



BRILL

Religion, Morality, and Democracy in Ghana

Jeffrey Haynes | ORCID: 0000-0002-8434-6951

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, London Metropolitan University,
London, UK

Tsjhayni@londonmet.ac.uk

Received 18 September 2023 | Accepted 25 March 2024 |

Published online 10 May 2024

Abstract

Many Ghanaians express concern about what they regard as a serious decline in morality and integrity, at both elite and popular levels. The decline is believed to fuel corruption, undermine national development, and diminish faith in democracy as the best available system of government. The paper argues that a close relationship between Ghana's largest church, the Church of Pentecost (CoP), and the country's two main political parties, the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress, threatens Ghana's secular constitution and the country's three decades of democracy in two ways. First, the CoP wants undemocratically to impose a framework to control Ghanaians' moral behaviour according to the church's values and beliefs. Second, the CoP's influence on Ghana's two main political parties seeks to prioritise power and control over all Ghanaians regardless of their religious affiliation and of the country's commitment to democratic norms and institutions.

Keywords

Ghana – Church of Pentecost – religion – morality – democracy – development

1 Introduction

Many Ghanaians express concern about what they regard as a serious decline in morality and integrity at both the elite and popular levels. The decline is believed to fuel corruption, undermine national development, and diminish

faith in democracy as the best available system of government. The Church of Pentecost (CoP) is Ghana's largest church, with more than 3.3 million followers – over 10 percent of the country's population (Klutse 2022). The CoP has a close relationship with senior figures in Ghana's two main political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which have alternated in power since redemocratisation in 1993. The NPP currently (November 2023) holds the presidency. The parliament is hung, with an equal number of seats for both parties. Both NPP and NDC are energetically pursuing CoP members' votes in the next electoral race for both the presidency and parliament in December 2024.

This paper argues that a close relationship between the CoP, the NPP, and the NDC threatens the country's three decades of democracy in two ways. First, the CoP appears to want to impose a framework to control Ghanaians' moral behaviour according to the church's values and beliefs. Second, the CoP's influence on Ghana's two main political parties prioritises power and control over all Ghanaians, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Sperber and Hern point to recent research indicating that 'the rise of born-again Christian movements¹ across sub-Saharan African states has significant implications for democratization, ethnic politics, and civil society in the region' (2018, 230–231; see, for example, McCauley 2013, 2014; Grossman 2015; McClendon and Riedl 2015; Obadare 2018; Gifford and Nogueira-Godsey 2011). Saiya (2023) argues that 'Christian nationalism' is a global problem that affects several regions, including Africa. This is because when Christian nationalism is 'entrenched in national politics, the quality of democracy [is] substantially degraded' in three ways (2024, 103).² First, it 'prioritizes power and control over others', leading to support for political candidates who 'promise to protect or restore the hegemony of Christianity, regardless of these politicians' commitment to democratic norms and institutions' (2024, 103). Second, it disregards 'the principle of democratic equality' since the main aim is to strengthen and enhance the national position of Christians (2024, 104). Third, Christian nationalism threatens 'the cornerstone of democratic governance: the peaceful transition of power' (2024, 104).

This is not to suggest that the Church of Pentecost in Ghana is a hotbed of Christian nationalism. However, it is widely agreed that Christian leaders have both religious and social power when they are viewed as being above politics and with moral authority seen as representative of the nation, which fuses both national and religious identity (Grzymała-Busse 2015). The fusion's power draws on myths about the nation's religious character. Ideas about a Christian nation are powerful when they are believed beyond the most devout sections of the population and widely perceived as integral to a national identity that

must be maintained. In a recent study of Christian nationalism in the United States, Whitehead and Perry (2020) argue that Christian nationalist beliefs fuse multiple markers of traditional American identity – Christianity, whiteness, conservatism – into a single cultural framework that is not limited to devout Evangelicals, while it is strongly associated with them. In Ghana Christian belief frequently draws on traditional markers of Ghanaian identity – Christianity, normative conservatism, antagonism toward ‘progressive’ ideas imported from abroad such as LGBTQ+ equality. These articulate a single cultural framework that may appeal not only to the especially devout but also incorporates those who more generally share such values. The argument of the paper is that the Church of Pentecost, Ghana’s largest Protestant church, is in the forefront of efforts to articulate ideas about a Christian nation that may threaten aspects of the country’s democracy of 30 years standing.

2 Methodology

This paper adopts a comparative and qualitative methodological approach while also drawing on Afrobarometer’s quantitative data. It builds on my long-standing interest in religion and politics in Ghana that began in the mid-1980s and involved lengthy research trips in 1985 and 1990. Further research visits to Ghana were undertaken in July and November 2022 and April 2023, resulting in 23 personal interviews with knowledgeable Ghanaians, including theologians, public intellectuals, political scientists, current and former government members, members of civil society organisations, and journalists.³ Personal interviews were augmented by email and WhatsApp interactions with interviewees in April–August 2023. The article also draws on other sources of information such as research monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, press statements from politicians and religious figures, relevant articles from Ghanaian newspapers, and Ghanaian and foreign news websites, blogs, and social media, including Facebook. Finally, the article benefits from grey literature,⁴ not least because much of the current debate about the political role of religion in Ghana is expressed in such fora.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section examines perceptions of morality in Ghana. The second section looks at the issue of morality in relation to religion and national development. Section 3 focuses on a recent event, the National Development Conference 2023 with the theme ‘Moral Vision and National Development’, organised by the Church of Pentecost. The fourth section looks at the outcome of the conference and how this relates to the political role of the CoP in relation to morality, integrity, and democracy in Ghana.

Section five assesses more generally the relationship between democracy, corruption, and national development in Ghana. A concluding section sums up the findings of the paper.

3 Morality in Ghana

Ghana's national development is said to be undermined by what many Ghanaians regard as a serious decline in morality and integrity at both the elite and popular levels. Moral decline is believed to fuel corruption and diminish some citizens' belief in democracy as the best available system of government. The role of religion in morality is highly important in Ghana, which is often identified as a highly religious country (Quashigah 2015; Interviews A, B, D). Most Ghanaians belong to a religious faith. The most recent census (2021) indicates that 71.3 percent of the population identify as Christians.⁵ About three-tenths of Ghanaians (29 percent) – that is, about ten million people in a population of 30.8 million – are not Christian. Muslims constitute one-fifth (19.9 percent) of Ghana's population, those following 'traditionalist' religions amount to 3.2 percent, 'other religious groups' to 4.5 percent, and those with 'no religion' 1.1 percent (Sasu n.d.).

The public voice of Christian leaders is prominent in Ghana. Bediako (2005) examines the central role of mainstream Christian leaders in calls for Ghana's redemocratisation from the mid-1980s. He identifies the emergence of what he calls 'a new public theology', which contests the existing tendency to vest political power with sacred authority (Bediako 2005, 117). Recounting the election in 2000 of a democratic challenger to succeed the then president Jerry John Rawlings, who first briefly took power via military coup in 1979 and again in 1981, leading to a decade as the country's authoritarian leader, Bediako sees evidence that the new public theology had a central role in shifting Ghana's political culture in a genuinely democratic direction (Interview C).

