


# A political theology for the Ghanaian context from Christ's perspective

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One of the key challenges facing contemporary Ghana is ineffective political structures and leadership. Leadership failure is the main reason why Ghana continues to experience socio-economic challenges such as poverty, hunger, poor education system, poor road networks, injustice, high unemployment rate, human right abuse, and local currency depreciation despite the country's vast natural resources. Ghana's socio-economic problems continue to attract scholarly attention and yet, the problems persist. As a predominantly Christian nation, the church has a major responsibility to engage the country's political space by analysing and scrutinising political structures with the effect of charting a new path of socio-economic and political developments. This research was, therefore, conducted to contribute to the ongoing discussion by exploring how a contextual application of political and leadership lessons embedded in Jesus's teaching in Mark 10:35–45 might address the Ghana's political needs. The article is a qualitative research that analysed data collected from books, Bible commentaries, journal articles, and dissertations.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This research involves systematic and/or political theology, New Testament studies, and leadership and/or governance. It argues that for Ghana to overcome her political challenges, leadership must be seen as a position of service rather than an opportunity to amass wealth at the expense of others. The article contributes to the field of political theology in the Ghanaian setting.

**Keywords:** Ghana; corruption; Christianity; political theology; servant-leadership.

## Introduction

The fact that Ghana continues to experience poverty, high unemployment rate, corruption and many other socio-political challenges in spite of her abundant resources is worrying. Ghana's problems started many decades ago. After independence, the country started well but later failed woefully. In 2002, Ghana joined The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) because of her inability to successfully manage her economy. Ghana received debt relief amounting to US\$275.2 million in 2002, US\$290.8m in 2003, and US\$318.3m in 2004 (Bank of Ghana 2005:3). In spite of these reliefs, the country continues to face huge economic crises because of corruption, mismanagement of the economy, and other factors. Contemporary Ghana is characterised by poverty, hunger, diseases outbreak, poor education system, environmental degradation, poor governance, bribery and corruption, injustice, human right abuse, high inflation, high budget deficit, frequent power outages (referred to as *dumsor*), frequent labour unrests, and local currency depreciation. Ghana's dependence on external loans and grants keeps increasing, and this affects the country's attempts to be economically self-sufficient (cf. Ofori-Atta 2022:19–20).

The task of addressing the problems facing the country is the responsibility of all regardless of one's religious affiliation. However, Christianity, being the dominant religion, has a major role to play in providing solutions to life challenges confronting the general Ghanaian public. This article, therefore, contributes to the quest for a solution to Ghana's political challenges by drawing leadership lessons from Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:35–45 for contemporary Ghana. The choice of this text is motivated by the fact that the context that Jesus address compares well with the Ghanaian situation and the author's desire to give a Christological dimension to leadership. The article used a literary-based research approach to critically analyse secondary data – such as journal articles, Bible commentaries and books – in order to formulate a theology to address Ghana's needs.

Before delving into the issues, it is important to explain the expression 'political theology'. According to Cavanaugh and Scott (eds. 2007:2) political theology refers to 'the analysis and

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criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God's ways with the world'. Political theology simply refers to the ways in which theological concepts relate to politics or the religious thought about politically related questions. Key features of political theology are that it is biblically based, interdisciplinary, politically oriented, and contextually informed, among others (eds. Cavanaugh & Scott 2007:2; Forster 2020:19; Pears 2010:7–8).

With these introductory notes, I proceed to provide the biblical basis for the entire article. Detailed exegetical and background (historical and literary) discussions have been avoided to give room for a more detailed discussion of the socio-political issues in the text.

## Political-theological reading of Mark 10:35–45

### Misplaced leadership priority (vv. 35–37)

Mark 10:35–45 is meant to give a picture of leadership from a Christian perspective. In this account, two brothers – James and John – selfishly approached Jesus privately (v.35) and asked for places of highest authority and honour in his messianic kingdom (cf. 8:38; 9:1–2; 13:26) (Evans 2003:1088; Musiyambiri 2015:6–7). Given Jesus' teachings on renunciation of social power, one can feel his weariness as he listened to the two brothers. James and John were seeking selfishly to occupy such a position and use it in a similar way as leaders in their society used political power. James and John could be likened to leaders in the Ghanaian society who struggle for power not for the benefit of the community but for their own benefits. The leadership model that focusses on power rather than serve (as I point out later) contradicts Jesus' philosophy of leadership, which is based on dialogue, selflessness, servitude, and justice, among others. James and John mistakenly defined leadership in terms of prestige and acquisition of positions of honour and fame. It seems that their view of leadership was that of attaining higher rank and/or position.

