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Spirituality and Social Transformation: The Samson Syndrome and National Progress - Judges 13-16

by Joseph Quayesi-Amakye

Abstract

This essay examines the African church's role in the socio-economic and scientific-technological transformation of the continent against the African claim of religiosity. Taking the Samson story (Judges 13-16) of resource dissipation as a case study, the paper challenges the African church to reexamine its understanding of spirituality so that it becomes meaningful and relevant to Africans. Such reexamination will enable the church to take up its rightful place as the prophetic voice for the reconstruction of the continent so that Africa will move from its nonchalant stance to become a key player in global progress and development. To this end the church must transform its theological education programmes to reflect the real needs of African people so that they can be equipped to participate in this programme of reconstruction.

Introduction

This paper argues that any spirituality, theology or ideology that does not take the general good seriously, but dissipates its purpose, must be questioned and rejected. It is my conviction that the African church has a mission to African peoples so that Christianity permeates their religion, culture, politics, economics and social relationships. This issue of a liberative Christian mission brings to the fore three key questions that demand scholarly investigation. Firstly, we may ask, "What is religion?" This question is about the way African peoples perceive their world and their quest for spiritual reality. Secondly, we ask ourselves "What role should the African church play in effecting religio-economic, socio-political and cultural transformation in its environment?" The contemporary theologian sees different modes of engagement that demand that theology becomes action-oriented. That is, praxis must become the first act of theology, a commitment to progressive development. Thirdly, we ask "What ways can the African church 'immanent' the transcendent Being of God into the existential realities of African societies so that God-talk will permeate the socio-economic, political and scientific-technological 'new world' realities?" An appropriate answer will ensure that the African will shift from a latecomer status to respond to contemporary world possibilities and opportunities.

It was Harry Sawyerr who wrote: "In spite of the difficulties inherent in the term African, there is a strong case for a *Theologia Africana* which will seek to interpret Christ to the African in such a way that he feels at home in his new

faith.¹ Sawyerr was interested in seeing an African theology that does not depart from the basic biblical teachings. He was equally interested in the development of a kind of Christianity that adopts a philosophical attitude to basic socio-religious factors of human society, as opposed to a mythopoetic approach, which attributes to psychic phenomena an explanation of the Christian way of life.² This is where my paper comes in.

As an African Christian theologian I am bothered about how my people continue to demonstrate great faith in God and endure all kinds of dehumanising circumstances and yet fail to catch up with the rest of the world. It seems to me that the African's Christian spirituality keeps him/her from taking seriously the mundane realities of the times such as scientific and technological developments. Kwame Bediako's position that in the Akan worldview "accepting Jesus as 'our saviour' always involves making him at home in our spiritual universe and in terms of our religious needs and longings" must be closer to the reality of African spirituality.³ No matter how 'enlightened' the African may appear he or she is still haunted and controlled by his or her worldview. Similarly, as stubbornly religious as he or she is, his or her Christianity will not 'free' him or her from this primal worldview. Thus the issue is not so much about the authenticity of the African worldview than its relevance in Christianising the African. That is why we have to agree with Louise Tappa that true spirituality must embrace all that is material and physical about human and communal lives.⁴

Clarification of Some Terms

Before proceeding we will have to clarify our use of some key terms. Ideology is a "system of social beliefs, a closely organised system of beliefs, values, and ideas forming the basis of a social, economic, or political philosophy or programme. [It is also a] meaningful belief system, a set of beliefs, values, and opinions that shapes the way an individual or a group such as a social class thinks, acts, and understands the world".⁵ The above definition elicits a number of implications. An ideology can be a social or political philosophy with practical and theoretical elements that have a focus of explaining the world and transforming it. As such ideologies affect people's worldview. Consequently, an ideology, like religion, has a strong potential in

¹ Harry Sawyerr, "What is African Theology?" in *African Theological Journal* 4 (August, 1971), 24.

² Sawyerr, "What is African Theology", 19.

³ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), 9.

⁴ Louise Tappa, "The Christ Event From the Viewpoint of African Women: A Protestant Perspective" in Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (eds.), *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 31.

