana as God's holy country wherein sin cannot dwell. The song also profiles the CoP as God's Holy Church, wherein sin cannot dwell. In this regard, the song profiles both the CoP and Ghana as God's Holy institutions where sin must not be allowed to dwell. As has been discussed above, the CoP ensures the moral aptitude of its members and openly disciplines members who fail the moral test, especially sexual sin, by excluding the person from holding any leadership position

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<sup>46</sup> *Prekese*, known by its botanical name *Tetrapleura tetraptera*, is a flowering plant species in the *Fabaceae* family native to Western and Central Africa. It is said to have medicinal value and is rich in essential vitamins.

<sup>47</sup> 2020 CoP theme song (Twɛ version): 4man kronkron, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBVPzOaUK4A>; February 7, 2020; November 7, 2020.

in the church or suspending them from taking an active part in all church activities. In extreme cases, an offending person may be excommunicated from the church by the Executive Council.<sup>48</sup> As recently as 2019, the church outlawed what it considers indecent pre-wedding pictures that expose some sensitive body parts of the woman of a would-be couple.

As a Holy Church in a Holy Nation, the church encourages its members to engage in politics as a way of influencing/impacting the nation. For instance, the immediate past Chairman of CoP, Opoku Onyinah, instituted a mentoring program (Youth Political Chamber) that grooms the young men and women of the church to go into politics. Currently, CoP has church members in high and strategic public offices, including the Minister of Education, Inspector General of Police (current and immediate past), the first elected female Greater Accra Mayor, and the immediate past chairman of the NDC, the country’s largest opposition party at the moment.

### **Profiling the Church of Pentecost as a Moral Agent in Ghana: “A Glorious Church to Possess the Nations”**

As part of revising Ghana’s “secular” status to rekindle the moral reformation agenda of the CoP, the church needs to brand itself as legitimate with a God-ordained mandate to push back moral laxity in the country. For this reason, the church rebranded itself as the moral vanguard of society through the song “A Glorious Church”<sup>49</sup>:

#### Song 10: A Glorious Church

##### **Twi Version**

*Anuonyam Asɔre  
Nkonimdie Asɔre  
ereko agye dɔm ama Kristo  
Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo  
Etim ɔbotan Yesu so  
erenhinim  
Na enni nkoguo da  
'Fise etim ɔbotan no so*

##### **English Version**

A glorious church,  
Victorious church  
Setting free many to Christ.  
The church is founded on Christ.  
It is built on Jesus the Rock,  
Will not be moved,  
Will never know defeat,  
For it is built on the Rock.

*Anuonyam Asɔre  
Nkonimdie Asɔre  
erefa wise nyinaa nnomum*

A glorious church,  
Victorious church  
Taking captive all of the world

<sup>48</sup> The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2016), 106.

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG\\_hic1SE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG_hic1SE) (English version) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teSkMWHnHIM> (Twi – Akan- version). February 2, 2020. Accessed November 7, 2021.

*Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo*  
*Etim ɔbotan Yesu so*  
*erenwoso*  
*Na erensesa ara da*  
*'Fise etim ɔbotan no so*

The church is founded on Christ  
It is built on Jesus the Rock  
Will not be swayed,  
Will never change its course  
For it is built on the Rock.

*Anuonyam Asɔre*  
*Nkonimdie Asɔre*  
*erehyeren wɔ wise nyinaa*  
*Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo*  
*Etim ɔbotan Yesu so*  
*erennuru sum*  
*Na erenyera kwan da*  
*'Fise etim ɔbotan no so*

A glorious church  
Victorious church  
Shining brightly through the world  
The church is founded on Christ  
It is built on Jesus the Rock  
Will not go dim  
Will never lose its way  
For it is built on the Rock

*Anuonyam Asɔre*  
*Nkonimdie Asɔre*  
*erekyere nnipa nkɔwagye kwan*  
*Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo*  
*Etim ɔbotan Yesu so*  
*erenfom kwan*  
*Na erenyera ne tumi*  
*'Fise etim ɔbotan no so*

A glorious church  
Victorious church  
Showing all the way of life  
The church is found on Christ  
It is built on Jesus the Rock  
Will not be swayed  
Will never lose its power  
For it is built on a Rock.<sup>50</sup>

