



Rethinking Development in Africa: Agenda 2063 and John Wesley's Socio-Political Theology

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Abstract

Africa remains underdeveloped despite many years of conceptualising, formulating and implementing different development policies and programs. Africa's developmental challenges have attracted attention from various stakeholders and many factors have been identified as contributing to the problem. The African Union, at its Golden Jubilee celebration in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in 2013, adopted a new development plan aimed at making Africa a key player in global affairs by 2063. Africa's new development Agenda has been engaged at various conferences and seminars. However, not much theological engagements with the document have been witnessed so far. The purpose of the paper is to explore how a contextual application of selected aspects of John Wesley's socio-political theology might catalyze the achievement of two of the seven aspirations set out in Agenda 2063. The main thesis of this paper is that human political activities are deeply rooted in God's political nature and hence must be exercised within God's sovereign rule. The paper concludes that the development of Africa must not only focus on socio-economic progress but also on moral/spiritual development. The paper contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussions on Agenda 2063 and provides Christians, political leaders in Africa and other stakeholders with theological framework for achieving a holistic and sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: *Africa; Agenda 2063; Development; Holiness; Political; Wesley*

Introduction

No human society is completely free from socio-economic challenges. The intensity of these challenges, however, varies from one part of the globe to another. Africa is among the continents with the highest levels of socio-economic and political problems. Africa's woes are partly attributable to pandemics that the continent has experienced recently. For example, the Ebola Virus Disease affected most parts of sub-Saharan Africa with its attending devastating effects on both African and global

economies. The first case of Ebola Virus Disease was recorded in Sudan in June 1976; Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) experienced an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease in August 1976. Since then, other parts of Africa (including Guinea, Liberia, and Ivory Coast) have experienced the disease in one form or the other. More recently, Africa's woes have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic which hit the world in March 2020, few months after the first COVID-19 infections were detected in the Wuhan city of China (in December 2019). Even though Africa has not recorded as much cases as Europe, North America, Asia and South America, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a relatively more devastating effect on the continent's economy.

One may be right in attributing Africa's socio-economic predicaments in recent times to pandemics. However, a critical analysis of the African situation reveals that the main hindrances to Africa's progress are rooted in socio-political structures and activities. Africa's socio-political structures and operations are the main reasons why the continent remains underdeveloped despite her abundant natural resources (including gold, oil, cocoa, mineral deposits, timber, and others), vast land of over 20 percent of the global land area (world's second-largest continent), and huge population of 14 percent of the world's population (UNCTAD, 2016). Therefore, the idea that Africa's underdeveloped situation is predominantly (though not exclusively) attributable to poor and ineffective socio-political structures and activities serves as the foundation for the discussions in this paper.

African leaders have responded to the continent's underdeveloped situation by the adoption and implementation of various policies and programs. One of such policies is the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa which the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) adopted in 1980 to increase Africa's self-sufficiency. This plan was meant to minimize Africa's dependence on Western countries by maximizing Africa's own resources. The Economic Redressing of Africa was another development program adopted by the African Union in 1985 toward Africa's economic progress. Again, at the beginning of 1988, Africa adopted the Alternative Structural Adjustment Program for Africa which launched the search for an African alternative framework to structural adjustment program that would simultaneously address both adjustment and structural transformation problems of the African economies (World Bank, 2000). In 2002, Africa adopted another plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, as a solution to Africa's development problems. This plan aimed at reducing poverty, placing Africa on the path of sustainable growth and development, checking the marginalization of Africa, and empowering women in Africa (African Union, 2001).

The implementation of each of these (and other) policies and programs yielded an improvement in Africa's development. However, the impact of these policies could not propel Africa's development to the desired level. These policies could not deal adequately with the challenges of poverty, high unemployment rate, frequent labor unrest, high illiteracy rate, local currency depreciation, bribery and corruption, and injustice, among others. The search for a more sustainable plan yielded the formulation of a continental strategic framework (Declaration) dubbed "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want." This strategic document was signed by African leaders (in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) in 2013 during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the formation of The Organization of African Unity/African Union. A successful implementation of this Agenda is expected to yield inclusive and sustainable development through unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance by the year 2063.

Since its adoption, the strategic plan has been engaged at different levels and from different (scholarly) perspectives. Yet, not much engagements from the theological point of view have been witnessed so far. Certainly, theological discourse on the Agenda needs a boost. Given the fact that Africa is a predominantly Christian society, there is the need to provide a theological model to direct the continent in her quest to becoming a powerhouse in the global economy. This paper addresses this need, by exploring how a contextual application of selected aspects of Wesley's socio-political theology might

catalyze the achievement of the first and third aspirations set out in the plan. The choice of Wesley in this exercise is informed by the fact that Wesley's society shares remarkable similarities with the contemporary African society and therefore, an application of Wesley's thoughts will be appropriate in dealing with Africa's challenges.

