Christianity as a Problem in and for Africa: Towards Redeeming the Distortion of the 'Good News'

Dr. Kizito Uzoma Ndugbu, SMMM

Abstract

This essay critically examines the complex role of Christianity in Africa, highlighting the paradox between its liberating theological promise and its complicity in colonial oppression, cultural alienation, and contemporary exploitation. It examines how Western missionary enterprises imposed foreign theological frameworks, resulting in spiritual dislocation and cultural displacement among African converts. The essay further investigates how modern manifestations of Christianity—such as prosperity gospel movements and neo-colonial theological dependencies—continue to hinder the church's transformative potential. In response, the paper calls for a contextualized and liberating African Christianity, rooted in indigenous wisdom, prophetic engagement, and authentic expressions of faith. Ultimately, it advocates for the redemption of the Gospel's core message in Africa as a force for justice, dignity, and holistic human flourishing.

Keywords: African Christianity; colonialism and religion; theological alienation; prosperity gospel; contextual theology

I. Introduction

Christianity in Africa is a paradox—at once a source of hope, transformation, and spiritual renewal, and at the same time a historical agent of domination, alienation, and socio-cultural fragmentation. Proclaiming a message of liberation, justice, and

unconditional love, Christianity has paradoxically journeyed through the continent in chains of colonial conquest, theological imperialism, and ecclesiastical complicity with systems of exploitation. The contradiction lies in the fact that a religion grounded in the radical teachings of Jesus Christ was often used to justify the very systems that dehumanized the African people.

It would be intellectually dishonest to deny the many gifts that Christianity has brought to Africa: educational institutions, healthcare, peace advocacy, and moral foundations that continue to shape civic life. Christian missions established some of the earliest schools and hospitals, played a significant role in literacy and nation-building, and in many contexts stood with the poor and marginalized. And yet, this same religion was interwoven with the machinery of colonialism, often legitimizing European superiority, erasing African spiritualities, and displacing indigenous cultures.

Here, we critically interrogate this complex legacy, asking hard but necessary questions about Christianity's role in shaping both Africa's past and its future. While affirming its spiritual and cultural contributions, this essay contends that Christianity in Africa has also been a tool of subjugation, manipulation, and theological alienation. It has too often mirrored oppressive political structures and failed to speak prophetically to the deep wounds of the continent. The legacy of missionary Christianity, especially as tied to colonization, continues to reverberate in today's churches—through distorted theologies, foreign dependency, and exploitative practices masked as divine mandates.

By tracing the historical complicity of Christianity in colonial projects, analyzing its theological alienation from African realities, and critiquing its contemporary misuse in socio-political manipulation, this essay seeks a path toward redemption—a reclaiming of the Gospel as genuinely Good News for Africa. It calls for a radical re-imagination of

Christianity, rooted in Africa's spiritual soil, committed to liberation, dignity, and the flourishing of all. The journey ahead is both prophetic and pastoral, demanding theological courage and cultural sensitivity as Africa seeks to heal from its past and envision a liberating future where Christianity no longer distorts but redeems.

II. Historical Foundations: Christianity and Colonization

Introduction of Christianity to Africa

Christianity's presence in Africa predates European colonization, with early Christian communities established in North Africa, notably in Egypt and Ethiopia, as early as the first few centuries AD. These indigenous expressions of Christianity developed independently, integrating local cultures and traditions. However, the advent of European exploration and colonization in the 15th and 16th centuries marked a significant shift. European powers, driven by a combination of economic interests and religious zeal, embarked on a mission to spread Christianity across the continent, often aligning religious endeavors with imperial ambitions.

Christianity as a Tool for Colonization

The intertwining of Christian missionary work with colonial expansion became particularly evident during the 19th century's "Scramble for Africa." Missionaries often accompanied colonial administrators, serving as agents of cultural transformation and control. The "civilizing mission" ideology posited that European civilization and Christianity were superior, justifying the subjugation and transformation of African societies. This perspective was institutionalized through doctrines like the "Doctrine of Discovery," which provided religious and legal justification for European powers to claim lands inhabited by non-Christians. Papal bulls such as Dum Diversas (1452) and Romanus Pontifex (1455) authorized Christian rulers to conquer and convert non-Christian

territories, laying the groundwork for centuries of colonial domination.

