

Why Religious Faith Matter in Ghana's Public Life: Christian-Muslim basis for public involvement

Ignatius Nti-Abankoro

Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Spiritan University College, Ejisu, Ghana

ABSTRACT

The significance of religious faith to public life has quite been a topical issue within the last two decades. Scholars on the development and public life debate have argued for the presence of religious voices in public circles. This article discusses the basis of Christian-Muslim involvement in the public space. At the heart of such involvement is the Christian or Muslim who is both a religious person and a citizen of the state. Having looked at the notions from Christian-Muslim perspectives, the article shows that the public sphere is no prerogative of politicians or celebrities. The public space encapsulates every member of society, hence their involvement of which has profound ramifications for the notion of the Common Good, equitable solutions to collective problems, boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and those practices that converge in the public. The study reflected on the case of Ghana and on why the Ghanaian Christian and Muslim must be involved in the Ghana's public life. The study demonstrates that religious faith in the public sphere remains indispensable for the preservation of the Common Good and hence makes the call for all religious people and people of good will, especially Christians and Muslims in Ghana to work in favor of maintaining the public sphere by being agents of the Common Good in that sphere.

Keywords: *Religious faith, Public sphere, Common Good, Christian, Muslim.*

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INTRODUCTION

The role that faith has to play in public life, with regard to whether or not religious faith should participate in it, continues to be a subject of great controversy. On one hand, some scholars like the sociologist, Kurt Alan VerBeek [1] have argued that religious faith has no connection with life in the public sphere, and consequently no link with development, a process we may identify as the progress of peoples. In fact, VerBeek concluded that "religion [is] (sic) a development taboo."¹ Similar views have also been echoed by the professor of development practice, Katherine Marshall [2] to the exclusion of religion in public life in three claims that (1) "religion is divisive," (2) "religious politics can be complex and often ferocious," and (3) "religion is dangerous."² These views from Beek and Marshall, show the typical yet complex nuances of anti-religious sentiments³ that characterized both the beliefs and hopes of the Enlightenment period and the Secularization theory, which according to Roger Trigg [3]⁴ is a "theory hangover from Marxist-type beliefs."⁵ On the other hand, scholars like John Stott [4], A. Morris [5], Roger Trigg, C.S. Makari [6], Wendy Tyndale [7] and Olav FykseTveit [8] have acknowledged the place of religious faith in the public space, highlighting the instrumentality of religious faith for public life, one animating the other.⁶

¹ K. A. V. Beek, *Spirituality: A development taboo*. Dev Pract [Internet]. February 1, 2000 [cited November 25, 2021]; 10 (1): 31-43. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520052484>

² Katherine Marshall, *Faith and Development: Rethinking Development Debates*. (World Bank, 2005), 6.

³ See: Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. (Michigan: William B. Eerdimans, 1999), Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *On Religion*. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), V.I. Lenin, *On Religion*. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), E. Borstein, "Religious Nongovernmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis". *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, (Vol 14, No. 1, March 2002).

⁴ Roger Trigg, *Religion in public life: must faith be privatized?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Trigg, *Religion in public life: must faith be privatized?* 9.

⁶ See Olav FykseTveit (Rev. Dr.) (General Secretary- World Council of Churches), on "The Role of Religion in Sustainable Development and Peace", Partners for Change: Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, (Berlin 17-18 February, 2016), C. S. Makari, *Imam Khomeini (R. A) The dynamic star that never sets*, (Tehran: ALHODA International Publication & Distribution, 2009), Wendy Tyndale, "Religions and the Millennium Development Goals," GerrieterHaar, (ed.), *Religion and Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), A. Morris, *The origins of the civil rights movement: Black communities organizing for change*. (New York: Free Press, 1984), Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis- Papal Encyclical on Social Concern*, (Roma: LibreriaEditriceVaticana, 1987).

To examine this issue, the question of whether or not religious faith any role to play in public life must culminate in a precise and succinct response to the understanding of what “public life” is all about. Such fluid discourse on the public life would, invariably, have close interrelationships with why religious faith must be or not involved in the public sphere. The exposition upon which I set out to embark here is to examine two religions in public life from a rather pluralist viewpoint. This would be done from a Christian-Muslim paradigm. This paper seeks to shed light on the necessity of religious faith in public life anchoring such necessity within a Christian-Muslim framework.

