CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS IN GHANAIAN POLITICS:
SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INVESTMENTS IN DEMOCRACY

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFRC – Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AIC – African (Instituted, Initiated, Independent, Indigenous) Church
CCG – Christian Council of Ghana
CDD – Center for Democratic Development
CHAG – Christian Health Association of Ghana
CODEO Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CPP – Convention People’s Party
CUCG – Catholic University College of Ghana
EC – Electoral Commission
ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States
FBO – Faith-based Organization
GCBC – Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference
GNA – Ghana News Agency
GPCC – Ghana Pentecostal & Charismatic Council
HIPC – Highly Indebted Poor Country
IDEG – Institute for Democratic Governance
IEA – Institute of Economic Affairs
MP – Member of Parliament
MoH – Ministry of Health
NCS – National Catholic Secretariat
NRC – National Redemption Council
NDC – National Democratic Congress
NDI – National Democratic Institute
NLC – National Liberation Council
NOAID – Northern Ghana Aid
NPP – New Patriotic Party
NCCE – National Council on Civic Education
PNDC – Provisional National Defense Council
SPG – Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
SMC – Supreme Military Council
UGCC – United Gold Coast Convention
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
Unigov – union government
WiLDAF – Women in Law and Development in Africa
WVS – World Values Survey
INTRODUCTION

On January 10, 2012, the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI), an NGO advocate for democracy and civic participation, located in downtown Washington D.C. hosted an event, “Ghana’s 2012 Elections: Domestic Election Observation and Innovative Information Communication Technologies.” The discussion about Ghana’s successful 2008 and 2012 elections focused on the laudable application of parallel vote tabulation (PVT) coordinated by the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) with the assistance of NDI. Near the end, one of the NDI scholars on the panel made a remark about the accolades a Ghanaian political party had offered regarding CODEO’s reports: “True as the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” The room erupted in laughter, with the exception of Dr. Franklin Oduro, the Deputy Director of the Center for Democratic Development—Ghana (the Ghanaian guest of honor) and a few others. The U.S. audience found humor in what was likely offered as a sincere and noteworthy compliment in the Ghanaian context. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is widely accepted as the ultimate truth in Ghanaian society where close to 80 percent of the population professes Christianity, many in a very public and often political fashion.

This thesis examines the role of the Christian network in Ghanaian politics. In order to do so, the thesis first traces the historical and contemporary status of Christianity in Ghanaian politics and society. Christian institutions have set a precedent and established an infrastructure to act in an integral and dynamic relationship in Ghanaian society and the state from independence to the modern day. The contemporary analysis examines the input of Christian actors in the December 2012 elections. Highlighting ideologies of adaptation, resistance,

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revivalism, and unity in politics past, the thesis suggests that Christian actors build on a unique societal salience and non-partisan character to promote issue-based politics and peace in the political process—much needed enhancements to the Ghanaian democracy. The thesis particularly aims to analyze the relationship between the traditional and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in politics in Ghana. The divide between the two has been a rapid, ongoing, contentious transition in the Christian population. This thesis will highlight that increasingly plurality within Christianity may serve as a resource for Christian institutions’ political involvement. The growth of various denominations enhances their practical and symbolic incorporation of diverse peoples and viewpoints in a common goal of state stability.

Ghana serves as a particularly interesting case for the study of religion in politics because it is a model of democracy on the African continent and an intensely Christian country. The Ghanaian political system and Christian landscape have dramatically developed in recent decades and continue to do so. This thesis chooses a political moment—the December 2012 elections—to analyze that evolution. This introductory section provides an overview of Ghana’s democratic reputation which warrants its selection as a case study, as well as a brief taxonomy of the diverse Christian denominations which are integral to the analysis through the thesis. It explains the methodology adopted for the study and the organization of the paper.

**Ghana: An African Democratic Frontrunner**

Ghana was a frontrunner on the African continent when it became the first colonized state to gain its independence in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. For the next thirty-six years, the country experienced political and economic upheaval amidst military regimes and brief episodes of democratic rule. In 1993, the first democratic leaders of the Fourth Republic took office. Since then, the country has undergone multiple successful elections—1996, 2000,
2004, 2008, and most recently 2012. The two major parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have exchanged power, and peace has persisted without catastrophic unrest or violence. Ghana has an active civil society and involved electorate. In the Mo Ibrahim Index, an analysis of African political, economic, and social development, Ghana ranks 6th in safety and rule of law and 6th in participation and human rights on the continent.²

The international interest and enthusiasm surrounding the 2012 elections is indicative of Ghana’s position on the world stage. Foreign news agencies reported high expectations for the Ghanaian elections as December 7 approached. The BBC noted, “Since the end of decades of military rule in 1992, Ghana has won praise as a model democracy.”³ The Washington Post reiterated that fact, “The peaceful handovers have made the country something of a model for the continent.”⁴ The Independent intensified the message, “When Ghanaians go to the polls today, it will affect far more than the 24 million who live in the former British colony. It will determine whether the beacon of African democracy remains an example for the continent.”⁵ The December 2012 elections marked not only an important moment for Ghana’s democracy, but for countries worldwide that view Ghana as a model of political stability. The Washington Post article included a discussion with the Executive Director of the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi. After commenting on the tight competition between political parties, Gyimah-Boadi concluded, “We all have fears, but typical

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of us Ghanaians, we pray that they won’t happen.” That connection—between Ghana’s democratic example and its prominent religiosity—is the subject of this case study.

**The Players: Christian Actors in Ghana**

Approximately 80 percent of the Ghanaian population identifies as Christian while around 15 percent identify as Muslim. The remaining 5 percent are non-religious or of other traditions—Traditional African Religions, Hinduism, and others. Syncretistic combinations of traditional beliefs and Christianity and Islam are common. Particularly because of the missionary and colonial history on the coast, Christianity has been the predominant religion in the political and economic hub of the South. This study focuses on the role of Christian institutions because of their widespread representation, popularity, and pronounced involvement in Ghanaian society at large.

The diversity within Christianity illuminates Christian institutions’ role in society. The traditional, Western, mainline, missionary, historical churches (or some combination of those titles) include predominantly the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican sub-traditions. Christianity arrived in Ghana beginning in the 1400s as a European import. Missionary efforts intensified in the 1800s, and through Ghanaian conversions, the churches became increasingly indigenous. Nonetheless, they maintain a foreign-based foundation and network. The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference (GCBC) along with the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS) are the cooperative institutions

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through which the traditional Protestant and Catholic churches have historically, and
continuously, articulated their stance on social, political, and economic issues in Ghana.\textsuperscript{11}

Ghanaians have adapted Christianity to a spiritual conception more akin to traditional
African religious practices. Generally, these independent, indigenous churches can be grouped
under the terminology Pentecostalism. In this application, however, Pentecostalism is extremely
diverse. It is not defined by a specific set of churches, although there are Pentecostal churches,
nor by a corpus of doctrines, although there are trends in beliefs. As an expanding religious
movement consisting of churches, ministries, prayer groups, fellowships, and individual
prophets, its definition is inherently ambiguous. Fundamentally, it is a form of Christianity which
emphasizes the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, including, but not necessarily, speaking in tongues,
prophecy, exorcism, and healing.\textsuperscript{12}

Traditional Christian missionary work has been sometimes characterized in Ghana as
“White man’s answers for white man’s problems.” With the birth of African Initiated
(independent, instituted, or indigenous) Churches (AICs), Christianity assimilated to the African
context. Known in Ghana as the Sunsom Sorè (literally ‘spirit’ ‘worship’), the AICs introduced a
new emphasis on practical and physical spirituality beginning in the early 1900s and can be
classified as the first Pentecostal movement in the region. The growth of classical Pentecostal
Churches, including the Assemblies of God, Church of the Pentecost, and the Church of the
Foursquare Gospel, followed. The classical Pentecostal churches are related to the U.S.
Pentecostal growth of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Similarly to the traditional churches, the Classical
Pentecostals were born of Western-based missionary involvement and maintain international

\textsuperscript{12} Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, 10-14.
ties. A Ghanaian minister founded the Church of Pentecost which has a uniquely indigenous character amongst the classical Pentecostal churches.\textsuperscript{13}

The AICs and Classical Pentecostal churches gave way to an explosion of indigenously led neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries built on similar concepts of expressive spirituality and the centrality of the Holy Spirit. Since the 1970s, a resurgence of Christian enthusiasm developed through these churches, prayer groups, and fellowships. Their expansion is an open market of church growth and movement. In addition to independent churches, this surge of Pentecostalism exists in trans-denominational prayer groups and fellowships, and revivals within the traditional churches. Traditional churches have adopted charismatic elements in an effort to meet the spiritual needs of their adherents. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, for instance, is very active in Ghana.\textsuperscript{14}

Although reform within the traditional churches has been a vital response to the Charismatic critique, the contrast between the two has drawn away adherents from the traditional churches. As Pentecostal and Charismatic production has swept the media and parishioners migrated to the enthusiastic churches, tensions have risen. Gifford offers evidence of some defensive responses from the traditional churches on the ground: bumper stickers such as, “I am a Methodist: I love my Church” and “I am a Catholic, I will remain a Catholic, and I will die a Catholic.”\textsuperscript{15} The traditional churches have targeted their criticism over the concern that many of the new wave Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are born of false prophets, who, in the

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 19-26.
\textsuperscript{15}Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 39.
language of the 71st Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, “use the name of God to cheat
and rob innocent people.”

In their political and social involvement, the traditional churches have the advantage of a
historically entrenched and formalized institution—the precedent formed particularly in the
action of the CCG, GCBC, and NCS and their social service networks. The Pentecostal and
Charismatic emphasis on spiritual renewal has captured the ideological attention of Ghanaian
popular media, society, and the political elite, however. Observation of their diverse roles in
Ghanaian politics is necessary for analyzing the overall impact of Christian institutions and so it
will be distinguished through the historical and social status analysis (chapters one and two). The
argument in chapter three highlights their collaboration, rather than contrast, in promoting peace
and issue-based politics. The contrasts highlighted in the first two chapters make their
cooperation in the most recent election analyzed in the final chapter more important. The
ecumenism between these diverse and changing Christian denominations may be viewed as an
enhancement to the symbolic value of Christian affiliation as a uniting force in Ghanaian society.

Organization

Chapter one presents a secondary analysis of the roles of religious institutions through
Ghana’s political history. The analysis draws from factors presented in a diverse selection of the
existing literature on religion and politics in Ghana, with additional archival sources. The
political history of Ghana is divided into four eras: the Independence Era, Busia and the Second
Republic, Military Regimes and the Third Republic, and the Fourth Republic—the current
democratic constitution of the country. In this analysis, the complexity of Christian institutions’
evolution is discussed and the political development of Ghana introduced. A precedent of
traditional institutionalized adaptation and resistance, Pentecostal and Charismatic incorporation

16Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 192.
and renewal, and a broader discourse of Christian unity in relation to the state leads to the conclusion: Christian institutions have had a dynamic and integral relationship to politics.

Chapter two presents a discussion of Christian institutions’ social capital and associated status in society. The expansive network of Christian social services demonstrates the depth of Christian penetration in society in providing for physical health and education in addition to individual faith. Further, these social services form a point of explicit partnership with the state. Social capital as an asset of the Christian network is then explored in the authority of Christianity in society at large and the political sphere specifically. Christian language, symbolism, and venues are showcased as “cultural currency” given their symbolic value in popular and political communication. Christian institutions’ social legitimacy thus provides for their position in contributing to political discourse.

The third chapter focuses on the role of Christian institutions in the December 2012 elections. It begins with a theoretical introduction to democratic consolidation and peacebuilding. Partisan polarization and political violence are identified as contemporary threats to the Ghanaian democracy, particularly during an election period. Building upon their historical involvement (chapter one), their contemporary social authority (chapter two), and their non-partisan political neutrality, Christian institutions and leaders occupy a unique space from which to advocate for issue-based politics and peace surrounding the elections. Their role in peaceful discourse as well as peace-promoting non-religious organizations indicates their contribution to this cause. Their cultural authority, collaboration across sects, and shared values enable them to fulfill this role with respect to diverse social groups and regions in Ghana. The collaboration of traditional and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in this pursuit for peace serves as a strong model of cross-cutting unity.
Methodology

The methodology of this thesis is interdisciplinary. The research and analysis draw from secondary histories, primary archival sources, political and development theories, institution profiles, and contemporary media and policy reports. African Studies offers a number of themes through which to approach the study. The consideration of religion in relation to missionary influence, indigenous religions, colonialism, and democracy are among these. The fundamental frame is the necessity to question the stereotypes which first characterized the Western understanding of the continent and have historically predominated academic analyses. The distinction between the secular and the sacred is one such Western imposition which this thesis seeks to question in the African context of Ghana.¹⁷

The theoretical and historical background to this study draws from secondary sources, primarily the work of Ghanaian political scientists and historians. The analysis of contemporary programs, organizations, events, and leaders is based upon evidence gathered from Ghanaian news sources, policy reports, and non-governmental organizations’ publications. These reports are the primary accounts of current political occurrences in Ghana. This strategy for research is modeled on some of the secondary sources referenced in the historical background—eras in which the intersection of religion and politics in Ghana have been well studied. The Ghanaian Times, The Chronicle, the Christian Council of Ghana, and The Catholic Standard, and The Ghana News Agency were accessed via the Internet. The online content of these sources, along with other Ghanaian media, were surveyed regularly from September 2012 to December 2012.

Freedom House classifies the Ghanaian media as “Free”—its highest classification—in its international survey of the freedom of expression.\textsuperscript{18} This report is corroborated by other studies of the free media market in Ghana.\textsuperscript{19} *The Ghanaian Times* is a state-owned newspaper established by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s independence leader, initially as the printing house for his Convention People’s Party (CPP). Today, it exists under the Ministry of Information but strives to function according to the highest journalistic standards in order to compete with the multitude of free media production. *The Ghanaian Times* is produced daily and posts substantial content to the web. President Kwame Nkrumah established *The Ghana News Agency* (GNA) the day before Ghana’s official independence. It generates a printed edition and online content and serves primarily as a source for other Ghanaian news outlets. As such, the GNA offers a deposit of news which is ultimately dispersed through multiple news sources. *The Ghana News Agency* and *The Ghanaian Times* are both national in coverage and have local offices throughout the country.\textsuperscript{20} The breadth of their report, online accessibility, and their repute constituted the reasons for focusing on these news sources. *The Chronicle* is a prominent privately owned news source founded in 1990.\textsuperscript{21} It has less strict standards than the *The Ghanaian Times* and *Ghana News Agency*, but it offers a valuable counterbalance to the government-owned media.