Ghana's Christian landscape underwent a major change in the early 1990s. The public prominence of the historic mission churches, central to Ghana's redemocratisation in 1993, became threatened by numerous new Pentecostal and Charismatic churches to which the majority of Christians in Ghana now belong. A prominent theologian, Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, avers that, spearheaded by Pentecostalism, Ghana now embraces 'the Christian faith with a fervour that is increasingly shaping its national identity' (Asamoah-Gyadu, quoted in Bigg 2022). The increased popularity of born-again churches stems in part from their similarity with traditional beliefs in which people consult

spirits when in need of help. A second factor is a combination of ecstatic worship and a faith in a God who is believed to not only perform miracles but also help people achieve their social and economic ambitions (Samuel n.d.; Interviews D, E, F).

Scholars have written extensively on religion and morality in Ghana, including assessments of what determines morality (Quashigah 2015; Anderson Jr. 2013). Some contend that religion is the most significant determinant of morality, while others are either sceptical or do not accept this view. Discourse on the sources of morals has found its way into African ethics with views both from the West and from Africans who maintain that the morality of Africans has a religious base (Anderson Jr. 2013). For Christians the foundation of the church is the Bible, which teaches principles such as love and compassion. Consequently, Christians are encouraged to shun greed, bribery, and corruption, and thus improve society's moral fibre (Interviews Q, W).

Anderson and Inusah identify moral values as 'guiding principles, virtues, or standards of behaviour' widely understood 'as desirable and important' and 'held in high repute by a society or an individual. The values guide the moral agent in his or her interaction with other moral agents' (2023, 173). The authors identify the following moral values extant in Ghana: honour, respect, hospitality, gratitude, truthfulness, obedience, unity, godliness, hard work, and courage. For Gyekye, moral values are 'forms or patterns of conduct that are considered most worthwhile and cherished by society'. Moral values are 'principles of behaviour and objectives of both social and individual actions' (1996, 55). Sarpong (1974) adds that moral values may be distinctive and differ from one culture or society to another, yet there are some values such as respect, truthfulness, and honesty that are universal (Interviews N, Q).

Leading Christians in Ghana publicly assert that the country is undergoing significant moral decline. For example, Reverend Joseph Felix Mensah, chairman of the Apostolic Council, Great Commission Church International, stated in August 2022 that 'the Church has failed in its responsibility of nurturing people of integrity and sound character'. This is because 'issues of morality and integrity were no longer of major concern, especially in educational institutions'. 'Moral breakdown' was negatively affecting society, leading some to ridicule the Christian faith ('The church in Ghana said to have failed to build integrity, character' 2022). Mensah's concerns were echoed in a June 2023 newspaper article, by Professor Revd. Emmanuel K. Asante, the former presiding bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana and past chairman of the National Peace Council. Asante quoted a prominent Ghanaian theologian, the late Rev. Prof. Joshua Kudadjie:

In private as in public life there is irresponsibility, dishonesty, corruption, subterfuge, people of all walks of life and status engage in currency and drug trafficking, abuse of office, cheating, fraud, misappropriation, embezzlement, nepotism. It looks as if we cannot distinguish between right and wrong and have no recognizable standard of behaviour. ... There is lawlessness, lack of respect for authority. (Asante 2023)

4 Religion, Morality, and National Development

The relationship between religion, morality, and national development has long been prominent in Ghana, at least since independence in 1957 (Nsia-Peprah 2017). Ghana's post-independence national leaders have all been Christians; some referred to their faith when in power (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014). Assimeng (1995) outlines six phases of national religiousness since independence, all of which indicate the importance of Christianity in national life. Over time, national leaders often pointed to shortfalls in morality and integrity as limiting Ghana's national development.

In the first phase, a nondenominational Christian, Kwame Nkrumah, head of the Convention Peoples Party government, sought to marginalise the church by prioritising religious and ethnic pluralism. Nkrumah's attempt to weld together Ghana's various religious and ethnic groups into a nation through a national consciousness of identity and loyalty was via a 'quasi-religious ideology' – 'Nkrumaism' (Hastings 1991, 188). Nkrumah was ousted in a military coup in February 1966.

Nkrumah tried to organise Ghanaian society in a certain way, that is, a secular state where no religious tradition is favoured over others. However, this does not mean that all Ghanaians believe that the idea of a secular state is normatively ideal for today. In addition, constructivist scholars warn against the presumption that separate public and private spheres exist in all societies, which underlies the notion of the secular state (Author 1996). Moreover, Ellis and ter Haar (2004) urge scholars of religion in African contexts to take African epistemologies seriously. They argue that many Africans do not meaningfully distinguish between the visible, material world and the invisible, spiritual world in the same ways that other cultures do.

The second phase of national religiousness occurred during the rule of the successor regime, the National Liberation Council (NLC, 1966–1969), a military government with Christian values as one aspect of the regime's ideology. The third phase of national religiousness came during the successor-elected civilian government of Kofi Busia (1969–1972). Busia proclaimed that public officials

must exhibit a 'God-fearing posture', behave morally in their jobs, and regularly attend church (Fretheim, 2011, 7). Military governments then came after that of Busia: the National Redemption Council (NRC, 1972–1975), the Supreme Military Council I (SMC I, 1975–1978), and the Supreme Military Council II (SMC II, 1978–1979), composing the fourth phase of national religiousness. Both NRC and SMC I were led by General Kutu Acheampong. SMC II, following Acheampong's ousting, was headed by General Fred Akuffo. Pobe (1987) argues that during Acheampong's rule Christianity was unsuccessfully misused to try to mobilise support for the government and to legitimise Acheampong's authority. Although Acheampong was a Catholic at certain points he turned to several religious traditions – not only mainline Christian but also Islam and African traditional religions, as well as the newly emerging born-again churches originating in the United States and active in many African countries, including Ghana. Agyeman-Duah explains that Acheampong 'did not disown his Catholic faith but shifted from the orthodox to the evangelical' (2021, 172). Acheampong's 'embrace of evangelicals (both from home and abroad) could be understood within the context of [his] anxiety for immediate remedies to the country's crisis' of national development (Agyeman-Duah 2021, 172).

A civilian-elected government followed, Dr. Hilla Limann's People's National Party (PNP, 1979–1981), whose brief period in office came after the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council's chaotic three months in power (Author 2022). The PNP government tried to improve national morality and integrity by appealing to Christian values, including prayer and a firm belief in God (de Witte 2008).⁶ Many Ghanaians regarded the disintegration of the economy during Limann's term as reflective of the government's institutional failings rather than a lack of morality and integrity or insufficient prayer (Haynes 1988).