Understanding the Term “Public”

Although the term “public” may seem common, even as it resonates across disciplines such as philosophy, political science, sociology, and law, it evades easy definition. We attempt an etymological analysis of the term here. “Public” originates with the Latin *publicus* which means “the people.”⁷ The English word “populace” owes its origin here. Generally, “public” denotes some mass population in relation to some matter of common interests. Salvatore and Eickelman [9] have indicated that the notion of public (sphere) is not limited to modern societies. Rather, they explain the public sphere as the “virtues, obligations, and rights that members of society require for some common good to be realized.”⁸ Accordingly, this means that a sense of “public” relates *in tandem* with the sharing of norms that show the ideas of community and responsibilities of those who belong to such public.⁹ A sense of the public therefore, may differ from one place to another. From Salvatore and Eickelman above, John Dewey’s much earlier argument that no two ages or places share the same idea of the public finds precise articulation.

Dewey [10] (1859 – 1952) refers by “public” to an institution with recognized common goals, with some sort of leadership. His notion of “public” anticipates Habermas’s conception of the public sphere. For Dewey, “what the public may be, what officials are, and how adequately they perform functions, are things we have to go to history to discover.”¹⁰ He continues that the public is “organized and made effective by means of representatives who as guardians of custom, as legislators, as executives, judges, etc., care for its special interests by methods intended to regulate the conjoint actions of individuals and groups. Then and in so far, association adds itself political organization.”¹¹

From Dewey’s position above, one gleans the essential nature of the *public* in achieving common recognized goals, by means of which every member of that space, especially, representatives, acting as guardians of custom, must organize effective ways of not only caring for special interests of such space but also protecting it. Dewey has maintained the regulation of the actions of individuals and groups in the public so as to ensure harmonious interrelationships of that sphere. Dewey thus sets important ramifications for our understanding of *public* in his analysis.

Alternatively, John Benington [11] has defined the public sphere as “a democratic space”¹² that includes the “web of values, places, organizations, rules, knowledge, and other cultural resources held in common by people through their everyday commitments and behaviors, and held in trust by government and public institutions.”¹³ Thus, John Benington has drawn on the Greek notion of the *polis*, as well as modern philosophy to remind societal members and their representatives of the need to protect and enhance the public sphere.

One key notion about “public” raised in these definitions is that the public is some sort of “relational interface,” which brings people together for some common interest or purpose. By contrast, the notion of the public (sphere) quite seems to possess some deep political resonance. That posturing raises further interesting questions that sets our discussion in right contexts and perspectives. One may question the nexus that religious faith has with a notion that is deeply politically nuanced. We now shift our focus to establishing some relationship between religious faith and the public sphere (life). This is being done in two considerations. First we look at the Christian understanding for the relationship with the public life, to be followed by that of the Muslim perspective.

Christian Basis for Public Engagement

Despite the dichotomy of spheres championed by advocates like the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke, for the separation between the Church and State, the fact remains that Christians have been involved in the public arena throughout history. This according to Michael Nazir-Ali [12] is because the origins of Christian attitudes to the state are

⁷Publicus, WordSense Dictionary, Retrieved from www.wordsense.au/publicus on November 28, 2021.

⁸ Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Editors), *Public Islam and the Common Good*. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), 5.

⁹ Salvatore and Eickelman, 5.

¹⁰ John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1927), 33.

¹¹ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927, 35.

¹² John Benington, “From private choice to public value?” In *Public Value: Theory and Practice*, edited by J. Benington and M. Moore. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 31.

¹³ Benington, “From private choice to public value?” 31 – 38.

found in the Bible.¹⁴ Writing from a Protestant perspective, Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz [13]¹⁵ have echoed Nazir-Ali's sentiments emphasizing that "Christian faith has an inalienable public dimension."¹⁶ They state that Christian discipleship is not only found in their private and communal lives; but also in their public and political lives as well.¹⁷ For them, "Christ must be the center and norm for Christian public engagement because Christ and his Spirit are at work, not just in our hearts, families, and churches, but also in our nations and the entire world."¹⁸ William Stringfellow [14] has argued – compellingly, I think - that the task of Christian life is to discern and follow the Word of God (Christ) in the common life in the world.¹⁹ This means that Christ is the foundation and example for the Christian's public engagement.