This project took shape during a study abroad program in Ghana in Spring 2012. Classes taken at the University of Ghana, including *Politics and Civil Society in Ghana* and *Pentecostalism in Ghana*, were especially relevant. Special thanks are due to the Communication


and Advocacy office at Women in Law and Development in Africa - Ghana (WiLDAF).

WiLDAF systematically reviews the news sources which are the focus of this study in order to monitor and evaluate efforts to promote gender equity. Exposure and participation in this research in Accra shaped the way in which the news informs this study. The focus on institution profiles is an extrapolation of the approach of the Religion and Global Development Project at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, which analyzes faith-based social services worldwide.

Finally, I wish to thank Paa Kwasi Evans Sakyi-Boadu and Valerie Awoonor-Williams, my Ghanaian companions. They have contributed consistently over the last year to my quest for authenticity, curiosity, and enthusiasm in this study as well as my love for Ghana. The analysis, advice, and support of Professor Shobana Shankar, Assistant Professor of the Georgetown History Department, have been invaluable to the approach, content, and argument of this thesis and my undergraduate career at large. I must extend my thanks to my family, particularly my sister and editor Catherine, and friends for engaging in my rants and raves in the journey to finish this thesis.

Several caveats are in order. This thesis focuses on an institutional analysis of Christianity, rather than individual professions. Even so, “suggests” is likely the most frequently used verb. The role of religion in politics in Ghana cannot be comprehensively proven or conclusively analyzed. Nonetheless, this thesis aims to provide evidence of the historical and contemporary dynamism of the relationship between Christian institutions and Ghanaian politics, particularly in their current contributions to democratic stability. The objective is not to capture every aspect of that dynamism, but rather to offer sufficient reason that the aspects that are
presented—primarily their promotion of peace and issue-based politics—are suggestions worthy of consideration.
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIC EVOLUTION

In their 1949 publication Christianity and Political Development, the Christian Council of Ghana articulated their agenda for the role of the church in Gold Coast politics:

The church contains people of goodwill who hold different views on the affairs of their country and support different political, economic, and social programs. The church therefore cannot become identified with any party or programme. She does not condemn any party so long as its object is in accordance with Christian principles and the means employed to reach the end are honest and good.22

This objective was broad but bold—to hold political actors to Christian principles of honesty and goodness. But how would such principles be defined and when would the churches choose to intervene?

Christian institutions have influenced the development of Ghana’s nationhood and government. Christianity first touched the Gold Coast with the arrival of European traders in the 1400s and had made inroads in the local population by the 1700s. Missionaries came in droves to the Gold Coast in the 19th Century, and independence era Ghana’s population was majority Christian. This chapter focuses on the evolution of Christian institutions within politics in relationship to Ghana’s state regimes since independence. From Nkrumah’s independent Ghana to the transition to democracy in the Fourth Republic, Christian institutions have had a vital role in the political discourse of the country. This review focuses on Christian institutions’ adaptation, including resistance and later collaboration, to the state complicated by the increasing intervention of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in recent decades. This history foreshadows Christian institutions’ position in Ghanaian politics in the contemporary era.

The historical account is organized into four eras: Independence, the Second Republic, Military Regimes and the Third Republic, and the Fourth Republic. The Independence era details

Kwame Nkrumah’s exchanges with religion which set the foundation for the dynamic between
religions and the Ghanaian state. Tensions arose in relation to the infusion of traditional practices
into state ceremony, political parodies of Christianity, traditional churches’ affiliation with
former colonizers, and the state’s increasing incursions on political freedoms. Even so,
Christianity served as a symbol of unity for diverse peoples attempting to form a nation. During
the subsequent decades of political upheaval Christian institutions emerged as a powerful
network through which to protest oppression. Political and economic downturns paved the way
for a new wave of Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity, and shifting power structures
opened the door for their rise to political power, sometimes alongside illiberal leaders. The
contemporary Fourth Republic has brought in a continued expansion of the Christian population
and plurality. The Christian network has aligned with the state in supporting the democratic
system of the Fourth Republic. It continues to critique state inadequacies and add a spiritual
dimension to political discourse, but it takes a more collaborative approach in working to
improve civic participation and welfare.

This summary is not all-inclusive, but it discusses incidences in which Christianity has
been influential in Ghanaian politics since the birth of the state. It provides background to
Ghana’s political development. The role of Christian churches in political adaptation, resistance,
and renewal historically has endowed them with a contemporary voice in political discourse. The
journey to this position contextualizes the role of Christian institutions in politics today.

The Independence Era (1957-1966): Christian Collaboration and Tension

Christian ideology impacted the nationalism movement that precipitated Ghanaian
independence. Not only were many of the nationalist leaders the product of missionary
education, but they embraced Christian thought as an inspiration for revolution. Casley Hayford,
a member of the Legislative Council and a prominent nationalist leader once said, “Jesus Christ was the greatest non-conformist the world has seen. We want badly in West Africa the spirit of honest protest.”23 The Christian Council made a statement supporting the right of the Gold Coast to self-government, but focused its attention on advocating for a non-violent way of pursuing that right.24 Nonetheless, Christian rhetoric was an important part of the rallying call for independence and transitioned naturally into a rallying point for nationalism.

In 1954, a new constitution established an entirely African legislature and cabinet. Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP) took power in the first set of elections, and it was under Prime Minister Nkrumah’s leadership that the legislature presented their proposal for Gold Coast Independence in May 1956. After a general election and a CPP dominated legislature voted for independence, the British requirements had been met and a date for independence was set. Ghana was the first African colony to receive its independence on March 6, 1957.25

Collaborating with Christianity

Nkrumah’s political and religious ideology laid the foundation of the independent Ghanaian state. His visionary leadership in Ghana and as a founding father of Pan-Africanism remains an important legacy in African political and social thought. Nkrumah and the CPP government set out to industrialize and modernize Ghana through a socialistic model. He aimed to adopt Western cultural contributions to modernization, including elements of science and technology, while maintaining and purporting African traditional values. His characterization of

24 Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study, 137.
Christianity was a complex compromise between its long-term influence on Ghanaian identity and its foreign origins coupled with the colonial legacy. Nkrumah endorsed a pluralistic faith, employing traditional power structures and Christian imagery to unify and ignite the nation.\textsuperscript{26}

Nkrumah was a product of missionary schools, taught in a Catholic school, and even considered becoming a Jesuit priest at one point. He moved away from Roman Catholicism and institutionalized religion in favor of a more personal faith. As the country’s forerunning nationalist leader, he identified as a non-denominational Christian.\textsuperscript{27} A few of his writings describe religion as oppressive and advocate for secularism in the state, in line with Marxist ideology, but he ultimately endorsed socialism and religion—a partnership common within African socialism.\textsuperscript{28} Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois were influential on Nkrumah. Black nationalism was tightly tied to Christian tradition. Marcus Garvey particularly contextualized his liberation movement in the Christian faith and Nkrumah matched his style. Both men began their rallies with prayers and infused their slogans with Christian language.\textsuperscript{29}

The spirit of Christianity was common in much of Nkrumah’s language and the rhetoric of the nationalist movement. The statue of Nkrumah erected outside the Parliament building read, “See ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you” a parody of the Bible verse Matthew 6:3. It is an often-cited example of the religious undertones to his leadership.\textsuperscript{30}

Nkrumah’s followers known as the ‘Verandah Boys’ demonstrated the integration

\textsuperscript{29} Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 126.
of Christianity in the political birth of Ghana with their creed, an adaptation of the central Christian prayer, the “Lord’s Prayer”:

I believe in the Convention People’s Party, the opportune Savior of Ghana, and in Kwame Nkrumah its founder and leader, who is endowed with the Ghana Spirit, born a true Ghanaian for Ghana, suffering under victimisations, was vilified, threatened with deportation. He disentangled himself from the clutches of the UGCC and the same day he rose victorious with the Verandah Boys, ascended the political heights, and siteth at the supreme head of the CPP form when he shall demand full self-government for Ghana. I believe in freedom for all peoples, especially the New Ghana; the abolition of slavery; the liquidation of imperialism; the victorious end of our struggle, its glory and its pride, and the flourish [sic] of Ghana, for ever and ever.  

This use of Christian language, alongside many similar slogans, suggests that Christian imagery resonated as a compelling tool for political appeals to Ghanaians.

Christianity’s penetration into Ghanaian society made it instrumental not only in political rhetoric, but in the overall national unity project. Nkrumah and the CPP understood that the Christian network was the largest social institution cutting across the nation. As such, they recognized Christianity as a resource in their objective to unite an ethnically diverse new nation and independent continent. The Christian churches endorsed this collaboration. The ongoing cooperation and expansion of the Christian Council and collaboration with the Catholic contingent—the Ghana Catholic Bishop’s Conference and the National Catholic Secretariat—indicate the norm of unity already established between traditional churches. The 35th Synod of the Presbyterian Church conveyed their commitment to Nkrumah’s vision to a united Africa through Christian unity, “We wholeheartedly share your vision of a free and united Africa. Our Church has recently helped to form an All-African Conference of Churches through which all the

churches of Africa can get to know one another and can co-operate in many practical ways. We believe this is a real contribution to the attainment of African unity.”

*Tension with the Traditional Christian Churches*

Nkrumah and the CPP’s adaptation of Christian imagery and language was a point of conflict with the traditional Christian churches. Some Christian leaders viewed the parodies of Christian language as disrespectful. The chairman of the Christian Council, Bishop Reginald Rosevere, criticized the adaptation of Christian imagery applied to Nkrumah and the state in the ideology of the Young Pioneer Movement, a CPP program in 1962: “It seems that the movement confuses the work and example of a great man with divine acts which are unique in history.” Bishop Rosevere was subsequently criticized as an imperialist and neo-colonialist in state media and ultimately deported. Nkrumah did, however, grant him readmission to the country a few months after his forced departure.

Nkrumah further incensed the traditional churches in his deference to local power structures infused with mystical beliefs. He called on traditional chieftaincy structures to affirm the power of the independent state. He himself was stooled in two different towns as chief—Nzema and Wenchi. The former based on heritage and the latter as an honorary position. At independence, he looked to the leaders of his town to confer a name on him in the tradition of Sacred Rulers. Nkrumah was given the title Osagyefo, the redeemer or savior. He tapped into traditional structures, authority, and language to legitimize his rule.

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33 The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Cry Justice: A compilation of messages, addresses, resolutions, statements and communiqués issued by the Synod now General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to various Governments of Ghana*, (Accra: Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 2003), 31.
35 Ibid., 145-146.
36 Ibid., 40.
The incorporation of traditional power and rituals posed a problem to traditional Christian church teaching. The traditional churches were vocal about their concerns regarding these rituals. For instance, traditional rituals featured during the independence celebration in 1957 were controversial. Pouring of libations, a traditional ritual, was part of the festivities. The Christian Council criticized the event as anti-Christian and pagan. The African Initiated Churches served as an alternate Christian outlet accepting of the integration of traditional ritual and Christian beliefs, but their institutional involvement in politics was not clearly articulated.

Despite his visionary leadership in Ghana’s independence, Nkrumah’s regime became increasingly overbearing and undemocratic. In 1958, the government established the Preventive Detention Act to legalize the arrest and imprisonment of individuals who were viewed as a security threat for up to five years—and later ten years—without trial. The Act particularly targeted members of the opposition party, the National Liberation Movement. In July 1960, an amended constitution transformed Ghana’s national structure from a parliamentary system led by a prime minister to a republican design led by a strong president. The following month Nkrumah seized power of the publishing industry, ensuring the ability to edit newspapers before their release. In 1964, he went a step further with a constitutional referendum that transformed the government into a one-party state.

The restrictions imposed inspired the first instance of Christian resistance in the newly independent state. The Christian Council communicated their rejection of the Preventative Detention Act to Nkrumah directly. Nkrumah responded to the Council with biting criticism of the failure of the Council to address the party tension surrounding the election that was the impetus for the Act: “I think that if the Christian Council and the churches want the Preventive

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40 Ibid., 191-193.
Detention Act withdrawn, it should be their duty first of all to take positive steps to remove the causes which led to the passing of the Act. As long as they have not done so, my colleagues and I cannot see that you and your colleagues have any right at all, moral or otherwise, to intervene in this matter.”

The Christian Council sought to meet with Nkrumah to discuss their disagreements, but the proposal was rejected. Communication ended. The expatriate clergy of the mainline churches were targeted with denunciation and even deportation. Nkrumah had reason for concern regarding bitter political competition, but the Preventative Detention Act and his refusal of the Christian Council’s call for dialogue undercut the democratic process for dealing with the tension.

In consolidating the Ghanaian nation, Nkrumah was sensitive to any neo-colonial influence, particularly in light of Cold War tensions. Born of Western missionaries, the traditional churches maintained a foreign network. In the Cold War context, traditional churches were associated with outside forces largely aligned with anti-Communist and anti-Socialist Western power. This colored the relationship of the traditional churches and the state. The leadership of the traditional churches was predominantly non-Ghanaian at the time—Archbishop William Porter of the Roman Catholic Church (until 1960), Rev. G. Thackeray Eddy of the Methodist Church (until 1961), Rt. Rev. Richard R. Roseveare of the Anglican Church (until 1967). These foreign heads reinforced the perception of their foreign alignment.

The Catholic Bishop of Kumasi, a Dutchman named André van den Bronk, accused Nkrumah’s Young Pioneer Movement of sending Ghanaians to the East for training, referring to the Communist tendencies of the CPP, in a sermon. Bronk’s affiliation with a foreign-based

42 Addo, Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study, 141.
43 Ibid., 140-141.
44 Ibid., 123-127.
45 Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 55.
Church became the fuel of harsh criticism in response. *The Ghanaian Times*, a state-owned (and strongly state influenced at the time) paper, printed an editorial regarding the matter on December 20, 1961, which read: “He represents in its most classical form, the religious imperialism of days gone by and in him is manifest the neo-colonialist tricks which the imperialists have embarked upon…Bishop van den Bronk is a present day edition of the religious exploiter of the imperial days who came with the Bible in hand and a loaded pistol in the pocket.”46 Amidst Cold War tensions, some traditional Christian leaders devolved into critiques of Communism and Socialism, and Nkrumah’s regime undermined their religious authority in naming them neo-colonial actors in response.