Aspirations of Agenda 2063

Africa's Agenda 2063 has sevenfold aspirations/goals. The first aspiration is to make Africa a prosperous continent rooted in inclusive growth and sustainable development. This requires "shared prosperity, which finances and manages its own growth and transformation" (African Union Commission, 2015, p.7). Here, the aim is to make Africa self-sufficient in all key aspects of societal development so that the continent's over-reliance on imported goods stops. The achievement of this goal will help stabilize African economies and local currencies.

The second aspiration is to make Africa a politically-united continent based on the ideologies of Pan Africanism and the vision of African Renaissance. Pan Africanism is the political ideology that holds that African indigenes have common interests and destiny that must be unified. African Renaissance calls for the re-birth of the African continent, the promotion of social cohesion, growth, development, values and ethics, and making Africa as a major player in global affairs (Daudu & Asuelime, 2019, 163). Through this, Africa is expected to emerge "as a united, strong, sovereign, independent and self-reliant continent that realizes full economic and political integration" (African Union Commission, 2015, p.7).

Thirdly, Agenda 2063 seeks to strengthen the principles of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, gender equality, justice and the rule of law in all African societies (African Union Commission, 2015, p.7). These are all prerequisites for socio-economic and political development. One of the main reasons why many African countries are underdeveloped is political instability. Political instability makes a country unattractive to investors and at the same time destroys the accumulated gains of a society. With a deepened democracy and the rule of law and justice (among others) in African societies, the continent can easily chart a new path of development, that will not only sustain her gains but also add significantly to the accumulated gains.

The fourth aspiration relates to the third; namely, to make Africa a peaceful and secure place (African Union Commission, 2015, p.7). Africa is a continent of many people with different socio-cultural, political and linguistic backgrounds. There is no human society that is completely homogenous. The diversity in human society is God-given. However, diversity (if not well-managed) may lead to self-centeredness and conflicts. There is, therefore, the need to promote unity in diversity in order to build a peaceful and harmonious continent where people can live in peace and develop their potentials.

Africa is a continent with a very rich cultural heritage. A sustainable and all-inclusive development of the continent cannot be achieved without adequate development and promotion of the culture of the people. Cultural development propels socio-economic development in many ways. In view of this, the fifth aspiration is to build an Africa that has formidable cultural identity, cultural values and ethics (African Union Commission, 2015). The development and promotion of African culture will not only serve as a resistance to cultural imperialism but will also emancipate Africans from the importation of Western and American cultures, which more often than not, leads to identity crises for many Africans.

Africa's sixth aspiration in Agenda 2063 is to have Africans and African-brewed resources driving the continent's development (African Union Commission, 2015). This is aimed at harnessing the potentials of African people, with particular emphasis on the youth and children. To this end, the continent will promote grass-root participation in decision-making in every area of societal development, including social, economic, political and environmental. This goal also caters for the needs and interests of children in national development.

The seventh aspiration is to have “Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner—Africa will emerge as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner with a bigger role in world affairs” (African Union Commission, 2015, p.7). This aspiration acknowledges that Africa cannot live in isolation. There is the need to partner other nations/continents. However, in partnering with other nations/continents, Africa must actively play a role in development and not passively receive what others have “cooked.” The achievement of this goal will reduce Africa’s over-reliance on foreign goods, and consequently stabilize local currencies.

Defining Development

Like any other terminology, the term “development” can be defined in different ways. The word “development” means “unfolding,” “growth,” “the fuller working out of the details of anything”, bringing out hidden potential, “change” in and “progress” of a society resulting from right actions (Harriss, 2014, p.35). Societal development refers to the change of a society from one state into a more advanced state (Harriss, 2014). Societal development is often measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), that is, “the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period” (Sepoy, 2022, p.17). Thus, a country’s level of development is often measured by its total Gross National Income. Given this understanding, development means realizing high GDP.

Aside using GDP to define development, one may also define the concept of development as the realization of full potential. In this sense, (inter)national development is understood as the creation of a conducive environment for people to realize their full human potential and live lives they value (Harriss, 2014). In other words, it means providing the conditions that give people the greatest opportunity to improve themselves based on their capacities. Gunda (2020, p.39) used the metaphor of a full-grown plant to explain development saying, “A plant is fully developed when it becomes fruitful because then it has realized its full potential.” Just as a plant is considered underdeveloped until its maturity, so societies are considered underdeveloped until they “mature” socio-economically. Given this understanding, it follows that socio-political activities must be geared toward enabling the citizenry to fully realize their potential regardless of the person’s gender, tribe or geographical location.