Writing from a Catholic viewpoint, Pope Benedict XVI [15], in *Deus Caritas Est*,²⁰ also showed the interconnectedness between faith and conduct in public life. Taking inspiration from his predecessor John Paul II²¹, Benedict XVI wrote:

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good."²² The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility.²³ Charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity".²⁴

For Benedict, the putting of faith into action in public life is itself an act of charity, and it remains an indispensable component of Christian life that all who profess Christ must embrace.

John Stott's seminal work, *Issues Facing Christians Today* situates in perspective the need for faith to be involved in the social dimensions of life which invariably communicates the idea of engagement in the public sphere. He poses the question, "Involvement: Is it our concern?" and goes ahead to state that it is imperative for Christians to be involved in social responsibility.²⁵ He has stressed that religious faith must be involved in social concern and social action.²⁶ Stott has traced these two activities of social concern and social action to the public ministry of Jesus Christ who not only went about 'teaching and preaching'²⁷ but also 'doing good and healing.'²⁸ Opuni-Frimpong [16],²⁹ who is influenced by John Stott's work has shown in his *Christian Ministry of Advocacy* the conviction for the church to keep her relevance, essence and impact on public life by calling for a reactivation and revitalization of the church's ministry of advocacy. He has maintained that the church has a meaningful role in contributing towards social transformation and development. He believes that the Church's involvement radiates the desire to serve the purpose of the cross.³⁰

¹⁴ Michael Nazir-Ali, "Christian Faith and National Belonging" in *Building a Better Bridge, Muslims, Christians and the Common Good*, edited by Michael Igrave. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 27.

¹⁵ Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz, *Public Faith in Action: How to Think Carefully, Engage Wisely and Vote with Integrity*. (Grand-Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016). See also: William Stringfellow, *A Private and Public Faith*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999); Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Volf and McAnnally-Linz, 3.

¹⁷ Volf and McAnnally-Linz, 3.

¹⁸ Volf and McAnnally-Linz, 3.

¹⁹ William Stringfellow, *A Private and Public Faith*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999).

²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*. (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), Number 29.

²¹ John Paul II's Post Synodal Exhortation *Christifideles Laici, the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* greatly animated Benedict XVI's position on this matter.

²² John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472.

²³ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* (24 November 2002), 1: (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 22 January 2003), 5.

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Number 1939.

²⁵ John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), 2-3.

²⁶ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, (Rev. Dr), "Christian Theology and Social Political Issues" (Lecture, Department of Religious Studies, KNUST, Kumasi, 2015/2016).

²⁷ Cf: Matthew 4:23: 9:35 RSV.

²⁸ Cf: Acts 10:38 RSV.

²⁹ Opuni-Frimpong is a Presbyterian Minister and the former General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana. He is also a part-time lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies KNUST where he lectures courses in Religion and Public Policy, and Christianity and Socio-Political Issues.

³⁰ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *The Christian Ministry of Advocacy*. (Accra: SonLife Press, 2015), 1-7.

Adom-Oware [17]³¹ also holds the view that faith has practical consequences on the lives of any group of persons. In his lecture, *The Gospel in Praxis*, he advances arguments for the involvement of religion in social issues. He has pointedly indicated that the Christian (the religious person) should be involved in renewing the temporal order, the face of the earth.³² He seems to be of the opinion that the Christian must be a witness of the Gospel values to the world in which he lives. Philip Giddings is therefore right, and in fact buttresses what Adom-Oware has stated in a unique way when he says that the most effective way to communicate the role of the Christian faith in public life is through the witness and service of Christian men and women in their daily lives.³³

In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*, the United States Catholic Bishops [18] have also mentioned that there is virtue in being a responsible citizen, and that it is morally obligatory for Christians to participate in the political life of their nations.³⁴ The bishops maintain that the commitment to participation in public life is rooted in the baptismal fidelity to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all that the Christian does. Their teaching flows directly from that Catechism of the Catholic Church which reminds that:

It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person ... As far as possible [all] citizens should take an active part in public life.³⁵

By this the US Bishops have reiterated the Catholic call to faithful citizenship by affirming the urgency of political participation and insisting that public service is a worthy vocation. They have further widened the discourse by calling it a necessity. In essence, we are called to life in the public sphere.