⁵ *Encarta World English Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999), 934. See also *DK Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* (London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd, 1998), 403.

shaping people's lives positively or negatively. In other words, an ideology may, on one hand, be humanising, empowering, and affirming of individual and communal worth; but on the other hand, it can be dehumanising, demoralising, disempowering and depersonalising. This means also that the formulator and possessor of an ideology determines a people's destiny either for good or for evil.

Theology and ideology relate as far as "theology is prevented from crossing the invisible line into ideology only by one thing ... namely, the necessity, inherent to it, of sustaining an ongoing dialogue with the world, and thus of being continuously judged and corrected by the transcendent Word to which it can only bear secondary witness".⁶ The contextualisation enterprise of the church demands prompt responses to the challenges of the times. It is about the church's vulnerability to an unambiguous, risky, open and willing dialogue with the socio-historical context to hear things that it "had not anticipated and to which it cannot readily respond".⁷

According to Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, "spirituality is what permits us to make sense of life. It is at the very centre of the life and culture of the individual and of the community. Spirituality is a basic dimension of life, the soul of all culture, its essential element".⁸ The African's socio-cultural spirituality intelligently explicates life in all its dimensions to him or her. Spirituality is foundational to the African in terms of the vicissitudes of life.⁹

The word 'demon', with its adjective 'demonic', is derived from the Greek *daimon* which originally held no inherently evil connotation. It denotes a neutral force, which is inherently neither good nor evil. This term, together with *daimonion*,

appear to have been used to specify a god or a minor deity against the background of popular animistic beliefs. Homer appeared to differentiate *daimon* from *theos* in that the former term constituted the divine power at work among people, while the latter isolated the concept of divine personality. Prior to the NT however, *daimon* was used for personal intermediary beings who were believed to exercise supervision over the cosmos. These beings, at least in popular belief, were considered to be the spirits of the departed, who were endowed with supernatural power. While the connection of demons with specifically evil practices slowly developed in Greek thought, this appears to have been consistently implied in the Hebrew use of such terms as *sedim* and *setrim*. Though the OT offers little speculation on the subject, the practices of idolatry, magic, and witchcraft were related to demonic forces (Deut. 32: 17;

⁶ Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 78.

⁷ Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 79.

⁸ Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, "African Spirituality: A Cry for Life" in K.C. Abraham and B. Mbuy-Beya (eds.), *Spirituality of the Third World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 64.

⁹ Mbuy-Beya, "African Spirituality", 65.

Ps. 96: 5). Such practices clashed with Israel's monotheism, they were specifically prohibited for the people of God (Deut. 18:10-14; 1 Sam. 15: 23).¹⁰

In our case 'demonic' is used to suggest wrong utilization of 'daimon' for evil purposes. Against this backdrop we may proceed with our analysis.

The African Blindness and Entertainment

Samson is one of three persons in the Bible whose births can boast of angelic annunciations. The others were John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. John was the Isaianic lone voice in the wilderness who called on Israel to prepare their hearts to receive God's kingdom through the Servant of the Lord. Jesus was to save Israel and the world from their sins. Samson, whose name means 'little sun', was to provide deliverance for Israel in the face of Philistine oppressive rule and domination (Judges 13:1-5). Unfortunately, unlike John or Jesus, Samson's life may be said to typify a life of resource wastefulness because he failed to appreciate his purpose in this life. He was an ignorant fellow who thought he could make sport with the divine anointing on his life. As such he dissipated his great strength by carrying out unnecessary raids among the Philistines just to entertain Israel. In the process he ended up being raided by the very people he was supposed to raid. This became possible because as 'a little sun' his captors succeeded in eclipsing him through the betrayal of the woman who he foolishly and blindly believed loved him.

Delilah, the name of Samson's Philistine girlfriend, has an obvious association with *dallah* (hair) and is reminiscent of *laylah* (darkness). In fact, through his sexual escapades Samson had been walking in blindness of purpose long before his captors put out his physical sight. It was this same blindness that made him think he could ignore God's explicit command to live as a Nazirite and God's call to deliver Israel from the Philistines and still enjoy divine favour and anointing. When eventually his enemies put out his sight, they brought his consistent propensity for entertainment to a logical conclusion.