This song, which was composed in 2020 as the CoP theme song for that year, hinges on the church's glory on Christ as its "Foundation". The CoP is described as a 'glorious and victorious church' because Christ, who is metaphorically conceptualised as a Rock, is the head of the Church and the foundation upon which it is built. Consequently, the church feels empowered (will not be moved, will never know defeat, will not be swayed, will never change its course, will never go dim, will never lose its way) to execute its mission (set many free, taking captive all of the world, shining through the world). Thus, the CoP incorporates the divine as the reason for the church's mission to embark on a moral reform in Ghana and the world. According to cognitive linguists, metaphorical language not only reflects metaphorical thought but is also capable of shaping and creating new ways of thinking about things in the world.<sup>51</sup> Thus, as suggested by the words of the song in brackets, the metaphorical conceptualisation of the Christian life as a battle (know no defeat), the church as a building with Christ as its foundation Rock (It is built on Jesus the Rock) is empowering and can energise church members to see the church as invincible against all forces in the world as it performs its divine mandate of evangelising the world.

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<sup>50</sup> 2020 Theme song "A Glorious Church" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG\\_hic1SE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG_hic1SE). December 16, 2019. Accessed: November 7, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

The belief that the church (CoP) is invincible manifests in how the CoP has related to issues of morality not only in the church but in Ghanaian society as a whole. For instance, in recent times, Western governments, including the USA and the UK, are leveraging their economic strength and technological breakthroughs to persuade African leaders and even church leaders across the world to accept homosexual practices. Indeed, some churches in the West have succumbed to the pressure to liberalise and acquiesce to homosexual practices and their stance on LGBTQ+ (e.g., The Church of England),<sup>52</sup> which has led to Anglican churches in Nigeria and Uganda breaking ranks with The Church of England.<sup>53</sup> In Ghana, several churches and church organisations, including the Anglican bishops, have openly declared their support for the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ practices in the country, arguing thus, “We see LGBTQ+ as unrighteousness in the sight of God and will therefore do anything within our powers and mandate to ensure that the bill comes into fruition”.<sup>54</sup> In executing its divine mandate to set many free for Christ, and in the power that comes from Christ, the Rock and Head of the church, the CoP, in a press conference in Accra, did not only openly profess support for the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ activities in the country but also vowed to mobilise its congregants, constituting a little over ten per cent (10%) of Ghana’s population, to vote against any political party that cows to Western pressure to liberalise LGBTQ+ rights in the country.

Again, through this song, the CoP metaphorically conceptualises the Christian’s moral duty to the world in terms of standing erect. The CoP, like other churches in Africa, refuses to be swayed by the currency of modernity, exemplified in the Western sexual revolution, which manifests in extreme forms of individual autonomy over their sexuality and bodies, which Robert Bellah referred to as individual expressionism and Charles Taylor’s “authentic age”.<sup>55</sup> While modernity and secularisation of morality since the 1960s are part of the drive towards the decriminalisation of homosexual practices, the CoP, among several other churches in Africa, have resisted all influences from the West to liberalise and adopt secular sex ethics. This runs at odds with a simplistic argument from Birgit Meyer and Kevin Ward that Christianity is the purveyor of modernity in Africa. While these scholars

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<sup>52</sup> Ghanaweb, “Archbishop of Canterbury speaks on anti-gay Bill in Ghana’s Parliament”. October 27, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021.

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Archbishop-of-Canterbury-speaks-on-anti-gay-Bill-in-Ghana-s-Parliament-1388941>.

<sup>53</sup> Kevin Ward. *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>54</sup> Myjoyonline.com, “We support anti-LGBTQ\_ Bill – Anglican Church of Ghana”. October 11, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/we-support-anti-lgbtqi-bill-anglican-church-of-ghana/?param=>.

<sup>55</sup> R.N. Bellah, Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A. & Tipton, S.M. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press; 1985); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

claimed that there is an intertwined nexus between Pentecostalism and modernity, they failed to demonstrate the extent to which such a simplistic idea of modernity incorporates sexual ethos among Pentecostals.