Destruction of Indigenous Cultures

The missionary enterprise often led to the suppression of African traditional religions, which were labeled as pagan or barbaric. Sacred sites were destroyed, rituals banned, and indigenous spiritual leaders marginalized. This systematic denigration of African spiritual systems resulted in a profound cultural dislocation. The imposition of Western religious practices disrupted the social fabric, leading to a loss of cultural identity and heritage among African communities.

Education and Subjugation

Missionary-established educational institutions played a dual role. While they provided literacy and vocational skills, they also became tools for inculcating European values and norms. The curriculum often emphasized European history, language, and Christian doctrine, sidelining African knowledge systems. This education system produced a class of Africans who were culturally alienated from their roots and more aligned with colonial interests. Such individuals often served as intermediaries between the colonial administration and the local populace, facilitating colonial governance.

III. Theological Alienation and Cultural Displacement

Westernization of Theology

The colonially mediated spread of Christianity in Africa also ushered in a theological framework heavily shaped by Western worldviews. The European missionaries, most of whom were trained within rigid doctrinal traditions of Western Christendom, often failed to recognize the validity and depth of African spiritual and cosmological systems. Consequently, the Christian theology that took root in many parts of Africa was

not indigenous but an imported construct, often bearing little relevance to the African existential condition (Mbiti, 1990).

This Western theological dominance resulted in a distorted expression of the Christian faith. God was portrayed in ways alien to African modes of thought, and salvation was often presented as an escape from the "darkness" of African religion into the "light" of European Christianity. The Bible, while translated into many African languages, was often interpreted through Eurocentric lenses, reinforcing cultural dependency and religious alienation (Sanneh, 2003).

Alienation from African Spirituality

A core consequence of the Westernization of Christianity was the aggressive demonization of African traditional religions. Missionaries routinely labeled African cosmologies as idolatrous, superstitious, or demonic, fostering a deep sense of shame and confusion among converts. Rituals, ancestral reverence, divination, and other sacred practices were forbidden and often violently repressed. This resulted in an internalized spiritual conflict where many African Christians struggled to reconcile their ancestral heritage with their new faith identities.

This alienation was not just theological but psychological. African converts were led to believe that their forebears were lost, their customs cursed, and their spiritual instincts flawed. The result was a fractured identity—caught between two spiritual worlds, yet belonging fully to neither (Bediako, 1995).

Cultural Displacement

Christianity's imposition in Africa also brought about significant cultural displacements. Traditional African music, dance, attire, languages, and symbols were replaced with Western equivalents in liturgy and worship. The rich oral traditions and communal worship practices were discarded in

favor of hymns, sermons, and rituals modeled on European ecclesiastical forms. In many mission churches, speaking local languages or using indigenous instruments was discouraged or even punished (Ukpong, 2002).

The erasure of African cultural forms in Christian practice further estranged African believers from their heritage. The Christian faith, which should have been a source of liberation and affirmation, became instead a vehicle for alienation and cultural amnesia. This has had enduring effects on African Christianity, which in many contexts still grapples with reconciling the faith with authentic cultural expression.

Clericalism and Authoritarianism

Another dimension of theological alienation is the clerical and hierarchical structure imported from Western Christianity. Mission churches established rigid ecclesiastical systems where authority was centralized in foreign clergy or mission boards. Indigenous leadership was often subordinated or excluded altogether, reinforcing notions of inferiority and dependency.

This authoritarian model persists in many African churches today, where pastors or bishops wield disproportionate power over congregations. Instead of fostering communal discernment and shared leadership, many churches replicate colonial patterns of control, thus compromising the liberating potential of the Gospel (Gifford, 1998). A true indigenization of Christian leadership structures remains a pressing task for African Christianity.

IV. Contemporary Challenges: Christianity and Manipulation

Prosperity Gospel and Exploitation

In recent decades, Africa has witnessed an explosion of charismatic and Pentecostal movements promoting the so-called "prosperity gospel." This theological model promises material wealth, physical health, and success in exchange for

faith, obedience, and particularly financial donations. While its appeal lies in addressing the economic struggles of many Africans, it has also opened the door for manipulation and exploitation.

Prosperity theology often shifts the focus of Christianity from communal care and justice to individual gain and miracle-seeking. Clergy become celebrity-like figures, often enjoying opulent lifestyles supported by the sacrificial giving of poor congregants. This distorts the Gospel message into a transactional affair, reinforcing inequality within the church and distracting from critical issues like poverty, corruption, and structural injustice (Gifford, 2007).