According to Scott Thomas, scholars of international relations have tried to determine the impact of religion, nationalism and spirituality in world politics to account for the resurgence of religion in both the Third World and the developed world.¹¹ His work shows a close affinity between world politics and religions and how the dominant economies manipulate Third World countries to their own advantage. In the face of Africa's socio-economic backwardness, this religio-political interface alarmingly questions the so-called African

¹⁰ Walter R. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd ed) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 331.

¹¹ Scott Thomas, "Religion and International Society" in Jeff Haynes (ed.), *Religion, Globalisation and Political Culture in the Third World* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 29-41.

religiousness and opens it up to pessimism.¹² It appears that African peoples' spirituality is insufficient for dealing with the problems of the continent. The issue is Africans are full of God-talk as if such 'godly' clichés are adequate panacea for their myriad problems. The African continent is blessed with enormous human and material resources. Unfortunately, like Samson many Africans, if not all, have allowed themselves to become blind to the realities around them. Pitifully, instead of acknowledging their self-induced negligence, many Africans delight in playing the blame game that always sees the West as the culprit. It is true that the West has a role in the persistent impoverishing of the African continent. But the fact still remains that like Samson this has been possible because Africans have chosen to make sport of themselves.

As the Samson story shows it was not the Philistines who made Samson engage in sport. He had been making sport of his life and destiny all along. Samson therefore represents many people who fail to appreciate their purpose in life and so choose to dissipate their lives through frivolity. The way many Africans live their lives with ease makes them appear oblivious of global happenings. They love to waste their lives on unprofitable chatter, organise and patronise programmes that help to derail individual and national progress the more rather than promote them. When others are busily exploring and conquering space and the universe to make the world a better place for human existence, many Africans are busily engaging in sports. In Ghana for example, television programmes for children do not seek to enhance the innate scientific and technological abilities of our children. Similarly, many young people and their parents have come to believe that life is all about making quick money. Consequently, many young men drop out of school to play football, which, in itself, is not wrong. The problem is that they fail to realise that knowledge is more powerful than physique; and that when all the strength is sapped, knowledge can still secure the future.

The African unbridled drive for entertainment does not promote creativity in people. It succeeds in creating a strong consumer desire for the products of those who conquered the world more than a hundred years ago. From the way many Africans live, they appear ignorant about being late conquerors of the earth. In many ways, especially scientifically and technologically, Africa seems years behind others in the world. And yet they can afford to make sport. This is indeed strange. The foregoing leads us to reflect on the use or misuse of spirituality and its effects on individual and national development.

Removing the Scales of Irrelevancy

All developed nations have had to reorient their attitude to work at one point or the other. Yet lest it should be thought that humans depend on their own ingenuity for the advancement of their society, Kudadjie offers this advice:

¹² J.N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Theology After the Cold War* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), 33-34.

Many take the influence of religion on society and development for granted. In matters of attaining high moral standards, such people would advocate the use of reason, buoyant economy, effort, effective preventive and deterrent measures, high moral ideals, and so on. Yet the truth is that throughout human history, the quest for God has inspired the art, poetry, music, literature and morality that have enriched human civilisations; and it still does.¹³

Kudadjie's comment reinforces the need for making African theology relevant to offer the needed hope for Africans' development. And yet religion must take its proper place in social development and advancement. This is why the wrong use of religion must not be entertained. An appropriate spirituality or/and religion must consider a hermeneutics of social development. Such hermeneutics must aim at undoing the socio-economic reversals of African peoples as satirically captured by Jean-Marc Ela:

The African today resembles a person running in the dark, not knowing which way to go. Run, run, but where? To the fore, to the rear, toward the tom-tom and the dance in the moonlight! Back to village life? Impossible. Ahead, to the future, the unknown future, mystery? Unthinkable.¹⁴

This apt description of today's African sounds much like Samson's situation. And it is the graphic representation of a people who ignore their purpose in this life but choose to play to the gallery of others. Like Samson, the African has become confused about his/her reason for living and is just following the dictates of others. This is something the new hermeneutics must seek to correct. This is why we insist, with J.N.K Mugambi, that Africans create new and better myths and also re-interpret old ones since "a society which is incapable of making its own myths or re-interpret its old ones, becomes extinct".¹⁵ One of the old myths is that Africans are unable to manage their affairs without the help of foreign intervention.