Defining development in terms of economic growth is widely accepted. However, economic development transcends economic growth; economic growth is just one aspect of holistic development. Confining development to the economic sphere (that is, economic growth) is, therefore, inadequate. Economic development has to do with growth accompanied by qualitative structural changes (that is, dramatic shift in a country’s production and employment structure) (Szirmai, 2004). It may be defined as the progress in productivity through the use of both traditional innovative means and modern technology, accompanied by improved living standards, provision of employment opportunities, improved transport and education facilities, improved health care and meaningful human interaction. It implies qualitative institutional and technological changes in the structures of a country in addition to quantitative progress in income, savings and investment.

Amartya Sen (1999) is among scholars who consider development as a broader concept than just economic growth or even economic development. Sen (1999) explained the freedom dimension of development as a country’s progress in expanding substantive freedoms and removing obstacles. The most important freedoms include “freedom from famine and malnutrition, freedom from poverty, access to health care and freedom from premature mortality” (Szirmai, 2004, p. 6). The freedom/welfare-oriented definition of development places human welfare at the center of human activities, and focuses on the quality of the lives of the people in the society. A society is deemed developed if the inhabitants have freedom and have their welfare needs met.

Each of the above definitions is well known and contributes to the overall understanding of the concept of development. These definitions consider development as a way of making life comfortable for

humanity. However popular these definitions are, they are inadequate for the purpose of this paper. These definitions (even if put together) fail to give a holistic understanding of human development. A holistic development of the human society transcends economic, social, political, and cultural aspects to include spiritual/moral and psychological transformation. Haynes (2008, p.190) serves us well with the following definition of “human development.”

The concept of ‘human development’ can be understood in various ways. Politically and economically, human development is concerned with stability, security and the relative prosperity of citizens. Socially, it relates to literacy, education, social relationships and, more vaguely, ‘the quality of life’. Morally, it involves development of conscience, moral awareness, and will and capacity to act according to societal and cultural knowledge of what is judged to be right – and in the developing world this overlaps considerably with religious and spiritual dimensions of life. Finally, psychologically, human development is to do with mental health, self-esteem, success in significant relationships, and happiness.

It is this holistic understanding of human development (provided by the above quote) that will guide the discussions in this paper. From this understanding, a society that is socially, economically and politically developed but lacks moral/spiritual or psychological wellbeing is underdeveloped. Holistic human development, therefore focuses on “societal stability, security and relative prosperity, with political, economic, social, moral and psychological dimensions” (Haynes, 2008, p.190). Given this understanding of development, there are a lot of so-called developed countries that are really underdeveloped.

John Wesley’s Socio-Political Theology

As stated earlier, this research considers how John Wesley’s socio-political theology might facilitate the achievement of two of the seven aspirations of Africa’s Agenda 2063. In this section, the paper outlines selected aspects of Wesley’s socio-political theology to be applied formulating theology of Africa’s development in the next section. The eighteenth-century England in which Wesley lived compares well with twenty-first-century Africa in many respects. Wesley’s society, like contemporary African society, was religiously and politically corrupt—the poor were exploited and neglected; people smuggled goods and evaded taxes; Christianity had become a superficial religion with virtually no impact on people’s public life; the judicial and security services were corrupt, and the society had been divided into social classes, among others (Boafo, 2014). Wesley developed his theology in response to these and other religio-cultural realities of his society. The next few sub-section deals with the foundations of Wesley’s socio-political theology, starting with his view on the political nature of humankind.

Political Image of God in the Humankind

Wesley’s socio-political theology is deeply rooted in his view on Christian anthropology. Anthropology is very important to the present study because one cannot talk of societal development without adequate understanding of the human person. Like many other Christian theologian, Wesley’s anthropology is founded on the biblical account of creation in the early chapters of the book of Genesis. Genesis 1:26-27 records the creation of humankind in the image of God (*imago Dei*). Created in the image of God, human beings not only have a special place in God’s creation but also differ from other creatures. The concept of *imago Dei* has been interpreted in different ways. For example, Grudem (2011, p.445-447) understands the *imago* in creative, relational, intellectual, spiritual and moral terms. Wesley on the other hand, considers the *imago* in three-fold. The first dimension is the natural image which comprises understanding (or reason), will (or volition), freedom (or liberty) and affections. The natural image of God in humankind denotes the faculties definitive of being human. The second image is the political image which comprises the faculties of leadership and management, making humankind the steward of creation. Humankind is the governor of this lower world (having dominion “over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” Gen. 1:28 NIV).