### Jesus' decline of request (vv. 38–40)

In verse 38 Jesus clearly states that James and John have no clue what they are ambitiously seeking for. Jesus indicates that the positions they requested are reserved 'those for whom it is prepared' (v. 40). God the Father is the one to assign those positions to those for who he has prepared these places. God's reservation of seats for those intended for is mentioned in Exodus 23:20; Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Hebrews 11:16; those worthy of occupying these seats are probably those who serve with humility (Mk 10:42–44). Jesus' assertion that the places of honour are reserved for those intended underscores that 'in the kingdom of God, knowing who can pull strings is not what determine honor' (Cole 2006:1216). The two brothers were close associates of Jesus; yet they would not get the places of honour if these places

were not intended for them. In the light of verses 45, these places are intended for those who qualify, the qualification being one's willingness to serve others rather than being served by others. Jesus' statement was not repudiating the vocation of leadership; rather, he was only insisting that leadership is transferred executively to those who are ready to serve rather than to dominate.

Those worthy of occupying these positions are those who are determined 'to build an egalitarian community that embraces the poor and honors them in God's kingdom' (Ajambo 2012:189). To some extent, Jesus refused them the places they asked for because he wanted them to appreciate what true leadership is and be willing to lead others according to godly principles before they could be given key leadership roles. He wanted them to understand that leadership means 'decoding the old social order of society and constructing an egalitarian community as opposed to a faction or patronage group' (Ajambo 2012:189). Thus, Jesus' failure to grant John's and James' request was partly because of their wrong perception about leadership.

### Competition among the disciples (v. 41)

When the news of the private request got to the other 10 disciples, they became indignant with the two brothers (v. 41). The other 10 disciples also had selfish ambitions. They worried because they knew that if the two got the two positions of honour, then the others were going to lose out and become servants. They failed to realise that it is through servitude that one becomes great in God's kingdom. They had equally failed to understand and apply Jesus' teachings about the proper view of power and honour. The indignant reaction by the other 10 disciples prompted Jesus' third teaching about discipleship – he first exhorted his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him (8:34–37) and later taught them the value of servanthood in true discipleship (9:35–37). Verses 42–45 focus on Jesus' teaching about the true meaning of leadership and power.

### The true meaning of leadership and authority (vv. 42–45)

In the midst of confusion about the right approach to leadership, Jesus taught his disciples the differences between kingdoms ruled by unbelievers (pagan) and the kingdom of God (vv. 42–44). Gentile-leadership is characterised by lording it over others (throwing their weight around) and the exercise of authority (playing the tyrant) (v. 42). By contrast, those who want to be great in the kingdom of God must be servants and those who want to be first among others be slave to all (vv. 43–44). Jesus concludes that the Son of Man did not come to have servants but to give himself to be a servant. He voluntarily veiled his greatness and glory (cf. 8:38; 13:26), and then incarnated as God's servant (Ps 49:5–7; Is 52:13–53:12; Phil. 2:6–8) not to be served by others but to be the servant of all (Mk 2:17; 10:46–52; Lk 22:27) (Lane 1974:383) and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The leadership style and philosophy of Jesus disciples are to be substantially different from those of leaders in the secular world in at least three respects. Firstly, greatness in leadership is expressed in service to God and humanity. Humility, evidenced in one's willingness to serve others, is the mark of those who desire to be first (Gruenler 2008:786; Matagora 2022:25). Greenleaf (2002:27) asserts that: 'The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead'. An illustration of this fact is Jesus' act of taking a little child in his arm and encouraging his disciples to serve 'little children', that is, the helpless and by doing so welcoming Jesus and the Father who sent him (9:36–37). Jesus is the epitome of greatness because he lived his life in humble service to humanity.

Secondly, leadership requires sacrifice for the benefit of others. In the Good-Shepherd pericope of John 10, Jesus speaks five times about laying down his life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17–18). He made this great sacrifice on the cross for the benefit of sinful humanity. He committed no sin to deserve death but as a great leader, he willingly died so that humankind will live (cf. v. 45). Similarly, he requires his disciples to prioritise the welfare of their followers and demonstrate genuine care (Adeyemo 2006:546).

Thirdly, kingdom leaders are not to consider themselves as having supreme power; they are to realise that their authority to rule comes from God (Rm 13:1–2), therefore, they must rule as servants of God. Such leadership is dialogical, allowing people of all social classes to express their views and to participate in the governing process. Leadership of this kind upholds justice, respect for human rights and human dignity, and opposes exploitation of the weak in the society.

Having presented the aforesaid political-theological study of Mark 10:35–45, I now proceed to examine the political situation in contemporary Ghana.

## The contemporary Ghanaian religio-political setting

Contemporary Ghana faces a lot of religio-political issues. However, for the sake of this work, I focus on corruption and religious issues.

