Introduction
ENGAGING RELIGION IN A HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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1. The Religion and Development Debate

Development that affects the human person, society and creation at large has been the concern of development theorists, international organizations, governments and religious bodies. Contemporary theorizing on development could be dated to after World War II (1948), when nations which have suffered economic losses because of the war were to be helped to resurrect from their woes[1]. According to Speckman, the introduction of "development aid" to such nations resulted in the "Dependency Theory"[2]. In response to this, the "Alternative Theory to Development" (ATD) «which focused on the power of the people and the transformation of socio-economic structures» was proposed[3]. Economic growth, translated into infrastructural development in the community, was at the centre of this theory. The slant towards provision of visible physical structures led to measuring development mainly in terms of asset acquisition; hence the "Asset-based Approach to Development" (AAD).

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[1] M. SPECKMAN, *Development, the Bible and the Role of the African Church*, in I. APAWO PHIRI – D. WERNER – C. KAUDA – K. OWINO (eds.), *Anthology of African Christianity*, Regnum Books International, Oxford 2016, 1085-1091. See also J. OGBONNAYA, *The Prospect of Humanising Development Discourse in Africa through Christian Anthropology*, "HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies" 72 (2016), 4, a3423, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v72i4.3423, 2-3.

[2] SPECKMAN, *Development*, 1086. See also P. EKINS, *A New World Order. Grassroots Movements for Global Change*, Routledge, New York, NY 1992; F.H. CARDASO, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, University of Califonia, Berkeley, CA 1979.

[3] SPECKMAN, *Development*, 1086. See also D.C. KORTEN, *Getting to the 21st Century. Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumaria Press, Hartford 1990.

However, in this initial phase, most development theorists either ignored religion or perceived it in negative terms[4]. Some even considered it as an obstacle to development because of the many conflicts around the globe that arise from religious intolerance or perpetrated by it[5]. Religious communities, however, did not remain silent. In various ways, they actively championed human progress and the dignity of the human person. For example, the encyclical letter, *Populorum Progressio* promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1967, addressed specifically to Roman Catholics, and also to the entire world, calls for integral development, with the human person at the centre[6]. In presenting the Christian understanding of development, the Pope calls attention to similar concerns addressed in previous documents such as: *Rerum Novarum* (1891) by Pope Leo XIII, On the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour; *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) by Pope Pius XI, On the Reconstruction of the Social Order, and *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) on the Church in the Modern World[7].

In recent years, the awareness of the indispensability of religion in development discourse has tilted the pendulum to include social, political, technological and religio-spiritual elements, with religion at the centre[8]. Some theorists, scholars and development agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN) have underlined the influence of religious ideas on people's choices in life, which ultimately leads to both individual and societal transformation and progress[9]. That eco-

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[4] Cf. K.A. VER BEEK, *Spirituality: A Development Taboo*, "Development in Practice" 10 (2000), 1, 31-43. Based on a content analysis of the articles published between 1982 and 1998 in three leading development studies journals, Ver Beek argued that religion constituted a "taboo" in the theory and practice of development. In fact, during the study-period, there was no single article which had the relationship between development and religion as the main theme.

[5] G. TER HAAR, *Religion and Development: Introducing a New Debate*, in EAD., *Religion and Development. Way of Transforming the World*, Hurt & Company, London 2011, 4-6. Some scholars of religion also hold similar views. See for example, J.N. KUDADJIE, *Does Religion Determine Morality in African Societies?*, in J.S. POBEE (ed.), *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, Brill, Leiden 1976, 60-70; P.L. BERGER, *Reflections on the Sociology of Religion Today*, "Sociology of Religion" 62 (2001), 4, 443-454.

[6] PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1967.

[7] Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2 April 2004).

[8] For a chronological bibliography of the published literature on the subject since the early to mid-2000s, cf. I. SWART – E. NELL, *Religion and Development: The Rise of a Bibliography*, "HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies" 72 (2016), 4, a3862, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3862.