*Political Upheaval*

On February 24, 1966, the Army and the police led a coup d’etat while Nkrumah was out of the country. The constitution was rescinded, and the administration, the CPP, and the National Assembly were dissolved. The National Liberation Council (NLC), as the new regime was named, characterized Nkrumah’s administration as oppressive and dictatorial, and cited the decaying economy as an indication of its poor leadership. The NLC maintained the judiciary and civil service employees and organized them to effectively run the government.47 The 37th Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana sent this message to the National Liberation Council: “We express our hearty thanks to the Almighty God for delivering this country from the shackles of dictatorship and oppression. We are grateful to the N.L.C for this great work of liberation that God has found fit and necessary to work through them.”48 The coup was a disheartening event in Ghana’s independence, and the Christian churches’ support for a military coup in this manner is complicated. It suggests how political interests warped Christian churches’ principles as well.

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46 Ibid., 54.

Civilian rule was restored in October 1969. Power was shared between a presidential commission and an elected parliament led by a prime minister. K.A. Busia served as the prime minister during this period and his Progress Party dominated the parliament. The Christian churches confirmed their gratitude for the restoration of civilian rule. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana addressed the newly elected President in the Second Republic, Edward Akufo-Addo, “We are thankful to God for the peaceful return to civilian rule which was marked by the inauguration of the Second Republic and more recently by your election to the office of President.” This reception could suggest either that the Presbyterian Church’s warm welcome to the NLC was because they saw it truthfully as a transitional regime to more democratic civilian rule, or rather that it merely adapted to accepting the government in power, whatever the source of its authority—republican transition or military coup.

Prime Minister Busia viewed Ghana’s Christian history similarly to Nkrumah. A devout Methodist and a sociologist, Busia encouraged adaptation of African Christianity from its European origins to further promote pan-African identity. An address delivered to the Assembly of the All African Conference of Churches in 1963 in Uganda captured his ideology. He described the European Christian missionaries as disruptive to traditional societies and family structures, but he perceived Christianity as having a unique unifying power—perhaps the unique unification which could serve as the foundation for the new Africa:

Christianity provides a unity of faith and of purpose, and one of its most convincing contributions to the unity of Africa, and indeed of the human race, is the bond of

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50 The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Cry Justice, 37.
51 Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 53.
fellowship with Christians, despite diversities of culture, colour or race, find wherever and whenever they meet in the name of Jesus Christ, the foundation on which the Church rests…Faith in unity in Christ implies faith in the power of Love to unite the world.\textsuperscript{53}

The Busia government came to an end as a consequence of an economic meltdown. Busia favored an open market, and international organizations, primarily the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, manipulated policymaking. Facing a severe debt crisis, the government was forced to implement a devaluation of the currency advised by international organizations which stimulated uncontrollable inflation.\textsuperscript{54} On January 13, 1972, the military seized power in a peaceful coup d’etat.\textsuperscript{55}


The subsequent four coups and around twenty years of military rule, with some democratic interludes, were a formative period for the role of Christian institutions in Ghanaian politics. The traditional churches became increasingly indigenous and important as the government digressed into repression. As such, the traditional Christian churches provided an outlet through which to counter government violations of freedom. This era marked the beginning of the rapid emergence of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The redemptive discourse of the coups resonated with the health and wealth Gospel of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. Military leaders’ call for the state to be “born again” echoed the spiritual renewal that Pentecostal and Charismatic ministers preached from the pulpit. This rapport brought Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders to the national stage, sometimes in relationship with repressive leaders. The health and wealth Gospel appealed to also appealed to suffering civilians

\textsuperscript{55} United States Department of State, “Ghana,” \url{http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/ghana/192343.htm}. 
as a refuge from political and economic turmoil, and the impact of the movement greatly increased during this era.  

Colonel, later General, I.K. Acheampong led the new military government established with the 1972 coup—The National Redemption Council (NRC). The NRC was composed of military officers, the head of the police, and a civilian representative. It was later rearranged as the Supreme Military Council (SMC) in 1975. Acheampong was raised Roman Catholic and attended Catholic schools, but his religious appeals as the leader of the Ghanaian government were influenced by independent Christian denominations. He was a member of the Nazirite Healing Church in Accra at the time of his own coup. A mystical church, it was seen as the necessary spiritual support behind Acheampong’s success. On January 13, 1972, Acheampong is reported to have said to an officer in the Ministry of Defense Headquarters, “With effect from today, I have taken over the administration of this country. I have support, both spiritually and in men.” Acheampong clearly identified with mystical workings in his own motivations and Ghana’s direction. Even the title he bestowed on his military government was indicative of this religious fervor—the National Redemption Council. Acheampong’s preference for the more mystical denominations and political and economic desperation for rebirth elevated Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The traditional churches emerged as critics of his repressive policies. While the era marked a trying time for the traditional churches, it set the stage for the institutionalization of their role as defenders of political justice.

The Christian character with which Acheampong analyzed Ghana’s fate and governance came to the fore in his Week of National Repentance from June 27 to July 3, 1977. General

Acheampong responded to critiques from university students by shutting down the three universities in the country, and in May 1977 the country broke into protest. Various professional associations led their own strikes in demonstration against the shutdowns and the ongoing injustices of the military regime. Amidst the unrest, General Acheampong declared that the political and economic challenges of the country were the direct result of the nation’s sinfulness and instituted an official Week of National Repentance to address these issues. In doing so, Acheampong laid claim to the position of moral arbiter for the nation and dissolved responsibility for the country’s challenges from the state. The reception of the Week of National Repentance was varied. Some individual historic churches used the time to preach for moral reform, but as a unit, the historical churches disapproved of the week. The Secretary General of the National Catholic Secretariat suggested that the call was outside the General’s jurisdiction on national television. Generally the week was viewed as a joke and the General’s religious authority further undercut. The concept appealed to the evangelical spirit, however, and some individual non-denominational preachers adopted the message.59

General Acheampong transitioned the Supreme Military Council into what he called “the union government” (Unigov) in 1978. Unigov eliminated the party structure in favor of a government committee composed of representatives from different sectors. Originally characterized as a route to democratic reform, Unigov translated into a government enforced unitary, undemocratic administration under Acheampong. Acheampong made use of various religious groups in establishing Unigov, particularly a coalition of Muslim leaders. Rev. Brother Charles Yeboah Korie was a prominent example of the mobilization of Christian leadership support for Unigov.60

59 Ibid., 50.
60 Ibid., 54.
Rev. Korie provides a nuanced case study for Acheampong’s engagement with Christian institutions. Korie’s church, F’Eden Church, bordered the Charismatic and traditional divide as a member of the Christian Council of Ghana and also the Pentecostal Association of Ghana. Rev. Korie emphasized indigenous Christianity as a foothold for African authenticity. Acheampong invited him to partake in a committee on a Charter of Redemption for the country when Bishop Peter Sarpong, Catholic Bishop of Kumasi, declined the invitation (a situation in which traditional church resistance transferred political positioning to a Charismatic leader). Rev. Korie promoted Unigov within his own parish as well as preaching on television. He once joined the CCG and GCBC members in a delegation to protest Unigov. The coalition aimed to criticize the government’s unjust oppression of dissent, use of propaganda, and general mismanagement of the country. When actually in the meeting, however, Rev. Korie turned on his companions criticizing them and championing Unigov once more. Rev. Dr. K.O. Thompson of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Blackson of the Church of Bethany and Presiding Director of the National Christian Ministers Union, Rev. Francis Walters of the African Religious Congress were among the independent Christian leaders who followed Rev. Korie’s lead in supporting General Acheampong’s Unigov from a religious perspective. Reminiscent of Nkrumah era challenges, supporters of Unigov alleged that the traditional churches were influenced by foreign powers to critique Unigov in order to constrain Ghana’s progress.

The Unigov years were filled with civilian protest instigated by enduring economic difficulties and rampant government corruption. In July 1978, Acheampong’s chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Frederick Akuffo, deposed him and assumed the leadership of the state under the SMC-2. Akuffo restored political parties and formed a Constitutional Assembly. The nation’s economic

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61 Ibid., 53-54.
62 Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 55.
problems and the administration’s corruption persisted, however. Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings
overturned Akuffo and the SMC-2 in a violent military coup. The military coalition formed the
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in June 1979.⁶³

*J.J. Rawlings and the Transition to Democracy*

The political oppression and the economic downturn which deepened in the 1980s
marked an increased involvement of Christian institutions in politics. Kwasi Yirenkyi conducted
an analysis of the social, political, and economic memoranda produced by the Christian Council
from 1941-1994. Of the sixty documented, forty were published in the 1980s and onwards.⁶⁴
Thus, the traditional churches developed an even more pronounced norm of presenting their
positions on social, political, and economic issues in the 1980s and forward than in the past.

The AFRC took on an aggressive and illiberal anti-corruption campaign. First,
Acheampong and Akuffo were executed along with other top military officials. Special Tribunals
secretly tried dozens of government and military personnel on charges of corruption, requiring
long prison sentences and confiscation of property. While some individual traditional Christian
leaders publicly supported the executions, the CCG and the NCS published an official statement
to the public condemning execution as evil and ineffective on July 1, 1979: “We therefore do
not subscribe to any killings because our Christian Faith teaches us…That the ultimate aim of
any national cleaning exercises should be the need to bring about a change of heart.”⁶⁵

The AFRC instituted a new constitution, and elections were held for a new President and
Parliament on September 24, 1979. The Third Republic assumed a three-branch Western-style
democracy. President Hilla Limann served as the first president of the Third Republic and the

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leader of the People’s National Party (PNP) which held a slim majority in the Parliament. He also served as the last Third Republic president. In the face of continued corruption, economic decline, and deepening inequality, J.J. Rawlings launched a second coup accompanied by soldiers to topple Limann’s administration on December 31, 1981.66

Rawlings and his colleagues formed the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The PNDC consisted of seven members chaired by Rawlings which assumed legislative and executive powers. The PNDC dismissed the 1979 constitution and enforced a unitary government. Although the judiciary was nominally maintained, the military government established Public Tribunals and government commissions to adjudicate an assortment of crimes. The PNDC put political and human rights to the side in favor of prioritizing socioeconomic development (which ultimately failed as poverty deepened). The brutality of the PNDC regime, the direct precedent of the current democratic system in Ghana, silenced civil society. Free speech was eliminated. The government was responsible for inexplicable murders, disappearances, arrests, and confiscation of property.67

Religious liberties were impacted as well.68 The Catholic Standard was banned for three years.69 Numerous churches were attacked and Christians who criticized the regime excesses were killed. The Religious Bodies Registration Law required that religious institutions register with the government and obtain a license to operate. The PNDC defended this law as a protection for the citizens against falsely identified religious groups. The establishment of the law evidently corresponded with the Christian community’s critique of the PNDC’s violations, however. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana were

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68 Ibid., 557-565.
69 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 23.
particularly vocal in their protest. They argued that the law undermined the freedom of religion and association.\textsuperscript{70}

Some Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders rose to power during this era. Rawlings turned to the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The opportunity for recognition was a draw to these newly developing churches.\textsuperscript{71} However, despite the affiliation of some individual Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders with Rawlings, this collaboration did not necessarily reflect the Pentecostal and Charismatic contingent as a whole. The Pentecostal and Charismatic movement is diverse and fluid, and so the alignment of individual leaders with repressive regimes did not negatively color the entire Pentecostal and Charismatic sect. Rather, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements expanded exponentially during this period as spiritual renewal appealed to the citizenry in difficult times as much as it did as instrumental rhetoric for Rawlings (and Acheampong). Regarding the traditional Churches, Kwasi Yirenkyi reaffirms the arguments of Pobee and Assimeng. He quotes the latter, a sociologist at the University of Ghana, “Leading Christians have been quite vocal in their assessment of the Rawlings regimes…the terror inherent in their regimes has been such that only established bodies such as the Christian Council, the Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Association of Professional Bodies, have been capable of collectively expressing condemnation of the regimes.”\textsuperscript{72} Political and economic upheaval created an opening for the health and wealth Gospel of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches to penetrate, while it provided the stage for the traditional Christian institutions to exercise their commitment and ability to resist.

Confronted with economic crisis in the early 80s, Rawlings curbed his socialist leanings in desperation for the financial support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

\textsuperscript{70} Oquaye, "Human Rights and the Transition to Democracy Under the PNDC in Ghana," 557-565.
\textsuperscript{71} Gifford, \textit{Ghana’s New Christianity}, 40.
\textsuperscript{72} Yirenkyi, "The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics," 335.
The Christian churches network was (and is) second only to the state in Ghana, and it emerged strongly when the rest of civil society was destroyed during the Rawlings era of military rule. In 1984, the PNDC formed a National Commission on Democracy to research and develop potential paths to democracy in Ghana. The Christian Council of Ghana did not receive an invitation to partake in the forum, but it compiled a document describing its perspectives—*Christian Council Response to Ghana’s Search for a New Democratic System*. In reality, the government intended to limit the debate to the proposals under control of the government. The CCG produced the document in defiance and sent it to the government.\(^3\)

The memorandum begins with a description of the CCG’s role in the state, “The Christian Council is aware that the Church in Ghana has a prophetic role to play, in witnessing to the truth in all matters affecting the welfare of our people, and a sacred responsibility to create a suitable climate for reconciliation.”\(^4\) It follows with demands that the PNDC rescind power to civilian rule after its ten years in power. The memorandum enumerates a number of requests including multiparty competition, free and privatized media, and the release of individuals imprisoned or held under political restraint, among others. It references its efforts in convening discussions regarding the people’s desires for the new republic as the source of the document. It draws its legitimacy for the statement from a “consensus” drawn from “throughout its constituencies.”\(^5\) This articulation of the CCG’s ideology demonstrates its transition from a historic role of resistance and adaptation to a contemporary role of collaboration in the pursuit of democracy. While it draws a hardline in demanding change from the PNDC, it commits primarily to supporting the citizenry, particularly in pursuing a peaceful transition and


\(^5\) Ibid., 13.
forgiveness of past ills.\textsuperscript{76} This strategy foreshadows the Christian social network described in chapter two as a source of legitimacy for the political role of promoting peace described in chapter three.