Unfounded as this may seem to us, everyday African socio-economic and political experiences seem to confirm it. There are ample illustrations to the effect that many African governments irresponsibly grind their economies down, fail to maintain existing infrastructure, show blatant disregard for law and order, supervise rather than combat the high spate of corruption, thrive on nepotism, do not open up for accountability and are unwilling to accommodate dissenting views from those in opposition to them.

As Mugambi has rightly argued, a twenty-first century Christian theology in Africa must include such motifs like the Exilic, Deuteronomic, Reconstructive and Restorative since the 1970s Exodus motif failed to focus on transformation and reconstruction. Mugambi's is a good suggestion, since most African theologies, and Third World theologies in general,

¹³ J.N. Kudadjie, "The Role of Religion and Ethics" in *Accountability in National Life* (Proceedings of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994), Vol. 28, 1990, 60.

¹⁴ Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 100.

¹⁵ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 37-38.

overemphasise socio-political liberation to the detriment of technological development. Indeed, socio-political liberation without the compensating technological development results in neo-dependency. It is to this end that the suggestion that "ICT must be introduced to schools right from the primary level" in Ghana is a welcome one.¹⁶ For the same reason the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology's decision to introduce a new programme to train young and brilliant students for doctorate degrees is laudable and innovative.¹⁷

Of course, such lofty ideals ought not to remain on drawing boards but must translate into reality. The emergence of many Christian private universities in Ghana with programmes aimed at responding to the technological development of Ghanaians and Africans in general is a welcome relief and response to the Christian theological task of liberating Africa from its dependency on Euro-America. Indeed, African theology owes it as a matter of duty to send the message to African peoples and governments about the need for technological and scientific liberation.

Towards a Relevant Christian Spirituality

"Every man has the right to decide his own destiny
And in this judgement there is no partiality".¹⁸

Our discussions so far require us to do a relevant theo-praxis. Such theo-praxis demands a reflection on the actions required to reverse the negative trends that beset the African continent and peoples. It is important to appreciate the destructiveness of ignorance of purpose. This is because it results in frivolous living. Failure to sustain one's goal within the general purpose leads to abuse and mismanagement of potential and resources.

In the long run mismanagement of resources and potential is akin to abuse of the future. Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-16; see also Matt. 25:14-30) underscores this. Similarly, we see in everyday life situations that people who live without the future in focus approach life with a short circuit mentality. Oftentimes, the solution such people provide is short term rather than long term. But human beings are created to offer permanent rather than intermittent solutions to the world. People who place a low premium on their spirituality are exposed to the ridicule of their enemies. Such spiting of spirituality emanates from complacency. Complacency disguises vulnerability and provides false hope and false security. But complacency is a sure sign of vulnerability; and indicates one's blindness to reality. The serious-minded have no room for fools. In a scientific-technological world physical strength and blind spirituality are not good enough for positively contributing to history. Its

¹⁶ "ICT: Gold Mine of the Mind", *Daily Graphic*, Thursday, Sept. 2, 2004, 7.

¹⁷ "Editorial", *Daily Graphic*, Monday, September 6, 2004, 7.

¹⁸ A statement made by Malika Lee Whitney and cited in *Bob Marley: Reggae King of the World* (Kingston, Jamaica: Kingston Publishers, 1984), 100.

consequence is disillusionment and fatalism. Many times our failure to understand the times and our objectives in life makes us waste our remaining energies on our supposed enemies. Samson prayed to die with the Philistines. But his real enemy was his ignorance to understand the purpose of his existence and the demands of the time. Those who rely on physical strength and blind spirituality become sport to those who know how to use their brains or minds. Wisdom and skill are more powerful than mere physical strength or blind spirituality. Those who rule do so via the ignorance of the ruled.