[9] TER HAAR, *Introducing a New Debate*, 4-6; J. OGBONNAYA, *Religion and Sustainable Development in Africa: The Case of Nigeria*, e-publications @ Marquette, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 2012, 3-4 https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1231&context=theo_fac. See the interesting summary of the «tortuous history» of development and religion by K. MARSHALL, *Development and Faith Institutions. Gulfs and Bridges*, in TER HAAR (ed.), *Religion and Development*, 27-53 and the special issue of the journal "Development in

nomic growth is not the sole indicator of development, and that development must improve and value human life, has been affirmed in the 2001 report of the "United Nations Development Programme" (UNDP), when it defines human development as follows:

> Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means of enlarging people's choices[10].

It is in the light of the above that James D. Wolfensohn, the former president of the World Bank, called for a closer collaboration of the World Bank and other Development agencies with religious institutions and Faith Based Organizations (FBO) in the provision of sustainable[11] and integral development in his foreword to the book "Religion and Development. Ways of Transforming the World"[12]. Eight years down the line, what is the situation like? Are there new ways of understanding progress in a holistic perspective, which embrace the concrete religious/spiritual worldview of people? Any attempt to answer these questions demands a contextual analysis of the meaning of the two concepts, religion and development. Gerrie ter Haar underlines this when she writes:

> It is vital to take a closer and more critical look at the two major concepts […] This is necessary because unless we are prepared to look at these concepts from a fresh perspective, trying to set aside biases there will be no real change in relations of development and any new policies will be little more than technical adaptations[13].

Practice" 27 (2017) 5, on *Faith and Health in Development Contexts*. For the African context, see S. DE GRUCHY, *Of Agency, Asset and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities between Theology and Development*, in B. HADDAD (ed.), *Keeping Body and Soul Together: Reflection by Steve de Gruchy on Theology and Development*, Cluster Publication, Pietermaritzburg 2015, 66-86; SPECKMAN, *Development*, 1085-1091.

[10] UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001: Making New Technologies Work for Human Development*, UNDP, Oxford University Press, New York, NY – Oxford 2001, 9, http://hdr. undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/262/hdr_2001_en.pdf [http://www.webcitation.org/6zeTHW 7Nm].

[11] UN, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, October 1987, also known as the Brundtland Report, http://www.un-documents.net/ wced-ocf.htm [http://www.webcitation.org/6zeTVFqvp].

[12] J.D. WOLFENSOHN, *Foreword*, in TER HAAR, *Religion and Development,* xvii-xviii.

[13] EAD., *Introducing a New Debate*, 5.

While Africa has been the object of development discourse, it has rarely been the subject of the narrative. It is time that Africa tells her own story as a step towards being responsible of her own destiny. Therefore, an understanding of religion and development from an African, specifically Ghanaian, perspective is key for the discussions in this volume[14]. While we acknowledge the global debate on religion and development, which has resulted in numerous academic publications[15], we chose to engage the Ghanaian religious experience in the search for integral and sustainable development.

Religion in Ghana permeates every aspect of life[16]. It negotiates the well-being of the individual and the community at large, between the here-an-now and the here-after[17]. For this reason, religion and customs of the people form the most important and influential elements in the social life of Africans. Hence, development is not limited to material things, but spiritual treasures as well[18]; it entails a rediscovery of the dignity of the human person in relation to the Creator and the created world. According to the Ghanaian Philosopher, Kwame Gyekye, development concerns behavioural change and «must be perceived in terms of adequate responses to the entire existential conditions in which human beings function, conditions which encompass the economic, political, social, moral, cultural, intellectual and others»[19]. In the light of the above, it means that for development to be sustainable there is the need for a dialogical encounter between the people's worldview, their self-understanding and their environment in pursuit for an improved quality of life.

Before introducing our project, I deem it important to provide a sketch of the Ghanaian complex religious landscape for the sake of our readers who may not be conversant with it.

2. Ghana's Religious Landscape

The statistics of the 2010 Ghana housing census suggest that 94.8% of Ghanaians profess one religion or the other, with just few who do not belong to any religion. See the table below[20]:

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[14] For a discussion the concept 'development' from an African perspective, see K. GYEKYE, *Taking Development Seriously*, "Journal of Applied Philosophy" 11 (1994), 1, 45-56. Refer also to E. ANI, *Three Objections to Gyekye's Functionalist Conception of Development*, "African Studies Quarterly" 17 (2017), 1, 61-77; OGBONNAYA, *Humanising Development Discourse*.