A Consultative Assembly of 258 members from diverse districts, business, and civic organizations was tasked with the process of developing a democratic constitution using PNDC resources. The PNDC put the draft to a national referendum on April 28, 1992 without revision. The Fourth Republic Constitution was accepted with over 90 percent national approval.\textsuperscript{77}

\textit{The Fourth Republic: Democratic Transitions and Spiritual Politics}

On July 23 and 24, 1991, the Christian Council held a conference called, “The Nation, the Church and Democracy.” The conference attracted 200 attendees from the fourteen CCG churches as well as Roman Catholic Church representatives, and members of the Ghana Pentecostal Council. The Christian conference attendees reaffirmed the churches’ commitment to promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation as the nation prepared to transition to democracy. The churches planned to advance this message through prayer as well as programs for civic education inside and outside of Church structures.\textsuperscript{78} The conference demonstrated the commitment of both the traditional and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches from the outset to collaborating in creating a receptive atmosphere for the fledgling democracy.

It is difficult to give a brief overview of how this commitment has played out in the Fourth Republic. The increasing diversity of Christian denominations and the expansion of the state bureaucracy complicate the dynamic. The religious influences in this most recent period have not been comprehensively studied. Gifford theorizes that the traditional churches focus less

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 13-17.
\textsuperscript{77} United States Department of State, “Ghana,” \url{http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/ghana/192343.htm}.
on direct political involvement in the defense of human rights and more on social development in light of democratic reform but persistent poverty respectively. The Pentecostal and Charismatic ideological influence, particularly in the wealth and health Gospel as it pertains to economic difficulties, has continued to play an increasingly important role in political rhetoric. 79 This section provides a summary of the first few democratic transitions as pinpoints of the evolving democracy. It highlights some important instances in which the Christian network demonstrated continued involvement in politics in the Fourth Republic. The second and third chapter will provide more detailed insight into the contemporary involvement of Christian institutions in the politics of the Fourth Republic.

Multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections were held in November and December 1992 respectively for the first time. The PNDC reestablished itself as the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The opposition ultimately boycotted the parliamentary elections due to claims of government rigging, which resulted in a Parliament dominated by the NDC with 181 of the 200 available seats. President Rawlings and the members of Parliament took office on January 7, 1993 under the Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana. The 1996 elections included multiple competitive parties. President Rawlings was re-elected with 57 percent of the vote. 80 Domestic and foreign international observers widely declared the 1996 elections and the subsequent elections of Ghana’s Fourth Republic—2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012—free and fair. 81

Rawlings selected John Atta Mills as the forbearer of the NDC for the 2000 contest. John Agyekum Kufour defeated Mills as the candidate of the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NPP also claimed a majority in the Parliament. Rawlings subsequently

79 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity.
80 J.J. Rawlings is an enigma of Ghanaian politics. Despite his legacy of political repression, he has maintained general popularity. He is memorialized for his role in the democratic transition.
delivered a speech to the armed forces denying his belief in democracy at the festivities memorializing the December 31 coup before Kufuor’s inauguration.  

The fact that Rawlings, a popular leader and the only “democratic” president the Fourth Republic had yet known, protested the validity of democracy at this critical transition point indicates the fragility of the new Republic.

President John Kufuor was an active member of the Catholic Church and recognized as such during his presidential term. Even so, he showed deference to Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders as well. In the second year of his term, he participated in a publicized prayer service for him and his administration at the International Central Gospel Church of Pastor Mensa Otabil, one of the most prominent neo-Pentecostal ministers. He also came into tension with some Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders, however. As part of his economic development policy, President Kufuor declared Ghana a “Heavily Indebted Poor Country” (HIPC) in 2002 in an effort to secure debt forgiveness from foreign donors and international organizations. Several Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers protested this labeling as a prophetic wording—in classifying Ghana as a HIPC, politicians were condemning Ghana to be an HIPC. They must rather muster faith in their wealth in order to be wealthy. This situation is indicative of the “spiritualizing” effect on politics the Pentecostal and Charismatic expansion has had in the Fourth Republic. Particularly in the application of the ‘health and wealth’ Gospel, Charismatic traditions present a spiritual, faith-based, reason and resolution for ongoing poverty.

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82 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 17-18.
84 Ibid., 111.
85 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 166.
The Charismatic conception of spiritual resolution to economic struggles was evident in the strategy applied to redeem Ghana Airways. On June 6, 2003 Ghana Airways, the national airline founded in 1958, held a prayer vigil as a last ditch effort to salvage the failing company. Organized by the management and staff, Ghana Airways brought in a renowned London-based evangelist Dr. Lawrence Tetteh to lead the celebration in a widely publicized event attended by government officials. Six months later, Ghana Airways called on His Eminence Peter Appiah Turkson, a Ghanaian Cardinal, to plead their case in renegotiating debt held by Alitalia. The solicitation was likely inspired not only by Cardinal Turkson’s Italian connections, but his religious graces. The situation was a widely publicized incident of state-endorsed reliance on spirituality as an economic resource.

President Kufuor was re-elected in 2004 with just over 52 percent of the vote. The 2008 presidential election required a run-off vote when none of the presidential candidates successfully secured over 50 percent. John Atta Mills, the NDC candidate, defeated the NPP’s Nana Akuffo Addo in the run-off election by a minimal margin—some 40,000 votes. While John Atta Mills was a professed Methodist, Rev. Dr. Charles Agyin Asare, pastor and founder of the World Miracle Church International—a Charismatic church, boasted of the prayers sessions he conducted weekly with Mills during his term as Vice-President.

In July 2012, President Mills died while in office. His vice president, John Dramani Mahama, was sworn into office immediately in keeping with the constitution. President Mahama took position as forbearer of the NDC in the December 2012 elections in which he defeated Nana Akuffo Addo by 3 percent. President John Dramani Mahama is from the Muslim North, but is a Christian himself. He was raised Presbyterian but reportedly accompanied his wife to the

86 Asamoah-Gyadu, ““Christ is the Answer“: What is the Question?” 93-117.
87 Ibid., 109.
Assemblies of God—the first Fourth Republic president to identify with a Pentecostal
denomination.  

Conclusion

From independence through the Second Republic, Military Regimes and the Third
Republic, and into the Fourth Republic which continues today, the Christian network has been
vocal in Ghanaian politics. Political leaders have used Christian sentiments to promote certain
ideologies—unity (Nkrumah and Busia) and renewal (Acheampong and Rawlings). The
traditional churches have a history of adaptation and resistance to the state, but in both cases,
articulation of their political perspectives has been pronounced. Pentecostal and Charismatic
churches teach an ideology of spiritual rebirth which has been applied to political and economic
renewal—sometimes by illiberal leaders, but also in growing popularity amongst the electorate.
The historically prominent positioning of the Christian institutions in politics has provided the
foundation for a continued role in contemporary Ghanaian politics.

89 Thomas Fosu, “Mahama begs Presby minister,” The Daily Guide, September 17, 2012,
CHAPTER TWO: CONTEMPORARY STATUS

In 1997, the Christian Council of Ghana convened a conference under the theme, “The Role of the Church Towards Ghana’s Development.” The Open Assembly was attended by an array of Christian denominations from the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference to the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Council of Independent Churches, and the Council of Charismatic Churches, among others. In his presentation on “The Church in Collaboration with the Civil Society for Development,” John S. Pobee of the World Council of Churches reflected on the Christian churches’ approach to political and social development with these words, “We do not do development for the people; we do it with the people. We act together, we think together, we act together. Churches together work at the development issues and with others.” Pobee’s analysis points out the unique approach of Christian institutions in society: partnership. Christian institutions generate social capital through this partnership and so have accumulate social status in contemporary Ghana.

This chapter offers evidence of the generation and accumulation of social capital with respect to Christian institutions in contemporary Ghana. It commences with a theoretical overview of civil society, social capital, and religious actors’ role in civil society as a framework for the subsequent discussion of the Ghanaian case. From this framework, the paper proceeds to discuss the active role of Church institutions in their provision of social services, particularly in health and education. These services forms an expansive network through which Ghanaians negotiate their relationship with institutions and each other—civil society. In providing basic services, the churches form a fundamental partnership with the population in meeting individual needs, and the state in helping it to meet its responsibilities to the electorate. This relationship is

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both a codified partnership between churches and the government and an extension of the churches’ contributions to the citizenry in terms of their spiritual, mental, and physical health. Following the discussion of social services, the chapter provides a profile of the churches’ accumulation of social capital as shown in the respect of electorate and in the political sphere. This discussion reinforces that Christian institutions, affiliation, and values act as cultural currency and so indicate the authority of Christian actors. Individual professions of faith cannot be proven nor is it the objective of this study to attempt to do so. Rather, Christian actors’ overall importance in society can be extrapolated from the social and political positions that they fulfill. Together these attributes—social services and authority—of Christianity in “secular” domains constitute the dynamic integration of Christian institutions in Ghanaian society. This contemporary status forms an important premise for the assessment of the political character of these Christian institutions’ set forth in the subsequent chapter.

**Civil Society, Social Capital, and Religious Actors**

Gyimah-Boadi considers civil society the route to public participation, including policy discussions, political moderation, consensus-building, and the provision of basic services. It is the conduit through which civilians can engage the state and viewed as a fundamental step to democratic consolidation. Religious actors’ roles in civil society have often been overlooked. Hollenbach points out the false dichotomy between religion and politics produced from the perspective of the Western liberal secular state. He argues that the two have been historically integral to each other through the influence of individual faith as well as the distinguishable roles which religious institutions have played and continue to play in building community, solidarity,

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91 Civil society is vague term used in diverse capacities. The intention is to encapsulate the bodies outside the government which provide for the institutional representation and relationship of its citizens—a vague realm in reality. It is used here to relate this study to other theoretical conversations which employ the term.

and civic engagement—religious institutions as civil society actors—even in the Western context.\(^{93}\) Under the widely accepted “Secularization Theory” religion was expected to become increasingly irrelevant in the modern state and thus the role of religion in civil society was considered irrelevant. Clarke attributes the recent consideration of religion to the growth of civil society in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which have broadly defied the Western-focused theory of secularization, among others reasons.\(^{94}\) He defines faith-based organizations (FBOs) as development actors in that they are “involved in (1) public policy debates and associated political contests concerned with national and international development; (2) social and political processes that impact positively or negatively on the poor; and (3) direct efforts to support, represent or engage with the poor.”\(^{95}\) This typology is directed toward a developing context, thus the emphasis on engaging the poor, but it can be extended to civic engagement as a whole. The third chapter focuses on Christian institutions in Ghana with regard to the first action in view of the December 2012 elections, and this chapter examines their role with respect to the second and the third in social services and broader social authority.

Civil society may be best defined its product: social capital. Robert Putnam connected the concepts in his seminal work on American civil society, *Bowling Alone*. He defines social capital as the product of symbiotic networks and norms in society: “By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital—tools and training that enhance individual productivity—


"social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as the networks through which individuals garner power:

…the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

These terms resonate with the strata of social involvement of Christian institutions in Ghana. Putnam’s view of social capital frames the churches’ social service provision in their generation of “social trust” through the health and education systems. Bourdieu’s concept of social capital resonates with the churches’ social status. Christian institutions’ social “credentials” are evident in the respect of the electorate and within the political sphere.

According to Freedom House, religious organizations are some of the most active of Ghana’s civil society organizations. The Center for Democratic Development—Ghana (CDD-Ghana) reports that religious institutions attract the greatest number of participants across regions, foster deep social roots, and have a unique independence from the government through which to resist and advocate for change. The first part of this chapter analyzes the role of Christian institutions in making active contributions to society, the state, and citizenship through social services networks. The second provides some evidence of the social capital attributed to the Christian network amongst the citizenry and within the political sphere. Christian

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institutions’ social projects and penetration demonstrate their political importance, which was crucial in the 2012 election analyzed in chapter three.

**Christian Civil Society Actors: Social Services**

Even marked by its recent escalation to middle-income status, Ghana still faces many developmental challenges.\(^9^9\) It ranks 135 out of 187 on UNDP’s 2011 Human Development Index.\(^1^0^0\) According to the Mo Ibrahim Index, Ghana scores sixth on the continent for the strength of the rule of the law as previously referenced, but twelfth and nineteenth with respect to education and health respectively.\(^1^0^1\) Christian networks supplement the state provision of social services.

As the Ghanaian democratic infrastructure consolidates, concern remains that ultimately the state must provide adequate human services in order for citizens to continue to support democracy.\(^1^0^2\) Thus, human development needs are an integral part of democratic consolidation. Rev. Dr. Charles Gyang-Duah, the Synod Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, delivered the keynote address at the “Workshop on Intergroup Tolerance Towards Building Constitutionalism in Ghana” on July 14, 2000. He began his speech with a discussion of the economic difficulties the country was facing (and continues to face, though to a lesser degree) which captures the relationship of economic struggles to state stability and peace:

> Poverty has become a real problem in our nation. Many of our citizens can barely make ends meet. Some have become helpless, alienated and disenchanted because they have nowhere to turn to. Since “a hungry man is an angry man,” such person, if driven to desperation, can be a source of serious disruptive unrest.\(^1^0^3\)

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\(^1^0^3\) The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Cry Justice*, 165.
Thus, the churches view their engagement in social services as a broader commitment to state and social stability.

Social service provision is an aspect of the Christian contribution to society that showcases the contrast between the traditional and Pentecostal/Charismatic structures. Traditional social services are long established. Gifford calls the Catholic influence an “incalculable,” example. The Catholic Church benefits from its historical establishment in Ghana and international network of social services. Diocesan efforts converge with services provided by Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. social arm of the Catholic Church which benefits from USAID and other American donors. Catholic Relief Services was established in Ghana in 1958 and employs almost an entirely Ghanaian staff (60 of 63 employees). It partners with the Ghana Health Service and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, along with the National Catholic Secretariat and Diocese. Its programs include: agriculture, disaster response, health, HIV and AIDS, microfinance, peacebuilding, and water and sanitation initiatives.\(^{104}\) While Pentecostal and Charismatic churches often initiate independent service projects, their contributions are not as institutionalized and documented as the networks formed through the traditional churches.\(^{105}\) Catholic Relief Services supports an array of services, but the health and education infrastructures are two of the most significant of the Christian institutions’ contributions to social services more widely.