From the views expressed above, a few key takeaways here has need of further highlight. Contrary to the views that religious faith has no bearing whatsoever with public life, it is important to emphasize that religious faith is imbued with some public significance, and, in fact, has “an inalienable dimension,” hence making it imperative for religious faith to engage the public space. Also, Christians are called to bear witness of their faith in the public by perfecting the temporal order. This invitation is actually necessary and morally obligatory for Christians to show commitment to their participation in public life by promoting the Common Good, an indication that the life of the Christian must permeate the public space and improve it.

Muslim basis for Public engagement

According to Ball and Haque[19], Islam is not so much about *believing* in the faith but how Muslims *respond* to the faith, that is, “not so much a noun but a verb, an action.”³⁶ In fact, they argue that “Islam is tantamount to accepting a way of life – spiritually, politically, and socially, about how to behave in family and public life,”³⁷ Islamic values they contend impact on all areas of society. This idea lays some foundation that Islam is not decoupled from public life.

In *Islamic Views of the Collective*, Tariq Ramadan [20] has shown profound links of the public sphere with the idea of the *Collective*. He reveals that Islam has a strong message and teaching as to the direction of the human collective.³⁸ He maintains that there is a very clear message as to Muslims should deal with collective affairs, the public sphere. The collective affairs seems akin to the public sphere. In that chapter, Ramadan outlines two general Islamic principles on the public sphere.

First, with regard to the global sphere, he states that Islam teaches about what should be protected in a specific collectivity, in a specific society.³⁹ Thus from the Qur’an and Sunna, principal objectives that should be protected and implemented are extracted. Ramadan has identified these principles (*maqāsid*) as follows: the protection of *din* (religion),

³¹ Adom-Oware is a Ghanaian Catholic priest of the Catholic Diocese of KonongoMampong and an Emeritus Professor of Moral Theology of the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

³² Seth Adom-Oware, “*Catholic Social Thought*” (Lecture, Spiritan University College, Ejisu, 2015/2016, unpublished).

³³ Philip Giddings, *Voice of the Church in Public Life: A background paper from the Mission and Public Affairs Council*, October 2008.

³⁴ USCCB. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007), 4.

³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition, numbers 1913-1915. LibreriaEditriceVaticana-(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC 2000).

³⁶ C. Ball & A. Haque, Diversity in Religious Practice: Implications of Islamic Values in the Public Workplace. *Public Personnel Management*, 32 (3), (2003), 317.

³⁷ C. Ball & A. Haque, 315.

³⁸ Tariq Ramadan, “Islamic Views of the Collective” in *Building a Better Bridge, Muslims, Christians and the Common Good*, edited by Michael Igrave. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 73.

³⁹ Ramadan, *Islamic Views of the Collective*, 75.

nafs(personal integrity), *'aql*(intellect), *nasl*(everything that is connected with the family, its ties and relations), and *mal* (property).⁴⁰ The notions above are typically suited to the discourses of the public sphere as well as the Common Good.

Second, in relation to collective affairs, Ramadan maintains a clear understanding of a framework of interpersonal relationships governed by a state of law. This framework, he avers is founded on consultation and law. Muslims therefore need to be involved in governance and decision-making pertaining to the public sphere.⁴¹

Eickelman and Salvatore⁴² have also offered some discussions on Islam and the public sphere. Citing Taylor [10], they state that “reasoning and dialogue, shared understandings and practices underpin the public sphere in any historical era.”⁴³

One may thus deduce that in Islam, there is the call for dialogue, shared practices and understandings on matters that relate to the public sphere. We can state that Islam refers a positive attitude to one’s involvement in the public life in matters of shared interests. Now we turn our attention to the situation of Ghana and present arguments why religious faith remains crucial to its public sphere.

In the light of the Christian and Muslim views presented above, we derive some synthesis of those positions. It must be stated that both Christians and Muslims have greater concern for the promotion of the Common Good hinged on a framework of interpersonal relationships, which obviously spills out into the public sphere, and is characterized by dialogue, shared understandings and practices. The two positions also make it clear that one cannot decouple religious faith from whatever happens in the public sphere. Invariably, those who make up the public space, do so with their religious faith and they have some responsibility towards improving that space. One may therefore state, for example, about the case of Ghana, that when Christians and Muslims use their religious faith to contribute towards enhancing the Common Good, society’s progress and development would be positively affected.