[15] See for example, the collected essays in TER HAAR (ed.), *Religion and Development*.

[16] Cf. K. ASARE OPOKU, *West African Traditional Religion*, FEP International Private Limited, Awka 1978, 1-2.

[17] For a discussion on the secular view of development and religious view see TER HAAR, *Introducing a New Debate*, 19-20.

[18] SPECKMAN, *Development*, 1087.

[19] GYEKYE, *Taking Development Seriously*, 45.

[20] GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE, *2010 Population & Housing Census: Analytical Report*,

RELIGION	PERCENTAGE
Christianity	**71.2**
• Pentecostals	28.3
• Protestants	18.4
• Roman Catholics	13.1
• Other Christians	11.4
Islam	**17.6**
African Indigenous Religion	**5.2**
Others	**0.8**

Among the Christians, the membership percentage of the Historic Mission Churches (HMC)[21] has decreased drastically over the years, giving way to the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and Ministries[22]. One of the world leading scholars of the phenomenon, Asamoah-Gyadu, spoke about "pentecostaliza-

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http://statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/National_Analytical_Report.pdf. [http://www.webcitation.org/6zbBBtVBt].

[21] Historic Mission Churches is the current designation for Christian denominations founded by Western missionary bodies, which evangelized Ghana between the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century. They were previously known as "mainline churches", a terminology that with the impressive quantitative growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches is no more considered accurate. Cf. J.K. ASAMOAH-GYADU, *An Introduction into the Typology of African Christianity* in APAWO PHIRI – WERNER – KAUDA – OWINO (eds.) *Anthology of African Christianity*, 261-264.

[22] Pentecostals do not generally consist of a uniform or homogenous group. Therefore, the classification of Pentecostalism is quite challenging: cf. J. POBEE – G. OSITELU II, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*, World Council of Churches Publications, Geneva 1998. Some scholars avoid the issue of classification all together and refer to the various groupings as "Pentecostal type" movements: see, A. ANDERSON, *Diversity in the Definition of 'Pentecostal Charismatic' and its Ecumenical Implications*, "Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies" 19 (2002), 2, 40-55. However, C.N. OMENYO – A.O. ATIEMO, *Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Prophetic Churches in Ghana*, "Ghana Bulletin of Theology. New Series" 1 (2006), 55-68 proposes the following classification: (i) The independent churches originating in Ghana or from other African countries, otherwise called the African Initiated Churches (AICs); (ii) The Classical Pentecostal Movement, which began in North America at the beginning of the 20th century and appeared on the Ghanaian religious scene in the 1920s e.g. the Assemblies of God, The Church of Pentecost, Christ Apostolic Church etc. They teach a post-conversion experience of baptism with the Holy Spirit, with the initial evidence of speaking with tongues; (iii) Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic non-denominational fellowship, for example the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship and Women Aglow; (iv) Charismatic renewal groups in HMCs, e.g. Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and (v) the independent Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches/Ministries including Christian Action Faith Ministries International, International Central Gospel Church, Fountain Gate Chapel, etc.; (vi) Neo-prophetic churches that highlights strongly the role of the prophet-leader, charismata and an elevated regard for the African perception of life.

tion" of African Christianity, and states: «The explosion and growth of the Pentecostal movement is the single and most important development that has occurred within Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa since the turn of the twentieth century»[23].

It is important to note that even the HMCs are affected by the wave of "Pentecostal" spirituality[24]. Not only do we have in all HMCs movements/associations that incorporate "Pentecostal" elements in their worship, but also the style of leadership, preaching, etc. of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches is becoming the predominant "ecclesiastic style". Terminologies such as "born again" and "life in the Spirit"; insertion of informal "praise and worship" segment and glossolalia into the church liturgy; the use of "holy expletives" like shout of "amen" and "hallelujahs" in response to preaching; hand-lifting; spontaneous applauses are becoming common liturgical elements. To give an example, invitation to renewal-oriented programme meant to empower people in the Spirit, evangelistic/healing crusades, anointing services, harvest and tithes are now advertised on bill boards, bulletins and even on huge banners located in the sanctuary of majority of Parishes of the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana, as well as in the other HMCs[25]. Debates against and in favour of this development are an on-going exercise, but there is no doubt that «Pentecostalism at the moment represents the most cogent, powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal in Ghana»[26].