### **The Church of Pentecost and Ghana's Public Sphere and Orality**

The spillovers of the 1980s crystallised at the turn of the millennium, signalled by the Western drive to compel Ghana and other African countries to decriminalise homosexuality.<sup>56</sup> Since 2007, the visible and aggressive involvement of foreign diplomats in Ghana and the international community to get homosexual practices accepted in Ghana has rationalised the call for the CoP to revitalise its moral reforms. In 2018, Opoku Onyinah (former chairman of the church - from 2008 to 2018) threatened to lead thousands of his congregants on a nationwide demonstration to fight the government over any efforts to decriminalise homosexual practices.<sup>57</sup> In 2021, in response to diplomats of Euro-Americans seeking to compel Ghana to decriminalise LGBTQ+ practices. A group of Ghanaians drafted a Bill to protect the heterosexual family values of the country.<sup>58</sup> While the Bill enjoyed nationwide support, a group of eighteen academics and professionals, led by their lawyer, Akoto Ampaw, wrote a counter-memorandum to the Bill.<sup>59</sup> This led to Eric Kwabena Nyamekye, the current Chairman of the CoP, also threatening to mobilise his congregants to vote out any government that opposes the passage of the Bill.<sup>60</sup>

The CoP's efforts at keeping the ethical and moral boundaries of Ghana have reinforced the orality culture of Pentecostalism. As a church with strong usage of oral theology, the church uses songs to enforce its covenantal responsibility of keeping Ghana's public sphere against the influences of the moral liberalism of the West. One such song, as scripted below, calls on church members to see themselves as slaves to Christ. The image of a slave in the song is socially and theologically relevant to reorienting church members to dedicate their bodies and sexual desires to the control of God. This is largely because the church frames homosexual tendencies as a form of enslavement to sin. So, with songs such as the following, the

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<sup>56</sup> 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021,' <https://citinewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LGBT-BILL.pdf>. (Accessed: June 5, 2022).

<sup>57</sup> Ghanaweb (May 3, 2018), 'I Will Lead Demonstration Against Legalising Homosexuality - Onyinah' <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/I-will-lead-demonstration-against-legalising-homosexuality-Onyinah-648389> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021,' <https://citinewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LGBT-BILL.pdf>. (Accessed: June 5, 2022).

<sup>59</sup> A Group of Ghanaian Citizens, 'Press Conference on Memorandum to Parliament of Ghana Against Passage of the "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021', <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ANTILGBT-BILL-PRESS-STATEMENT.FINAL-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

<sup>60</sup> Kenneth A. Darko, (October 7, 2021), "'We Will Vote Out Any Government that Opposes Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill" - Church of Pentecost' <https://www.myjoyonline.com/we-will-vote-out-any-government-that-opposes-anti-lgbtq-bill-church-of-pentecost/> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

church calls on its constituency to surrender their desires to Jesus, their newfound friend.

Song 3 (a repetition of Song 2)

I have found a friend  
A friend who sticks forever  
I have gained a spiritual wealth for myself  
I am no longer a slave to sin  
Because I am born of Christ.<sup>61</sup>

The homosexual discourse is quite sensitive, as it is located within the rubrics of human rights. Consequently, because individuals with claims to same-sex orientation can be marginalised if the church composes songs that directly implicate such individuals, the church engages in the extrapolation of songs in its teaching against same-sex practices. So, as the CoP seeks to walk the complex terrain of being compassionate that drives its evangelism without compromising its position on same-sex practices, the church composed and/or re-articulated these songs to reinvest in Paul's theological denunciation of same-sex practices. In the Epistles of Paul, especially as recorded in the books of Romans and Corinthians, Paul profiled sexual impurity as sinful and a violation of one's body – which, in the case of a Christian, should be dedicated entirely to Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup> Paul profiled himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, which is extrapolated to mean that he had debased himself to honour his Saviour.<sup>63</sup> For this reason, Paul could say that he considered all things useless because of Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, Paul argued that when one becomes a Christian, one transitions from the Kingdom of Darkness, which involves subjection of the body to sexual perversion, to the Kingdom of Light, which involves renunciation of one's sexual desires to the service of the Lord.<sup>65</sup> So, for the CoP and several Pentecostals, same-sex practices constitute an antinomy in the expected holy and dedicated life of a Christian. This is because, in Pentecostal theology, one is expected to pursue holiness as one debases and mortifies oneself to take on the character of Jesus Christ. This partly explains the preponderance emphasis the CoP places on Holy Spirit baptism, as the Holy Spirit is believed to transform one's moral and sexual life to reflect the righteous character of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>61</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7WtX2\\_wfVQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7WtX2_wfVQ).