*Health*

Christian health initiatives date back to missionary times. As missionaries struggled to cope with the West African climate, hospitals became a necessary and strategic part of their


position in the Gold Coast. This legacy continues today as Christian institutions contribute a significant part of the healthcare in Ghana. The Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) acts as a non-governmental organization in coordinating the health initiatives of the churches which fall under the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and the Ghana Pentecostal Council. While it does not encompass every Christian health institution, it is inclusive of all sectors of Christian providers. As the most institutionalized organization of Christian health services in the country, it is a useful point for departure in analyzing these services. CHAG demonstrates: the capacity of Christian services, both in terms of percentage of health coverage provided through CHAG and the regional and religious diversity of their services; the divide between the traditional and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in this sector; and the explicit reliance of the state on Christian services. Perhaps the most important impact of CHAG is the fundamental impact the provision of health services has on individuals. Public health is a key ingredient in the construction of citizenship, the nation, and a decent human life.

CHAG reportedly provides over 42% of the nation’s health services. It includes 182 institutions—hospitals, primary health providers, and health education centers. It is deliberately geared toward compensating for the most severe shortcomings of the state health structures in providing to rural areas. It is thus positioned to have a dramatic impact on Ghana’s most underserved citizens. CHAG is considered a notable model of state and private collaboration for the provision of social services in the development field at large. Quentin Wodon, World Bank Human Development Network Advisor who has been involved in the Bank’s effort to consider

faith-inspired contributions to development reports: “CHAG is now recognized not only for the services that its member clinics and hospitals provide, but also for its broader expertise. This is a very good example of fruitful collaboration.”

The composition of CHAG is reflective of the traditional and Pentecostal/Charismatic divide in institutionalized social services. Of the 152 of the Christian Health Associations’ institutions documented in 2005, the Catholic Church is responsible for 78 and the Presbyterian Church is the second largest provider with 21 institutions. The Evangelical Presbyterian, Anglican, and Methodist churches are the next three largest contributors. Together the mainline churches compromise the top five most significant contributors to CHAG with a total of 78 percent of the member institutions between them. The association includes various classical Pentecostal churches, African Initiated Churches, and Charismatic churches—including the Church of Pentecost, the Assemblies of God, the AME Zion Mission, and the Global Evangelical Church of Ghana, but their contributions are miniscule in comparison with the institutional presence of the traditional churches. The remaining 22 percent of the institutions are split up between eleven other denominations.

CHAG is a prime example of formalized state investment in Christian institutions. The Christian Health Association of Ghana began in 1967 with twenty-five health institutions. At the start, Western missionaries were the primary funders and leading administrators in Christian health services which formed the organization, but Western church donations decreased as Ghanaians increasingly took over the hospitals. The 2002 finances of CHAG are reported on their website and suggest that donations compromise only 5 percent of the funding while user


fees provide 63 percent and government subventions contribute the remaining 32 percent. In addition, the government provides medical professionals to some CHAG facilities and has contributed funding from donor-pooled funds, though in lesser proportions than donor-pooled funding allocated to government health institutions. CHAG and the Ministry of Health (MoH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing to continued collaboration in 2003, with an addendum attached in 2006.111

The CHAG-MoH Memorandum of Understanding describes the government’s effort to support and rely on privately provided services to enhance basic services. The agreement includes the condition that CHAG should provide services in accordance with MoH standards, regardless of religious affiliation but in accordance with Christian ethics and the principles of the church groups involved. The MoH agreed in the Memorandum to provide training and financial support to CHAG institutions within their means to enable them to execute their service potential. Further, CHAG representatives are guaranteed a place in MoH conferences, seminars, and policy discussions. The MoH offers CHAG a voice in the design of such policies unless the guidelines conflict with the moral and religious identity of CHAG.112 In short, the Memorandum seeks to standardize the health services offered by CHAG, as well as to extend government services more efficiently, given limited resources, through a formalized public-private partnership.

Education

The contemporary education infrastructure in Ghana draws heavily from the Christian mission school precedent. Mission schools were the primary missionary strategy for expansion,

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111 Ibid.
and the first introduction of formal Western-styled education to Ghana. They began in the form of schools in European trading castles on the coast. Schools were originated with the Portuguese as early as the 1400s, but primarily served mixed race children at the time. In the 1700s, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel began to establish schools. The Basel, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican missions followed suit in the 1800s.\(^{113}\)

The Christian educational partnership with the state began with the introduction of the Education Ordinance of 1887. In this ordinance, the state articulated a formal partnership with the mission schools. The state offered aid to church schools if they met basic educational standards.\(^{114}\) Max Assimeng discusses the collaboration between mission schools and colonial structures in implementing education as a status determinant. Formal Western education took root in Ghana when the colonial administration favored educated Ghanaians in civil servant appointments.\(^{115}\) The independence era elite determined by the colonial government were largely the products of missionary education.\(^{116}\)

The traditional churches continue to provide a substantial portion of the education infrastructure in Ghana. It is difficult to enumerate as the accounting of schools is an issue across secular and faith-based institutions in Ghana. In addition, statistics provided by the Ghana Educational Service differentiate primarily between public and private schools. Religious schools were integrated to the public infrastructure in the 1970s and so many church schools have been classified within the government structure of public schools. This fact alone is


\(^{114}\) Pobee, “Church and the State in Ghana 1949-1966,” 123.

\(^{115}\) Max Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana*, 123.

indicative of the impact that Christian educational services play in partnership with the state, but it makes statistics quantifying that role difficult to procure.\textsuperscript{117}

The World Council of Churches has catalogued some of the educational achievements of the traditional churches, however. The Methodist Church is noted for providing two of the most esteemed secondary schools in West Africa, a school for the visually impaired, and one of the top education schools in the country, Wesley College.\textsuperscript{118} Wesley College recently celebrated its 90\textsuperscript{th} anniversary and boasts amongst its alumni former President K.A. Busia.\textsuperscript{119} The World Council of Churches reports that the Presbyterian Church supports 1,000 primary schools and another 430 junior and secondary schools, six vocational institutes, five training colleges, a university college, and a research center.\textsuperscript{120} The Evangelical Presbyterian Church provides an additional 196 nursery schools, 341 primary schools, 89 junior schools, 5 senior schools, and 2 teacher training colleges.\textsuperscript{121} Applicants overwhelm the resources of state universities in Ghana and private Christian colleges are becoming an increasingly popular alternative.\textsuperscript{122} While the government oversees five state universities, church universities are expanding rapidly: the Catholic University College of Ghana, Central University College, Christ Apostolic University College, Christian Service University College, Methodist University College, Pentecost University College, Presbyterian University College, and Valley View University are some

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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The existence of these schools suggests that thousands of Ghanaian students are educated through Christian institutions, but the numbers are not specific or definitive. Two profiles of Christian schools will offer greater insight into their prestigious impact on society: Achimota Secondary School and Catholic University College of Ghana.

Achimota Secondary School was opened by the British Governor Guggisburg along with Rev. A.G. Frazer from Trinity College in British Ceylon, and Jame Aggrey, a Ghanaian educated in the United States, in 1927. Although not a missionary school, it was formed as a non-denominational Christian institution. Achimota was designed in partnership with the colonial administration to be a co-educational institute for African leadership, and it remains one of the premier secondary schools in Ghana and across West Africa. It served as the direct precursor to University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Science and Technology (two of the most respected state universities). Achimota is most famous for the Ghanaian leaders which it has produced, including presidents Kwame Nkrumah, Edward Akufo-Addo, Jerry John Rawlings, John Atta Mills, and John Dramani Mahama.  

While Achimota is the oldest top-tier educational institute in Ghana, the Catholic University of Ghana is one of the youngest. Achimota is a non-denominational Christian school whereas the Catholic University of Ghana is linked to one of the most traditional Christian denominations. The two schools flank the spectrum of Christian educational services. The Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference agreed upon the creation of a Catholic university in 1998, the Catholic University College of Ghana (CUCG) received National Accreditation in 2002, and was

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opened with 50 students in 2003. The University now has to close to 2,500 students. It boasts of its contribution to the local economy in the Brong-Ahafo region as well as the provision of a holistic education geared towards “moral and academic excellence.” CUCG is affiliated not only with Ghanaian tertiary institutions—the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for Science and Technology—but other Catholic institutions worldwide—St. Mary’s University in Canada, and the Catholic University of America and Boston College in the United States. CUCG students won the 2012 SIFE National Championship for their achievements in educational development outreach. Just ten years old, its rapid growth, holistic education, international partnerships, and recent achievements indicate the continued relevance and expansion of Christian educational networks in Ghana.

The Christian social service network generates social capital in the form of an institutional network throughout the country. It serves as a fundamental source of health services, particularly to the poorest of the poor, and provides an educational infrastructure ranging from primary and vocational schools, to the most prestigious, internationally recognized secondary and tertiary educational institutions—young and old. In providing these health and education services, this network generates social capital. It forms a country-wide network and communicates norms of basic standards as well as Christian principles. It supplements the state in meeting its mandate to provide for the basic needs of the electorate. Thus, it contributes practically to health, education, and other basic needs as well as to the construction of community and citizenship: civil society.

127 Ibid.
Christian Social Authority

The authority of Christianity is a mark of the social capital—the shared networks and norms—which enables Christian institutions to maneuver in more formalized social and political contexts. Christian symbolism laces Ghanaian streets, popular media, political discourse, and representations of political leaders. This usage of Christian markers demonstrates that Christian affiliation is a form of cultural currency in religious and “secular” settings and so Christian institutions are well endowed with social capital in Ghanaian society.

Christian influence in Ghanaian culture is an overwhelming presence. The streets of Ghana are marked with Christian store names—“‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Ventures,’ ‘For Christ We Live Brake and Clutch Linings,’ ‘Lord of Glory Kebabs.’” Car decorations with biblical allusions and declarations of faith are particularly popular amongst taxis and trɔ trɔs (public transit vans).129 The popularity of Pentecostal and Charismatic media—publications, radio, and television broadcast—reinforces the enthusiasm surrounding Christianity. The commercial industry of these productions are a phenomenon unto themselves and have been the subject of many studies. Their successful outreach deepens the penetration of the Christian network, particularly the Pentecostal and Charismatic influence.130

Existing statistics support the claim that religious leaders and institutions are broadly valued in Ghanaian society. The quantification of values is variable, but the overwhelming numbers in the Ghanaian case make a point nonetheless: Christian institutions are influential. The 2007 World Values Survey of the country reported that 90 percent of Ghanaians classify

129 Paul Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 21.
religion as “very important” in their lives while only 25 percent consider politics “very important.” Seventy-two percent are “active members” of churches or religious organizations. In comparison, only 48.5 percent are “active members” of political parties. Sixty-eight percent express “a great deal of confidence” in churches in comparison to 29.7 percent’s “great deal of confidence” in the government.¹³¹ Not only are Christian institutions gathering confidence, but the Pew Forum reports that 88 percent of the population associates the term “honest” with Christians,¹³² an important character element for their role as political and social organizers. Ninety-three percent said that they preferred political leaders with strong religious beliefs.¹³³ These numbers suggest that religious institutions hold a place of importance in Ghanaian society today with respect to political institutions, political decisions, and the political values of the electorate.

**Political Brokering for Religious Cultural Currency**

Political leaders’ religious language, visits to religious institutions, and messages offered from the pulpit offer evidence of the integration of religion into the highest political offices in the country. Democratically elected political leaders show deference to Christian language, leaders, and institutions. This is not necessarily indicative of the individual religiosity of the political leaders, but it suggests that religious affiliation is an important factor in the characterization of the country’s leadership for the electorate.

Political discourse is infused with religious language. The proliferation of religious language in the political context corroborates its worth as cultural currency. Political leaders

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connect to the electorate with Christian imagery. Responding to criticisms on the campaign trail last October, President Mahama was quoted, “I know that God is on our side, and we will be victorious so as to create a new phase of politics in Ghana.” Likewise, at the National Democratic Congress Manifesto launch in Ho, former president J.J. Rawlings rallied supporters, “Your president needs help and I pray to God to give him strength and courage to put his foot down and do what he needs to do.” President Mahama’s inaugural address encouraged confidence through the intervention of God, “Nelson Mandela once said, ‘It always seems impossible until it is done.’ I believe that with God, and in Ghana, all things are possible.”

Beyond the use of religious language in political appeals, political leaders make publicized visits to Christian churches. President John Mahama spoke at Royal House Chapel, a Charismatic church, on October 7, 2012 in anticipation of the December elections. He joined the church for their “Convention of Saints” program, which reportedly attracted MPs, other government officials, and persons from diverse denominations. President Mahama noted, “Do not take the peace we as Ghanaians have enjoyed over the years for granted, for this peace is a result of prayers from our religious leaders and God Himself has granted us his mercies, which we need to continue thanking Him for.” In addition to his attendance at the service, the President’s willingness to publicly purport such a message to distinguished guests and the media demonstrates the President’s need to recognize the role of religious leaders and faith itself in the well-being of the country.

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The President’s pronouncement at this religious event is part of a common thread of political leaders making public statements and appearances which contribute to the image of their respect for religion. *The Ghanaian Times* published an article on July 30, 2012 entitled, “Cultivate Your Faith Through Reading – MP.” The article reports on a speech given by a Member of Parliament of Adenta (a subregion of Greater Accra), Mr. Kojo Adu Asare, at a Charismatic church, The World Miracle Church, during the release of a book entitled *Faith, The Master Key*. The article concludes with comments from the local Chief of Madina, Nii Kotei Djoo 1, which emphasize faith as the foundation of the President John Atta Mills’ successful leadership. On October 4, 2012 *The Daily Graphic* reported a similar church visit. According to the article, Mr. Kwaku Owusu Antwi attended a service at a charismatic church, Maranatha Ministries, in Kumasi to give thanks for his new position as the presidential candidate of the newly founded (July 2011) United Front Party. Although such events are minor, their frequent occurrence is indicative of an overarching norm.