It is also noteworthy that while the HMCs have always paid attention to the integral development of the human person – they have been at the forefront

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[23] J.K. ASAMOAH-GYADU, *I Will Put My Breath in You, and You Will Come to Life': Charismatic Renewal in Ghanaian Mainline Churches and its Implications for African 'Diasporean' Christianity*, in A. ADOGAME – R. GERLOFF – K. HOCK (eds.), *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*, Continuum International, London 2008, 193. Omenyo emphasized the same concept: «Members of the various charismatic renewal groups are determined to remain in their 'impoverished' churches and to revitalize them with the introduction of Charismatic/Pentecostal spirituality», cf. C.N. OMENYO, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*, Boekcentrum Publishing House, Zoetermeer 2002, 7.

[24] Cf. OMENYO, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*. ASAMOAH-GYADU, *I Will Put My Breath in You*, 193.

[25] Referring to the Evangelic Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Asamoah-Gyadu comments: «This mode of advertising Christian program, inspired by the growing influence of Pentecostalism in Africa, would have been considered out of character for a historic mission denomination only a few years ago. With the gradual integration of charismatic renewal phenomenon into historic mission church life, a "charismaticization" of Christianity is currently underway in Africa», *ibid.*, 195.

[26] J.K. ASAMOAH-GYADU, *African Charismatics. Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*, Brill, Leiden 2005, 14. He continues, «I would argue that even the new lease of life being experienced by some of the older churches in Ghana is explicable in terms of their, albeit recent, tolerant and open attitude towards Pentecostal phenomena and renewal movements in their midst».

in the provision of formal education and medical care[27] – and advocacy for social justice, their counterparts, the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have been in the past extraneous to this process and have mainly concentrated on "winning souls". But in this last decade, Pentecostals have also begun founding schools and hospitals and have become active on the Ghanaian political landscape, as some of the contributions in this volume demonstrate[28].

Against this background – in a time when the concept of development changes from focusing on only economic issues (the economy and physical structures) to concentrate on the formation of the human person to care for God's creation – the question worth asking in the context of the vibrancy of religious manifestation in Ghana is: "How can religion reorient the Ghanaian towards the search for the common good and respect for the dignity of the human person"? It is this question that motivated the project, as the following pages describe.

3. Origin and Orientation of the Project

The present volume was conceived with the aim of inquiring into how religious ideas in the Ghanaian religious landscape have shaped and are still shaping development in Ghana, starting from the fact, as all the contributions demonstrate, that in Ghana religion is relevant to everyday living: it is understood as an essential component of personal and community identity.

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[27] Some important data to consider. According to the 2010 census, the Roman Catholic Church has 1,266 Kindergartens (KG), 2,020 Primary Schools (PS), 957 Junior High Schools (JHS), 61 Senior High Schools (SHS), 9 Colleges of Education, 11 Tertiary Institutions (3 University Colleges) and 58 Vocational/Technical Schools, representing 64% of Vocational Training of Church-based Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Country. Furthermore, the Catholic Health Unit runs 78 Clinics, 36 Hospitals, 10 Training facilities and 5 Specialized facilities (www.nchs.org.gh). The Presbyterian Church has more than 60 health facilities across the country making it the third largest provider of health services in Ghana. The PCG currently has two Universities, the Presbyterian University College Ghana, at Abetifi with satellite campuses at Asante Akyem Agogo, Tema, Kumasi, and Akropong Akuapem, the Akrofi-Christaller Institute at Akropong Akuapem, 5 Colleges of Education, 31 Senior High Schools, 714 Nursery and Kindergarten, 1,109 Primary Schools and 575 Junior High Schools (https://www.facebook.com/presbychurchghana). The Methodist Church, Ghana had established 719 KG, 1,017 PS and 483 JHS; 20 Second Cycle Public Schools, 22 Secondary/Vocational Institutions, 3 Colleges of Education and 1 University College. Two Hospitals, sited at Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo Region and Ankaasi in the Ashanti Region, bear the mark of the church (*Contribution of the Methodist Church to Education in* Ghana, November 15, 2010, https://www.modernghana.com/print/304531/1/contribution-of-the-methodist-church-to-education-.html [http://www.webcitation.org/6zVKPZD6U]).