The third dimension of the *imago* is the moral image, comprising holiness, love and righteousness (Thompson, 2010). Wesley further taught that the perfect image of God in humankind was defaced by the fall of humanity and restored in the works of Christ (Outler, 1991). Overall, Wesley's concept of political image could be summarized as follows: God rules his creation through human beings who serve as channels of communication between God and his creation.

The moral aspect of the *imago Dei* gives the context for sin. For Wesley, the reason why sin entered the world is that humanity carries the image of God. Here, it is the moral image that Wesley has in mind. As Kim (2006, p.47) has noted, "the moral image is the expression of God's relation to humanity, a relation that can be corrupted and twisted through the destructive effects of sin." The moral image in human is the basis of divine-human relationship in terms of righteousness and holiness. It cannot exist apart from God. Wesley argued that the fall of humanity affected the image of God in humans. Consequent to the fall, humans became a corrupted and self-centered being, characterized by exploitation of the resources of the earth for their selfish interest; unjust beings who deny justice to the poor; ungrateful beings who fail to honor God and thank him for his works (Mpere-Gyekye and Brodie, 2019). This means that the recovery of the political image of God in human requires redemption. That is, it is only through salvation that humans can have their perfect political image restored. This issue will be examined further in the next sub-section.

Restoration of the Political Image

The restoration of the political image is achieved through salvation. From the Wesleyan perspective, salvation involves three divine acts of grace, namely; prevenient grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace is the divine grace that precedes human decisions on the road to salvation (Royster, 1989). It is God's means of partially restoring the *imago Dei* to humanity and removing the inherited guilt due to Adam's sin, thereby making humanity conscious of the need for salvation and hence enabling them to respond to his saving grace. Justifying grace is God's gracious act in restoring humanity to a right relationship with himself and consequently, forgiving our sins and incorporating the saved into the body of Christ. Cushman (cited in Royster, 1989, p. 85) defined justifying grace as "prevenient grace becoming triumphant." This triumph, however, requires human response to God's invitation to salvation. Justifying grace is rooted in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Because of God's justifying grace, he sees the repentant sinner as though he/she had not sinned. He imputes the righteousness of Christ on those who express faith in Jesus. From justification till death, one goes through the process of sanctification by means of God's sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the means by which God makes the believer holy and whole. Sanctification is a process by which one's love for God and neighbor is developed and perfected. From Wesley's viewpoint, holiness is the renewal of the complete image of God in humanity.

The acts of grace outlined above constitute the divine means by which the political image of God in lost humanity is restored. According to Mpere-Gyekye and Brodie (2019, p.148), God "initiates a consciousness of good governance patterned on the divine care for creation" by his prevenient grace, accepts humanity and restores in them his political image for the purpose of fulfilling "the divine vocation" by his justifying grace and causes humanity to embrace "social involvement in that humanity is to be a channel of blessing to the rest of creation" by his sanctifying grace. Therefore, after a person has been redeemed by Christ, his/her political activities must yield holistic development demonstrated by personal and practical holiness, which the next sub-section examines.

Personal and Social Holiness

Even though Methodism was an evangelistic movement, it had a political intent. According to Wesley (cited in Field 2015, p.178), Methodism was formed to "reform the nation and, in particular, the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land." Wesley's purpose was to reform the church and the

society through holiness. Holiness is therefore central to Wesley's socio-political theology. The eighteenth-century British society in which Wesley lived and ministered lack personal piety and genuine holiness (Boaheng, 2020). There were, however, a few people who eventually formed bands of renewal movements for the purpose of restoring Christian spirituality and holiness to the society. Wesley's response to this situation was his theological emphasis on Christian holiness and perfection (Boaheng, 2020). Christianity cannot be devoid of holiness; to be Christian is to be holy. For Wesley, holiness of life was "the aim of his life, the organizing center of his thought, the spring of all action, his one abiding project" (Jennings, 1990, p. 140).

Christian holiness, however, does not occur without salvation. Wesley explained this point by his metaphor of a house in which he stated that "the Christian faith to a house (representing holiness of heart and life), which has repentance as its porch and justification by faith (pardon, forgiveness, reconciliation with God) as its door" (Boaheng, 2020, p. 54). One cannot enter the house of holiness without passing through its porch of repentance and its door of pardon, forgiveness, reconciliation with God. Clearly, one cannot experience holiness without salvation.