### Corruption

Corruption is a global problem. It is one of the main reasons for Ghana's chronic underdevelopment and backwardness. Like other terminologies, 'corruption' defies a single definition. From the Latin expression '*cur-rumpo*' – which means 'to break completely; to destroy, annihilate, ruin, spoil, waste; to falsify, adulterate, pervert, degrade, seduce, mislead; to gain by gift; to bribe' (Christian Council of Ghana 2002:8–9), – corruption denotes any human act that destroys social harmony and prevents people from experiencing the fullness of life. The National Anti-Corruption Coalition (NACC) (2011:23) defines corruption as 'the misuse of

entrusted power for private gain'. Corruption is injustice, antisocial and inhuman.

In Ghana, corruption in its varied forms takes place in both the private and public spheres. However, the effects are particularly horrible within the public sector where people in authority use their power in immoral ways for their benefits. The probability of detecting and punishing corruption in the private sector is higher than in the public sector. Consequently, the incidence of corruption (i.e., cases of corruption detected) is not as much in the private sector as in the public sector. Those in the private sector seem to be more law-abiding because they know that they can be easily found and punished if they act in a corrupt manner. Corruption in its varied forms takes place in both the private and public spheres; including bribery, fraud, nepotism, extortion, and embezzlement (Kunhiyop 2008:165). Corruption perpetuates poverty of the nation by diverting state resources intended for development and thus incapacitating the government of providing basic services to the people (Annan 2004:iii). Because of corruption 'state expenses are not used effectively or even efficiently, but according to individual and corporate profit interests of high-ranking politicians, influential middlemen and big international businesses' (Koechlin 2008:16).

In the next section, I present some of the cases of corruption in Ghana in the past three decades.

### Selected recent cases of corruption in Ghana

Corruption remains a major challenge in Ghana despite various attempts to curb it. Since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1993 to begin the Fourth Republic, the country has remained relatively peaceful under different constitutionally established governments. Christianity has also 'flourished' in these years with the Christian population reaching 71.3% in 2021 as indicated in the last national population and housing census (Ghana Statistical Service 2021:58). Paradoxically, the politically stable and religiously flourishing Ghana is characterised by corruption in various sectors of the economy as shown in the following survey.

All the former presidents in the Fourth Republic have had corruption allegations levelled against them. Former President J.J. Rawlings, for instance, was said to have abused his office. To be specific, it was alleged that a whopping amount of US\$7m cash got missing from a total of US\$10m that was allocated for the refurbishment of the Tema Food Processing Factory (Andoh 2021:32). Rawlings was also accused of not making the sale of most of the state-owned companies transparent. The purchase of Nsawam Cannery Company (a state-own company) by Rawlings' wife was cited to support the alleged political prebendalism and patrimonialism in his government. In addition, a number of Rawlings' appointees were jailed for political corruption that resulted in financial loss to the state (Andoh 2021:32).

Rawlings' successor, President John Agyekum Kuffour was also not free from corruption allegations. People levelled charges of abuse of political power against him. The purchase of the African Regent Hotel by Kuffour's son at a cost of US\$3.5m became a major issue in the country (Andoh 2021:33). The President declared the uncompleted hotel building, which was close to his private residence, as posing security threats to him and so had to be sold to be completed and used. The hotel project was funded by Prudential Bank, a Bank part-owned by Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), a state-owned enterprise, and by the National Investment Bank (NIB), another state-owned bank, and by the ECOWAS Regional Investment Bank (ERIB), which advanced US\$1m to the hotel. Given that President Kufuor was the Chairman of ECOWAS and Mr. J.S. Addo, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Prudential Bank, was his representative on the ERIB and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of ERIB at the time that his son purchased the hotel, one sees a clear conflict of interest, prebends, and patrimonialism in this case (Andoh 2021:33). Nonetheless, an investigation in the issue cleared the president of corruption.

The John Dramani Mahama's government was not corruption-free either. It was also charged with a number of high-ranking and highly-publicised cases of corruption (Rahman 2018:5). In November 2013, a former deputy communication minister, Honorable Victoria Hammah, was dismissed after she was recorded allegedly saying that she would stay in politics until she made \$1m (Andoh 2021:34–35; Odartey-Wellington 2014:2). In December 2015, a former Minister for Transport, Honorable Dzifa Attivor, resigned after she was investigated for winning and executing a contract that made her spend GH¢3.6m on rebranding 116 buses (Andoh 2021:35). The incidence prompted many Ghanaians to question how that outrageous budget could be approved by the President.

