



Public Theology, Media and National Orientation in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This article examined the interface between the church and media and how the interface contributes to the effort toward national orientation with insights from Public Theology in Ghana. Using the qualitative methodology in its information-gathering approach, the study observed that the church and media remain key social institutions that have an influence on the shaping of public opinion, public behaviour and social responsibilities. The church for instance promotes national orientation through the teaching of moral and ethical values of the Ghanaian society that are consistent with the Bible. The church teaches its members to be honest, hardworking and to contribute to the development of their communities. These values are aligned with Ghana's national values, which aim to promote social cohesion, nation-building and national development. The church promotes the virtues of honesty, integrity, hard work and respect for authority, which are essential for the development of a responsible and productive citizenry. The study concluded that Public Theology must provide insights for the church and media in Ghana as they seek to use their influence to make significant contributions to national orientation. It further recommends that theological insights such as social watchdogs, social reformers, social referees and hope-givers must be harnessed by the church and media for national orientation.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Theology and national orientation are two important aspects of Ghanaian society that are closely intertwined. Public Theology refers to the application of Christian beliefs and values to social issues and public life as the author has noted in an earlier publication.¹ National orientation however involves educating and informing citizens about aspects that are important for a shared sense of national identity and pride. National orientation according to Sam Okudzeto points out the values, attitudes and beliefs that shape the identity and character of a nation.² In Ghana, the church has played an important role in shaping national orientation which is guided by its theological insights. Many churches and Christian organizations are involved in the advocacy around issues such as human rights, social justice and good governance according to Anquandah.³ They also provide social services to their communities including education, healthcare and support for the needy. Through these activities, they help to shape the values and attitudes of Ghanaians toward issues of public importance. It is important for policymakers and other stakeholders to understand this relationship and work to promote a

¹ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "An Exploration into the Public Theology of the Basel Missionary Society in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, 9 (4) April 28, 2023, 145–56, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2023941>.

² Excerpts of an interview with Lawyer Sam Okudzeto on National Interest February 13 & 20, 2020.

³ James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 Years of the Christian Council of Ghana, 1929-2009* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2009).

national orientation that is aligned with the values of Public Theology, including social justice, human rights and good governance.

Christianity is the dominant religion in Ghana and many churches have been actively involved in promoting national development and social cohesion. The church has been an important partner in promoting national orientation in Ghana. Kwamena-Poh has observed that the church has a large influence on the social and cultural fabric of Ghanaian society.⁴ It has used its influence to play an important role in promoting national orientation in Ghana. It has worked alongside the media, the government and other institutions to promote a sense of national identity, unity and social responsibility among its members and other citizens.

National orientation is intended to shape the behaviour and mindset of the citizens towards national development, national dignity, national identity and national pride. It encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at instilling a sense of patriotism, social responsibility and civic consciousness among citizens. In the estimation of Esther Ofei Aboagye, national orientation involves the uniqueness of the people as a nation and encompasses the country's history, culture, political system and economic development. Efforts towards national orientation promote national unity, patriotism and a sense of belonging regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations.⁵

National orientation is a critical component of the country's development as it promotes values that are essential for building a prosperous and inclusive society. Governments recognize the importance of national orientation in fostering a sense of unity, shared purpose and pride among its citizens. Through various initiatives and programmes, it continues to promote the values and aspirations that define society and culture. The process of instilling values, beliefs and attitudes that are essential for nation-building, social cohesion and sustainable development involves promoting a sense of national identity and pride among citizens, as well as encouraging them to participate in nation-building activities.

The churches in Ghana have established programmes to provide support for the poor, the sick and the vulnerable in their communities. Moreover, the church has been involved in several social interventions aimed at promoting national development. Some of the churches have established schools, hospitals and other social welfare programmes to support the government's efforts in providing basic services to the people.⁶ The church has further played significant roles in promoting peace and unity. During times of political tension and conflict, the church has often served as a mediator, bringing together opposing parties and promoting dialogue and reconciliation as noted by Emmanuel Asante.⁷ These programmes help to instil a sense of social responsibility among the members of the church and encourage them to contribute to the development of their communities and the nation as a whole.