Why Religious Faith Matters in Ghana’s Public Sphere

Ghana’s public space has deep religious underpinnings. Nine out of every 10 Ghanaians indicate some sort of religious faith affiliation. Statistics from the 2010 Population and Housing census give an interesting picture of Ghana as a religious nation. And, Richard Crook [21],⁴⁴ even maintains that Ghana is predominantly a Christian nation.⁴⁵ Figures from the 2010 census state that 94% of Ghanaians are religious. The breakdown of such religious composition are as follows: Christians 71.2%, Muslims 17.6% and adherents of African Traditional Religion 5.2%.⁴⁶ The Ghanaian religious composition perhaps corroborate how both John Mbiti’s [22]⁴⁷ and Geoffrey Parrinder’s [23]⁴⁸ arguments that the African is notoriously and incurably religious. Such high religious composition numbers cannot be left out when the issue of a vibrant public sphere. Invariably, the notion of a vibrant public sphere may be likened to a fluid society. This is because the members of society are those who make up the public sphere. Consequently, the effectiveness of any public sphere cannot be unanchored from the members who constitute that sphere.

A better public sphere is therefore the result of a better membership composition. This means that the first step to getting a better public space is to form a better human person. And, this formation process has mostly been animated by religious faith in Ghana. On such formation, Clay Tucker-Ladd [24] has quoted one anonymous writer thus:

Just in case you believe that great social problems are beyond your scope, consider this story: God said to me: Your task is to build a better world. I answered: How can I do that? The world is such a large, vast place, so complicated now, and I am so small and useless. There’s nothing I can do. But God in his great wisdom said: Just build a better you.⁴⁹

From the quote above, one can state clearly that the public sphere depends in full on the members who constitute it for its effectiveness, fluidity and vibrancy. Without the people who make up the public sphere, nobody can talk about it

⁴⁰ Ramadan, *Islamic Views of the Collective*, 76.

⁴¹ Ramadan, *Islamic Views of the Collective*, 77.

⁴² Salvatore &Eickelman, “Muslim Publics” in Salvatore, A. and Eickelman, D.F. (Eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good*. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004).

⁴³ Salvatore &Eickelman, “Muslim Publics, 10. See Charles Taylor, “Modernity and the Rise of the Public Sphere.” In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol 14. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ Crook is a public policy and development analyst.

⁴⁵ Richard Crook, *The Role of Faith-based Associations in political change and Development*. Policy Brief No. 5 (Accra: Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2005), 1.

⁴⁶ Ghana Population and Housing Census, 2010.

⁴⁷ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (2nd Edition). (Gaborone: Heinemann, 1990).

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*. (London: Longman, 1962).

⁴⁹ Quoted by Clay Tucker-Ladd, Why we need Values and Morals, Retrieved from www.talentdevelop.com on October 15, 2016.

at all. We can establish some correlation here between the people who make up the public space and the public space itself. The better the people, the better the public sphere. This means that when religious faith in Ghana with all its positive values are brought to bear in public life, the public sphere would be greatly enhanced.

Welsh theologian and philosopher Hywel David Lewis [25] corroborated that a living religious faith serves to integrate and animate the individual behavior in society, so as to give him confidence in meeting crisis and to introduce into his/her existence a stable central core as the basis for ethics.⁵⁰ The religious faith of people helps sculpt their understanding of reality. It thus shapes values, tastes, preferences, ideas and aspirations of people. Always, a people's perception of reality are not uninfluenced by religious considerations.⁵¹ In Ghana, as Nti-Abankoro [26a] notes, religious faith tends to equip adherents with such values as sense of purpose, selfless service, discipline, hard work, prudence, integrity, truthfulness, modesty, simplicity of lifestyle, love of neighbor as self.⁵² These values are also germane to the idea of the common good that remains an indispensable part of any vibrant and fluid public space.