The prosperity gospel—a theological framework that reinterprets the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the lens of material wealth, personal success, and physical well-being. While its roots trace back to the American Pentecostal and televangelist movements of the 20th century, its transplantation into Africa has taken on unique characteristics shaped by the continent's socio-economic vulnerabilities, cultural dynamics, and religious enthusiasm.

At its core, the prosperity gospel promises that faithful Christians will be rewarded with financial abundance, divine health, business breakthroughs, and social uplift, provided they adhere to certain spiritual principles—usually involving tithes, seed sowing, and loyalty to church leadership. It is often marketed as a form of divine transaction: "Give to God (through the church or man of God) and you will receive tenfold." This theology thrives particularly in contexts of poverty, unemployment, and social instability, where believers seek divine intervention to escape daily hardship.

However, this model represents a dangerous misreading of the Gospel. It reimagines Jesus not as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), who calls his followers to bear their cross (Luke 9:23), but as a cosmic benefactor of material ease and worldly success.

Suffering, sacrifice, and social justice—central themes of the biblical narrative—are often sidelined or reinterpreted as signs of weak faith. The consequence is a theology that erases the prophetic dimension of Christianity and replaces it with a consumerist, transactional religiosity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2012).

Moreover, the prosperity gospel has given rise to a new clerical elite: "celebrity pastors" or "men of God" who accumulate vast personal wealth, often living in luxurious mansions, driving expensive cars, and surrounding themselves with bodyguards and political connections. This cult of personality elevates the pastor above the congregation, creating spiritual dependency and discouraging theological inquiry. Poor congregants are encouraged to give sacrificially, sometimes at the expense of basic needs, with the hope that their "miracle" is around the corner.

This theological manipulation constitutes a form of spiritual exploitation and deepens economic and psychological inequalities within the church. It also compromises the credibility of Christianity, as religious leaders become indistinguishable from corrupt political figures—both claiming to be saviors while enriching themselves off the suffering of others. Far from being a liberating force, prosperity preaching becomes a mechanism of control and false hope, contributing to a cycle of disillusionment and cynicism among the faithful (Gifford, 2007; Omenyo, 2006).

In theological terms, the prosperity gospel also distorts the doctrine of grace, replacing it with merit-based formulas rooted in performance and giving. It undermines the biblical call to solidarity with the poor (Matthew 25:31–46) and the denunciation of unjust economic systems (Amos 5:11–12). The cross of Christ—symbolizing redemptive suffering, humility, and self-giving—is replaced with a theology of entitlement, where wealth is equated with righteousness and poverty with spiritual failure.

Furthermore, this distortion diverts the African church from addressing structural injustices such as political corruption, gender inequality, unemployment, climate change, and systemic poverty. When prosperity is individualistic and divine favor is personalized, there is little incentive for churches to engage in prophetic advocacy or community empowerment. In some instances, churches even ally with corrupt political regimes, offering them spiritual legitimacy in exchange for protection or financial benefit (Chitando, 2020).

To confront this challenge, the African Church must engage in a robust theological renewal that reclaims the radical message of the Gospel: a call to discipleship, justice, compassion, and communal solidarity. This means re-emphasizing Christ's preferential option for the poor, nurturing contextual theologies rooted in African realities, and training pastors and leaders in integrity, biblical literacy, and servant leadership. It also calls for re-educating the faithful, helping them distinguish between genuine hope in God's providence and manipulative spiritual consumerism.

Thus, the prosperity gospel is not merely a different interpretation of Christianity—it is a misnomer that threatens to hollow out the transformative core of the faith. It preaches reward without sacrifice, glory without justice, and faith without love. For Christianity in Africa to remain credible and life-giving, it must liberate itself from these exploitative theologies and renew its commitment to the Gospel of Christ—who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

Neo-Colonialism through Religion

The legacy of colonial dependency continues today through the persistent dominance of Western theological institutions, donor agencies, and missionary networks in shaping African Christianity. Many seminaries and church leadership structures remain beholden to Western funding and doctrinal

oversight. This limits theological innovation and reinforces cultural and financial dependency.

Despite the end of formal colonial rule in Africa, many post-colonial structures persist—subtly entrenched in religious institutions, especially through theological influence and ecclesiastical power dynamics. This phenomenon, often described as religious neo-colonialism, manifests when dominant Western church bodies or voices continue to set theological agendas, define orthodoxy, and subtly delegitimize African perspectives on critical moral and doctrinal issues. African churches, though vibrant and growing, often find themselves under pressure to conform to Western ideological trends, particularly on culturally sensitive topics such as sexuality, gender, and morality.