[28] Cf. D. FREEMAN (ed.), *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches*, *NGOs*, *and Social Change in Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2012.

It originated out of a collaborative research workshop in 2015 between the Department for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana and the Faculty of Theology of the University of Basel in Switzerland, which later developed into a dialogue among scholars living and working in Ghana. It engages Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous Religions with the view of deepening and widening the sense of what it means to be human from the African or Ghanaian believers perspective.

The contributors to this volume are scholars from both public and private universities in Ghana, who come from diverse religious persuasions: Muslims and Christians from different Historical Mission Churches (Roman Catholic; Presbyterian; Methodist; Lutheran), Pentecostal (Church of Pentecost and Assembly of God) and Charismatic churches (Perez Chapel International; International Central Gospel Church and Action Chapel International). Their papers are not only situated in their areas of expertise but are also backed by their faith experiences.

We consider it important to state that this volume does not intend to present the contribution of the different religions/denominations to development, but rather to illustrate how the different religions (Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous Religions) impact integral development, and can be "utilized" as dialogue partners towards a sustainable development.

Considering the multi-disciplinary nature of our work, the contributors follow a variety of methodological approaches (phenomenological; exegetical; linguistic; historical, etc.). However, they have a common aim: to fill the gap between the academy and life, between *thinking about* Religions and *living* the Religious experience in everyday, ordinary life. Using the famous expression of a Latin American Theologian – theology finds its fulfilment not in mere "right thinking" (ortho-doxy) but in "right acting" (ortho-praxis)[29] – we want to give a voice to the cry of anger and the whisper of hope, to educate to be responsible and active protagonists in the painful birth of a new world. By means of a typical distinction of the scientific world, our research is not located in the field of "pure sciences" but in "applied sciences".

Furthermore, while we fully appreciate the methodological debate surrounding the study of religions[30], we opted for a "narrative theology"[31], a

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[29] See, S.B. BEVANS, *Model of Contextual Theology*, Faith and Cultures Series, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 1992, 65.

[30] For a summary, cf. M. STAUSBERG – S. ENGLER, *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion,* Routledge, Abingdon – New York, NY 2014.

[31] Cf. S. HAUERWAS – L.G. JONES (eds.), *Why Narrative? Reading in Narrative Theology*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1989; G.W. STROUP, *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, GA 1981; B. WACKNER, *Teologia Narrativa*, Queriniana, Brescia 1981; J. BROWN, *Is the Future of Biblical Theology Story-shaped?*, "Horizons in Biblical Theology" 37 (2015), 13-31; B. SALVETTI, *In principio era il racconto: verso*

theology committed to action and writing in such a way that an ordinary African may be able to locate him/herself within it. Therefore, the different contributors accepted the invitation to be "a story teller" – not in a naive sense – to develop a narrative theology that takes into consideration the ordinary people's struggles and aspirations[32]. Their articles intend to direct the attention of readers from the theories to the re-appreciation of the "small" – the local, the particular – which is often being covered up by grand narratives and totalising structures[33].

This is the task that Katongole entrusts to the African theology,

> to be able to write a theology not from the top, but from below, from the ordinary experience of the believer. Critically, the task of theology is to challenge the various metanarratives that claim validity simply because they come from the top, but which fail to take people's life histories seriously. These are the stories that, because they are so committed to a theory, a program or a system, fail and/or refuse to see the real, the concrete, that which resists reduction to, or is intentionally excluded by the system[34].

For this reason, we consider the volume an open text, an on-going dialogue among people with diverse religious experiences, who read and interpret reality from their own faith experience.

4. Mapping the Contributions

The volume offers a multi-religious and multidisciplinary collection of articles, characterized by a common aim: to explore how religious ideas affect development in all aspect of life – culture, education, health, sport, music, etc.

Exploring questions and issues that affect human life and dignity, the various contributors challenge their readers, especially politicians, economists, policy makers, social analysts as well as religious leaders to take seriously religious resources – religious ideas, religious practices, religious organizations and religious experiences – in the development debate and praxis[35].