To respond to the challenge of relevancy, the church must take the theological training of its leaders and faithful seriously. Such training must shift from the traditional curricular focus to include non-theological matters like politics, law, economics, science and technology and sociology. In a time when African Pentecostals are beginning to see the wisdom in theological education we cannot think that theological education is irrelevant to our development. After all, over the years Pentecostals worldwide showed some antagonism towards education in general, and theological education in particular, because for them anointing and spiritual empowerment trumped theological training.¹⁹ This was particularly so with African Pentecostals. No wonder African Pentecostal literature rarely makes its way to the academic shelves of the West.²⁰ This lack of accessible literature has been the bane of the Pentecostal movement because practitioners have not been able to articulate concisely and intelligently the faith they claim to espouse. Yet Pentecostal empowerment has been associated with radical critiquing of the existing socio-religious status quo

because its proponents were unflinching in refusing to be co-opted into any other agenda than the one for which they knew they had been empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In this sense it was a prophetic religion, a religion similar to that of Elijah and Jeremiah.²¹

But Pentecostalism should not be seen as a religion of low critical thinking. This is what the immediate past General Secretary of the Ghana Pentecostal Council (GPC) meant when he noted that many Pentecostal predecessors' failure to balance spirituality with scholarship made them lose considerable influence in society. But the acquisition of doctoral degrees by Pentecostal pastors shows that "scholarship will show the way to Pentecostal delivery".²² In fact, since Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity has come to stay it is necessary for practitioners to realise that whatever the level of their spirituality, they need the counsel of scholarship to sustain them in the ministry. Indeed,

¹⁹ Rosalind I.J. Hackett, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana" in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28. 3 (1998), 262.

²⁰ Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 36.2 (1998), 175.

²¹ Mathew Clark, "Questioning Every Consensus: A Plea for a Return to the Radical Roots of Pentecostalism" in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 5:1 (2002), 73-76.

²² Apostle Ekow Badu Woode, 1st National Prophetic Leadership Conference.

while glossolalia unlocks the mystery of empowerment it does not in any way suggest that it sums up the totality of Pentecostal spirituality. It just serves as a foretaste of divine empowerment. In fact, what is said about Pentecostalism is applicable to African Christianity in general.

Commenting on Pentecostal hermeneutics among African Pentecostals Allan Anderson notes that “the significance of this Pentecostal hermeneutical process is that a reciprocal relationship between the Bible and the Spirit occurs”.²³ He further observes:

One presupposition that conditions this hermeneutical approach ... is the emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit that is common to Pentecostals, including African Pentecostals. The Bible is used to explain the experience of the working of the Holy Spirit in the church with supernatural “gifts of the Spirit”, especially healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues and prophesying - although there are sometimes differences between the churches in the practice of these gifts.²⁴

Today, however, the tides are changing; there seems to be some unexplained movement towards theological education among many Ghanaian Pentecostals. As the Pentecostal fellowships or ministries metamorphosed into churches, neo-Pentecostals gradually began to shift away from their mockery of theological education. They set up their own Bible schools to train and equip their potential leaders to ‘catch’ the principal leaders’ or founders’ visions. Others also travelled to far away lands to pursue some level of biblical education.

Hopefully, when the church tailors out appropriate theological education to meet the contemporary needs of Africans it will be able to arise to fulfil its prophetic mission of righting the wrongs in the socio-economic and political fibre of our societies. Of course, this will be attainable when the church cleans its own stables of any filth of competition, covetousness, hypocrisy and manipulation of the poor to enrich the aristocratic priests who load their followers with burdens too difficult for the poor laity to bear.²⁵ For when the leadership is inconsiderate of the people’s plight, and are seen to be part of the ‘without and within rejecters’ behind the sufferings of the masses, the church will lack the will to confront the political ‘principalities, powers, thrones and dominions’ that manipulate our poor in the guise of international trade