In 2016, President Mahama was also alleged to have received a bribe in the form of a Ford Expedition from a Burkinabe contractor to help him secure a road-building contract in Ghana (Kpodonu 2020:10; Laary 2016:Online article). The president denied the corruption allegations and claimed that the vehicle was a gift, which he received and added to the Presidential car pool as a state property (Kpodonu 2020:10; Laary 2016:Online article). The incident was considered by some public personalities as a breach of the provisions of Ghana's laws, a conflict of interest, and a shameful act that merited impeachment (Laary 2016:Online article). Although the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) later cleared the president of bribery, he was found guilty of breaching government rules regarding the acceptance of gifts (Andoh 2021:34; Quayson 2016:74).

Nana Akuffo-Addo's government took over from Mr. Mahama on 07 January 2017 and has ruled till date (June 2023). In 2017, the internal audit of the National Youth Employment Agency identified approximately GHc 50m (US\$11.1m) payroll fraud in the agency (Rahman 2018:5). The

year ended without any evidence of the government holding anyone responsible for this fraud (Andoh 2021:34; Hawkson 2018:Graphic Online). In the same year (2017), the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana was entangled in a corruption scandal, as some high-ranking members of the commission accused each other of fraud and maladministration, including awarding contracts illegally, embezzlement of funds, and perceived political nepotism (Andoh 2021:34). After a thorough investigation conducted by the EOCO probing the allegations, the chairperson of the Commission, Mrs. Charlotte Osei, and her two deputies were charged with corruption and incompetence, and subsequently dismissed (Andoh 2021:34; Rahman 2018:6).

In February 2018, a former National Coordinator of the defunct Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA), Mr. Abuga Pele, and a businessman, Mr. Philip Akpeena Assibit were convicted and charged with to a total of 18 years in prison for wilfully causing a loss of GH¢4.1m (i.e., about \$332356.00 in March 2022) to the state of Ghana (Andoh 2021:34; Hawkson 2018:Graphic Online). In September 2019, the acting Board chairperson of Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), Adelaide Ahwiring, was tied in a conflict of interest scandal involving the rental of two of her buildings to the GRA at an exorbitant amount of GHc 1.4m per annum (Andoh 2021:35). In November 2022, President Nana Akufo-Addo sacked Mr. Charles Adu Boahen, the minister of state for finance, after an expose alleged that the minister had taken bribes from some mine investors. The President referred the issue to the Special Prosecutor for further investigations.

Ghana's judiciary service is the third arm of government; its key responsibility is the interpretation of the law. Despite the constitutional and legal protection given to this arm of government to enhance its services and to be independent, the judicial service is also plagued with the menace of corruption and bribery (Ofori 2018:29). A 2007 study within selected courts in Accra, Tema, and Kumasi had more than 52.0% of the judges and magistrates, 64.2% of lawyers, and 51.3% of litigants perceiving judicial corruption as a reality (Ghana Integrity initiative cited in Amankwah, Bonsu & Peter 2017:3). Later (in 2011) three lawyers of the Ghana Bar Association also asserted that the judicial service is corrupt (Amankwah et al. 2017:3). Several allegations of corruption were levelled against the judiciary service, but they were considered as mere perception (probably because of lack of empirical evidence to back the claims).

In 2015, Ghana's undercover investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas, released a documentary accusing 180 judicial officers, 34 judges, and hundreds of prosecutors and prosecutors of bribery for favourable rulings between 2013 and 2014 (Kpodonu 2020:11; Rahman 2018:8). Consequent to the expose, 22 circuit court judges and magistrates were suspended, 12 Supreme Court judges were investigated while 20 magistrates and judges were dismissed (Kpodonu

2020:11). However, no criminal charges were filed against any of the judicial officers found to be corrupt (Rahman 2018:8). Anas's exposure served to confirm some previous allegations that were levelled against the judiciary.

Corruption is also present in the sporting sector. In June 2009, the then President John Evans Atta Mills asked a Member of Parliament and Minister of Youth and Sports, Honorable Mubarak Muntaka, to step down following investigations into a number of allegations of financial negligence and abuse of power that were levelled against him. Honorable Muntaka was asked to refund the embezzled funds (Andoh 2021:34). The 2014 FIFA World Cup tournament was marred with a lot of corruption allegations against the then Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, Mr. Elvis Afriyie Ankrah, and the then President of the Ghana Football Association (GFA), Mr. Kwesi Nyantakyi. Ghana performed poorly in this competition as compared to their performance in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa in which they reached the quarter-final stage. In Brazil 2014, the Black Stars only picked a point with Germany and lost by two goals: one to United States of America and another to Portugal. After the competition, pictures of Mr. Elvis Afriyie Ankrah eating coconut with some other Ministers of State popped up on the social media. Mr. Afriyie Ankrah is alleged to have said, during interrogation, that the cost of a coconut in Brazil was about \$200. The issue of airlifting about 3m dollars as estimated bonus for players also popped up. A committee was formed to investigate the matter but no one was prosecuted (Powell 2021:Opera News).