Wesley's concept of holiness/sanctification comprises two interrelated aspects; namely, personal holiness and social holiness (Yrigoyen, 1996). Personal holiness/sanctification involves "total commitment to God, singleness of intention, centering one's life completely on God", includes "believing in, trusting, worshipping, initiating, and obeying God" and consists of "constant reliance on God's grace and using the gifts God gives to become what he intends us to be" (Yrigoyen, 1996, p.25). Social holiness, on the other hand, concerns the believer's relationship with his/her neighbor and the environment. Social holiness promotes justice and fairness within the institutions and structures of society. Wesley often described it with the triad of "justice, mercy and truth." Social holiness is suppressed by such acts as "envy, hasty judgment, pride, anger, injustice, greed, quarreling, intemperance, and neglecting other people's need" but promoted by holy habits such as "patience, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, justice, self-denial, sacrifice, and desiring the best for [one's] neighbors" (Yrigoyen, 1996, p.25). Personal holiness has to do with changes in personal attitudes and behavior patterns while social holiness deals with social relations, socio-political and economic structures that promote good governance.

Wesley emphasized social holiness (Kreider, 2008) but also recognized that both aspects of holiness are necessary for achieving a flourishing society. His emphasis on social holiness should be understood against the background of the privatization of Christianity in his society. He linked social holiness to *koinonia*, arguing that one needs others in heaven; therefore, it is proper to influence the society with Christian holiness and by so doing, help others to join you in heaven. He argued further that the *koinonia* dimension of holiness must go beyond ecclesial *koinonia* to affect the entire society. In other words, instead of realizing holiness individualistically, true Christian holiness must be realized within the socio-economic and political community (Aboagye-Mensah, 2013). In the next sub-section, the study explains further, what Wesley means by practical Christian holiness within the public space.

Socio-Economic Ethics

Wesley's society was hierarchical, as noted earlier. It compares well with the contemporary African society characterized by socio-economic classes. Wesley's theological conviction of the equality of human beings permeates his social ethics. As stated earlier, all humans no matter their race, gender, color etc. are equally human and must be treated as God's image bearers. Wesley ministered to people who were religiously, socially, economically and politically marginalized and became a voice for the voiceless (Aboagye-Mensah, 2013). He fought against slavery, considering it as inherently unjust and immoral. Based on information he gathered from traders and explorers, Wesley noted that Africa experienced justice, peace, prosperity, equity and reverence for God before the European slave trade set in

(Field, 2015). He considered slavery as something outside God's plan for humanity. God created humans to be free within his sovereign rule. Wesley condemned the cruelties associated with the slavery and preached that the blood of slaves was crying out to God for vengeance (Field, 2015).

Wesley's social ethic established a case against the slave trade institution itself (not just its associated cruel practices) based on the concepts of natural law and natural liberty (Wesley, 2007). He argued that slave trade is inherently evil because it contradicts justice and mercy. Slave trade practices are unjust because they inflict injury and pain on innocent people. Wesley lamented how the colonial laws had legitimized (legalized) the cruel punishments for enslaved people who resisted or sought to escape and drew the law makers attention to God's wrath against them. He also argued against the idea that slavery was economic necessity saying an economic necessity cannot justify depriving one of his/her fundamental human rights (Field, 2015). He stated: "It is impossible that it should ever be necessary for any reasonable creature to violate all the laws of justice, mercy and truth. No circumstances can make it necessary for a man to burst in sunder all the ties of humanity" (Wesley, 2007, p.72). He further argued against the idea that enslaved people are treated cruelly in order to make them work productively. He argued against those who considered Africans as stupid, stubborn, and wicked people who deserve the cruelties associated with slavery. For Wesley, Africans are not inferior to Europeans; the so-called stupidity, stubbornness, and wickedness were a product of the system of slavery (Wesley 2007). He considered Africans as intelligent beings who might even be more intelligent than their slave masters.

Close to the end of the eighteenth century, England witnessed economic instability that resulted in wide social and economic gaps between the rich and the poor (Sekyere, 2017). Peasant farmers and freeholders lost their lands to the rich for various reasons (including using the land as mortgage for loan) (Boafo, 2014). Having lost the means of living, the poor became vulnerable and attracted further socio-economic exploitation and abuses by the rich just as we have in contemporary Africa. Many people became homeless due to poverty, war, migration, famine, unemployment, and urbanization. Social structures did not favor the poor. Wesley criticized the social structures that created poverty and sought alternative ways of addressing the needs of the poor. He visited the poor, preached to them and shared his resources with them. He protested against discrimination against and oppression and exploitation of the poor. He visited prisoners and shared the gospel with them.