The church has a long history of using media in Ghana according to Hans Debrunner.⁸ In the past, this primarily involved traditional forms of media such as radio, television and newspapers. Churches often purchase airtime on these platforms to broadcast sermons, religious programmes and other content. The churches have also embraced digital media, using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to reach a wider audience. Some churches have established their own media outlets, such as newspapers, radio stations and television channels. Kwame Karikari has noted that this has allowed them to control the narrative around their activities and reach a wider audience with their messages.⁹ These media outlets serve as important platforms for promoting the teaching of Christian beliefs and values and engaging with the public on issues of social justice and morality. The study is qualitative in its information gathering approach. Available library information is critically reviewed. Moreover, identified individuals with accumulated knowledge of the interface between the church and media and related matters of national orientation were identified and interviewed due to the limitation of the available materials on some specific dimensions of the study within the Ghanaian context.

National Orientation and Nation Building

National orientation is a process of shaping the mindset and attitudes of individuals of a nation towards their country, its institutions and values and promoting patriotism, loyalty and a sense of responsibility. It is moreover the efforts of governments, religious bodies, media and other institutions to shape public opinion and encourage

⁴ Michael Albert Kwamena-Poh, *Vision and Achievement: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (1828–1978)*, (Accra-Ghana: Waterville Publishing House, 2011).

⁵ Excerpts of an interview with Dr Esther Ofei Aboagye on Setting National Priorities September 17, 2020.

⁶ Noel Smith, *The Presbytery Church of Ghana 1835-1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966).

⁷ Excerpts of an interview with Rev Prof Emmanuel Asante on Religion, Peace and Security in Ghana October 21, 2019.

⁸ Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967).

⁹ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

citizens to adopt certain values and behaviours that promote national interests.¹⁰ It is an important aspect of nation building and promotes national cohesion and development. It is pursued through the set of beliefs, values, customs and traditions that shape the national identity of a country and its citizens. National orientation encompasses the cultural, historical, social, economic and political ideals that guide a nation's development and shape its identity.

National orientation involves the promotion of patriotism, national unity, social responsibility and respect for the rule of law. According to Sam Okudzeto, the goal of national orientation is to promote national unity, integration and development by creating a shared sense of purpose, pride and commitment to the national interest and aspirations.¹¹ These goals are achieved through various means, such as education, media, social institutions and government policies, cultural events and public campaigns. The goal of national orientation is to promote national unity and cohesion and to create a shared vision of the future that is rooted in a collective understanding of the past and present. The primary intention of national orientation is to promote unity, patriotism and a sense of responsibility among citizens and to create a cohesive and harmonious society.

The Bible and National Orientation

The Bible has influenced many aspects of society, including national orientation. It has been a significant influence on the development of national values, ethics and laws. There are several passages in the Bible that discuss the relationship between individuals and their society, which can be interpreted in the context of national orientation. The teachings and principles of the Bible have been used to shape the values and beliefs of societies and nations throughout history according to John Stott.¹² The Bible contains teachings that emphasize the importance of respecting authorities, the common good, national development and working towards a just and compassionate society.

In Romans 13:1-7, the apostle Paul instructs Christians to submit to the governing authorities because they have been established by God. This passage emphasizes the importance of respecting and obeying the laws of the land. It implies that good citizenship is an essential aspect of Christian living. In addition, the Bible contains many teachings about justice, human dignity, equality and compassion, which are important values for any government to uphold. In Micah 6:8, the prophet Micah instructs his listeners to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. This passage emphasizes the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion and working towards a fair and just society.

The Ten Commandments have remained biblical teachings influencing national orientation. These commandments, which are found in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament, are a set of moral and ethical principles that have been used as a basis for the development of national laws. The Bible also teaches the importance of love, justice and compassion for others. In the New Testament, Jesus teaches his followers to love their neighbours as themselves and to treat others with kindness and respect. Furthermore, the Bible promotes the idea of equality and the inherent value and dignity of all human beings.

In Galatians 3:28, the Apostle Paul writes, 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' The Bible contains teachings and principles that can guide individuals and societies in their moral and ethical decision-making. One of the central teachings of the Bible is the importance of loving one's neighbour as oneself. This principle can be applied to the context of national orientation by promoting social justice, equality and respect for human dignity. The Bible also teaches the importance of honesty, integrity and accountability in leadership. Proverbs 29:4 states, 'by justice, a king gives a country stability, but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down.' This passage highlights the importance of just and righteous leadership for the stability and prosperity of a nation.