The Parliament of Ghana website includes brief profiles of each Member of Parliament in office including their (in order of listing): hometown, marital status, party, religion, date of birth, profession, education, and parliamentary committees. The religious section notes not only the tradition (i.e. Christianity), but the denomination of the MP (i.e. Methodist). Religious affiliation and denomination would seem to be somewhere between party affiliation and age in the important factors regarding an MP’s identity. It is doubtful that the Internet profiles of the MPs are critical in Ghanaian society at large, but it is an indication of the characterization of the

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country’s political leaders. This identification works in tandem with political leaders’ religious language and attendance at Christian events. These factors point to the infusion of religious, and particularly Christian identity, in political outreach to the electorate—a suggestion of its authority in society at large.

Religious Leaders’ Secular Positions

The third chapter discusses religious leaders in several secular political mediating organizations on the national, regional, and local level. While that discussion focuses on the nature of the work and their character, the fact that religious leaders hold such positions is demonstrative of their positioning within society. The positions are honorable appointments performed in partnership with political and commercial leaders. The President of Ghana nominated the National Peace Council, for example, and the prime positioning of religious leaders in this institution demonstrates their preeminence in society.\textsuperscript{141} Furthermore, the nation’s most notable news sources’ political coverage often includes considerable content about religious leaders’ and institutions’ commentary and actions with regard to politics, as is cited in the following chapter.

Caveats and Complexities

Christian institutions’ social capital is relevant to their status as civil society actors who thus garner a voice in political discourse. The purpose of this overview is to describe this social role as a premise for their political character in chapter three. In depth determination of the value of their social role exceeds this study. However, given the positive connotation of social capital and civil society in democratic discourse, some caveats and complexities must be offered in

contrast. The analysis of their value is inconclusive, but these caveats suggest the complexity of the situation.

First, while the social service network does supplement the state in the short-term, the argument may be raised that this ultimately weakens the state’s authority in the long-term. Christian social services may detract from the relationship between the state and the civilian. The state does not have the resources to provide adequately at the moment, but if state and private resources continue to go to Christian social services, it may never be able to do so. Second, the Christian institutions’ dominance in this sphere may be seen as neo-colonial in its own right. Even apart from their missionary antecedent or ongoing foreign ties (in the case of traditional churches), Christian institutions’ power in the social service sphere indicates the indirect dominance of this group over others.\(^{142}\) Ghana’s population is majority Christian, but 20 percent of the population, or close to 5 million Ghanaians, do not identify with Christianity. Christian social services and political rhetoric may be seen as exclusionary to these citizens.\(^{143}\) Finally, Christian social authority, particularly in the political sphere, has been critiqued as potentially unproductive. “Spiritualized” politics, particularly in light of the health and wealth Gospel, sometimes undercut responsibility for political, social, and economic ills.\(^{144}\) These critiques are not comprehensive, but they provide a counterbalance to the positive connotation of social capital. Christian institutions contribute to civil society, but the value of their contribution is nuanced.


Conclusion

Ghana serves as an important example of the role of religious institutions in civil society. Christian social services form a national network which provide individual welfare resources, community norms, connections, and state supplements. They generate social capital in the nation at large. The social service network enhances the breadth and depth of Christian social authority. The penetration of Christianity is evident in public displays, popular media, quantitative evaluations, political discourse, and the political leaders’ representations. Christian markers work as cultural currency. Their pervasiveness in social and political networks and norms is indicative of their status in the accumulation of social capital. Together the social services and social authority of Christian institutions pave the way for their importance in the political discourse of the Ghanaian democracy—the focus of the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: THE DECEMBER 2012 ELECTIONS

The fusion of religion and politics is evident and instrumental in Ghana’s Fourth Republic. Christian social services are pervasive. They make religious institutions visible and important in the street and within the political sphere as described in chapter two. Further, Christian institutions have a history of symbiotic adaption and vocal discourse in relation to politics. Chapter one discusses the ways in which they have adapted, resisted, renewed, and promoted unity in the political sphere. This chapter analyzes the discourse surrounding the December 2012 elections in order to highlight the role of Christian institutions in this political event. The central objective is to suggest some fundamental and concrete roles of Christian institutions in the promotion of democracy and its constituent elements. The analysis addresses the diversity of Christian sects in the distinction between traditional churches and the Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations to illustrate the diversity and dynamism of Christian involvement.

The chapter begins with a theoretical introduction to elections as a democratic pinpoint and the promotion of peace in the face of inter-group conflict. It follows with an explication of the greatest challenges that the Ghanaian state faces in approaching democratic transitions. In an overview of the 2008 and 2012 elections, partisan polarization, ethnoregional divides, and political violence emerge as significant challenges to democratic consolidation. The study subsequently provides evidence of the ways in which Christian actors and institutions are uniquely addressing these weaknesses. Building on their historical, social, and cultural capacity, Christian institutions defend their non-partisan character to act as central promoters of issue-based politics and peace.
**Elections as a Democratic Indicator**

Evaluation of democratic consolidation involves far more than successful democratic elections or even transitional elections. Such overemphasis on the importance of elections has been criticized as a neglect of the broader cultural, social, and year-round character of a successful democracy. In their analysis of the Ghanaian democracy, Abdulai and Crawford depart from tests limited to democratic transitions in making use of Linz and Stepan’s model that incorporates multiple dimensions of democratic culture. Linz and Stepan articulate three central dimensions to democratic consolidation: behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional.\(^{145}\)

The behavioral dimension involves the acquiescence of political groups to the democratic regime and the united state. Political parties’ and candidates’ involvement in violence, intimidation, and unwillingness to accept election results are negative indicators of behavioral regard for democracy. The attitudinal dimension includes the citizenry’s reliance on democratic systems for political change. Civic participation and civic education, particularly with regard to voting, are critical to this dimension. Political violence is an indicator of a deficit of democratic attitudes. The constitutional dimension emphasizes respect for laws and institutions in the democratic process. This is particularly poignant given the heightened stakes and vulnerability of laws and institutions surrounding democratic transitions.\(^{146}\) This chapter applies these concepts in analyzing not simply democratic turnover, but rather the atmosphere surrounding the December 2012 elections in Ghana.

**Peacebuilding**

Francis Azumiah discusses the application of peace studies within the Ghanaian context. He draws on several theoretical focuses which are applicable to the analysis of peace

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\(^{146}\) Ibid., 27-36.
surrounding the 2012 elections. In his complex analysis of ethnic conflict in Ghana, Azumiah prescribes intergroup conflict resolution and peacebuilding theoretical frameworks to counteract ethnic divides. Ethnic divides contribute to partisan polarization and the associated risk of political violence in Ghana. They also mirror the partisan divides with respect to problematic social perceptions more broadly. Party loyalties often erode issue-based debates, and so political competitions become a zero-sum game. As such, Azumiah’s model for interethnic peace translates well to the political context. Azumiah builds on Gordon Allport’s foundational Intergroup Contact Theory. The theory breaks down into four necessary provisions for social cohesion: groups should have equal status independent of their size; “social enablers” must be actively present in order to advocate for intergroup cooperation; groups must find some shared values; a mutual authority must be present to structure the intergroup cooperation.147 This foundational theory of inter-group conflict resolution and peacebuilding is a useful theory through which to view the contributions of Christian institutions to peacebuilding.

In light of Linz and Stepan’s multidimensional perspective on democratic consolidation, weaknesses in the Ghanaian democracy emerge, mainly partisan polarization and political violence. In response to these concerns, peacemaking efforts and discourse surround the elections. Examination of the December 2012 elections shows that Christian institutions are in a unique position to act as Allport’s “social enablers,” “agreed authority,” and “shared values” in order to undercut problematic social perceptions. Christian actors are at the forefront of the promotion of peace in relation to Ghanaian politics.

Partisan Polarization and Political Violence in Africa and Ghana

A common problem across African democracies is what Gyimah-Boadi calls “crude majoritarianism.” Inadequate party structures undermine democratic stability. Parties are isolated from the population at large and lack organization and institutionalization. They suffer from the precedence of one-party systems. Party loyalty is considered key, undercutting debate and dissent within the party. Parties often fail to articulate an alternative policy platform or to take a stance on ideological issues. Partisan polarization can reinforce trends of personal politics and erupt attempts to build an issue-based campaign. Partisan divisions are heightened when religion, ethnic, regional, class, or other identity distinctions are exacerbated by party lines. As a result, multiparty competition is sometimes perceived as an inhibitor to participation and peaceful transition, and a contributor to ethnic and regional conflict. Parties must endorse democratic structures behaviorally and constitutionally while providing a route for citizen participation in order to build democratic consolidation along the attitudinal dimension.

Ghana has a multiparty system which works functionally in fierce and polarized competition between two parties—the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The 2008 election demonstrated a close competitiveness between the NPP and the NDC which was recently repeated in the December 2012 contest. While other parties contested the elections, the next most powerful competitor, the Convention People’s Party (CPP) failed to rise as a third major party. It attracted enough votes to require a run-off election in 2008, however, and so maintains an important strategic point in campaign appeals.  

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149 Ibid., 11-12.
150 Ibid., 12.
In 2008, the incumbent NPP lost the election by less than one percent. The NDC’s President John Atta Mills was declared the victor over the NPP candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, in a run-off election. The peaceful transition of power from the NPP to the NDC in 2008 is one of the hallmarks of the Ghanaian democracy’s international acclaim. The final count is indicative of the polarization between the two parties, but the fact that a peaceful transition triumphed in such an intense competition is a marker of democratic success. However, the attitude of that competition and the affiliated ethnoregional and class divides demonstrate the extent of the conflict between the parties and its implications for democratic consolidation.152

“Crude majoritarianism”—a zero-sum attitude—did not overwhelm the elections, but it did challenge the democratic process. Ethnoregionally based politics, undemocratic party structures, voter intimidation, the misuse of government resources, erosion of issue-based debates, violence, and undermining of election institutions in criticism of the Electoral Commission are indicative of the weaknesses in the democratic culture. These issues suggest that the democratic processes and institutions were weakened through the abuses of political parties and the government—discrepancies in behavioral and constitutional consolidation. The electorate demonstrated an attitudinal deficit in democratic consolidation in partaking in personal and even violent politics.

Party politics overlooked issue debates and democratic participation in focusing their politics on ethnic and regional alignments and winning at all costs. The NPP is primarily composed of members of the Ashanti ethnic group established in the Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, and Eastern regions. The NDC consists of largely non-Ashanti ethnic groups and is seen to have a greater grassroots foundation, but a base in the Volta Region. The NPP and the NDC campaigned all over the country, but their most pronounced efforts were amongst each party’s

152 Ibid., 142-146.
respective ethnoregional strongholds. The NPP was practically barred from the Volta Region while the NDC could not attempt to campaign in the Ashanti region. The run-off election intensified the competition. In the Volta region, the NDC erected roadblocks to prevent outside moderators from observing the polls. NPP affiliates started a rumor that Mills had developed a list of prominent Ghanaians to be assassinated once he was in power, invoking the military regime of the party’s forbearer, J.J. Rawlings. The NDC painted the NPP as representative solely of the Ashanti and the rich.\footnote{153}

Democratic institutions were undermined by the misuse of state resources and disrespect for the Electoral Commission. Before the run-off election, the NPP abused its incumbent privileges in dropping fuel prices, cracking down on illegal poaching by foreign fishers, and releasing drivers who had been imprisoned under a generally unpopular traffic law. In advance of the election, the NDC, the opposition at the time, was very vocal about its distrust in the Electoral Commission. It did ultimately accept the Electoral Commission’s result which were in its favor.\footnote{154}

The threat of political violence instigated by political parties demonstrated the degradation of democratic processes among the electorate. Violent outbursts occurred in Accra and Bawku leading up to the first round of elections. In advance of the second round, President J.J. Rawlings led a “popular-resistance” movement in which he encouraged violence. He called for supporters to stock arms while surrounded by retired military commanders and spearheaded rallies which concluded with “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” NDC supporters camped outside the Electoral Commission in Accra encouraged by a pro-NDC radio station. NPP supporters reported to another pro-NDC local station to protest the station’s announcement of the NDC’s lead.

\footnote{153} Ibid., 142-146.  
\footnote{154} Ibid., 142-146.
Rumors of the NPP’s intent to shut down a radio station, Radio Gold, for supposedly purporting pro-NDC ethnic sentiments and reports that the government was going to declare a state of emergency to preserve the NPP came to a peak on December 30, 2008. Stores, banks, and businesses around Accra shut down in anticipation of violence. Fortunately, while members of the NPP and the NDC both protested at the Electoral Commission with sticks and machetes, the groups convened at different times and violence was avoided.\textsuperscript{155} While a smooth transition prevailed in 2008, the election process was not entirely peaceful and Ghanaians entered the 2012 election with a concerted desire to provide for peace in anticipation of a similarly close election.

The December 2012 election ran relatively smoothly. The Electoral Commission extended voting for a day—from Friday into Saturday—in order to compensate for delays caused by malfunctioning biometric voting machines. With the exception of a few skirmishes, the election was deemed peaceful, free, and fair. A number of media outlets began to predict a win for President John Dramani Mahama on Sunday morning, and the NPP responded with allocations that it was not appropriate for the media to be making such reports, particularly since they had evidence of inconsistencies in the voter tabulation. NPP officials requested that the Electoral Commission investigate their concerns before making an official report.\textsuperscript{156} The Electoral Commission announced later that afternoon that President John Mahama Dramani had won the election with 50.7 percent of the vote followed by Nana Akufo-Addo’s 47.74 percent. Since then the NPP has submitted a suit contesting the results to the Supreme Court, but while the country waits, President Mahama has been inaugurated. The event was boycotted by the

\textsuperscript{155} Abdulaia and Crawford, “Consolidating democracy in Ghana,” 30-32.

The NPP also boycotted the Parliamentary review of President Mahama’s executive nominees. This decision has been criticized. While it is a strong statement, it is undercutting the democratic function of the state. On March 18, 2013, the Supreme Court requested that the parties partaking in the case—the NPP who filed and the NDC and EC as the respondents—must convene and articulate a memorandum of issues which they are contesting to submit to the Court. At the time of the writing of this thesis, the Court was still reviewing the parties’ petitions for a case. Over three full months since President Mahama took office for a second term, the additional delay suggests that the Supreme Court is not prioritizing a rapid response.

While the Ghanaian elections have been internationally applauded as free, and fair, the 2008 election atmosphere demonstrated that the process still has severe weaknesses. Extreme partisan polarization undermined policy debates, exacerbated ethnoregional divides, and threatened democratic institutions. These democratic deficits persisted in 2012. Social perceptions of the opposing party are based on stereotypical identities, and party victory is seen as a zero-sum game. Only minor violent incidents have occurred, but the tensions surrounding the foundation of democracy in the electoral process are pervasive. The promotion of issue-based politics and peace are needed to address these challenges and further democratic consolidation.