Another reason why religious faith matters across the world, and Ghana in particular may be seen in the observation made by James D. Wolfensohn [27], a former President of the World Bank, arguing for closer collaboration of the World Bank and other development institutions with religions. He states:

Religious faith [remains] an omnipresent and seamless part of daily life, taking an infinite variety of forms that are part of the distinctive quality of each community. Religious faith could thus not be seen as something apart and personal. It is, rather, a dimension of life that suffuses whatever people do. Religious faith has an effect on many people's attitudes to everything, including such matters as savings, investment and a host of economic decisions. It influences areas we had come to see as vital for successful development, like schooling, gender equality, and approaches to health care. In short, religion could be an important driver of change ... (sic)⁵³

Wendy Tyndale has also made similar remarks on the role of religious faith in public life. She mentions that institutions now value the presence of faith-based groups in the public space.⁵⁴ She avers that "economic development programs will not be sustainable, even within their own terms of reference, unless they incorporate the spiritual as well as the cultural, political, social and environmental dimensions of life."⁵⁵

Nti-Abankoro [26b], also, in his *Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living* has indicated that bettering the conditions of human life demands that Christian and non-Christian citizens alike participate more fully in public life.⁵⁶ From his Catholic perspective, he believes that involvement in the public sphere is to allow everyone to contribute their quotas in a way that will benefit the common good, developing common political and social solutions that reflect the dignity of human life.⁵⁷ The Vatican II council exhorts that Christian must infuse the temporal order with Christian values by exercising their proper tasks in diligence and love, and collaborating with other citizens in line with their particular capability and responsibility.⁵⁸ By this Christians and Muslims are called to work towards the common good in public life "albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities."⁵⁹ Thus Christians and Muslims in Ghana must therefore fulfil their civic duties and "are never to relinquish their participation in public life, that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good."⁶⁰ When this is done, it will see to the furtherance and safeguarding of public goods such as order and peace, respect for human life and regard for the environment, justice and solidarity, and freedom and equality.⁶¹

⁵⁰ H.D. Lewis, *Philosophy of Religion: Teach yourself* (London: SCM Press, 1966).

⁵¹ Olav Fykse Tveit cited in Nti-Abankoro, I. "Linking the Formal and Informal Expressions of Christianity for Socio- Economic development: A case study of Selected Christians in the Kumasi Metropolis." MPhil Thesis unpublished, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2017, 4.

⁵² Ignatius Nti-Abankoro, *Linking the Formal and Informal Expressions of Christianity*, 4.

⁵³ James D. Wolfensohn, "Forward", Gerrieter Haar, (ed.), *Religion and Development*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), xvii.

⁵⁴ Wendy Tyndale, "Religions and the Millennium Development Goals," 216.

⁵⁵ Tyndale, "Religions and the Millennium Development Goals," 216.

⁵⁶ Ignatius Nti-Abankoro, "Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living" *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)*, Volume 2, Issue 5, May 2021, pp. 42-51. Available online at: <https://noyam.org/journals/ehass/> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2021251>

⁵⁷ Nti-Abankoro, "Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living" 42-51.

⁵⁸ Nti-Abankoro, "Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living" 42-51.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472.

⁶⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 42 cited in Nti-Abankoro, "Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living" 42-51.

⁶¹ Nti-Abankoro, "Christian Oughtness for Today: Biblical Perspectives for Christian Living" 42-51.

CONCLUSION

Every part of life has a public side. In fact, all of life as Volf and McAnnally-Linz have maintained, it is shot with “public significance.”⁶² The public thus cannot be separated out and dealt with apart from the rest of life. It is one dimension of human life that involves issues and institutions concerning the good of all, the common good. Public life therefore is seen as “life together in society.”⁶³ And, it is not the preserve of politicians or celebrities. Each and every human being lives a public life, because every life has a public dimension permeating it. The paper discussed the notion of the public, and why it is important for religions to be involved in that sphere from Christian-Muslims perspectives. The perspectives from Christianity and Islam were important to clarifying why the Ghanaian Christian or Muslim must engage in public life around the notion of the Common Good. The case is therefore poignant, in effect, that because the Christian or Muslim is also a member of society, s/he has a mandate, in fact, an irrevocable one to get actively and consciously in matters regarding of common humanity, i.e. the Common Good. This is the reason why we recommend that all religious people and people of goodwill, especially Christians and Muslims in Ghana that they be involved in the public sphere contributing to the common good, as such contribution remains indispensable towards the reflection of our common human dignity.

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