In addition, the Bible teaches the importance of humility and serving others. Philippians 2:3-4 states 'do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.' The passage points out the importance of selfless leadership and service to others in promoting the common good. The Bible guides individuals and societies in their moral and ethical decision making, including in the realm of national governance. Additionally, the Bible encourages humility and a spirit of service toward others. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ himself modelled this behaviour by washing his disciples' feet, which was a humble act of service. This principle can be applied to national orientation by promoting leadership and policies that prioritize service to the people and the common good over personal gain or power. In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus tells his disciples, 'whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among

¹⁰ Excerpts of an interview with Dr Tony Oteng Gyasi on Young People, Unemployment and Entrepreneurship January 9, 2020.

¹¹ Excerpts of an interview with Lawyer Sam Okudzeto on National Interest February.

¹² John Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, London: Marshall Morgan & Scott (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984).

you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ This means that leaders should have a servant's heart and work to meet the needs of their citizens. The Bible provides principles that guide national orientation and governance, such as treating others with respect and fairness, upholding justice and righteousness, and serving the people.

One of the most famous teachings of the Bible is the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as you would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). This principle can be applied to national governance, where leaders should treat citizens with respect and fairness and citizens should equally treat each other with kindness and compassion. The Bible also emphasizes the importance of justice and righteousness in national governance. Proverbs 14:34 states, ‘righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.’ This means that a nation that upholds justice and righteousness will prosper, while a nation that embraces sin and wrongdoing will suffer. Additionally, the Bible teaches that leaders should serve the people, rather than the other way around.

The Bible furthermore, teaches that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This principle can be applied to a country's treatment of minorities and vulnerable populations, promoting inclusivity and social justice. The Bible provides a framework for ethical behaviour and a vision for a just and compassionate society. Its teachings can be applied to promote a positive national identity based on principles of justice, compassion and respect for human dignity. It emphasizes the importance of individual morality and righteousness. The Bible teaches that individuals should live in a way that is pleasing to God and that promotes peace and justice in society.

Media and National Orientation

The media has played an important role in promoting national orientation in Ghana. The media has the power to shape public opinion and influence the attitudes and behaviours toward issues of national importance according to Justice Emile Short.¹³ Media refers to the various forms of mass communication channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and social media platforms. Some of the major newspapers include the Daily Graphic, the Ghanaian Times and the Daily Guide. There are also several television and radio stations, including state-run outlets such as GTV and Unique FM, as well as privately-owned channels like Joy FM, Citi FM and UTV.

The media promotes national orientation through entertainment, education and dissemination of information and news that is relevant to Ghanaians. It provides citizens with information on government policies and programmes, as well as updates on national events and activities. This helps to keep citizens informed and engaged in national development efforts. The media further provides platforms for national conversations, dialogue and debate. Rev Prof Emmanuel Adow Obeng has opined that through various media channels, Ghanaians express their opinions, ideas and concerns on issues affecting the country. This helps to foster a sense of national identity and unity, as well as promote a culture of democratic participation and citizenship.¹⁴

Through news, analysis and commentaries on political, economic, social and cultural issues, media provide the insights that are needed to inform and shape opinions on these issues. The media plays a role in promoting national unity and social cohesion. It provides a platform for diverse voices and perspectives and helps to bridge the gap between different regions, ethnic groups and religions. This helps to promote a sense of national identity and a shared sense of purpose among Ghanaians.

By reporting on corruption, human rights abuses and other forms of wrongdoing, the media helps to promote transparency and accountability in government, which are essential for promoting national development and progress. Short has argued that through investigative journalism, media outlets have exposed cases of corruption and malfeasance in government, holding public officials accountable for their actions and promoting good governance.¹⁵

The media serves as a platform for promoting Ghanaian culture and heritage. By showcasing Ghanaian music, dance, art, and other forms of cultural expression, the media helps to promote a sense of pride in Ghanaian identity and cultural heritage, which is essential for promoting national orientation and unity.¹⁶ This has helped to shape the identity and character of Ghana as a nation and has helped to promote a sense of national pride, unity and identity among Ghanaians.¹⁷ Media outlets often celebrate Ghanaian culture and promote a sense of national pride and unity. This has helped to strengthen the bonds between different ethnic and regional groups

¹³ Excerpts of an interview with Justice Emile Short on Transparency and Public Accountability November 7, 2019.

¹⁴ Excerpts of an interview with Rev Prof Emmanuel Adow Obeng on Towards Peaceful Elections November 19, 2020.

¹⁵ Excerpts of an interview with Justice Emile Short on Transparency and Public Accountability.