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una teologia narrativa, EMI, Bologna 2004; C. THEOBALD, *I racconti di Dio. Pensare la Teologia Narrativa*, EDB, Bologna 2015.

[32] Cf. E. GRAVELING, *Marshalling the Powers: The Challenge of Everyday Religion for Development*, in B. BOMPANI – M. FRAHM-ARP (eds.), *Development and Politics from Below: Exploring Religious Spaces in the African State*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2010,197-217.

[33] E.M. KATONGOLE, *"African Renaissance" and the Challenge of Narrative Theology in Africa. Which Story/Whose Renaissance?* "Journal of Theology for Southern Africa" 102 (1998), 29-39. Cf. J.C. HEALEY – D. SYBERTZ, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi 1996.

[34] *Ibid.*, 32.

[35] TER HAAR, *Religion and Development*, 8.

The book is organized in three parts. The first part presents African Traditional cultures and religions as "partners" to development; in the second, attention is drawn to the role religions can play in moments of crisis; the last part examines the complex relationship between religious identity and development.

Part I: African Traditions and Cultures as Development Partners

In this section, four authors analyse how the cultural patrimony offered by diverse traditions of African people could be exploited as "partner" in the difficult journey towards sustainable development. The first article introduces the debate by offering a theoretical background. The three that follow illustrate how this "partnership" could be concretized in real life.

Lawrence Boakye begins by recalling the long debate that ensued concerning the possibility of an "African Philosophy" because of the absence of written sources. Following in the steps of the Gyekye, a renowned Ghanaian philosopher, Boakye re-affirms the epistemological value of oral tradition of African people founded on «reasoning, critical thinking, enquires, dialogues among wise people as one will identify in sage philosophy». Using the oral tradition of the Akan as a case study, the author analyses some proverbs and legends to demonstrate how oral traditions can be *sources* of African philosophy, as well as *contributors* to innovation, social change, and development in society. In fact, «the Akan oral sources inform, persuade, and entertain» becoming, therefore, a relevant tool of empowerment towards social change. The reason being that oral tradition establishes a collective representation of what is deemed good and inspiring for social change, to build, for example, better institutional frameworks, and didactic instruments able to make Africans proud of their cultural heritage and actively involved in shaping their future.

In the contribution that follows, **Vincent Assanful** analyses chieftaincy, one of the most important religio-political structures of Ghanaian society. It is an ancient institution that has been a pivot around which Ghanaians find their identity. It continues to enjoy the esteem and respect of the population and it is recognized by the Ghanaian Constitution as "parallel power" to the democratic elected leaders. In this way, "traditional" and "modern" authority coexist and are called to collaborate for the development of the nation. After an overview of the history of chieftaincy in the Ghanaian context, the author examines how a traditional chief can be an instrument in actualizing Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): «Promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institution at all level». Through interviews and direct observation, the author demonstrates how in the contemporary Ghanaian society, chiefs act as liaisons between their people and the central government to bring development to their traditional areas, abolish cultural practices that infringe on the rights of people and contribute to create a more inclusive and peaceful society where sustainable development can take place.

Philip Kwadwo Okyere starts his reflection arguing that it is inadequate to conceptualize development in pure socio-economic terms without paying attention to cultural issues present in the context. The author demonstrates how the acritical assumption of a «Western secular ideology of development» paradoxically has increased the poverty of a majority of Ghanaian citizens, creating a "dependence" mentality. Following Sommers, he argues that development should be defined in spiritual and cultural terms as well as economics. Against this backdrop, Okyere, employing Moffitt "Jesus model of holistic development", analyses how the contextualization of Jesus' identity among Akan speaking Christians can become a potential source for development. Using hymns of the Methodist Church of Ghana, he discusses four "titles" attributes to Jesus, on the background of the Akan concept of kingship. Looking at Jesus, "the One Who Mends", "Liberator", "King of Kings" and "Righteous Judge", Akan Christians can find a new paradigm and an attractive model of holistic development.