The PNP government was ousted in a military coup on 31 December 1981. Flt-Lt Jerry John Rawlings, head of the self-styled revolutionary regime the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC, 1981–1992), declared a 'holy war' (Kahiu 2020, xx), the sixth phase of national religiousness. Rawlings, a Catholic who once claimed he wanted to be a priest, introduced dramatic changes in Ghana, seeking to address Ghana's perceived moral decline, lack of integrity and rampant petty and state-level corruption (Addy N.d.; Author 1988, 2022). During PNDC rule Rawlings frequently exhorted Ghanaians to behave morally and eschew corruption. The PNDC introduced various institutions, including a Citizens Vetting Committee to investigate and punish those deemed guilty of tax evasion, a National Investigations Committee to examine corruption in public office, and countrywide public tribunals designed to overcome perceived weaknesses in the judicial system (Haynes 1988, 2023; Interviews T, U, V).

After the PNDC regime stepped down and democracy was reintroduced, Jerry John Rawlings was popularly elected president in 1992 and again in 1996. The period from redemocratisation in 1993 until the present time forms a seventh phase of national religiousness. Today Ghana's Christian landscape is dominated by born-again churches, headed by the Church of Pentecost (Gifford 2004, 2015). While 'the mainline churches or the historic mission denominations' long 'relied on their human intellectual resources to respond to developments through communiques and statements in the media addressed to the parties involved', born-again churches have a different approach (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 168). They organise 'periods of prayer and fasting to deal' with societal threats, including a perceived decline in morality and 'poor governance'. To do this they use 'biblical precedence to interpret and explain' why Ghana is suffering, while also 'employing prayer and prophetic declarations' (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 170). Today the born-again churches are the new 'heartland of the Christian faith', with a particular understanding of moral decline as the cause of development shortfalls (Quasyi-Amakye 2015, 640).

5 National Development Conference 2023: 'Moral Vision and National Development'

The speaker of Ghana's parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, announced that parliament would not sit on 26 July 2023 due to what he described as an event of great national importance taking place away from parliament. Not only Bagbin but also the leadership of the House and other members of parliament participated in the country's first National Development Conference on 26–27 July, organised by the Church of Pentecost at the Pentecost Convention Centre in Millennium City, Gomoa Fetteh ('Parliament suspends July 26 sitting for National Development Conference' 2023). Others in attendance included representatives of national executives of political parties, leaders of religious bodies and civil society organisations, and governance experts ('Public engagement and policy dialogue towards national development in Ghana' n.d.). Conference keynote speakers were drawn from Ghana's political, legal and religious elite: the vice president Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, speaking on behalf of Ghana's president Nana Dankwah Akufo-Addo; Speaker Bagbin; the chief justice of the Supreme Court Gertrude Araba Esaaba Torkornoo; two former presidents of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor and John Dramani Mahama; the chairman of the Church of Pentecost Apostle Eric Nyamekye; and Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, spokesperson of Ghana's national chief imam Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu.

This conference followed the 2019 publication of *Vision 2023* (Church of Pentecost 2019). *Vision 2023* sets out in detail how the church would strategically address Ghana's development problems. The church's strategy, 'to possess the nations', was to be achieved via two approaches: 'equipping the church' and 'strengthening and realigning church institutions and structures' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 27, 65). Pastor Kwasi Asante Annor (2023), general manager of the CoP television station PENT TV, explained that the National Development Conference was an important component of transforming societies. The conference was 'a historic event that brought together the influencers of society to deliberate and reflect on the moral vision of our nation – Ghana – and its implications for National Development' (Annor 2023). *Vision 2023* is a manifesto for transforming Ghanaian society in line with biblical pronouncements, including Genesis 41: 39–41 and Jeremiah 29: 4–7.⁷ A section of *Vision 2023*, titled 'Community Transformation Overview', states:

The Church is commissioned by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. Its mandate is the discipleship of the nations, which also brings along societal transformation and development. In other words, to develop and transform the nations and communities is to move those communities towards Christ. This calls for a change of worldviews, opinions, attitudes and ways of life. (Church of Pentecost 2019, 62)

CoP efforts to transform society involve working with the government, traditional authorities, such as chiefs, and the media. Specific steps include:

- rolling out 'programmes to strategically engage/disciple the nation's existing governance structures' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 53)
- deepening 'engagement with the chieftaincy institution in order to impart values of the Kingdom of God to traditional authorities' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 57)
- embarking 'on strategic partnerships with government in developing the nation' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 61)
- partnering with 'government to establish public schools at strategic places to enable the poor to have improved access to education' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 61)
- contributing 'to national level dialogues and discussions on highly relevant issues that promote national development and border on the welfare of Ghanaians' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 61)
- initiating 'a security-based development project dubbed "Police Station & Post Project (PSPP)" to put up police stations/police posts in some selected deprived and insecure areas. This will be our contribution to government's

efforts to provide police posts in communities where they are needed' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 61)

- through collaborating 'with the Ghana Prisons Service, the church will initiate the construction of accommodation facilities (cells) for selected prisons in the country as part of efforts to support government ease congestions in those prisons' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 61–62)
- 'strategically collaborate with some selected media houses to push the transformation agenda of the church' (Church of Pentecost 2019, 67)

The anticipated outcome of the strategy, covering the years 2018–2023, is set out in a section titled: 'Expectation of a Transformed Society':

- Society free from negative behaviours or vices,
- Society where Christ-like behaviours are displayed,
- Increase in godliness in the society i.e., people of integrity,
- Considerable reduction in corruption,
- Reduction in crime-rate and social vices such as teenage pregnancy, smoking and rape cases,
- A society whose members are law abiding citizens,
- Godliness in the society,
- The Church will be actively involved in the discipling of the nation's existing governance structures (executive, judiciary, legislature) and corporate and social institutions with the values and principles of the Kingdom of God. (Church of Pentecost 2029, 105–110)

To what extent, if at all, do such goals indicate that the CoP seeks to prioritise power and control over all Ghanaians? It could be argued that central aspects of the CoP's actual agenda include the following, which are not necessarily indicative of a programme to arrogate political power: improving access to education for the poor, establish better policing for crime reduction, improving humanitarian conditions in prisons, reducing corruption, and reducing teenage pregnancy.

However, the point is that achieving the goals of *Vision 2023* would be highly dependent on a moral transformation of Ghana, which could only be accomplished through the exercise of power and control that would not necessarily be respectful of democratic norms or the values and beliefs of some in Ghana's religiously plural society. The theme of the 2023 National Development Conference, 'Moral Vision and National Development', highlighted links between morality and national development. Conference speakers addressed this theme in several ways. Vice-President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia 'pledged that Government would work assiduously' to establish 'a free and just society, where entrepreneurship and individual initiative are the sources of wealth

creation with a strong social safety net for the marginalised and disadvantaged; and the improvement of the governance architecture to deepen accountability and respect for the rule of law in our body politic' ('The Church of Pentecost is a Steadfast Development Partner – Veep' 2023). Bawumia did not explain how this would be done, or what reforms would be undertaken to ensure success. A second speaker, the chief imam's spokesperson Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, emphasised the 'significant role of religion in upholding moral uprightness for national development'. Shaibu asserted that 'religion and morality are inseparably intertwined, with religious norms shaping and governing behaviour to achieve moral goals'. For Shaibu defining morality as a system that society uses to understand what is right involves 'a code of conduct that guides individuals to engage in behaviours deemed good and encouraged while discouraging harmful actions (moral vices)' ('Religion Plays a Significant Role in Nation Building – Sheikh Shaibu Asserts' 2023).