²³ Allan Anderson “The Hermeneutical Processes of Pentecostal-Type African Initiated Churches in South Africa” www.geocities.com/missionalia/missalia.htm (also in *Missionalia* 24:2, August 1996)

²⁴ Anderson “The Hermeneutical Processes”

²⁵ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), 122. See Simon Maimela, “Current Themes and Emphasis in Black Theology”, 103, and Itumeleng J. Mosala, “The Use of the Bible in Black Theology”, 194, in Mosala J. Itumeleng, and Tlhagale Buti (eds.), *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Black Theology From South Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986).

inequality.²⁶ Ela cries loudly against the insolent luxury of a privileged few who vainly try to hide the misery of the great majority of African peoples:

Social class differentiations are becoming more accentuated in society as a whole. The atmosphere is permeated with illusion. The wretched masses are being plied with a mass culture that they imbibe like a drug and that prevents them from ever becoming aware of the growing injustices against them. The dominant ideology has a ready-made explanation for the current difficulties: the crisis of the international situation and inflation ... One begins to realize that the rapid, exciting prosperity of a minority is not always the fruit of productivity. It can be the fruit of corruption ... the basic living conditions of the masses have scarcely changed, and the profits of development, which accrue at the national level, accrue to a select few only.²⁷

Laurenti Magasa similarly opts for a paradigm shift in African Christology. This praxis-oriented Christology of liberation sees liberation as a religio-cultural, socio-economic and political fact of reality and as a duty that incarnates Christ in human sufferings for the total liberation of the African person.²⁸ When the African church understands its purpose in the world, it will then be in a position to make its voice heard on national issues without having to echo other people's voices. It then will be able to fulfil its prophetic mission as a true messianic church with a clear understanding of the politics of Jesus. This is because it would be in a position to tap into religion's potential for revolutionary transformation to bring about true and authentic biblical liberation of African peoples.²⁹

In reality, Africa is rich. The only problem is how Africans harness, mobilise, insure and maximise their physical, human and collective assets so that they become profitable to the continent. Africans cannot afford, for example, to allow their human resources to waste away through debilitating diseases like HIV/AIDS.³⁰ Nor should Africans encourage the negative use of religion or spirituality that diverts the right use of time from productive services into the holding of prolonged fasting and prayer vigils. Such pious practices only create conditions akin to laziness, and a false and misplaced belief that

²⁶ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "A Theology of Isaiah" in Roy B. Zuck, et al (eds.), *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 307. See J. M. Waliggo, "Africa Christology in a Situation of Suffering" in Robert J. Schreiter, (ed.) *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 164-180. See also Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry*, 83-84.

²⁷ Ela, *African Cry*, 84.

²⁸ Laurenti Magasa, "Christ the Liberator in Africa Today" in Robert Schreiter (ed.), *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 151-163.

²⁹ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 60-75. See also "Final Statement of the Fifth EATWOT Conference" held in New Delhi (August 17-19, 1981) in Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.), *Irruption of the Third World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), 201.

³⁰ W. Asenso Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention: A Converse To Treatise On Poverty Reduction* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2001), 12-13, 15-37.

God blesses according to how much one prays or fasts.³¹ God blesses industry but not religious pomposity. Even the practice of tithing on one's income needs to be examined to bring out its theological and economic significance. It is only when people work that they can receive income to tithe on to support God's work. He does not bless people simply because they tithe even if they are lazy. He blesses their work and not the tithe per se. What Africa needs is a new work ethic. Indeed, God desires responsible citizenship of his children, such as honouring their tax obligations for national development. He also demands that we adopt frugality and employ proper economic measures to safeguard our future and posterity. A people who do not know how to avoid waste and are unable to save little crumbs cannot expect to be economically and scientifically viable or relevant.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to critically examine the relevancy of African spirituality in the face of debilitating problems. The contention of this paper is that the African church must blaze the road to socio-economic and scientific-technological reconstruction of the continent. To this end, a new spirituality, which carves new humanising myths of Africans, is demanded of all African people, especially the faith community. The church has the power to make this work by adopting appropriate theological education for its leaders and laity.

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³¹ W. Asenso Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, 19.

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