¹⁶ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions: Perspective of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Excerpts of an interview with Lawyer Sam Okudzeto on National Interest February 13 & 20, 2020.

and promote a sense of national identity. Through its coverage of cultural events, festivals and other activities, the media has helped to promote a sense of shared culture and heritage among Ghanaians. This has helped to foster a sense of national identity and pride and has helped to shape the character of Ghana as a nation.

Through its role in promoting public debate, transparency and accountability, the media has helped to shape the values, beliefs and attitudes of Ghanaians towards issues of public importance and will continue to do so in the years to come. The media is a tool for civic education and promoting democratic values according to Prof. Kwame Karikari.¹⁸ It provides information on the importance of civic participation, encourages citizens to vote and promotes transparency and accountability in government. Ghanaian media outlets cover major events such as elections, national holidays and important policy decisions, which helps to keep citizens informed and engaged in the political process. They provide information on important issues such as health, education and the environment and encourage citizens to participate in civic activities such as volunteering and community service. Media has played significant roles in shaping national orientation in Ghana by influencing the values, beliefs and attitudes of Ghanaians towards issues of public importance according to Karikari.¹⁹

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting national orientation in Ghana. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have been used to mobilize citizens around important issues, share information and promote national values and ideals. Social media has also been used to promote the cultural heritage of Ghana and showcase the talents of Ghanaians on the global stage. Amin Alhassan has however cautioned that social media have their peculiar characteristics like anonymity that make them problematic. One can remain faceless on any of these platforms even though facelessness and anonymity may have some positive sides. Some people who may be expressing the truth but are shy and are not too sure of themselves or do not want to be known can put on something useful to society.²⁰ The concern about social media is its abuse. Even the more technologically advanced societies are having a hard time regulating social media. It is known that the governments in these technologically advanced societies are working with the owners to find ways of regulating them to find some level of sanity.

PUBLIC THEOLOGY INSIGHTS FOR CHURCH AND MEDIA INTERFACE

The church and media remain very key social institutions that are influencing national orientation in Ghana. The interface between the two institutions must be deepened to provide the needed influence on the national orientation. The church through its theological insights is well-positioned to provide the resources that must guide the operations of the interface. Among the various areas of operation that must be considered for the interface are social watchdog, social referee, social reformers, mobilization and hope-givers.

The Church and the Media as Social Watchdogs

The church has had a very cordial relationship with the media in the performance of its role as a watchdog of the Ghanaian society. The two institutions have been the eyes and ears of society and mirror society's concerns. Following from the above role, the media and the Christian community have over the years, played key roles in national orientation and transformation. They play a crucial role in monitoring the activities of governments and other influential organizations in society to ensure that they act in the best interest of the citizens and ensure accountability, transparency and good governance. They moreover ensure that the voices of the people are heard and that those in power are held accountable for their actions.

The church, which has a strong presence in Ghana, is widely respected and influential. The church serves as a moral compass and often speaks out on social and political issues affecting the country according to its various communiqués and other public statements by the Christian Council of Ghana and other Christian organizations.²¹ Through its sermons and public statements, church leaders raise awareness on issues such as corruption, human rights abuses and social inequalities. The church moreover through its teachings and Christian values, promotes moral and ethical behaviour in society as earlier on noted. It encourages its members to hold public officials accountable for their actions and to demand transparency in governance. The churches actively engage in social and political issues, such as poverty reduction, education and health and often advocate for policies that benefit the disadvantaged and marginalized.²²

¹⁸ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

¹⁹ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

²⁰ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Amin Alhassan on Media and Public Decency July 22, 2020.

²¹ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "Doing Public Theology in African Christianity: A Reflection on Communiqués by Churches in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 7, no. 11 (November 15, 2021): 190–200, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20217111>.

²² Peter A Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana* (Smartline Pub., 2000).

Many Ghanaians see their religious leaders as moral authorities who provide guidance on ethical issues and hold public officials accountable. The church, as a moral authority in Ghanaian society, has a responsibility to speak out against injustices and advocate for the well-being of the people. In this role, the church acts as a watchdog by monitoring the actions of the government and holding them accountable for their actions. Additionally, the church uses its platforms to raise awareness about social issues and encourage its members to take action to address them. They also use their influence to push for positive change and advocate for social justice and development.