Speakers at the conference included two prominent Muslims: Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia and Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu. Obviously neither of these men are Pentecostals. Their presence at the conference indicates the importance of the CoP in setting the contours of the national debate on how to improve morality in Ghana and the importance of prominent public and religious figures, including non-Pentecostals, to be seen taking this issue seriously. However, it does not imply that all attendees at the conference agree with the CoP's transformative agenda as set out in *Vision 2023*.

At its close, the conference issued a communique that stated: 'The moral character of the nation has dipped, as evidenced in the increasingly inefficient leadership at all levels (such as family, Chieftaincy, religious, political etc.), degradation of the environment, lack of integrity, disrespect in public discourse, corruption, lack of patriotism and volunteerism in Ghana'.⁸ The conference called for establishment of a National Moral and Integrity Council (NMIC) with the status of Ghana's Peace Council.⁹ The aim of the NMIC would be to oversee 'a process of restoration of generations of decay and moral decadence that Ghana has experienced over the years' via a 'National Moral Vision Plan' (Osei 2023). In addition, the NMIC would appoint a multielectoral team led by faith-based organisations to engage national bodies, such as the National Commission on Civic Education and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, and 'other relevant stakeholders to actualise the National Moral Vision Plan' (Osei 2023).

The government did not immediately respond to the call for a NMIC, a National Moral Vision Plan, or a faith-dominated multielectoral team, and the CoP provided no further details such as terms of reference or how progress

would be assessed.¹⁰ To assess how Ghanaians felt about the NMIC and other aspects of the CoP plan, the author communicated during 5–12 August 2023 with around 20 Ghanaian colleagues and friends, some who were religious people and some who were not.¹¹ The aim was to seek their views on the NMIC and whether they believed it could fix Ghana's perceived lack of morality and integrity, including significant state-level corruption, which Afrobarometer (2022) identifies as one of the most serious issues facing the country. Responses ranged from a conviction that such a council was not needed and/or would not be established, to the belief that the NMIC was potentially a good idea but it was unlikely that the government would view it as a priority with the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for December 2024. Several respondents noted a problematic issue: whose morals are appropriate to judge elite and public morality and integrity, and what standards should be used to make these judgments?

Ghanaians were active on social media following the National Development Conference. Commenting on Facebook on 28 July 2023, one University of Ghana graduate, Kwaku Antwi-Boasiako, captured the thoughts of many:

If a country that is apparently made up of 70% Christians, 20% Moslems and a certain percentage of the rest being traditional leaders and traditional African religious believers, still requires the setting up of a National Moral and Integrity Council (NMIC) to 'curb social vices' and to reverse 'generations of decay and moral decadence that Ghana has experienced over the years', you don't have to be a prophet to know that this NMIC will at best achieve nothing and at worst expose the lack of depth of the thinking and analysis behind this move. (<https://www.facebook.com/kwaku.antwiboasiako.3>)

On his personal Facebook page Professor Henry Kwasi Prempeh, chief executive of CDD-Ghana,¹² noted close links between senior political figures from both main parties and leaders of the Church of Pentecost (<https://www.facebook.com/hkwasi.prempeh>).¹³ Prempeh also asserted:

The country is adrift. Our two-party populist politics has unleashed all manner of demons into our national life. The irony is that the ascendancy of these theocratic forces is moving in tandem with a deepening amorality and venality in public ethics. The future of Ghanaian democracy isn't looking good from where I sit. (WhatsApp conversation with Professor Henry Kwasi Prempeh, 7 August 2023)¹⁴

On his Facebook page Prempeh noted:

The moral and ethical core of the Ghanaian state and society have deteriorated sharply as the numbers of churches, preachers, and self-professed religionists and pious politicians and public officials have grown astronomically. Our politics and public life are now infused with more open profession of religious piety and faith than ever before. Can we say our politics and public life have become more moral or ethical as a result? (<https://www.facebook.com/hkwasi.prempeh>)

He reminded 'proponents' of the NMIC 'of the letter AND SPIRIT of Article 56 of the Constitution of Ghana' (emphasis in the original): 'Parliament shall have no power to enact a law to establish or authorise the establishment of a body of movement with the right or power to impose on the people of Ghana a common programme or a set of objectives of religious or political nature' (<https://www.facebook.com/hkwasi.prempeh>. Also see Ghana's 1992 constitution at <https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/Ghana%20Constitution.pdf>).

6 Morality, Integrity, and Democracy in Ghana

There may be a constitutional threat linked to the political influence of the CoP in Ghana, one of Africa's few continuous democracies for three decades (Interviews O and P) There are indications that Ghana is already backsliding in its commitment to democracy (Mohammed 2023). Sweden's V-Dem Institute recently categorised Ghana as an 'autocratizer', implying a significant decline in democratic quality. The main cause, according to Nsia-Peprah, is 'unethical leadership' leading to 'moral decadence and dysfunctional institutions that facilitate the abuse of government power' (2017, 66–67). Caprara notes that 'democracy's realisation depends upon citizens' aspirations and capacities to sustain forms of self-governance that promote the expression of their personalities and the full actualisation of their potentials' (2022, xx). It may be that an NMIC with statutory powers would significantly impact Ghana's democracy, given the likely influence of values and beliefs associated with the Church of Pentecost as reflected in *Vision 2023*. CoP influence could undermine independent 'development of citizens' personalities', which necessarily draws on uncontrolled 'world views, reasoning, values, aspirations and habits' and are central to a country's democratic health (Interviews G, H, I).

To be vigorous, Ghana's democracy must be an environment that encourages a variety of beliefs, motivations, and behaviours that accord with optimal development outcomes and pursuit of the common good (Interview J). Democracy is a consistent challenge that can only be realised by citizens' comprehensive moral commitment to treat each other with the same respect as each would like to be treated. It is also necessary to care for each other's well-being just as one cares for one's own growth and happiness (Interviews L and O). Democracy may fail unless citizens' moral agency uses democratic institutions to moderate economic and social iniquities caused by modern life (Interview K).

Until recently Ghana was recognised as a democratic success story, following more than a decade of military rule (1981–1993) (Haynes 2023). In 2008 the U.S. National Intelligence Council opined, 'Ghana has emerged as one of Africa's most liberal and vibrant democracies, reclaiming a position of political leadership on the continent' (National Intelligence Council 2008, 4). Freedom House's 2023 report identifies Ghana as a 'free' country, implying a relatively high level of democratic development, with considerable political rights and civil liberties. Graham Gyampo, Faanu, and Yobo (2017) identify some of Ghana's democratic strengths: a viable multiparty system; electoral reforms to improve the structure and process of elections; a lively civil society and independent media; and widespread acknowledgement of the importance of democratic norms by both the mass of ordinary Ghanaian citizens and political elites, behaviourally, attitudinally, and constitutionally (Interview M).