Wesley developed economic ethics to guide wealth acquisition, spending and sharing against the backdrop of the situation that prevailed in his society. As noted earlier, a wide economic gap existed between the poor and the rich, making the poor vulnerable to economic exploitation and ridicule. The rich continued to accumulate wealth while the poor suffered. Wesley responded to this situation by formulating an economic policy expressed as: "Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can." By this, Wesley encouraged people to work hard and acquire as much wealth/money as possible. However, Wesley's work ethics does not support any work that is destructive to the worker or to any other person. Therefore, it is unethical to engage in work that endangers one's life and/or negatively affects one's faith in and devotion to God (Macquiban, 2016). One should not value wealth more than life; human life is invaluable. Having gained all that one can, one is required to save as much as possible. For Wesley, one must spend only on necessities in order to minimize spending and maximize savings. It is to this end that Wesley (cited in Forell ed., 2013, p. 185) gave this instruction, "[w]aste no part of it [your money] in curiously adorning your houses; in superfluous or expensive furniture; in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books; in elegant rather than useful gardens." Given this understanding, it is unethical to buy things simply to please taste or other senses or to attract people's applause. Whatever one buys must be of necessity.

In the present African context, some people become poor because of poor saving culture. Even though Africa is still developing and has a high rate of illiteracy, many of its people use flashy cars and electronic gadgets. People buy expensive electronic devices (such as iphones, ipads and icomputers) and

use less than twenty percent of the functions in these devices. Simply put, many contemporary Africans spend their money on luxuries. Wesley's economic ethics frowns upon such habit. Wesley urged Christians to cater for their own basic needs (including food, clothing, shelter, health needs, education needs, and others) and those of their families (including spouse, children, and any other person in the household) (Macquiban, 2016; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). Spending moderately and only on necessities automatically increases a person's saving ability.

Saving as much as one can may lead to wealth accumulation. However, for Wesley, accumulating wealth when other lack basic resources is unethical. Therefore, Wesley's economic ethics requires people to share what they have saved with others. This means the acts of working and saving have their fulfilment in sharing rather than wealth accumulation. To sum up, Wesley's economic ethics underline that God is the ultimate owner of everything, and that humans have been entrusted with resources which must be used as God sees fit. God wills, that resources be used to meet human needs. Spending on luxuries while others remain in need amounts to robbing God.

An exhaustive treatment of Wesley's socio-political theology is beyond the scope of this study. The paper now proceeds to use what has been outlined above as a guide for rethinking development in Africa.

Rethinking Development in Africa

All the seven aspirations are worth-exploring. However, this paper concentrates on the first and the third aspirations as they relate more closely to Wesley's socio-political theology espoused above. The key issues considered (in this section) based on the selected aspirations are spiritual and moral transformation/development, inclusive growth/development, promotion of common identity, good governance (including justice and the rule of law). Each of the sub-sections below considers one of these themes.

Spiritual and Moral Transformation

Based on the foregoing discussion, spiritual and moral development must be the starting point in any discussion of the development of Africa. Africa's path to a sustainable development must start with spiritual and moral (psychological) remedies. Spiritual/moral transformation is the right tool to curb almost all factors that hinder development in Africa and any other human society. African Christians are very "spiritual" and this spirituality must have socio-economic and political ramifications. Spirituality should not be disconnected from daily living. Christians need to confront the public sphere with their spirituality and hold on to their biblical principles. This applies to all, whether one lives in a Christian-majority or a Christian-minority society. Genuine Christian spirituality "is a wholistic concept, a balance of good relationship with God and meaningful co-existence with fellow humans" and affects all aspects of human development (Nihinlola, 2013, p.143). This paper contends that such practices as corruption, improper disposal of waste and bad economic management all of which hinder Africa's progress can be dealt with through spiritual/moral transformation.

That corruption is a major hindrance to socio-economic progress in Sub-Saharan Africa is not in doubt. The 2021 world corruption ranking had South Sudan and Somalia ranked, respectively, the first and third most corrupt countries globally (Transparency International, 2022). The high rate of corruption in Africa results in ineffective institutions and weak democratic values which in turn hinder anti-corruption progress. Delia Rubio (chair of Transparency International) pointed out that "Corruption is much more likely to flourish where democratic foundations are weak and, as we have seen in many countries, where undemocratic and populist politicians capture democratic institutions and use them to their advantage" (Transparency International, 2019, p.1).

Various attempts have been made by different African countries to combat corruption but none has been effective. For example, in Ghana, the appointment of a Special Prosecutor by the ruling New Patriotic Party in 2018 gave the hope that the country's corruption rate was going to decline. However, the country has not seen any significant progress in its fight against corruption in spite of the resources directed toward fighting corruption. In Ghana, more than 70% of the population claim to be Christian (Census 2020). The high rate of corruption in Ghana attests to the fact that Christianity has not had adequate and sustainable impact on the society. This is also true for many other African countries. A spiritually-developed person will have the society at heart and avoid corrupt practices based on his/her love for God and humanity.