A stark example of this was seen in 2014 (Catholic Herald, October 17, 2014), during heated debates on homosexuality within the Catholic Church. In a moment that drew widespread condemnation, German Cardinal Walter Kasper reportedly dismissed African bishops' voices by suggesting that Africans should not tell the Church in the West "too much what to do" on such issues. This comment, though later denied, was received by many as a racist and patronizing attempt to silence African moral theology, especially given the cultural and religious context in which African churches operate. The uproar this provoked revealed an uncomfortable truth: that African bishops and theologians are often tolerated rather than listened to, and their insights are seen as peripheral to global ecclesial discourse.

The issue is not merely about disagreement on doctrine; it exposes deeper power imbalances within the global Church. No doubt, "some persons will not feel comfortable about a pope from Africa," although Africa is currently one of the most dynamic and flourishing centers of Christianity. His comments reflect the persistent Western skepticism toward African

leadership in global ecclesial affairs—a holdover of colonial attitudes suggesting that "nothing good can come out of Africa."

Such marginalization amounts to a form of theological apartheid, in which African contributions are undervalued or filtered through a Western lens before being deemed acceptable. This ecclesiastical imbalance is compounded by financial dependence on Western church bodies and missionary organizations, which often condition support on theological alignment with Western liberal norms. Seminaries, liturgical materials, and even episcopal training programs in many parts of Africa still rely heavily on Western funding and curricula, which frequently prioritize foreign concerns over contextual African realities.

This neo-colonial influence curtails the development of authentic, incarnational African theology—one that speaks meaningfully to the continent's unique social, political, and spiritual context. Moreover, it reinforces a cultural inferiority complex, in which African Christians are subtly taught to view their traditions, insights, and leaders as secondary to those from the Global North. Surely, what the Church needs is not a pope from any particular region, but a "wise, holy and most suitable successor of Peter"—someone willing to proclaim the truth of the Gospel "even when it is neither popular nor ideologically convenient." This prophetic courage is needed not only in Rome but throughout the African Church, which must increasingly resist subtle forms of domination and reclaim its theological agency.

To break free from this religious neo-colonialism, African churches must assert their voice in the global ecclesial conversation—not from a position of defensiveness, but from a place of dignity and conviction. A welcome manifestation of this is evident in the total rejection of the "horror" the Fiducan Suplicans portends, by the Catholic Bishops of Africa. This includes developing robust theological institutions, fostering indigenous scholarship, and encouraging local leadership to

engage in global debates with boldness and nuance. A decolonized Christianity in Africa will not abandon the universal faith but will help purify it from cultural biases that have long distorted its liberating message.

Moreover, the content of sermons, theological training, and liturgical practices in many African churches still reflect foreign priorities. Issues such as sexual ethics, biblical literalism, and end-times prophecy often overshadow pressing African realities, including governance, climate justice, and economic survival. As such, Christianity risks functioning as a neo-colonial force, promoting foreign agendas under the guise of spiritual authority (Chitando, 2020).

Religious Divisions and Conflicts

Christianity in Africa has also been implicated in deepening sectarian tensions and interreligious conflicts. The proliferation of independent churches with little theological accountability has led to doctrinal confusion and fragmentation. Meanwhile, in countries like Nigeria, tensions between Christian and Muslim communities have sometimes erupted into violence, with religion manipulated for political or ethnic purposes.

While the growth of Christianity across the continent is statistically impressive, this expansion has often come without sufficient theological depth, institutional accountability, or ecumenical vision, leading to a crisis of disunity and doctrinal inconsistency. One of the most visible manifestations of this challenge is the mushrooming of independent and neo-Pentecostal churches, many of which operate without affiliation to larger theological traditions or denominational oversight. While these churches have often emerged in response to the spiritual and cultural needs unmet by historic mission churches, their lack of structured formation and theological training has in many cases resulted in doctrinal confusion, unverified spiritual claims, and problematic practices. Pastors self-ordain without formal theological education, "revelations"

supersede Scripture, and charisma often replaces ecclesial accountability (Kalu, 2008).

The result is a theological free-for-all that not only destabilizes the unity of Christian witness but also fosters spiritual competition, where churches market themselves for followers, miracles, and influence. Such rivalries often turn toxic, with churches publicly criticizing one another, or even engaging in lawsuits and confrontations over territorial or congregational claims. This ecclesial chaos confuses the faithful, discourages interdenominational collaboration, and presents Christianity as a fragmented and internally contradictory movement.