Like Freedom House, the V-Dem Institute assesses Ghana's democracy annually. V-Dem categorised Ghana as a liberal democracy from 2003 to 2014 and again from 2017 to 2020. V-Dem classified Ghana as an electoral democracy in 2021 and an 'autocratizer' in 2022, indicating a significant democratic decline (V-Dem 2023, 19).¹⁵ Freedom House itemised signs of Ghana's democratic backsliding: 'discrimination against women and LGBT+ people', 'weaknesses in judicial independence and the rule of law, corruption and public service delivery present challenges to government performance, political violence¹⁶ as well as illegal mining causing destruction to water bodies' (Freedom House 2023). Graham, Gyampo, Faanu, and Yobo also identify some of Ghana's democratic weaknesses: 'electoral processes [that] continue to be saddled with monumental flaws that undermine the integrity of elections and pose a threat of democratic relapse'; executive president with wide, some claim excessive, powers; ethnically or tribally based politics that potentially undermine political stability; periodic postelection violence; and limited policy influence for civil society (Graham et al. 2017, 100; Interviews R, S).

7 Democracy, Corruption, and National Development

What, if any, are the connections between democratic weaknesses and Ghana's first national development conference organised by the Church of Pentecost? Could the proposals for a National Moral and Integrity Council and a National Moral Vision plan be instituted and implemented democratically? It may be informative to note what Pastor Kwasi Asante Annor (2023), general manager of the CoP's television station PENT TV,¹⁷ sees as a model for Ghana's transformation – Rwanda.¹⁸

Pastor Annor (2023) provides an account on the CoP website of his August 2023 fact-finding visit to Rwanda. He wanted 'to make a reflective contribution to the discourse of morality and national development, drawing from the Rwandan model and offering some lessons for our country – Ghana'. Impressed by Rwanda's 'C-5 model' of courageous leadership, compliance, courtesy, comportment, and compassion, Annor focuses on courageous leadership and compliance. During his visit Annor observed that Paul Kagame, president since 1994, not only exhibited 'courageous leadership' but is loved by Rwandans. According to Annor's Uber driver, Kagame is revered as 'the father of the nation'. Annor draws comparisons to Ghana where, he claims, 'even secondary school students have the effrontery to use bad language against the president and video record it because they had gone to write an examination and struggled'. He also asserts that Rwandans are inherently law abiding, implying that Ghanaians are not (Annor 2023).

According to Freedom House, Ghana is a democracy, that is, a 'free' country. Rwanda, on the other hand, is categorised by Freedom House categories as 'not free', that is, an autocracy:

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by President Paul Kagame, has ruled the country since 1994, when it ousted forces responsible for that year's genocide and ended a civil war. While the regime has maintained stability and economic growth, it has also suppressed political dissent though pervasive surveillance, intimidation, torture, and renditions or suspected assassinations of exiled dissidents. (Freedom House 2022)

Under Kagame Rwanda is both an autocracy and a 'champion in fighting corruption'. According to Camargo and Gatwa (2018), 'petty corruption as a normalised practice has been effectively eliminated in Rwanda'. This has been achieved by enforcing 'behaviours associated [with] Rwandan national identity' – respect for 'the rule of law ... reinforced with harsh punishments for

those found guilty of corruption' (Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 26). As a result, 'Rwandan citizens can generally obtain the services they seek without having to resort to bribery, gift giving or favouritism' (Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 27). In addition, public officials are tightly monitored by participating in '*Imihigo*', an annual contract with the public authorities that sets personal and institutional performance goals (Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 19). Failing to fulfill these commitments is a 'serious dishonour'. Digitisation of all government processes, including paying taxes and the transfer of money to and from public officials, makes typical avenues of soliciting bribes or stealing public funds very difficult to pursue. Finally, the need for public officials to co-opt and demand bribes is diminished by proper pay and processes (Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 18). While Camargo and Gatwa (2018) claim that Rwanda is dealing effectively with petty corruption, it makes no mention of state-level corruption which may not be petty.

Transparency International (2022) ranks Rwanda 54th and Ghana 72nd in a global league table of 180 least and most corrupt countries. Ghana has a serious problem of corruption at both petty and not so petty levels. There are close links between corruption, morality and integrity. In its periodic surveys Afrobarometer assesses Ghanaians' attitudes toward corruption. Afrobarometer does not survey public opinion in Rwanda on any topic, including corruption, because it is impossible to do so. Freedom of speech is so constrained that Afrobarometer cannot run a valid survey, leaving the organisation 'without data to counter the government's claim that national consultations revealed a mere 10(!) very brave souls who opposed the extension of President Kagame's term in office' (Afrobarometer 2016).

Recent Afrobarometer (2022) data indicate that democracy is not working well for all Ghanaians for several reasons, including perceptions of increased petty and state level corruption, as well as pessimism about the direction of national development and lack of confidence that successive governments will have the ability to deal with these problems. In 2022 Afrobarometer (2023) found that '77% of Ghanaians say the level of corruption in the country increased during the previous year' and '87% of citizens think Ghana is heading in the wrong direction'. Afrobarometer (2023) asked respondents, 'How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say' in relation to 'fighting corruption in government?' The responses were very badly: 33.5 percent, and fairly badly: 21.0 percent.

Afrobarometer (2022) also asked about religious leaders: 'How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?' The responses were some: 61.5 percent,

most: 17.7 percent, and all: 9.5 percent, a total 88.7 percent. In addition, more than half of those asked had no or only a little faith in religious leaders. The responses were not at all: 21.0% percent, and just a little: 31.3 percent. These responses are noteworthy in the context of the call for a National Moral and Integrity Council and a National Moral Vision plan, both of which would likely be dominated by prominent Christian figures, including from the Church of Pentecost.

The Afrobarometer data identify two pressing issues for Ghanaians – increasing corruption and the nation going in the ‘wrong direction’. Yet in 2022 a large majority of Ghanaians (75.9 percent) expressed their view that ‘democracy is preferable to any other kind of government’ (Afrobarometer 2022). This implies that democracy per se is not the problem, but rather that most Ghanaians believe that democracy is not working well for them.

Afrobarometer does not ask specific questions about moral issues, and it is not possible to identify from its findings how Ghanaians perceive the state of morality in the country. In addition, Afrobarometer data cannot indicate whether Ghanaians agree with the conclusions of the National Development Conference that moral decline is the key source of Ghana’s current development ills. What Afrobarometer does ask is questions pertaining to the quality of democracy. The responses enable an assessment of what Ghanaians believe is the chief source of the country’s democratic and developmental shortfalls. In response to Afrobarometer’s (2022) question ‘In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (1st response)’ the answers were management of the economy: 22.3 percent, unemployment: 18.9 percent, infrastructure/roads: 11.7 percent, water supply: 8.8 percent, and corruption: 5.8 percent. These responses indicate that Ghanaians see the four most important problems facing the country as development shortfalls for the government to resolve, with corruption the fifth most important first-response problem. Like other development shortfalls, fighting corruption is primarily seen as an issue for the government to address, highlighted by sustained public pressure on whoever is in power to ensure political commitment to combating it (Asomah 2023).