In 2018, Anas aired an investigative documentary titled 'Number 12', which uncovered extensive corruption in Ghana's football industry (Allotey 2018:np; Rahman 2018:6). The documentary showed match referees bribed to favour particular clubs and match officials and football administrators involved in match-fixing businesses (Allotey 2018:np). It was also alleged that the selection of players into the Ghana national team involves the payment of bribe. In all, 77 Ghanaian referees and 14 GFA executives were caught up in a slew of corruption allegations (Oteng 2018:np; Rahman 2018:6).

In the video, the then president of the GFA, Kwesi Nyantakyi, claimed to have huge influence on many sectors of the Ghanaian economy. He also claimed that a bribe was required to facilitate business transactions involving Ghana's president and vice president (Rahman 2018:6). In addition to banning him from all football-related activities for life, Fédération internationale de football association (FIFA) also fined Mr. Nyantakyi an amount of about GHS 2.4m.

## Causes of corruption

A number of socio-economic and political factors account for the rise in the rate of corruption. This section outlines some of these factors. Firstly, corruption may be the result of low salaries of public administration employees (state officials), which makes people look for illegal ways of earning

additional means (Asante 2014:101; NACC 2011:28). In a developing country such as Ghana, the salaries of public-sector workers are not able to meet the demands of the rising cost of living. In such a context, some people use every available opportunity to make extra money without considering the ethical issues associated with the means. One may resort to asking for bribes when rendering services to people. Those who do not give bribe suffer from 'The Go-come-go-come' approach, that is a situation whereby the service to be rendered to a person is delayed unduly. For example, the worker may deliberately refuse to work on the file of those who fail to offer monetary gifts and work on those who offer him and/or her gifts irrespective of who deserves to be served first. To avoid this, some people pay bribe and have their requests granted as early as possible.

Secondly, corruption may also happen because of weak democratic values and ineffective state institutions (Transparency International 2019:1). More often than not, corruption flourishes in societies that have weak democratic foundations, which makes it possible for selfish politicians to capture and use state institutions for their personal gain. Even though Ghana has practised democracy for a relatively long time, her democratic institutions are still weak and non-transparent, and hence unable to support anti-corruption efforts. Thus, the Ghanaian environment makes it possible for the politically powerful to pay their way through. Institutional weakness makes it difficult to implement laws and policies that would otherwise ensure transparency, probity and accountability (Transparency International 2019:27). More so, the weakness in state institutions makes it difficult to detect and caught corrupt people.

Thirdly, corruption in Ghana remains a problem to the nation because of extreme acquisitive greed and avarice of some people (Asante 2014:104). According to the Christian Council of Ghana (2002:2), the human predisposition for greed that yields certain corrupt activities 'is what in the human being could be baser and more bestial than even the beast'. Carnivorous animals usually kill to satisfy their hunger and/or to protect themselves. Once they are full and are not threatened by anyone, a lot of their preys may pass around unharmed. On the contrary, greedy people are never satisfied no matter how much wealth they accumulate. Such people are self-centred and show no love for their neighbours (Asante 2014:104). Most Ghanaians respect and adore wealthy people without questioning where they got their riches from. Consequently, there is pressure on people to get rich no matter how they make it. This is part of the reasons why many Ghanaian youth have developed the get-rich-quick attitude and are engaged in all sorts of activities for make it in life. This situation promotes corruption in the society as people see it as a means of getting rich quickly and enjoying societal acceptance and prestige.

Fourthly, the seeming immunity of persons in authority from prosecution is also another contributor to the rise in corruption in Ghana (Asante 2014:103). Oftentimes, people involved in corrupt practices are suspended or dismissed

rather than being prosecuted. In the few cases where corrupt persons are prosecuted, their sentences do not serve as deterrent for others. Their sentences are of lower standards as compared to what ordinary persons receive for the same or similar crime. The reason is that corrupt people are usually persons with political power of one form or the other. Even though on paper, the law is no respecter of persons, in reality, senior public officials and politicians seem to enjoy some immunity from prosecution. Therefore, although occasionally one or two politicians may be made scapegoats, in most cases, corrupt senior public officials use their political power, fame and wealth to manipulate the judicial system and get away with high-level corruption (Asante 2014:103).

Fifthly, corruption persists in Ghana because of the lack of commitment to society (Adei 2018:13; Asante 2014:103). Most Ghanaians consider the government as detached from their personal actions. The fact that everyone is part and parcel of the government and hence needs to protect the public purse is not popular among the citizenry. Hence, they consider such actions as pilfering, stealing, under invoicing, over invoicing, and smuggling as affecting the government but not them. People undertake all sorts of corrupt activities and think 'after all it is government's money'. Because of their failure to recognise the overall effect of their action on the general well-being of the nation, they keep on undertaking corrupt activities.