Many African societies are flooded with improperly disposed waste. Many African governments spend a lot of money on waste management. These societies characterized by improper waste disposal are not spiritually developed because a spiritually-developed society is inhabited by spiritually-developed/transformed people, who apply eco-theological principles to dispose of their waste properly. Spiritual underdevelopment is evident in the disposal of waste in the street, in gutters, and other unauthorized areas. Again, spiritually-developed person will not build a house at an unauthorized area which will later cause flood and destroy lives and properties. The use of chemicals for fishing and fishing in unauthorized waters is a characteristic of spiritual immaturity. Wesley's socio-political theology demands the church to effectively nurture its members and prepare them adequately enough to pursue societal transformation based on their own personal spiritual maturity and transformation. Thus, spiritual transformation is expected to address ecological challenges, corruption, and inefficiency, among others.

Inclusive Growth/Development

Another developmental strategy emanating from the selected aspirations and Wesley's socio-political theology is inclusive growth. Inclusive development is, growth accompanied by equal opportunities for the different classes, cultures, communities and genders in a society (Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2010). It may also be defined as "economic growth that results in wider access to sustainable socioeconomic opportunities for a broader number of people, regions, or countries, while protecting the vulnerable, all being done in an environment of fairness, equal justice, and political plurality" (The African Development Bank, 2012, p.2). The purpose of "Inclusive growth" is to give everyone the opportunity to benefit fairly from the national cake and hence improve his/her living standard. Inclusive development ensures levelled socio-economic and political playing fields for all, and has significant economic, social and institutional policymaking implications.

Over the years, most of the policies adopted for Africa's development have failed to achieve inclusive growth. The following example substantiates this assertion. When the United Nations held the Millennium Summit in September 2000, eight key Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set out to address socio-economic and political challenges across the globe. The prime focus of these goals was the reduction of extreme poverty by half by the year 2015. Most African countries achieved unprecedented gains in the 2000s. Ghana, for example, achieved the target of reducing extreme poverty by half in 2006 (nine years earlier than the MDGs target) (Coulombe & Wodon, 2007). At the face value, this is good news. However, a deeper analysis indicates that Africa's period of great growth did not yield any significant improvement in livelihoods of most Africa people. Rather, the economic growth widened the gap between the rich and the poor (Boaheng, 2020).

In rethinking development in Africa, Africa's socio-economic strategic interventions must go beyond focusing merely on how to achieve economic growth to include how the benefits of growth are distributed across various groups/regions within countries. In other words, Africa's economic growth must not only contribute to poverty reduction but must also bridge the gap between the poor and the rich. This approach is needed to deal with inequalities that characterize most African societies. It is hoped that

an approach of this nature will shield disadvantaged and marginalized groups from adverse shocks. The aim is not to have everybody owning the same amount of wealth but to provide everyone with life's basic necessities. The theology espoused in this paper demands policy makers to ensure Africa's development includes concrete and practical steps in ensuring that the vulnerable and marginalized groups are adequately catered for and given a conducive environment to improve their lives.

Common Identity

Even though Africa comprises people of diverse backgrounds, African people have certain common identities. Of interest to the present discussion is the African communal sense of life expressed aptly in the Ubuntu philosophy, *Ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("I am because of who we all are"). According to Tutu (1991, p.31), the concept of Ubuntu means "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours... A person is a person through other persons." Thus, contrary to the Western idea that "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito, ergo sum*), the African concept of humanity is "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share." The communal sense of life is underlined by the extended family system, which considers one's family as transcending the nuclear family (parents and their children) to include grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, among others. The nuclear family system was introduced to most African societies during colonialism. The extended family system is suitable for Africans because most Africans cannot survive without assistance from others.

Boaheng (2021, p. 220) identified three implications of the African communal worldview or the concept of *ubuntuism*. First, one's humanity is inextricably intertwined with the humanity of others. In other words, one cannot exist as human without the existence of other humans. Secondly, true humans prioritize life over wealth, power, fame or any other thing. Thirdly, leaders become leaders through their subjects. Given this understanding, the African communal sense of life collaborates well with the Wesley's view of human existence.

The communal sense of life must not only bind Africans together but must more importantly, promote sharing of resources, interconnectedness, compassion, generosity, harmony, solidarity, and human dignity among others. The practice of sharing implies that wealth belongs to a Sovereign God who has entrusted it to people. Therefore, one will account for the way he/she uses the resources entrusted to him/her. This principle flows directly from Wesley's principle on wealth accumulation, wealth sharing, and wealth acquisition. The principle of wealth acquisition, spending and sharing must be taken seriously to promote African development. The same principle can contribute immensely to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich.