8 Conclusion

This discussion suggests several points for those seeking to understand links between religion, morality, and democracy in Ghana. First, links between corruption, values, and the role religion plays in people’s attitudes and lives can be assessed through in-depth research that takes Ghana’s specific cultural and

religious context into account. The paper is a preliminary effort to do that. Second, the potential contribution of religion in tackling corruption is limited, not least because in contemporary Ghanaian society values are subject to many non-religious influences. Third, despite the great majority of Ghanaians being followers of a religious faith, many are sceptical of their religious leaders, believing they are prone to corruption. Fourth, there is untapped potential for religious ethics and narratives to contribute to curbing corruption. However, this would only be the case if religion is not merely interpreted in terms of ritual practices but in terms of its values consistently lived out and translated into appropriate moral behaviour. To attain this, spiritual training and appropriate values should be infused from childhood, and then consistently reinforced throughout adult life.

The Church of Pentecost's organisation of Ghana's initial national development conference underlined growing calls for religion to be used in the fight against moral decadence and corruption on the assumption that Ghana's religious elite are more ethical and moral than other Ghanaians. However, this is a dubious assumption, not least because many of the more corrupt countries in the world, including Ghana according to Transparency International, also rank highly in terms of religiosity, and ordinary Ghanaians believe many religious leaders are corrupt, according to Afrobarometer data. Some Ghanaians may believe that there is a causal relationship between religion and corruption that involves some religious leaders. Religion may have some impact on attitudes toward corruption, but it may have only a limited impact on actual corrupt behaviour. This is because despite universal condemnation, Ghanaians widely view corruption as being so systemic that behaving in an incorrupt manner makes little sense.

Finally, there is the issue of the impact of the Church of Pentecost on Ghana's democracy. Saiya argues that when Christian nationalism is 'entrenched in national politics, the quality of democracy [is] substantially degraded' (2024, 103). He asserts that Christian nationalism 'prioritizes power and control over others', leading to support for political candidates who 'promise to protect or restore the hegemony of Christianity, regardless of these politicians' commitment to democratic norms and institutions' (Saiya 2024, 103). So far, increasingly close relations between the CoP and both major parties in Ghana have not led to any promises or policies to increase the hegemony of Christianity over other religious traditions in Ghana. Further, Saiya asserts that Christian nationalism disregards 'the principle of democratic equality', aiming to strengthen and enhance the national position of Christianity (Saiya 2024, 104). This is not the case in Ghana to date, although if the National Morality and Integrity Council is established and given power it could lead to increased

Christian hegemony at the cost of Ghana's other religious traditions and the small percentage of Ghanaians – around 1 percent – who are not followers of any religious tradition. Third, there is no evidence that in Ghana political Christianity threatens 'the cornerstone of democratic governance: the peaceful transition of power'. In other words, like most other Ghanaians Christians in Ghana are largely in favour of democracy and would not endorse an undemocratic takeover of power.

References

- Addy, Kpanie. N.d. 'The Rawlings revolutionary "summons" and Catholic responses: A preliminary survey'. Unpublished manuscript, University of Edinburgh.
- Afrobarometer. 2016. 'Africa's largest public-opinion survey is under threat, but here's what you can do about it'. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/articles/africas-largest-public-opinion-survey-under-threat-heres-what-you-can-do-about-it/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Afrobarometer. 2019. 'Summary of results. Afrobarometer Round 8 Survey in Ghana, 2019'. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Summary-of-results-Ghana-Afrobarometer-R9-21oct2022-1.pdf>.
- Afrobarometer. 2023. 'Summary of results. Afrobarometer Round 9 Survey in Ghana, 2022'. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/ghana/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Agyeman-Duah, Baffour. 2021. *General Acheampong. The Life and Times of Ghana's Head of State*. Accra: Digi Books.
- Anderson Jr., George. 2013. 'Religion and Morality in Ghana: A Reflection'. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 1.3, 162–170.
- Anderson Jr., George, and Hussein Inusah. 2023. 'Virtue Ethics as a Model for Addressing Moral Decline in Ghana'. *Noyam (E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences)* 4.3, 170–180.
- Annor, Kwasi Asante. 2023. 'Deepening the Call for Moral Vision and National Development: The Rwandan Model – Lessons for Ghana – Part One'. <https://thecophq.org/deepening-the-call-for-moral-vision-and-national-development-the-rwandan-model-lessons-for-ghana-part-one/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. 2014. "'God Bless our Homeland Ghana": Religion and Politics in a Post-Colonial African State'. In Cephias N. Omenyo and Eric B. Anum (eds.), *Trajectories of Religion in Africa. Essays in Honour of John S. Pobee*. Leiden: Brill, 165–183.
- Asante, Emmanuel. 2023. 'Message for Fathers' Day Celebration: To Be Celebrated or Not to Be Celebrated?' *The Chronicle*, 23 June. <https://thechronicle.com.gh/message-for-fathers-day-celebration-to-be-celebrated-or-not-to-be-celebrated/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

- Asomah, Joseph Yaw. 2023. 'Does democracy fuel corruption? Most Ghanaians don't think so'. <https://theconversation.com/does-democracy-fuel-corruption-most-ghanaians-dont-think-so-201789> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Assimeng, Max. 1995. *Salvation, Social Crisis and the Human Condition*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Assin North By-Election. 2023. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Assin-North-by-election-What-is-the-use-of-voting-for-someone-going-to-jail-Akufo-Addo-1792649>. (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Bediako, Kwame. 2005. 'Christian Witness in the Public Sphere: Some Lessons and Residual Challenges from the Recent Political History of Ghana'. In Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (eds.), *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 117–132.
- Bigg, Matthew Mboke. N.d. 'Faith puts Ghana at heart of global Christianity'. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-ghana-church-idUSKBN1670UP> (accessed 23 September 2022).
- Bjarnesen, Mariam. 2020. 'The Foot Soldiers of Accra'. *African Affairs* 119.475, 296–307.
- Camargo, Claudia Baez, and Tharcisse Gatwa. 2018. 'Informal Governance and Corruption – Transcending the Principal Agent and Collective Action Paradigms. Rwanda Country Report'. Basel: Basel Institute on Governance. https://baselgovernance.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/rwanda.informalgovernance.country_report.pdf (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Caprara, Gian Vittorio. 2022. 'Democracy as a Moral Challenge'. In Ashley Weinberg (ed.), *Psychology of Democracy. Of the People, By the People, For the People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 307–331.
- 'The church in Ghana said to have failed to build integrity, character'. 2022. Ghana News Agency. August 26. <https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2022/08/26/the-church-in-ghana-said-to-have-failed-to-build-integrity-character/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Church of Pentecost. 2019. *Vision 2023. Five-Year Vision Document for The Church of Pentecost Covering the Period 2018–2023. Theme: Possessing the Nations. (Equipping the Church to Transform every Sphere of Society with Values and Principles of the Kingdom of God)*. Accra: Church of Pentecost Ghana.
- 'The Church of Pentecost is a Steadfast Development Partner – Veep'. 2023. <https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/4/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- de Witte, Marlene. 2008. 'Spirit media: charismatics, traditionalists, and mediation practices in Ghana', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam.
- Ellis, Stephen, and Gerri Ter Haar. 2004. *Worlds of Power. Religious Thought and Political Power in Africa*. London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Freedom House. 2022. 'Rwanda'. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda> (accessed 16 August 2023).