**Issue-based Politics and Peace**

Gyimah-Boadi notes the persistence of political violence despite strides made toward democracy in many fledgling democracies across the continent. Civil society actors must

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assume the role of fortifying democratic values and communicating norms of peace and investment in institutional rather than violent responses to political debates. Returning to Allport’s Intergroup Contact Theory, Christian leaders and institutions in Ghana are able to leverage their historical positioning, social capital, and social authority to create a meaningful conversation of peace across partisan, ethnic, and regional divides. Religious leaders defend their non-partisan, politically neutral role in fortifying democratic governance. They have an intimate relationship with the electorate, an established role in regulating politics, and a network across the country through which to communicate this non-partisan message of peace. This section offers evidence of the role of religious leaders and institutions in this capacity. It discusses the role of religious leaders in non-partisan organizations, their discourse on peace, and the perception of their power from the pulpit. Religious actors’ advocacy occurs in both officially secular and religious venues around the country.

The role of religious leaders as neutral moderators of democratic governance is shared between the traditional and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Their collaboration in this capacity not only extends the network through which their message of peace is communicated, but enhances the symbolic value of their authority. Cross-sectarian cooperation serves as a model and a route to unity for Ghanaians of diverse regions, ethnicities, and political affiliations.

Church Media

The political engagement of the church institutions is most coherent in their own literature. This discussion intentionally precedes the subsequent conversation regarding religious leaders’ and institutions’ roles in non-religious institutions. It can rightfully color the lens through which the evidence of religious leaders’ and institutions’ political engagement in non-religious contexts is understood. The nature of the churches’ social agenda is likely most
profoundly felt from the pulpit through which they engage the electorate. This is particularly true for the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. While they are diverse, generally they present spirituality and individual transformation as their central mission. These objectives are increasingly accompanied by social service projects, but their political impact is angled towards individuals’, including politicians’, moral renewal. There may not be a sector dedicated to the regulation of the state within all of these churches, but they call on their spirituality to supplement the state in need.162

The structures of the traditional churches are evident in their literature regarding political engagement. The National Catholic Secretariat, Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and the Christian Council of Ghana have historically played an important role in negotiating with the state. They have an established precedent of producing communiqués regarding the state of the nation which provide an easily accessible point of analysis for their attitudes and priorities in politics.

In the Catholic media, this institutional presence extends as far as the Vatican news. *Vatican Radio* reported on the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s (GCBC) statements regarding the 2012 elections at the conclusion of their annual assembly. The GCBC encourages candidates, political parties, the media, and all citizens to maintain peace throughout the election. It pinpointed the need for media outlets and political parties to patiently wait for and respect the declaration of the Electoral Commission, expressing any complaints through the proper legal means. It closes, “After the declaration of results, we urge all to continue in the spirit of togetherness to join forces to build Mother Ghana. We appeal to all citizens to adopt a spirit of

oneness and solidarity.” The Ghanaian Catholic institution also reports its perspectives through *The Catholic Standard*, a weekly newspaper with some limited online presence. Before the election, *The Catholic Standard* posted several articles reinforcing the need to overcome partisanship and self-interested politics to create a sense of solidarity in preparation for and following the elections.164

The Christian Council published an analysis of the threats of the upcoming election in April 2012. The *Communique Issued by Christian Council of Ghana Annual General Meeting on the December Polls* discusses the risks of political unrest and unproductive political divisiveness. The Communique enumerates instructions for the government, judiciary, political parties, the Electoral Commission, security services, media, civil society organizations, and the electorate regarding their attitudes and actions to ensure peace through the election. It concludes with a listing of the commitments of the Council in order to provide for peace. The Council promises to focus on advocacy within the religious context—from the pulpit and through prayer—as well as nonreligious contexts. It commits to remaining neutral in its efforts to contribute to the electoral process and to collaborate with other religious institutions and civil society organizations.165

As previously mentioned, the diversity and fluidity of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is fundamental to their identity. Combined with their recent, rapid, and ongoing


expansion, a coordinated institutional presence has not yet emerged and is not as relevant to their structure. Nonetheless, the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) serves as a coalition of some 185 Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. A group of five Pentecostal churches inaugurated the Council in 1969: the Assemblies of God, the Church of the Pentecost, Elim Pentecostal Churches, the Christ Apostolic Church, and the Apostolic Church. The Council’s intentions for the 2012 election are evidenced in its PLUS Ghana program. PLUS stands for Peace, Love, Unity, and Stability, and the program was founded to ensure peace, transparency, accountability, and participation in the political process. The program description defends the faith-based institutions as uniquely positioned to complete this work and the GPCC as the ideal leader for the venture: “It is obvious that the Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) including the GPCC are better positioned to play a leading role in the ‘PLUS GHANA Project’ because more than any other stakeholder, they have the capacity to prevent social, religious, political and internal conflicts.”\(^{166}\) The proposal promises to work from a “non-partisan basis” in collaboration with a number other institutions including the GCBC and the CCG. It calls on religious and non-religious means to ensure peace in the elections.\(^{167}\)

These statements present an overview of the political objectives of the traditional and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in anticipation of the 2012 elections: peace and issue-based politics. The unique ability for these religious institutions to advocate for peace and issue-based politics is tightly tied to their non-partisan identification.

*Discourse Defending Non-Partisanship*

The Christian Council of Ghana, the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and the National Catholic Secretariat have historically articulated a non-partisan approach to intervention


\(^{167}\) Ibid.
in the state. In their prescriptions to the PNDC approaching democratic transition and amidst the restoration of multi-party politics, the CCG reiterated this commitment; “The Christian Council has always maintained a policy of non-partisanship in all its dealings with successive Governments of this country. It is noted, over the years, that its non-partisan position enhances its stature, and strengthens its capacity to play an effective conciliatory role of peace and harmony in the state.”

This statement made at the start of the Fourth Republic, has become increasingly important as partisan competition has evolved under the democratic constitution.

The non-partisanship of these religious leaders has been publicly articulated by religious leaders and on their behalf, including the President of Ghana. In 2010, Most Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Asante spoke as the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church (he now serves as the chair of the National Peace Council): “The Methodist Church is non-partisan, but that does not mean that we as individuals are apolitical,” he said. He noted that it would be wrong for the Church to engage in partisan politics but reinforced the Church’s commitment to engaging with other institutions in pursuit of the country’s development. He offered the example of the Church’s willingness to criticize President John Atta Mills, the president at the time, and his wife despite their affiliation with the Methodist Church to corroborate his claim that the Church does not identify with a given party or political candidates. The Chronicle published commentary from Rev. Elvis Kwadwo Sarpong of the Old Tafo Assemblies of God Church in the Ashanti Region on the politicization of free education on October 30, 2012. The article reports, “He appealed to the men of God to use the pulpit to preach peace as the basis of the word of God and

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remain neutral since the pulpit is not a political platform as the church is a community of people with different political inclinations."

Two scandals highlight the commitment of the clergy to preserve their non-partisan identity and the broader community defense of this neutrality. In August 2012, a number of NDC officials affiliated with the Presbyterian Church departed due to their perception that the Church was not supporting the establishment of 45 new voting constituencies. Tension arose between the NDC which was advocating for the expansion and the Presbyterian Church. President Mahama, as flagbearer of the NDC, paid a personal visit to the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey, in order to apologize, and requested that the NDC members who were criticizing the Church for political reasons return. He argued that such political debates should not divide the Church and “begged” the moderator for forgiveness over the dispute.

A similar situation arose in November 2012. Rev. Mensa Otabil, overseer and founder of the International Central Gospel Church, was accused of openly stating his opposition to the NPP’s free secondary high school program—the most prominent policy difference in the two major parties’ platforms. Otabil released a statement that the recording advertised had been doctored by media outlets and contained false information. He defended his right to remain non-partisan and refrain from public statements on policy through the election debates. Many jumped to his aid to defend and protect his neutral political attitude—from editorialists to Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Asante and Christian Charismatic leaders who issued a joint statement in his

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The controversial advertisements inspired a unified defense of Otabil’s non-partisan integrity.

*Non-Partisan Organizations for Peace*

Religious leaders and institutions are involved in a number of non-partisan, independent, secular organizations which seek to promote democracy in the political atmosphere. While their religious identity is often noted, it does not define their role in these organizations. The positions require multi-partisan neutrality publicly, and, thus, the role of religious leaders and institutions demonstrates the public confidence in their non-partisanship, individual integrity, and authority to shape consensus-building and peace in the community.

*The National Peace Council*

The National Peace Council is one such organization. Formulated by UNDP, the National Peace Council is part of a framework set to maintain peace and promote non-violent participation at all levels of society. In 2002, the King of Dagbon based in the Northern region was killed along with his administration of elders. The Northern Peace Advocacy Council was formed as a result. Leaders reached out to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for assistance in advocating for peace, and under the guidance of UNDP. Modeled after the successful Northern Peace Advocacy Council, UNDP established the National Peace Council to extend these peacebuilding efforts throughout the country. The peace infrastructure includes District Security Councils, Regional Security Councils, Regional Conflict Resolution Officers, and the National Peace Council in order to reach every region and demographic in the country in

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The National Peace Council is composed of leaders that are broadly accepted as figures of moral integrity. Appointed by the President and approved by the Council of State, six of the thirteen members are religious leaders. The Council’s influence is dispersed throughout the country in district and regional councils operated by thirteen-person boards and Executive Secretaries. Trained in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the peace councils work to provide education, and to expose and resolve tensions.\footnote{Ibid.}

The current Peace Council consists of Methodist, Catholic, Muslim, and neo-Pentecostal leaders in addition to several other professionals affiliated with a variety of non-religious associations. The Most Rev. Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, the presiding Bishop of the Methodist church in Ghana and the head of the Christian Council of Ghana, currently serves as the chair of the Council. The National Peace Council includes a representation of various sectors of civil society—trade unions, academia, and the youth among them.\footnote{Ibid.} Religious leaders, however, are overwhelmingly represented. The attendance and words of the chairman of the Council, Rev. Emmanuel Asante, are often reported as representative of the Council. In fact, of the current National Peace Council members, he is the only person who is regularly differentiated as an individual member representative of the Council in the mainstream media.

The National Peace Council was noted for playing a critical role in the peaceful transition of the 2008 election.\footnote{Paul van Tongeren, “Increasing Interests in Infrastructures for Peace,” \textit{Journal of Conflictology} 2, no. 2 (2011): 47-48.} The National Peace Council reached out to the electorate. It produced a
series of television spots with the Culture and Technology Network, a Ghanaian NGO, featuring religious leaders making appeals for peace to civilians and citizens, at times with reference to the religious motivations for peace. Cardinal Peter Turkson, articulates the objective for peace: “Let us fashion within our lives capacity for tolerance, capacity for love, capacity to serve God, want to serve God, and the rights of one another, and most importantly the pursuit of the common good of all of us.” His comments are accompanied by a Muslim leaders explanation of Islam as “peace,” and comments from Mensa Otabil along the same lines.\textsuperscript{177} The Minister of the Interior, Hon. Martin A. B. K. Amidu, reported that the National Peace Council was instrumental in convincing the parties to accept the presidential election results in 2008. He announced at UNDP in New York that, “We nearly came to catastrophic elections in 2008…Members of the Council sat down with the presidential candidates and persuaded them to accept the election results, regardless of the outcome.”\textsuperscript{178} Ghanaian founder of the West African Network for Peace, Emmanuel Bombande, is quoted as having said, “When it mattered most in an extremely difficult moment during Ghana’s elections in 2008, the National Peace Council was there to save Ghana.”\textsuperscript{179} In 2011, the National Peace Council was codified in the National Peace Council Bill passed by Parliament.\textsuperscript{180}

The National Peace Council was very vocal in the months leading up to the December 2012 election and had an important voice in the last few days of the electoral debate. The Council’s Kumasi Peace Accords were a particular success in preparation for the 2012 election. The Council gathered the presidential candidates in Kumasi shortly before the election to sign

\textsuperscript{179} Chetan Kumar and Jos De la Haye, “‘Hybrid Peacemaking: Building National ‘Infrastructures for Peace,’” \textit{Global Governance} 18 (2011): 15.  
\textsuperscript{180} Paul van Tongeren, “Increasing Interests in Infrastructures for Peace,” 47.
peace accords in public ceremonies promising a peaceful response to the election. The gathering held at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology included representatives of the political parities, youth, civil society actors, and the former presidents John Kufuor and J.J. Rawlings. The President of the National House of Chiefs, the Chair of the Electoral Commission, and Inspector General of the Police also attended.\textsuperscript{181} The event was televised and streamed live. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the head of the ECOWAS Observation Mission stationed in Ghana to monitor the election,\textsuperscript{182} applauded the work of the National Peace Council leading up to the election and commented on the peace agreement: “The Kumasi Declaration is not only unique, it is commendable and worthy of emulation.”\textsuperscript{183}

As was true in 2008, the National Peace Council was also responsible for calling a meeting between party leaders while the election results remained unsettled and tension was escalating in December 2012. The National Peace Council, through the public statement of Rev. Asante, condemned the NPP when they made a premature announcement of Nana Akufo-Addo’s victory on Saturday before the polls were closed and counted. He criticized the action as unlawful with respect to the Electoral Commission’s authority and risky. He encouraged other bodies to refrain from making such announcements and requested that the public calmly await the official results.\textsuperscript{184} The National Peace Council convened a meeting the following day of the NPP, NDC, and the Electoral Commission. At the time, the Electoral Commission was preparing to release the official results while the NPP was contesting the results and advocating an

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{182} The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of which Ghana is a member, provided a 250-person mission from the regional body to monitor the elections.
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investigation into inconsistencies in voting. The aggrieved parties left the meeting with an agreement that the Electoral Commission could release their results, and the NPP could file suit in the Supreme Court to express their concerns. While the NPP did not ultimately accept the results, it has pursued the legal and peaceful path to disputing them and has successfully maintained a peaceful atmosphere amongst its followers.