In the last article of the section, **George Ossom-Batsa** and **Felicity Apaah** analyse the adoption of Akan sacred lyrics by Christian Communities to re-tell biblical narratives and to incarnate them in their everyday life. The process was started at the beginning of the Methodist mission in Ampiah-Adjumako by Christian converts to contextualize their new-found faith in their traditional culture. Employing a literary critical and pragmatic approach, the authors analyse five popular lyrics, exploring their perlocutory effects on selected Christian communities. The study shows how performance and re-interpretation of lyrics enhance the sense of belongingness and empower the humanity of the people, thereby becoming assets for participatory and self-reliant modes of development.

Part II: Religions, Crises and Development

In part II, attention is drawn to the role religion can play in moments of crisis and conflicts as a factor of mitigation. The six articles that comprise this section present diverse "crises": Ebola pandemic; economic and ecologic crises; inter-religions and electoral violence. The authors discuss how theological principles, deduced from sacred texts, Bible and Qur'an, could be used as a resource to resolve or minimize some of the great problems facing humanity in the contemporary world.

The first article draws the attention of the readers to a major crisis which has affected West Africa in 2014/15: The Ebola pandemic. In a relatively short time span, 28.600 cases with 11.300 death were registered. Ghana was not affected, but it was considered by the World Health Organization one of the 18 "high risk Countries". Against this background, **Liv Adams** and **Nicoletta Gatti** investigate religious actors' roles in the Ebola preparedness in Ghana, as a manifestation of the social ministry (*diakonia*) of the Christian churches. Through the analysis of the documents issued by the World Health Organiza-

tion and the Government of Ghana, and interviews with key stakeholders, the authors analyse the space given to religious actors and the role that the different religions can (and want to) play in the prevention and dealing with a deadly pandemic. Insights from this experience suggest the importance of including religious actors in the development process, because of the relevance of religious worldview and ritual in the life of African people and the consequent unique position of religious leaders in society.

Mustapha Abdul-Hamid and **Mohammed F. Aminu Amadu** explore new ways in which Ghana's development agenda can incorporate Islamic economic and business models into the mainstream of Ghanaian economic activity in time of economic crisis. Starting from the shared conviction that the present world economic crisis is an "ethical" crisis, they argue that the implementation of Islamic principles can enhance economic discipline, promote profit and loss sharing, discourage excessive risks and maximize economic return, promoting an ethical economy. Furthermore, the innovation will provide relief for low income workers in the population, especially Muslims, who are unable to access loans from the traditional banks to finance their micro businesses.

Using Gen. 1:27 and Lev. 25, **Nicoletta Gatti** studies how the love for the Old Testament, evident in the Ghanaian religious landscape, can be transformed into a tool for holistic development, with special reference to the ecological challenges that the world at large, and Ghana in particular, is facing. Employing the look – listen – act approach, popularized by the theology of liberation, Gatti "looks" at the ecological crisis through the lens of the communiques of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference; and "listens" to the eco-sustainability project emerging from the narrative analysis of the biblical texts. Finally, the author proposes a "call to action" for Christian communities leaving in Ghana. Against the backdrop of the encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, she recommends reconsidering the concept of development in terms of human dignity, equality, solidarity and inclusiveness.

Ghana is considered a peaceful country for the absence of major conflicts. This success story is partially due to the capacity of religions to dialogue and to work together for the prevention and solution of many micro-conflicts, as the contribution by **Sylvia Owusu-Ansah** demonstrates. The author analyses how three religious organizations – the Interreligious Body, Interreligious Forum and Interfaith Dialogue programs – have contributed to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the Northern part of Ghana, over the years. Through interviews with different religious leaders, Owusu-Ansah establishes how direct knowledge of the religious "other" and activities aim at building relationship and trust among people belonging to different religions can create a network able to prevent or minimize conflicts. She concludes drawing attention to the fact that notwithstanding the perception that religious belongingness is a possible source of conflicts, people who belong to diverse religions can coexist peacefully, if a conscious effort is made and innovative structures are established.