<sup>62</sup> Romans 1:18:32; 12:1-2.

<sup>63</sup> Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 5:1-12.

<sup>64</sup> Philippians 3:8.

<sup>65</sup> Colossians 1:13.



With the song, “I have found a good friend,” the CoP reengages Paul’s Christian transformation from Satan’s Kingdom to Christ’s Kingdom. A convert of the CoP is expected to sever relations with Satanic practices and align with Jesus Christ as his or her new friend. With Jesus Christ as a new friend, a Pentecostal convert is expected to renounce worldly friendship that drives his or her passion for his or her old life, which may include sexual impurity. The “new friend” – Jesus Christ – is expected to endow the new convert with spiritual wealth to overcome the temptations of the body towards sexual immorality and also make one “no longer a slave to sin”. Since Pentecostals treat same-sex marriage as sinful and enslavement to the desires of the body, a Pentecostal convert must renounce same-sex practices because he or she is expected to lay claim to “I am born of Christ”.

The same Pentecostal anti-homosexual stance is condensed in the second song, which invites the Pentecostal convert to see Christ as indwelling in him or her. With the stanza, “I have Jesus who lives in me; He is my Lord; I will worship Him always; Because He is all I have”, Pentecostals are called on to dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ through sublimating themselves. The Pentecostal converts, upon coming to Christ, are expected to look to Christ for their identity instead of looking within themselves.

The above Pentecostal theological dislocation of homosexuality as immoral is expressed in the second and third stanzas of Eunice Addison’s song, which invites Christians to invest their energy in God’s service rather than pursuing amorous desires through same-sex practices. Another common song the CoP sang to urge its constituency to refrain from LGBTQ+ practices was the following:

**Nyame Ahome**

*Nyame ahome, twi fa me so  
Nyame sunsum, bɔ bra me kra so  
Sesa me ni-padua nyinaa  
Hye me na menye wo pe nyi-naa*

**Nka emi nko a**

*Nka emi nko a  
Nkye meehu Wo yie Nka emi nko a  
Nkye meehu Wo yie  
Na maadɔ Wo  
Na maasom Wo  
Medze mo ho nyinaa ama wo*

**Spirit of God**

Spirit of God, hover over me  
Spirit of God hover over me  
Transform completely my entire body  
Cause me to do all your will

**Left to me**

Left to me  
Left to me I would have known you well  
I will have known you well  
So that I will love you  
So that I will worship you  
I dedicate all my life to you

The CoP’s anti-homosexual theology is further concretised in Opoku Onyinah’s song, “Nyame home, twi fa me so” (“God’s Spirit, rule over me”). As stated above, the CoP considers same-sex practices as the antinomy of the Christian self-

debasement upon his or her acceptance of Jesus Christ – a violation of God’s appointed nation. The church’s songs are usually directed toward inviting Christians to dedicate their bodies as sacrifices to Christ. Such a transition in the theology of the church is mediated through the Holy Spirit. For instance, in Onyinah’s song, the Holy Spirit is invited to rule over the life of the Christian (*bo bra kra so*) and also transform the Christian (*sesa me nipadua nyinaa – transform my body*). The same anti-homosexual socio-theological import of the CoP is expressed in Eunice Addison’s song, ‘*Nka emi nko a*’, which in the last line invites the Christian to dedicate his or her entire body to Jesus Christ. Transformation of the “body” of a Christian, as emphasized in the CoP song, is because the CoP affirms the Christian theology of “original sin” that teaches that one is born a sinner and in need of the transformative character of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup>