Thus, the National Peace Council has played a prominent and crucial role in the peaceful transition of political power in the 2008 and most recent election. The significant representation of religious leaders on the Council, particularly in the chairmanship of Rev. Emmanuel Asante who often serves as the vocal figurehead of the Council, is in itself a signifier of the repute, representativeness, and perceived integrity of religious leaders in Ghana. Various accounts of the Peace Council demonstrate that their non-partisanship, moral authority, and social networks are reinforced by their religious affiliation. Through the National Peace Council, religious leaders contribute to a unique enhancement of the Ghanaian democracy in moderating the political process.

As mentioned earlier, Rev. Asante defended the non-partisan character of the Methodist Church in 2010. In anticipation of the 2012 election, he spoke along similar lines in his capacity as chair of the National Peace Council defending the non-partisan integrity of religious leaders in politics. Rev. Asante was quoted in an editorial published on September 18, 2012 in the Daily Graphic, which argues for the amelioration of political polarization and the acceptance of diverse and divergent political views. It makes reference to Rev. Asante’s instructions to Ghanaians to

refrain from imposing partisan labels on clergy while encouraging political debate within and between parties.\textsuperscript{186}

As religious leaders, members of the National Peace Council also have a social network in their religious followers. The \textit{Ghana News Agency} reported Rev. Emmanuel Asante’s message to the youth to avoid violence and peacefully accept the election results. The event that called for the chairman’s speech was the induction of a new bishop—the Rev. Kweku Buabeng-Odoom of the Winneba Diocese—a seemingly apolitical ceremony.\textsuperscript{187} Likewise, the \textit{Ghana Broadcasting Corporation} reported that Rev. Emmanuel Asante spoke at the ceremonies commissioning 45 ministers of the Methodist Church encouraging the ministers to preach peace in the political process.\textsuperscript{188} The religious hierarchy provides him access to leadership which creates a widespread network throughout the country. The non-partisanship and religious network is evident in the leadership roles of religious leaders in other organizations designed to moderate the political process from a neutral position on the national, regional, and local level—the Presidential Debates Committee, the Monday Civic Campaigns Report, and the Akyemmansa Inter-Party Dialogue Committee.

\textit{National: Presidential Debates Committee}

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) is a Ghanaian public policy research institute that advocates for a free market, good governance, and democracy. In 2000, the IEA introduced a number of presidential debates during the presidential campaign to lower tensions between parties, foster a commitment to peace between competitors, and bring policy issues to the front of the political agenda.\textsuperscript{186} “Make Room for Jaw Jaw, Not…,” \textit{The Daily Graphic}, September 18, 2012, \url{http://graphic.com.gh/news/page.php?news=23699}.

\textsuperscript{187} “Ghana is legacy for the youth so they should protect it-Rev. Asante.” \textit{Ghana News Agency}, October 22, 2012. \url{http://www.ghananewsagency.org/details/Politics/Ghana-is-legacy-for-the-youth-so-they-should-protect-it-Rev-Asante/?ci=2&ai=51000#.UJrRRml25Q0}.

\textsuperscript{188} “National Peace Council calls on churches to propagate peace.” \textit{Ghana Broadcasting Corporation}. \url{http://www.gbcghanaln/index.php?id=1.934556}. 

of the campaign. A Presidential Debates Committee of nine religious, traditional, intellectual, professional, and media leaders administers the events. The committee meets with candidates’ representatives to negotiate guidelines and format the debate.\textsuperscript{189} Rev. Dr. Mensa Otabil, of the neo-Pentecostal International Central Gospel Church, was the chair of the 2012 Presidential Debates Committee. His committee members included the Ameer of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, and high profile non-religious leaders, such as the Chairman of National Media Commission, and the Executive Director of IEA.\textsuperscript{190} In addition to his role on the National Peace Council, this position on the Presidential Debates Committee reaffirms Otabil’s respected role in society and confidence in his non-partisan, neutral integrity in order to promote issue-based debates amongst the people.

\textit{Regional: Monday Civic Campaigns Report Council}

The Monday Civic Campaigns Report Council was formed as an advisory group of “eminent leaders” a part of the Northern Ghana Aid (NOGAID) 2012 election project. The Monday Civic Campaign Report Council brought together a variety of religious and professional leaders in its thirteen person membership, including the Chief Imam of the Central Mosque, a Sunni leader, the Catholic Archbishop of Tamale, and the Regional Superintendent of the Assemblies of God. This group of Muslim, traditional mainline, and classical Pentecostal leaders, partook in a seven-month intensive peacebuilding process that included tours throughout the region. In a radio program run by the Council the day before the elections throughout the

\textsuperscript{189} Institute of Economic Affairs, “Political Debates & Evening Encounters,” \url{http://www.ieaagh.org/index.php/programmes/elections/political-debates-a-evening-encounters}.

region, they made an explicit appeal to their followers to abide by the teachings of their respective religious traditions in abstaining from violence.  

*Local: Akyemmansa Inter-Party Dialogue Committee*

The Akyemmansa Inter-Party Dialogue Committee worked to enable stakeholders to communicate with and question the political parties in order to provide transparent, peaceful, free and fair, and issue-based elections in the Akyemmansa district of the Eastern Region. The Committee was composed of one representative each from the NDC, NPP, the National Council on Civic Education, the District Assembly, and Muslim and Christian communities, in addition to members from security agencies, women’s group, youth groups, traditional authorities, and the Electoral Commissions. Reverend Kwame Kyereh of the Methodist Church of Ghana chaired the Committee. *Ghana News Agency*’s report on the Committee emphasizes his pledge to execute the Committee’s objectives without bias. On the local level, the Committee demonstrates the importance of religious leaders—in this case a mainline Christian leader—in ensuring neutrality to ameliorate political polarization and provide good governance.

*Public Discourse for Peace*

In addition to the prominent voice of the Rev. Emmanuel Asante as part of the National Peace Council and leaders represented in various non-partisan institutions, religious leaders across the country are proponents of electoral peace in religious and non-religious venues. The

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presence of religious leaders as advocates for peace is evident in the mainstream news media and
the promotion of various civil society associations.

The Christian Friends of Democracy, represented by Rev. Samuel Adjei of the neo-
Pentecostal House of Grace Chapel International urged political leaders to perform peace in
word and deed in mid-August. At the end of August, the Institute for Democratic Governance
(IDEG) in Accra brought His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson and Professor Henrietta Mensa-
Bonsu, Director of the Legon Center for International Affairs, together as a part of their Eminent
Citizens Discussion series. The conversation was entitled “Deepening Dialogue on National
Values – Peace and Unity.” IDEG reported on the event and recounted Cardinal Turkson’s
contribution, “Cardinal Turkson urged the populace to work and pray for peace together because
praying without working at peace is a mockery of God.” In The Ghanaian Times, Apostle
Christopher Sackey of the neo-Pentecostal Church of the Lord Mission International asked that
politicians teach peace and the youth act peacefully. He presented this message at the Church’s
annual Mountain Taborra Festival at the end of August and reported that the Church has close to
120 branches spread throughout the country through which to spread the message.

In September, the former moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Very Rev. Dr. Yaw
Frimpong-Manso, emphasized the expectation that politicians would focus on important issues
on the country’s development agenda in his speech offered at the fifth anniversary event for
Presbyterian Relief Services and Development, the social services wing of the Presbyterian
Church. He requested that politicians and citizens alike engage in thoughtful and peaceful policy
debates, rather than a banter of threats and insults. Likewise, in September, Rev. Dr. Jacob Kofi Ayeebo, Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Tamale, encouraged peace in the Bishop’s Charge of the first session of the seventh Synod of the Church of the Province of West Africa saying, “let us embrace what is good as we strive to make Ghana a better place in our democracy.”

_The Ghanaian Times_ published an article on the day of the election entitled, “Religious Leaders Optimistic of Peaceful Elections.” The article reports that many religious leaders weighed in on their hope for and confidence in peaceful elections. It includes extensive commentary from Rt Reverend Dr Edem Kwaku Tettey, the Moderator of the neo-Pentecostal Global Evangelical Church and Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah, the Chairman of the Church of Pentecost. They addressed the candidates, security officials, and electorates in their remarks. Dr. Onyinah’s comment to security officials summarizes the overall sentiment, “Though you have party affiliations put the nation first and attempt at all times to do the right thing at the right time.” This discourse represents only a sampling of the promotion of peace which religious leaders articulated and the media reported in anticipation of the elections.

**Appeals to Religious Leaders**

When religious leaders are not the source of discourse for peace, they are often the audience. The focus on religious leaders as a strategic audience is further evidence of their influence in society and willingness to advocate for such messages. A number of peace advocacy events in preparation for the 2012 elections noted the presence of religious actors. For instance,
the National Council of Civic Education (NCCE) hosted a workshop in the Volta Region called “Local Participation and Social Auditing for Good Governance.” The conference focused on analyzing the current state of transparency, accountability, and corruption in the Ghanaian political realm and resulted in the formation of Social Auditing Clubs. The clergy were noted amongst those in attendance, along with traditional representatives, security officers, NGOs, youth groups, and local public and civil servants.199

On October 6, 2012, the Electoral Commission Officer for the Cape Coast metro area, Mr. Anthony Nyame, discussed the need for political parties to keep in mind the common goal of Ghana’s goodwill. He presented to the Cape Coast Metro Inter-Party Dialogue Committee which included religious bodies. The religious participants were positioned as the audience to the advocacy for political peace through the Electoral Commission.200

The Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Greater Accra Region expressed similar sentiments when announcing the organization of a task force to strategize for peace in anticipation of the December 2012 elections. The Deputy Commissioner and Chair of the taskforce discussed preliminary plans for the dispersion of military and security personnel to polling stations and throughout the region for the election. The taskforce was composed of security and government officials, but the Deputy Commissioner spoke directly to religious leaders and bodies in his address. He asked religious leaders to make use of their position to advocate for peace and to accompany this example with prayer.201 These three examples are

among many cases in which religious leaders both positioned themselves as the audience for peace initiatives or were explicitly targeted as leaders in the effort in such discourse.

**Conclusion**

Ghanaian Christian religious leaders across sectors play prominent roles in institutionalized, non-partisan organizations that advocate for peace and issue-based politics on the national, regional, and local levels—the National Peace Council, the Presidential Debates Committee, the Monday Civic Campaigns Report Council, and Akyemmansa Inter-Party Dialogue Committee, for example. Their very presence in these positions reserved for eminent and respected members of society demonstrates the social authority of religious leaders. The nature of the organizations and the messages that they spread shows that the religious individuals that lead them have a unique character as neutral, non-partisan, but politically powerful community leaders. In addition to the institutionalized role of religious leaders in non-religious organizations, the public discourse of non-partisan peace is a far-reaching cry from religious leaders—often articulated on public occasions as well as in their religious facilities and reported in the mainstream media. Finally, appeals for peace made to religious leaders demonstrate their role as strategic actors in receiving and dispersing this message. Their partisan neutrality combined with their networks throughout the predominantly Christian country enables religious leaders to offer a unique contribution to democratic consolidation.

This chapter has focused on the role of Christian institutions in strengthening democracy through peacebuilding in Ghana. Tense conditions surrounding recent elections demonstrate the ongoing threats of partisan polarization, ethnogregional divides, and political violence in the Ghanaian democracy. Christian institutions’ historical precedent, social capital, and non-partisan identity and integrity enables them to fill a unique role in promoting peace and democratic
consolidation across multiple dimensions—behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional. Their ecumenical collaboration in this effort enhances Christian cultural currency as a cross-cutting and unifying factor. Aligned with a massive network, Christian actors implement this character in advocacy from the pulpit, at non-religious events, and through leadership in non-partisan, non-religious organizations which promote peace.
CONCLUSION

Western liberal democratic discourse has often overlooked the role of religion in politics. The rise of the Christian right in the United States (and its impact on foreign affairs), the emergence of political Islam, the evolution of religion after the end of the Cold War, and the explosion of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements across the developing world along with increased migration have revived an interest in the integration of the sacred and the secular.²⁰² The rise of democratic states on the African continent has given cause to reconsider the Secularization Theory in contemporary democracy. From pre-colonial times, religion has had an indistinguishable relationship with governance in many African communities. As Africa increasingly becomes the global stronghold of Christianity and witnesses simultaneously stable democratic governments in several countries, the role that religion plays in democratic participation demands more study. Ghana, as both a model of democracy in the region and an enthusiastically Christian country, provides an ideal case for examination.

This thesis has analyzed the political and social roles which Christian institutions in Ghana play using the December 2012 elections as an illustrative moment. The December 2012 elections demonstrate the social and political capital religious institutions have cultivated for many years in Ghana, a process examined in the first two chapters of the thesis. First, Christian institutions have intervened in and adapted to the Ghanaian state throughout the country’s independent history. Second, Christian institutions provide basic social services and thus have earned legitimacy. This legitimacy is reflected in the respect bestowed upon them by the electorate and political leaders.

The characterization of Christian institutions’ political and social influence in the first two chapters prefaces the analysis of their character in the December 2012 election in the third. In discussing the turmoil surrounding the most recent 2008 and 2012 elections, partisan polarization and political violence are shown as persistent challenges to democratic consolidation in Ghana. Religious organizations act as a counterweight to these threats to stability. Christian institutions’ historical, social, and non-partisan identity enables them to play a unique role in the promotion of peace and issue-based politics to address these challenges. The role of religious leaders in political advocacy from the pulpit, within non-religious organizations, and through peaceful discourse in religious and secular venues shows that they are at the forefront of bridging relations between government and the grassroots. The shared values and diverse populations—across regions, classes, and partisan affiliations—which Christian institutions encapsulate puts them in a symbolically and practically convenient position to promote resolution to the behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional challenges to the Ghanaian democracy. Cooperation across the competitive Christian sects of the traditional and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches strengthens the image of unity despite differences.

This thesis has relied on an analysis of Christian institutional actors. It looks to their codified, organizational, and publicly recorded positions and discourses in Ghanaian politics. Future research calls for an analysis of Christian identities and politics on the ground. While this study can provide some insights into the relationship of Christian and state institutions, it only begins to articulate the power and diversity of Christian influence in the ideological implications inlaid in individual and communal acts of faith. Further analysis calls for an investigation of the impact of Christian beliefs in Ghanaian politics. Surely it would complicate, but perhaps
corroborate, the contention that Ghanaians can use Christian cultural currency as an investment in democratic state stability.
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