- Freedom House. 2023. 'Freedom in the World. Ghana'. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ghana/freedom-world/2023> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Fretheim, Sara. 2011. 'K.A. Busia on ethnicity, religion and nationality'. <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/missionary-history-fretheim-busia-on-ethnicity-2011.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2023).
- Gifford, Paul. 2004. *Ghana's New Christianity. Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Gifford, Paul. 2015. *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. London: C. Hurst and Co.
- Gifford, Paul, and Trad Nogueira-Godsey. 2011. 'The Protestant Ethic and African Pentecostalism: A Case Study'. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 24.1, 5–22.
- Graham, Emmanuel, Ransford Gyampo, Pamphilious Fannu, and Eric Yobo. 2017. 'The Third Peaceful Transfer of Power and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana'. *Pan African Studies (Africology)* 10, 99–127.
- Grossman, Guy. 2015. 'Renewalist Christianity and the Political Saliency of LGBTs: Theory and Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa'. *The Journal of Politics* 77.2, 337–351.
- Grzymała-Busse, Anna M. 2015. *Nations under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gyekye, Kwame. 1996. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company.
- Hastings, Adrian. 1991. 'Review of John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1949–1966*, Accra, Asempa Publishers'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 21.1, 188–189.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 1988. *Rawlings and the Politics of Development Policy in Ghana, 1979–86*. Staffordshire Polytechnic, Stoke-on-Trent, UK, PhD.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 1996. *Religion and Politics in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 2022. 'Revolutionary populism and democracy in Ghana'. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 60: 503–526.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 2023. *Revolution and Democracy in Ghana: The Politics of Jerry John Rawlings*. London: Routledge.
- Heuser, Andreas. 2020. 'Megachurches, dominion theology and development'. In Jens Koehrsen and Andreas Heuser (eds.), *Does Religion Make a Difference? Religious NGOs in international Development Collaboration*. Baden-Baden: Nomos/PANO, 243–262.
- Kahiu, Magdalene. 2020. 'Ghana's Longest Serving President, Known for Calling Church Leadership to "speak up" Dies'. *AciaAfrica*. <https://www.aciafrica.org/amp/news/2336/ghanas-longest-serving-president-known-for-calling-church-leadership-to-speak-up-dies> (accessed 31 May 2023).
- Klutse, Felix Delah. 2022. 'The Church of Pentecost membership hits over 3.3 million'. *Modern Ghana*. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1155852/the-church-of-pentecost-membership-hits-over-33mi.html> (accessed 16 August 2023).

- McCauley, John F. 2013. 'Africa's new big man Rule? Pentecostalism and Patronage in Ghana'. *African Affairs* 112.466, 1–21.
- McCauley, John F. 2014. 'The Political Mobilization of Ethnicity and Religion in Africa'. *American Political Science Review* 108.4, 801–816.
- McClelland, Gwyneth, and Rachel Beatty Riedl. 2015. 'Individualism and Empowerment in Pentecostal Sermons: New Evidence from Nairobi, Kenya'. *African Affairs* 115.458, 119–144.
- Mohamed, Abdulai Kuyini. 2023. 'An Evaluation of the Quality of Democracy of Ghana'. *Democracy and Security*. Published online 7 June 2023. DOI: 10.1080/17419166.2023.2220140.
- National Intelligence Council. 2008. 'Democratization in Africa: What Progress toward Institutionalization?' Accra, Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 4–6 October 2007. https://fas.org/irp/nic/african_democ_2008.pdf (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Nsia-Peprah, Kofi. 2017. 'Flawed Democracy. The Bane of Ghana's Success in Curbing Corruption'. *ASPJ Africa & Francophonie*, 62–78. https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/ASPJ_French/journals_E/Volume-08_Issue-2/nsia-pepra_e.pdf (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Obadare, Ebenezer. 2018. *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*. London: Zed Books.
- Osei, Letitia. 2023. 'Clergy, chiefs, others call for establishment of National Moral and Integrity Council'. Citi Newsroom. <https://citinewsroom.com/2023/07/clergy-chiefs-others-call-for-establishment-of-national-moral-and-integrity-council/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- 'Parliament suspends July 26 sitting for National Development Conference'. 2023. The Ghana Report. <https://www.theghanareport.com/parliament-suspends-july-26-sitting-for-national-development-conference/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Pobee, John S. 1987. 'Religion and Politics in Ghana, 1972–1978: Some Case Studies from the Rule of General I.K. Acheampong'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17/1, 44–62.
- 'Public engagement and policy dialogue towards national development in Ghana'. N.d. Globethics. https://www.globethics.net/news/all/-/asset_publisher/mcgl/content/ghana-national-development-conference (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Quashigah, Kofi. 2015. 'Religion and the secular state in Ghana'. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Quasyi-Amakye, Joseph. 2015. 'Pentecostals and contemporary church-state relations in Ghana'. *Journal of Church and State* 57, 640–657.
- 'Religion Plays a Significant Role in Nation Building – Sheikh Shaibu Asserts'. 2023. <https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/5/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Saiya, Nilay. 2024. 'Christian Nationalism's Threat to Global Democracy'. *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 22.1, 102–107.

- Samuel. N.d. '9 Interesting Facts about Ghana Christianity'. African Christian. <https://africanchristian.info/ghana-christianity/> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Sarpong, Peter. 1974. *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Sasu, Doris Dakua. N.d. 'Religious affiliation of the population in Ghana in 2010 and 2021'. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172414/religious-affiliation-in-ghana/> (accessed 1 June 2023).
- Sperber, Elizabeth, and Erin Hern. 2018. 'Pentecostal Identity and Citizen Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa: New Evidence from Zambia'. *Politics and Religion* 11, 830–862.
- Transparency International. 2022. 'Corruption Perceptions Index'. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022> (accessed 16 August 2023).
- V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy). 2023. 'Democracy Report 2023. Defiance in the Face of Autocratization'. https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf (accessed 16 August 2023).
- Whitehead, Andrew L., and Samuel L. Perry. 2020. *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Appendix

Personal Interview Questions

- How would you characterise interfaith relations in Ghana today?
- How do you see relations between leading Christian churches and the government?
- Do you feel any religious groups in Ghana work against the national values as reflected in the 1992 constitution?
- What government policies could help develop further good relations between Christians and Muslims in Ghana?
- Overall, do you think that Ghana is an example of religious harmony in a region – West Africa – sometimes noted for growing religious disharmony?