The high levels of economic and political monopolisation also makes corruption perpetuate in the Ghanaian society (Asante 2014:103). In Ghana, certain economic activities are regulated, limited, and monopolised. For example, only a few people (usually people who have been loyal to the ruling party) are allowed to import certain commodities. Contracts are given to party members at inflated costs so that they can save money to help the party during the campaign season. The restrictions placed on certain areas of the Ghanaian economy encourages people to offer money to those in higher authority in order to avoid these restrictions. Politically, Ghana's fourth Republic has been dominated by two political parties, namely the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The political dominance of these two parties also serves as a motivation for corruption. This is because when one of these parties is in power, it does not (seriously) prosecute members of the opposition who might have been involved in corruption. The ruling party knows that in the near future, it will also be in opposition and may be paid in its own coin.

## Religious issues

Leadership crisis in Ghana is not limited to the political sphere; it is also found in the religious sector. The church, which is expected to be the salt of the world, also finds itself in leadership crisis. Many church leaders are characterised by the exploitation of the vulnerable, the commercialisation of the gospel, arrogance, and others. Many ministers of God take advantage of people's situation and charge them huge sums of money before even attempting to address the

problems (Umoh 2013:663). Obeng (2014:32) rightly observes that deliverance practices in Ghanaian churches are characterised by 'the demand for monetary support from the vulnerable in exchange for blessing....' The signal these religious leaders send to their audience is that God's 'blessings can be bought or earned' (Obeng 2014:37). These leaders buy airtime to advertise themselves not to preach the gospel. They prioritise money rather than the salvation of their followers (Obeng 2014:37; Umoh 2013:663).

Aside from the commercialisation of the gospel, the current Ghana religious landscape is also characterised by the human right violations. Healing and deliverance meetings abound where worshippers' human rights are blatantly violated. There is also a high level of arrogance among some religious leaders in Ghana. Some religious leaders project themselves as if they were Christ. Large billboards are erected for projecting founders of various churches rather than projecting Christ. The misuse of the social media by some Christian leaders has prompted the Methodist Church Ghana to ban the use of photographs (of ministers, speakers or any other church official) in publicising church activities. Clearly, there is a shift of focus from Christ and his gospel to human leaders and their gifts. There is a shift in focus from pursuit of God's kingdom and his righteousness to the accumulation of wealth and the fixation on earthly gratification. One therefore, agrees with Asamoah-Gyadu (2012) that today's church is:

[C]ommitted not to the core business of mission or the things of the Spirit as defined by the Cross, but carnality that manifests in foolish jesting, ecclesiastical pomposity, and the exploitation of the Gospel for economic gain. (p. 140)

Consequent to the aforesaid situation, the church in Ghana has not had much impact on the public space, considering the fact that 72.1% of the populace profess to be Christians. Atiemo's (2016:7) description of contemporary Ghana Christianity as 'clouds that gather without giving rains' is on the basis that the large Christian gatherings that take place in the country frequently fail to cause the required change in the socio-political lives of worshippers.

Using the Ghanaian political situation outlined here and the theological exposition on Mark 10:35–45 as contextual frameworks, I move to the section to formulate a theology of leadership for contemporary Ghana.

## Towards a theology of leadership

### Leadership and service

Power in Ghanaian politics is usually associated with the negative exercise of authority by individuals who take advantage of the vulnerability of some citizens to exploit and oppress them. Politicians seem to forget their promises to the electorate, the moment they assume power. Many politicians easily become corrupted by power as evident in the numerous cases of political corruption in the country as well as various cases of abuse of political power where leaders exert dominance over their subjects (Boyo 2021:182). Because of the advantage and privileges they enjoy as leaders, most Ghanaian

politicians do all they can to retain their power. Our political leaders refuse to serve; they actually wait to be served by others. This model of leadership is not biblical and normally results in leadership crisis. To remedy this situation, there is the need to project and promote servant leadership model at all levels of leadership.

Contrary to the worldly leadership model of the leader waiting to be served, Christian leadership is about service to God and humanity. Given this understanding, both religious and political leaders ought to demonstrate their preparedness to live in this city (of God) eternally by leading selflessly in humility and service. The political-theology data gleaned from Mark 10:35–45 also underline that a leader's status is a measure of the magnitude of service rendered to the society. Jesus epitomised this principle by exercising power in meekness and death on the cross, to reveal his 'power as constructive power, self-giving and service that bring others into being'. Authority, from Jesus example, is simply selfless, other-centred and sacrificial service to God and humanity. Greenleaf (2002:27) asserts that: 'The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead'. Thus, leadership is not about position, titles and lordship, but rather about service in humility.