Also, within the broader Christian tradition, deep divisions remain between Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and African Independent Churches (AICs). These divisions are not merely theological; they often mirror ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic cleavages, exacerbating underlying communal tensions. In some regions, particularly in Nigeria, church affiliations have become politicized, with ethnic groups aligning with specific denominations, fueling regional hostilities and mistrust (Marshall, 2009).

Moreover, liturgical diversity, which should be a strength of the African church's inculturation, has instead become a source of mutual suspicion and doctrinal policing. Charismatic expressions of faith—such as prophecy, deliverance, speaking in tongues, or prosperity preaching—are viewed with skepticism by more traditional denominations. Meanwhile, mainline churches are often accused of being "dead" or "spiritually dry" by Pentecostal movements. These internal battles dilute the Gospel message and distract from shared efforts in evangelization, social justice, and interreligious dialogue.

Also, interreligious conflicts, especially between Christians and Muslims, have posed even greater challenges in parts of Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, northern Nigeria, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. In many of these areas, religion has become

deeply entangled with politics, land disputes, access to resources, and ethnic allegiances. What may begin as a political or economic conflict is quickly framed in religious terms, thereby escalating tensions and inciting violence. Militant Islamist movements like Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabaab in Somalia have explicitly targeted Christians, churches, and educational institutions in their bid to establish religious hegemony. In retaliation, some Christian groups have armed themselves or supported violent reprisal attacks, fueling a cycle of vengeance that contradicts the peace-centered teachings of Christ (Ibrahim, 2014). These conflicts further entrench religious boundaries, breed mistrust, and endanger the Church's mission of reconciliation. Complicating this dynamic is the failure of many church leaders to articulate a strong theology of interfaith peacebuilding. In the absence of consistent teaching on religious tolerance, some churches fall into the trap of demonizing Muslims, preaching fear instead of love, and thus contributing to the broader culture of polarization.

Similarly, there is competition for resources and influence. The struggle for foreign funding, land, and political favor has also turned churches into competitors rather than collaborators. In many urban centers, churches outbid each other for land, vie for media presence, and seek government recognition or benefits. Some denominations align with political parties, hoping to gain protection or legislative influence. This politicization of religion not only undermines the spiritual authority of the Church but also risks moral compromise and corruption (Gifford, 2007).

At the grassroots level, denominational divisions often hinder joint community development projects, theological education partnerships, and ecumenical initiatives. Schools, hospitals, and charities that could be run collaboratively are duplicated and divided by denomination, leading to inefficiency and redundancy. The lack of unity sends a confusing message to

non-Christians and skeptics: that the Church itself is fractured and unable to embody the very unity it preaches.

To address these divisions, African Christianity must undertake a serious effort at ecumenical renewal and theological reconciliation. Church leaders must invest in theological education that prioritizes doctrinal integrity, pastoral sensitivity, and interdenominational respect. There is a need for shared platforms for dialogue, collaborative worship, and joint social action projects that reinforce the unity of Christ's body.

Furthermore, Christian institutions must develop interreligious peacebuilding frameworks grounded in African values of hospitality, communal living, and kinship—values deeply compatible with biblical ethics. By fostering interfaith cooperation in education, healthcare, and justice, the Church can model a more inclusive and peaceful society. Most importantly, the African Church must rediscover the ecclesiology of communion, where diversity is celebrated but unity in Christ remains paramount. As Christ prayed "that they may all be one… so that the world may believe" (John 17:21), so must the Church in Africa become a beacon of reconciliation in a continent often torn by sectarianism and strife.

Loss of Social Responsibility

One of the gravest contemporary challenges facing Christianity in Africa is the waning of its historical commitment to public service and social justice, a crisis of prophetic witness. The early and missionary phases of Christianity on the continent were marked by significant contributions to education, healthcare, human rights advocacy, and peacebuilding. Mission schools educated generations of Africans; mission hospitals brought essential medical care to remote areas; churches were among the first to advocate for the dignity of the poor and the liberation of the oppressed. However, this rich legacy of engagement and compassion is being steadily eroded by an increasing inward turn among many African churches.