Anonymised Personal Interviews

- A. Chairman of Muslim nongovernmental umbrella organisation, Accra, via Zoom, 10 May 2023.
- B. Executive director of Christian research institute, Accra, 17 April 2023.
- C. Director of research, nongovernmental peacekeeping training organisation, Accra, via Zoom, 25 July 2022.
- D. Scholar of African Pentecostalism, University of Ghana, Accra, 17 April 2023.
- E. Academic, theologian and priest, University of Ghana, Accra, via Zoom, 4 May 2023.
- F. Executive director of interfaith relations nongovernmental organisation, Accra, 21 April 2023.

- G. Civil society and democratisation activist, Accra, 25 April 2023.
- H. Political scientist, Abo Akademi University, Finland, Accra, 18 April 2023.
- I. Former leader of political party and legal scholar, Accra, via Zoom, 30 May 2023.
- J. Managing editor, online business and politics magazine, Accra, 25 April 2023.
- K. Political Scientist, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 1 November 2022.
- L. Former chief executive officer, nongovernmental organisation concerned with democratisation and democracy, Accra, 21 April 2023.
- M. Political scientist, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 1 November 2022.
- N. Scholar of religion, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, via Zoom, 12 May 2023.
- O. Research fellow, religious research institute, Accra, 24 April 2023.
- P. Sociologist, University of Ghana, Accra, via Zoom, 9 May 2023.
- Q. Executive director of national religious project, Accra, 26 April 2023.
- R. Research Fellow, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 1 November 2022.
- S. Chief executive officer, nongovernmental organisation concerned with democratisation and democracy, Accra, via Zoom, 30 May 2023.
- T. Legal scholar, University of Ghana, Accra, via Zoom, 6 May 2023.
- U. Former director of the Castle Information Bureau, Government of Ghana, Accra, 15 July 2022.
- V. Professor of anthropology, Dartmouth College, United States, via Zoom, 2 September 2022.
- W. Retired Catholic priest, Accra, 21 April 2023.

Notes

- 1 Afrobarometer uses the term 'born again' as a synonym for Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (2022). In this article 'born-again' is used synonymously with the term 'Pentecostal/Charismatic' churches.
- 2 This article focuses on the role of Christianity in Ghana in relation to democracy, with particular reference to the country's largest church, The Church of Pentecost. It does not consider the role of Islam or other non-Christian religions.
- 3 An anonymised list of interviewees who contributed to the research for this paper is included at the end of the paper. Interviews were semi-structured. A list of the interview questions appears in the appendix. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on interviewees' availability. The overall aim of the interviews was to shed light on different parts of the paper's argument, including how the relationship between religion and politics in Ghana today is understood by interviewees. Note that in Ghana it is possible to find almost every conceivable opinion. Interviewees were selected in the hope that they would be representative of majority views on the topic.

- 4 Grey literature is any information not produced by commercial publishers, including research reports, working papers, conference proceedings, theses, preprints, white papers, blogs, podcasts, social media posts, guidelines, policy documents and reports produced by government departments, academics, business, and industry. Such sources of information were often useful in helping find current information on emerging areas of concern, enabling the author to learn from a diverse range. Of course, this information is not peer reviewed, and its quality varies. As a result, the author sought to triangulate any information from grey sources with further insights from peer-reviewed material.
- 5 Christian denominations in Ghana include Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic, Lutheran, Seventh day Adventist, Baptist, and Pentecostal/Charismatic, referred to in this paper as born-again churches. Born-again churches demographically overshadow the historic mission churches, including Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches (<https://africanchristian.info/ghana-christianity/>).
- 6 Limann's brief time in office coincided with two important developments in the context of the growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Ghana: Nicholas Duncan-Williams founded the first Ghanaian Charismatic church, the Christian Action Faith Chapel International, and American evangelist Oral Roberts started broadcasts on Ghana Television (Heuser 2020).
- 7 Genesis 41: 39–41: Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you'. Jeremiah. 29: 4–7: So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt'. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper'.
- 8 The communique is reproduced in full at <https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/5/>. It is important to be clear how Pentecostalism and perceptions of declining morality in Ghana are connected. The CoP notes the failure of 'religious leaders' to improve morality; presumably this includes senior figures in the CoP. The argument of this paper is certainly not to allege that Pentecostal leaders, including those of the CoP, are generally actively corrupt. The author is unaware of any evidence that would suggest this.
- 9 Ghana's National Peace Council is an independent statutory national peace institution established by the 818th Act of Ghana's Parliament, named The National Peace Council Act, 2011. The core function of the Council is to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict and to build sustainable peace (<https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh/>).
- 10 This author emailed the CoP to gain further details but received no reply.
- 11 The author personally interviewed these correspondents regarding the relationship between religion and politics in Ghana during research visits in 2022–2023.
- 12 The mission of the Centre for Democratic Development is: 'To promote and deepen democratic consolidation, good governance and inclusive growth and development' (<https://cddgh.org/about-us/>). The Centre is widely respected in Ghana, as well as in Africa more generally and globally.
- 13 Close links between senior CoP figures and politicians of both main parties encouraged them to court CoP followers to compete for their votes. Partisan encouragement

- is sometimes blatant: In June 2023, two days before a crucial by-election in Assin North, one of 22 districts in the Central Region, President Akufo-Addo donated 150,000 cedis (15,000 USD) to the local CoP branch 'to support the construction of Pentecost University in Assin North' ('Assin North By-Election' 2023).
- 14 Professor Prempeh gave the author permission to use this quote on 9 August 2023, via WhatsApp.
- 15 An autocratizer is an incumbent who manages 'to bypass or weaken democratic institutional constraints such as an impartial administration, vertical and horizontal accountability, as well as free and open media. This applies both to an autocratizer's legal rise to power and their autocratizing behavior once in office' (<https://www.v-dem.net/our-work/research-programs/varieties-of-autocratization/>).
- 16 Bjarnesen notes party-based 'political vigilantes' are the cause of 'insecurity and violent riots in the name of political parties' (2020, 297).
- 17 'PENT TV is a limited liability company duly incorporated in Ghana under the Companies Act of 1963, Act 179 with the primary purpose of carrying out the business of digital television broadcasting. The media landscape is mostly secular so PENT TV hopes to carve a niche by propagating purely Christian content to the masses with a view of changing the status quo and positively affecting the mindsets of television viewers' (<https://penttvonline.com/>).
- 18 This is not to suggest that Annor is an authoritative voice in the Church of Pentecost. However, his article was published on the CoP website under the heading 'Church News' and no alternative views were published highlighting the lack of democracy in Rwanda compared to Ghana.