Ghanaian political leaders must learn from Jesus's paradigm, seeing their position as a privilege to serve rather than an opportunity to exploit their subjects. Like Jesus, who condescended, incarnated and lived among humans, serving them and not letting them serve him, political leaders must come to the level of the ordinary Ghanaian and serve the society. The service perspective of leadership is not new to the traditional Ghanaian worldview. The Akan word for 'minister' is *soafɔɔ* [literally, the one who carries something]. The designation of the leader as *soafɔɔ* underscores the responsibilities that the leader carries on their shoulder to address the needs of their subjects, a concept that echoes the Messiah's concern for the burdens of his subjects (cf. Is 9:6). The expression 'the government will be on his shoulders' (in Is 9:6) is a Hebrew idiom meaning 'to carry the burdens of the people in the kingdom'. The climax of this burden-carrying activity was his crucifixion on the cross, an event that made him carry the sin of the world. Leadership must, therefore, not be perceived as a position of prestige and privileges but as a position of responsibility that requires one to show genuine care and compassion for their followers through service. By accepting leadership positions, a person becomes the primary bearer of the society's burdens. This does not mean that only the leader must care for the needs of the society. Rather, it means the leader must lead the crusade for improved living standard in the society.

Finally, servant leadership is 'supportive, with authority at the bottom of the pyramid and followers being served by the leader and subject to the nurturing oversight of the leader', as opposed to worldly leadership that is 'suppressive with authority [concentrated] at the top of the hierarchy and

followers being lorded over and dictated to by those in authority' (Estep 2005:46; cf. Figure 1). This principle derives from Jesus' teaching about leadership in Mark 10:35–45.

This servant model of leadership (Figure 2) checks the abuse of power because it prevents the leader from dictating to the subjects. In Ghana, the servant leadership model has the potential of making the ordinary person have the greatest possible benefit from the political activities that go on.

### Leadership and moral integrity

Leadership failure can also be checked by maintaining moral integrity (Aboagye-Mensah 2020:50; Estep 2005:50). The cases of corruption in the society and the religious abuses outlined earlier suggest moral failure as one of the key failures in leadership in contemporary Ghana. The lack of

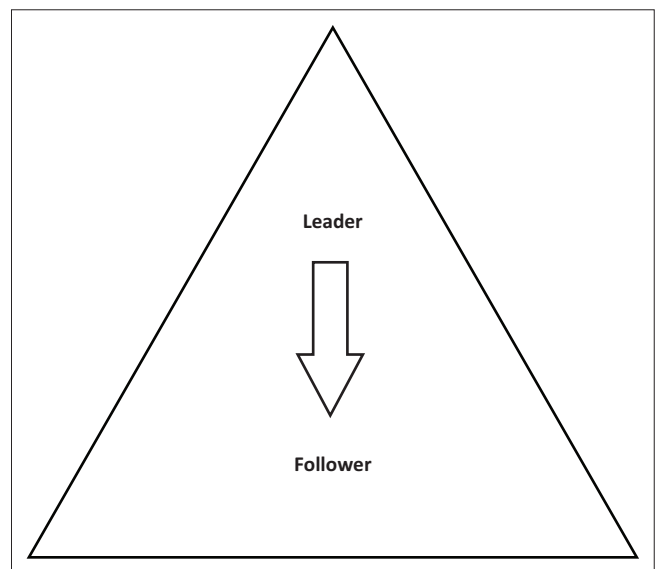
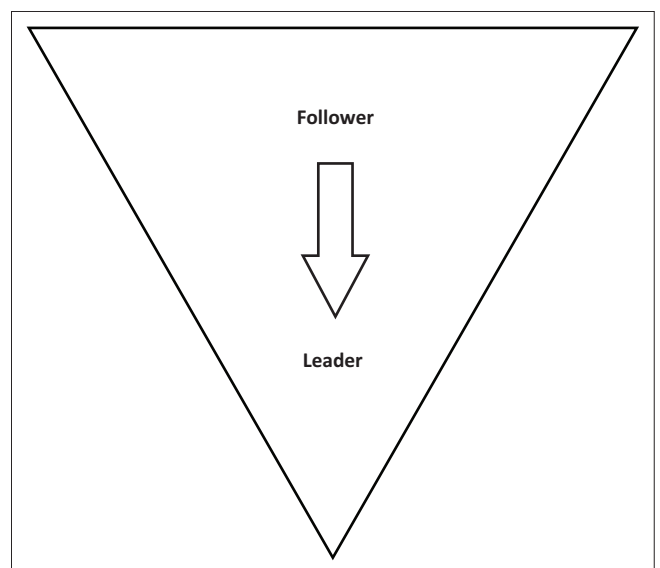


FIGURE 1: Gentile or worldly model of leadership.



Source: Estep Jr., J., 2005, 'A theology of administration', in M.J. Anthony & J. Estep Jr., (eds.), *Management essentials for Christian ministries*, p. 46, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville.