The theological focus in many churches today has shifted from the communal and prophetic dimensions of the Gospel to an individualistic spirituality centered on "personal breakthroughs," "miracle services," and "deliverance." Worship is often designed to cater to emotional excitement and private success, with little reference to structural issues such as poverty, inequality, or injustice. Congregants are exhorted to pray for prosperity, marital success, or healing while neglecting their civic duties and social responsibilities. In many pulpits, messages of liberation, justice, and transformation—hallmarks of Christ's ministry (cf. Luke 4:18)—are conspicuously absent.

This depoliticized form of Christianity contributes to a culture of disengagement from national issues. Where churches once served as voices of conscience and hope during the independence movements or against apartheid and military dictatorship, many now stand mute in the face of corruption, environmental degradation, gender-based violence, and ethnic conflict. As Ojo (2012) notes, this inward turn has seriously "undermined the transformative potential of the Gospel and eroded public trust in religious institutions."

Unfortunately, a particularly troubling development is the alliance between some church leaders and corrupt political figures. Seeking state favor, protection, or financial patronage, certain churches have embraced a theology of "divine kingship," portraying political leaders as God's anointed, beyond critique. In exchange, these leaders support church projects, attend services, or provide exemptions and privileges.

Such unholy alliances dilute the prophetic mandate of the Church. Instead of holding governments accountable, some pastors and bishops become apologists for failed regimes, often enjoying lavish lifestyles funded by public resources or congregational donations. This clerical complicity undermines public faith in the Church's moral integrity and perpetuates cycles of injustice. When churches become indistinguishable

from the political elite they should be challenging, the credibility of the Christian witness is severely compromised.

Yet, at the heart of the Gospel is a preferential option for the poor—a commitment to uplift the vulnerable and confront the systems that oppress them (cf. Matthew 25:31–46). Yet, many contemporary churches in Africa, especially those driven by prosperity theology, have inverted this call, glorifying wealth and stigmatizing poverty as a sign of spiritual failure. The poor are told that their lack is due to insufficient faith or hidden sin and urged to give sacrificially in hopes of miraculous returns.

This not only burdens the poor financially but also alienates them from their faith communities. The Church, once a sanctuary for the downtrodden, increasingly resembles a platform for the elite. Ministries to prisoners, the disabled, widows, and orphans—once staples of Christian social action—are now rare or underfunded. Social justice, once a theological imperative, is now often dismissed as “worldly politics.”

Things must change! The path forward would involve recovering the Church’s prophetic identity.

VI. Conclusion – Redeeming the "Good News" in Africa

The story of Christianity in Africa is one of paradox—of both liberation and oppression, of spiritual renewal and cultural disruption. What began as a faith proclaimed by Christ to bring good news to the poor has, in its colonial and postcolonial expressions, often betrayed its core message by serving as a tool for domination, alienation, and exploitation. Yet the Gospel itself remains fundamentally liberating, offering hope, dignity, and transformation.

To redeem Christianity in Africa is not to abandon it but to return it to its roots—a faith that affirms life, embodies justice, and honors cultural dignity. This requires a deliberate disentanglement from colonial legacies, a courageous embrace

of African theological agency, and a commitment to a Gospel that is both contextually grounded and prophetically engaged. African Christians must reject forms of faith that demean their heritage, commodify their devotion, or silence their struggles. Instead, they are called to reclaim the Gospel as a message of true liberation—one that empowers communities, challenges unjust systems, and nurtures holistic flourishing.

The path forward is not easy. It demands critical reflection, institutional courage, and spiritual resilience. But it is necessary if Christianity is to be a force for genuine good in Africa—no longer a problem in and for Africa, but a renewed and redemptive presence among its peoples.

To redeem its social mission, the African Church must recover the prophetic tradition rooted in both Scripture and African cultural values of community, solidarity, and justice. This means returning to the public square with a commitment to advocacy, integrity, and moral courage. Churches must actively address issues such as poverty, youth unemployment, gender violence, environmental degradation, and political corruption, not just through prayer, but through education, civic engagement, and structural reform. Leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, Cardinal Christian Tumi in Cameroon, and Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah in Nigeria have modeled what it means to speak truth to power, often at great personal risk. Their legacy must be rekindled across the continent. Seminaries and theological institutions must also form priests/pastors who are not only spiritually sound but also socially conscious, worldly astute, and civically responsible.

Christianity in Africa cannot fulfill its mission by retreating into miracle crusades and spiritual escapism. It must engage the world with the courage of the prophets, the compassion of Christ, and the wisdom of the elders. Only then can it reclaim the trust of the people and truly become a force for human flourishing, justice, and peace.