The Christian community through the various ecumenical bodies like the Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council as well as the heads of various religious groups have been consulted on several occasions on public issues and their views aired on a lot of social issues, spanning from health, politics, religion, employment, human rights, education, security, economy, justice and media among others. As a result of the key, respectable and revered position churches and their leaders occupy in society, their views are always held in high esteem as noted by Anquandah.²³

The media, on the other hand, serves as the eyes and ears of the public. It reports on the activities of governments and other organizations, exposing corruption, nepotism and other forms of malfeasance. The media in Ghana has been instrumental in promoting accountability and good governance, especially through investigative journalism. It serves as a watchdog by providing independent and objective reporting on government actions and other issues affecting the public. Through investigative reporting and critical analysis, the media uncovers corruption, human rights abuses and other abuses of power. By shining a light on these issues, the media holds those in power accountable and help to ensure that they are acting in the best interests of the people.

The media further serves as a platform for the dissemination of information and plays a critical role in exposing corruption and holding those in power accountable. Kwame Karikari has noted that Ghana has a vibrant and independent media landscape, with both traditional and digital media outlets. These outlets provide space for diverse perspectives and can help to counter false or misleading information.²⁴ Ghana has a relatively free and diverse media landscape, and journalists have been known to investigate and report on corruption and human rights abuses. It acts as a watchdog by providing critical information, analysis and scrutiny of government policies and actions.

Together, the church and media promote transparency and accountability. By shining light on issues that might otherwise be ignored and overlooked, they encourage public discourse and debate and ultimately help to build a stronger and more democratic society. Both the church and media in Ghana play important roles as watchdogs, ensuring that governments are held accountable and that the rights and interests of citizens are protected. As typical of watchdogs, media and the church survey society, protect the people, give them security, and information, and react to possible outside interferences with the rights of the people. By so doing, they monitor and police the society and sound alarms whenever it is deemed fit according to Karikari.²⁵

The Church and the Media as Social Referees

The church and media play an important role as social referees, helping to mediate conflicts, promote reconciliation and peaceful resolution of disputes. As social referees, they provide platforms for discussion and debate on social issues and help to facilitate dialogue and understanding between different groups in society. The church promotes Christian values such as love, compassion, forgiveness and unity among its members and the wider society. It facilitates the process of people from different backgrounds and beliefs to come together and work towards a common goal, social harmony and understanding.

The church according to Aboagye-Mensah is able to play a vital role in promoting peace and reconciliation in society due to its moral authority and social support systems.²⁶ By promoting ethical and moral values, the church helps to maintain social order and harmony. It provides support and guidance to individuals and families who are experiencing difficult times, such as during times of illness, financial hardship and pandemics. Additionally, the church provides social services such as education, healthcare and social welfare to improve the quality of life of people in the communities they serve. In moments of conflict, the church serves as an institution of calm, mediator, bringing together conflicting parties and working towards a peaceful resolution. The church plays an important role in shaping social norms and values. The church also provides a

²³ Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 Years of the Christian Council of Ghana, 1929-2009*.

²⁴ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

²⁵ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

²⁶ Excerpts of an interview with Most Rev Dr Kwasi Aboagye Mensah on New Year, New Opportunities, Fresh Challenges January 1, 2020.

platform for individuals to come together and address social issues such as poverty, inequality and discrimination. It plays an important role in shaping social norms and values.

The media similarly helps to shape public opinion and influence social norms by providing information and analysis on social issues. Through news coverage, opinion pieces and social media, the media raise awareness about important social issues and encourage public debate and discussion. The media serves as a platform for marginalized groups to have their voices heard and their concerns addressed. It ends up creating space for public debate and discussion, encouraging the development of informed opinions and promoting a culture of tolerance and respect for dissenting views.

Through their role as social referees, the church and media help to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. They promote shared values, encourage dialogue and understanding between different groups and build a more united and harmonious society. The church and media further facilitate discussions and debates that lead to greater understanding and cooperation between different groups. The media highlights success stories and positive developments in society, helping to promote a sense of unity and optimism among the population. The media promote open dialogue and debate, which helps to reduce tensions and prevent conflicts from escalating into violence. Moreover, the media provides coverage of initiatives and efforts by individuals and groups who are working to address social issues, promoting peace, helping to amplify their voices and encouraging broader engagement and support. The role of the church and media as social referees in Ghana promotes social cohesion, facilitates dialogue and promotes understanding between different groups in society. According to Asante, the church and media in Ghana have a critical role as social referees, promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts and encouraging dialogue and understanding between different groups in the society.²⁷ By using their platforms to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, they help to build a stronger and more harmonious society.