As the church is represented transnationally in different countries of the world, including those that have accepted and legalized LGBTQI+ rights, in 2010, the CoP added *the* definition of marriage as heterosexual to its tenets. For example, in its revised Constitution, the church declared its stance on LGBTQI+ as follows: “Homosexuality, lesbianism and other perverse sexual practices are not permitted in the Church as these are not biblically acceptable practices”.<sup>67</sup> The sum of all this is that the CoP invests and employs these songs to affirm Christ’s command that anyone who desires to follow Him must renounce himself and herself by rejecting dual loyalty between the worldly things and the things of the Kingdom of God.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Moral Responsibility of the Church of Pentecost Members: “A Prisoner of Christ”**

I have stated that the major antinomy in Ghana, which the CoP seeks to address, is moral corruption. The church is engaging in an internal moral reform, encouraging its members to exemplify Christ in the public through yet another song which was composed (in English) by Fred Amoakohene Sarpong:

#### Song 11: A Prisoner of Christ

A prisoner of Christ  
I must live only in Christlikeness  
A prisoner of change is to reflect the beauty of the church  
I will examine my life  
check my motives  
I will let the word of Christ

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<sup>66</sup> Christian Tsekpoe, “Man’s Depraved Nature” In *Tenets of the Church of Pentecost*, edited by Michael Ntummy, Alfred Koduah and Emmanuel Anim, 120-133 (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2020)

<sup>67</sup> The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2010), 74.

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 16: 24-26.

dwell in me richly  
I will shun uncleanness,  
And be clothed with Holiness  
So, the glory of Jesus Christ.<sup>69</sup>

This song calls on CoP members (Christians) to lose their freedom to do whatever they please in order to do what is pleasing to Christ. This idea is metaphorically conceptualized as being prisoners of Christ. The lyrics allude to some texts in the New Testament of the Bible. In Ephesians chapter three, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ and encourages Christians to become like him - prisoners of Christ, if they are to live righteous, godly, morally upright lives, as Christ would have them do. The imagery of a prisoner implies restrictions on freedom as is espoused by modern and post-modern theories that overemphasise individual freedoms and liberties. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul says, “the love of Christ constrains us” and John 14:15 says “if you love me, keep my commandments”.

Thus, this song reiterates known Christian principles in a form (song) that is easier to memorize and remember. Also, as a metaphorical prisoner and slave, the Christian is expected to submit their will to the Lordship of Jesus by pursuing holiness and shunning all forms of corruption. Although the church does not have the prosecutorial power to punish its members who engage in corrupt practices, it expects the state to punish wrongdoers, including church members. However, state prosecutors often accuse Christian leaders and traditional leaders of meddling in the prosecution of corrupt church public officers. These complexities have morphed into the excitement that CoP has experienced since the appointment of Ghana’s current IGP who is a member of CoP. The new IGP enjoys great public trust and respect for introducing several reforms that appear to be mending the dented image of the police and restoring integrity in the service.<sup>70</sup>

## **Conclusions**

The CoP is exploring important ways of resolving antinomies between the Christian majority in Ghana and rising cases of moral corruption in the country. By embedding its identity as a covenanted church in a covenanted nation, the CoP is deconstructing the ideas of secularism by infusing Christian morality into the country’s public sphere. Staging its presence in Ghana’s public sphere as a vanguard against moral decadence, e.g., the global push for the country’s decriminalisation of LGBTQ+ practices and advocacy, the church challenges the state to destabilise false

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<sup>69</sup> “A prisoner of Christ lyrics//2020 theme song”. February 24, 2020. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEyBnipamzE>.

<sup>70</sup> Adom Online, “IGP Dampare’s message of caution to religious organisations [Photos]”. October 26, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.adomonline.com/igp-dampares-message-of-caution-to-religious-organisations-photos/>.

binaries between "tradition" and "modernity". This is to restore family ethics that serve as a point of convergence for all the major religions in Ghana. By framing itself as a God-ordained institution to recalibrate the moral foundation of a country profiled as "God's own chosen country", the CoP seeks to turn the nation after God's principle for a living (*setting many free to Christ*). Using songs as an entry point, the church hopes to make it easier to memorise and remember the values that are embedded in the songs than any written code of conduct or laws.

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