Good Governance

Wesley's idea of the political image of God in human establishes government theologically in the doctrine of God (Weber, 2001, p.396). This idea requires all leaders to acknowledge the existence of a sovereign God who is the Creator of the resources that every government has and manages. The doctrine of divine sovereignty implies that no person, persons or community can exist as autonomous in the strict sense of the word. Human freedom must be exercised within the sovereignty of God. Human government has been instituted by the sovereign God who has delegated power to human leaders for a purpose (Rom. 13). One must exercise political power bearing in mind that God himself is the Governor and Sovereign Ruler, to whom all powers belong. Politics defined by the political image of God has the human person at center of the political process. From the Wesleyan perspective, human political systems and operations must yield social justice, respect for human rights, gender equality and the rule of law, among others.

Social injustice is one of the key factors hindering Africa's development. From the Wesleyan perspective, injustice is a sin that any society must avoid. Injustice is the main reason why the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen in most African countries. Agenda 2063 aspires to provide

practical steps to deal with injustice. In this regard, the church must prophetically speak against injustice. Israel's prophets emphasized God's distaste for injustice as a key message to the people. Amos, for instance, ministered in the eight-century BCE in a society characterized by injustice and oppression of the poor and needy. He forcefully cautioned the prosperous about God's impending judgment against such behavior as pride, luxury, selfishness, and oppression. In his time, commerce thrived (8:5), social classes existed (4:1-3), people lived extravagantly (3:15; 5:11; 6:4, 11), and the rich exploited the poor (2:6-7; 5:7, 10-13; 6:1-6, 12; 8:4-6). He responded to the situation by becoming the voice of the voiceless and preaching God's hatred for the maltreatment of the less privileged people (Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:7, 11, 24; 8:4-6). He climaxed his message by demanding that Israel should let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (5:24).

Good governance must demonstrate respect for human rights and dignity. K. A. Busia was a Ghanaian Prime Minister in the Second Republic and a Wesleyan theologian. He argued that the aim of any political activity must be "to create a democratic welfare society in which all may live a life of dignity and freedom, protected from destitution and from oppression" (Anane-Agyei, 2014, p. 7). Busia was speaking in the context of post-colonial Ghana, where people were recovering from the brutalities that characterized colonial rule. His statement, therefore, sought to define political conduct for the post-colonial community now ruled by Ghanaians themselves, with the responsibility of ensuring the respect for the fellow Ghanaians. Contemporary African societies are not under directly colonial rule. Therefore, the oppressions of people and disrespect for human rights and the lack of freedom that characterize some societies cannot be linked to any external influence. Busia further stated, that the progress made by the community must be measured by "the quality of the individual, by his knowledge, his skills, his behavior as a member of the society, the standards of living he is able to enjoy and by the degree of cooperation, harmony and brotherhoodness in our community life as a nation" (Anane-Agyei, 2017, p. 104).

In rethinking development in Africa, African leaders must respect the dignity of the fellow human beings and ensure that the citizenry enjoys freedom as enshrined in their constitutions. Learning from Wesley, Busia and Amos, African leaders must put structures in place to ensure justice. God demands justice from every person, more so from leaders because of their positions. People should not be denied justice because of their socio-economic status or political affiliation. In this regard, the church must oppose those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground by depriving the poor of justice in the courts. To sum up, this sub-section has argued that good governance flourishes only in an environment characterized by kindness and affection and benevolence and sympathy, as well as justice, fairness and righteousness.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore how a contextual application of selected aspects of Wesley's socio-political theology might catalyze the achievement of two of the aspirations set out in Africa's Agenda 2063. The two aspirations examined in this paper are (1) to make Africa a prosperous continent rooted in inclusive growth and sustainable development and (2) to strengthen the principles of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, gender equality, justice and the rule of law in all African societies. Based on these aspirations, the paper explored the following thematic areas: inclusive growth/development, promotion of common identity, good governance (including justice and the rule of law). The paper argues, after exploring Wesley's socio-political theology and relevant aspects of the African socio-political context, that no holistic and sustainable development can be achieved without spiritual/moral transformation demonstrated by both personal and social holiness. Christians must confront the public space with their faith. The obvious conclusion is that, in addition to all other strategic interventions, African leaders must engage the church to formulate practical ways by which every African

society develops spiritually/morally. Without adequate contribution by the church, Africa's development will simply be an illusion.

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