The Church and the Media as Social Reformers

The church and media in Ghana act as catalysts for social change and transformation working together to create a more just and equitable society. Through preaching, teaching and community outreach programmes, the church mobilizes its members and the wider community to advocate for social change in areas such as poverty, education, healthcare, gender equality, conduct and behaviour according to Aboagye.²⁸ The church and media play a significant role as social reformers, driving positive change in society through their various advocacy efforts. The church has been one of the leading advocates for human rights and social justice. Through its pastoral work, the church provides support and care to vulnerable groups such as the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. The church has also been vocal in advocating for policies that promote social justice and equality, such as fair labour practices, access to education, healthcare and protection of human rights.

The church uses its moral authority to challenge social injustices and promote reforms that benefit marginalized groups in its social reformers role. The church provides a platform for advocacy, encouraging its members to speak out against social injustices and to support movements that seek to bring about positive social change.²⁹ Moreover, the church uses its resources to provide social services and support for those in need, including the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable. The church often takes up causes that align with its core values and beliefs, such as social justice, human rights and equality. As social reformers, the church uses its moral authority and influence to push for changes in government policies and laws that negatively affect the well-being of the people. For instance, the church advocates for policies that promote social justice, human rights, and equality and speaks out against practices such as corruption, discrimination, and human trafficking. Additionally, the church provides social services such as education, healthcare and social welfare, to improve the quality of life of people in the communities they serve.

Through advocating for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed, and exposing social injustices, they help to create a more responsive and accountable government that is committed to promoting social welfare and human dignity for all. The church and media improve the lives of the people and promote a more just and equitable society. By advocating for policies and practices that promote the common good and speaking out against injustice and inequality, they help to shape a more positive future for the country.

Through the healthy interaction between the church and the media, traditions such as wake keeping, widowhood rights, burying kings with human heads, human execution and other unhelpful beliefs and fears have been gradually done away with, due to the interventions of the church and the media. The media and

²⁷ Excerpts of an interview with Rev Prof Emmanuel Asante on Religion, Peace and Security in Ghana October 21, 2019.

²⁸ Excerpts of an interview with Dr Esther Ofei Aboagye on Setting National Priorities September 17, 2020.

²⁹ Opuni-Frimpong, "Doing Public Theology in African Christianity: A Reflection on Communiqués by Churches in Ghana."

churches provide public education and explanation of the real ideas behind the performance of certain rites. This has positively impacted society's behavioural patterns, belief systems, lifestyle and attitudes. According to Karikari, witness can be borne today to the fact that Ghanaians live a far better life than a couple of decades ago and this type of enhanced life can be attributed among others to the role of the church and the media.³⁰

The Church and the Media as Givers of Hope

The church and media in Ghana have been a source of hope and inspiration for many people, particularly in challenging times because it gives them a sense of purpose and meaning in life. According to Most Rev Charles G. Palmer-Buckle, these two institutions have played a significant role as givers of hope, thus, offering spiritual and emotional support, a sense of community and inspiration to individuals and communities facing challenges.³¹ Through its teachings and various counselling programmes, the church promotes values such as faith, love and hope, which help to uplift and motivate people during difficult times. The church provides spiritual guidance and support to its members, offering messages of hope and reassurance that God is with them through life's challenges. The church also plays a role in providing practical assistance to those in need, such as healthcare, education, food, clothing and shelter. It offers a sense of community and belonging, which is particularly important for individuals who are struggling with isolation and social exclusion.

The media in Ghana has played various roles in providing hope to its audience by sharing stories of resilience, perseverance and success. The media highlight the achievements of individuals and groups who have overcome adversity, inspiring others to believe in their own potential and work towards their goals. Moreover, the media has also been a source of hope by providing information about opportunities for personal and social growth. The media has helped to empower individuals to take action to improve the quality of their lives by sharing news about job openings, education opportunities and social programmes. The media further promotes hope by providing platforms for people to share their experiences and perspectives, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. As a source of education, information, entertainment and coverage of positive news and inspiring stories, the media facilitate social motivation that is needed in national orientation efforts.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the interface between the church and media and how the interface contributes to the effort toward national orientation with insights from Public Theology in Ghana. The church and media are important institutions for national orientation in Ghana. The interface between the church and media towards national orientation needs theological insights that are in conformity with Ghanaian social values and aspirations for the performance of the national orientation roles. The study identifies Public Theology as a key major resource that must harness the theological insights for national orientation by the two institutions. The recommended theological insights include social watchdogs, social reformers, social referees and hope-givers.

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³⁰ Excerpts of an interview with Prof Kwame Karikari on Media, Public Education and National Orientation January 16, 2020.

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