The HMCs (Roman Catholic; Anglican; Presbyterian, Methodist; etc.) have always made their voices heard in any major political event of Ghana. **Fredrick Acheampong** and **Francis Benyah** discuss the contribution of a new Christian "voice", the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council's (GPCC), in the run up to the controversial 2012 Presidential elections. The authors analyse the intervention of GPCC in three critical moments: the "Peace Campaign Programs", before and during the acrimonious electoral campaign; the mediation process between the Electoral Commission and Political Parties, following the creation of new Constituencies; and the sensitisation of the citizens to respect the verdict of the Supreme Court ruling during the post-electoral dispute. They conclude that the successful interventions of the GPCC in the public space point to the plurality of Christian leadership voices which cannot be ignored in the political decision-making processes in Ghana.

In the final essay of the section, **Patrick Kwaku Ofori** examines the consequences of religious rituals in sports and the role of religion in establishing a successful "team". He further analyses how these positive effects can be transferred to the broader society to control conflict and maximise resource for sustainable development. He recognized that even if the role of religion appears ambiguous, because it can degenerate in superstitions and divisions, it influences issues such as moral education, religious tolerance, mutual respect, personal discipline and the shared vision of a team. The positive effect can be transferred in other ambits to avoid conflicts and maximise human resources.

Part III: Religious Identity and Development

The third part examines the complex relationship between religious identity and development.

The contribution of **Emmanuel K.E. Antwi** demonstrates how the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, as summarized in the Encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, can offer a criterion for evaluating the effective development of a Country and indicate possible paths towards sustainable development. With this lens, the author traces the long and chequered journey of Ghana, from the pre-colonial era to the present, in the optic of development, verifying how the diverse reforms, especially in education, have inspired the development of "every person" and the "whole person" (PP 14). The author concludes by presenting some challenges. Rampant corruption and religious fanatism are key factors that may block or delay the process of development of a Country. The orientation of PP 14 resonates in this context as an invitation to rethink the development process and re-orient it towards the formation of every person and the whole person.

Cosmas Ebo Sarbah focuses on one of the nodal moments accentuated in the preceding historical overview. It is about the 1961 Education Act, a post-independence document which reserved the responsibility of the provision,

management and supervision of education to the State. In the light of the protest organized in 2015 by Muslim students against religious practice in Public Mission Schools, Sarbah investigates how the application of the 1961 Education Act in first and second cycle mission schools in Ghana has brought with it apprehensions of infringement of rights to worship and the practice of religion. He concludes elaborating on how religious practices and principles adhered to by Public Mission Schools are means of eliminating religious ignorance as well as instilling discipline, conformity and uniformity – rather than being means of proselytising.

Rabiatu D. Ammah opens the reflection with a challenging title: «"Becoming Muslims" for Sustainable Development». Her thesis is that the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, the teaching of the Prophet, offer clear ethical principles to work out a pattern of sustainable development. Consequently, the anti-development or under-developed "label", often used to portray the Ghanaian Muslim community, derives from the inability of the community to live its identity. Ammah examines how some Muslim movements «in a quest to reconstruct their identity and accelerate their development» are fashioning new programmes to improve the life of Muslim in a holistic manner. She presents the history and programme of the Ghana Muslim Mission as a case study. The author analysed the contribution of "The Mission" in harnessing religious and other resources to the socio-economic, moral and spiritual upliftment of its members, with special reference to the formation of women, considered as «agents of change and custodians of culture».

Fatimatu N. Sulemanu continues the reflection, focusing on one important means of development: education. After defining the Islamic concept of education, Sulemanu examines two NGOs established by Muslim women: The Islamic Charity Centre for Women Orientation and the *Banatul-Sobr* (Daughters of Patience) Educational Centre and Library. Through interviews and personal observation, the author analyses their contribution to the promotion of education as a means of empowering women for socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Finally, Sulemanu explores the challenges (leadership; financial; etc.) that the two organizations need to address to maximise their impact in the formation and empowerment of women.

In the final contribution, **Joseph Quayesi-Amakye** examines the re-emergence of the prophetic phenomenon in the newer Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, which has provoked a lot of debate in the Ghanaian society. The author explains the historical root of the phenomenon and enumerates some of the unconventional methods utilized by contemporary Ghanaian prophets. He concludes by noting that though "prophetic" churches are enjoying much patronage, because of the "prosperity" they promise, their activities raise questions in the minds of Ghanaians about their effective contribution to the development of the society.