FIGURE 2: Servant model of leadership.

moral integrity is a major cause of political problems in many societies (Augustine 2019:143). Integrity can elevate or demote a leader. A leader with charisma without integrity is bound to fail. In the text, analysed here, Jesus was not so much interested in people's charisma but in their integrity. On the issue of integrity in leadership Clinton (cited in Ayandokun 2021) writes:

At the heart of any assessment of biblical qualification for leadership lies the concept of integrity, that is, uncompromising adherence to [a] code of moral, artistic, or other values that reveals itself in sincerity, honesty, and candor and avoids deception or artificiality. The God-given capacity to lead has two parts: giftedness and character. Integrity is at the heart of character. (p. 62)

In my opinion such social cankers as corruption, bribery, exploitation and oppression can be dealt with if leaders in Ghana act with integrity. Yet, it must be said that character alone is not enough; one has to combine other requirements for successful leadership to be able to succeed. For example, character cannot be a substitute for competence.

Going forward, there is the need to deliberately and consistently make efforts to change the attitude, behaviour and thinking of leaders towards their followers and the state. The Ghanaian leadership culture needs to be changed 'through a combination of leadership modelling, civic education (formal and informal), rewarding good behavior, strict enforcement of laws and sanctions against deviants, all aimed at creating patriotism, non-xenophobic nationalism' (Adei 2018:13). To attain a holistic growth, the appointment of leaders in Ghana (both for the society and for the church) should be guided by the prospective leader's level of integrity, and competence, rather than mere charisma, and commitment to the ruling party. By doing so, Ghana can win the fight against ungodly leadership. Ghanaian traditional teachings about integrity need to be promoted.

The lack of accountability will yield political crises. Therefore, the next section examines the issue of accountability in leadership.

### **Leadership and service**

The principle of accountability is an effective antidote to most of Ghana's political challenges, especially those fuelled by bad governance. Fundamentally, leaders are granted power by followers (the electorates). The concept of accountability requires judicious, frank and honest use of power. It is important that leaders give accounts of the leadership to their subjects on regular basis. In the traditional political setting, this is normally performed at traditional festivals. The leaders also make projections for the ensuing year after accounting for their stewardship of power. The accountability regarding traditional leadership is meant to establish a relationship of trust between leader and followers and to avoid the wrath of the supernatural. It also fosters interpersonal relationships and encourages the subjects to work harder to increase their productivity.

In Ghana's centralised democratic setting, accountability of one's power comes during the State of the Nation's Address (in the case of the President) and during some social gatherings (in the case of parliamentarians), during speech and prize-given days (in the case of heads of primary and secondary education), and others. While this is a good practice, it does not allow the subjects to ask questions and to probe issues that they find unclear. Also, the leaders chose to speak about what they want their subjects to know. They do not give account of every aspects of their activities. Going forward, leaders must set special days aside to meet their subjects on the issue of accountability alone. On that occasion they should give accounts of every aspect of their leadership and give adequate time for interactions with their subjects. The principle of accountability reminds leaders that they are leaders because there are subjects under them. Leadership exists only in the context of a group of people. Without followers, there is no leader. Therefore, leaders must consider their followers as an important part of their lives and hence treat their followers as people who have given them the power to rule over them. If that is the case, then there should be broad consultation during decision making. This will help to facilitate grassroots participation in the process, make things clearer to the subjects, and then restore and enhance public trust and patriotism.

Therefore, political leaders are encouraged to stop the use of political authority for private gains, the exploitation and oppression of people by political leaders, the mismanagement and misappropriation of state funds by those in authority, the use of human sacrifice to retain political power. These do not show proper stewardship of power and do not in any way contribute to the development of the nation. Ghanaian leaders are further encouraged to use their power in accordance with the purpose for which they have been given their positions so that they may not be found wanting on the day of accountability.

## **Conclusion**

This article has discussed how Jesus's teaching in Mark 10:35-45 may be applied to the Ghanaian context to address the religio-political issues of corruption and ungodly Christian leadership. The article noticed that for leadership to be beneficial to the society, there is the need to consider it as a privilege to serve rather than an opportunity to satisfy one's personal interests at the expense of the society's interest. The leader is required to serve with integrity and be accountable to the followers. This way, leadership will liberate, and not put people in bondage. Finally, it can be concluded that Jesus introduced a radical and countercultural principles of leadership that has no room for selfishness and domineering conduct, about rather promotes greatness through humility demonstrated through servanthood. Such leadership inevitably yield a flourishing society in which economic equality, interdependence, interconnectedness, respect of human rights, and equity are the core values.



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The author has declared that no competing interest exists.

## Author's contributions

I.B. has declared sole authorship of this research article.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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