

## Capitalism and Its Influences on Development in Africa

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### Abstract

This paper explores the impact of capitalism on political and economic development in Africa, with a particular focus on the ways it has contributed to inequality, dependency, and systemic underdevelopment. Despite being endowed with abundant natural resources, fertile agricultural land, and a rich cultural heritage, many African countries have struggled to achieve equitable growth. The capitalist system, characterized by private ownership and market-driven policies, has often prioritized profit over people, leading to exploitation of both resources and labor, weakening national sovereignty and marginalizing the poor. The purpose of this paper is to critically assess capitalism's role in shaping Africa's developmental trajectory and to offer biblical and theological responses that can guide the continent toward a more just and inclusive future. Capitalism is evaluated not only as an economic model but also as a cultural and moral force that influences how societies distribute resources, exercise power, and define success. Development is understood holistically—encompassing moral, social, spiritual, cultural, and political dimensions, in addition to economic indicators. From a Christian perspective, development involves restoration of human dignity, justice, and stewardship. Biblical theology, centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, presents an alternative vision that prioritizes love, justice, integrity, and servant leadership. When applied to political and economic systems, these values call for a radical transformation of leadership and governance structures in Africa. This paper argues that such transformation must begin with a renewal of the human heart, guided by a relationship with God, and must extend to public policy, resource distribution, and community life. By grounding political and economic practices in biblical ethics, Africa can begin to overcome the destructive cycles of corruption, inequality, and poverty. This approach calls for leaders who are morally responsible, socially inclusive, and committed to the common good.

**Keywords:** *Capitalism, Africa, Development, Theology, Biblical Ethics, Justice, Stewardship, Inequality, Political Economy, Transformation*

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## Introduction

Capitalism has significantly shaped Africa's economic and political development, often reinforcing inequality and weakening local systems. These effects demand critical reflection from a biblical and theological perspective, particularly on issues of justice, stewardship, and human dignity. As Mugambi asserts, "Theology must engage with such realities to remain relevant to African Christian witness."<sup>1</sup>

The continent of Africa is blessed. God blessed the continent of Africa with great people. Our diversity in East, West, North, South, and Central Africa is a gift from God. We have a beautiful unity of diversity embedded in the culture of the African people. Everywhere you travel across Africa, you are surprised by the cultural virtue of hospitality embedded in the Bible. It was a taboo in the recent past among African people to see a stranger hungry or thirsty without giving him/her something to eat or drink.

Not only is Africa blessed with wonderful people, but God also blessed us with resources. While talking about Africa's prosperity, the late Tokunboh Adeyemo said,

During his historic presidential visit to Africa, President Bill Clinton made a profound statement, the rest of the world cannot do without you- the world needs Africa, he said. Analysts and commentators have interpreted this to mean a reference to the enormous natural and energy resources that the continent is blessed with.<sup>2</sup>

Adeyemo highlights the fact that "God has blessed Africa with vast natural wealth—gold, diamonds, oil, and other resources—yet these blessings have too often been exploited rather than equitably shared."<sup>3</sup>

Africa is also blessed with rich agricultural soil. We grow cash crops such as tea, coffee, tobacco, cocoa, sugar cane, rice, wheat, barley, pyrethrum, sisal, marijuana etc. Subsistence crops are in plenty- maize, beans, yams, potatoes, millet, sorghum, bananas, peas, pumpkins, vegetables, onions, pepper, tomatoes, and a variety of fruits.

The African ecosystem is wonderful. Our fauna and flora attract tourists from across the world. Our forests and wildlife are our heritage from God. Our wonderful mountains, valleys, oceans, lakes, rivers, swamps, and springs speak of the creative work of God in Africa.

Our weather is compared to none across the world. Many countries in Africa experience warm climates. On the contrary, one wonders what is happening in our beautiful continent. Tokunboh Adeyemo poignantly asked, "Is Africa cursed?"<sup>4</sup>

The authors of this paper offer a look at Africa through a critical introspection of capitalism and its influence on Africa's political and economic development, biblical and theological solutions to African capitalism on political and economic development.

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*. (Nairobi. Acton Publishers 2003), 5

<sup>2</sup> [Tokunboh Adeyemo, \*Africa's Enigma and Leadership Solutions\*. \(Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers Limited 2009\), 4-5.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 9

This paper argues that capitalism has largely underdeveloped African economies by promoting inequality, dependency, and weakened sovereignty. Instead of fostering genuine economic development—defined as inclusive growth, improved quality of life, and sustainable progress—capitalism has often undermined these goals.

A biblical and theological perspective rooted in justice and stewardship offers a needed critique and alternative vision for Africa's economic and political future.

In order to comprehend this concept, it is important to understand what capitalism and what development means as we navigate around political, and economic perspective while looking at Biblical and theological solutions to our problems.

The word Capitalism is a “system of commodity production. In the capitalist system, producers do not simply produce for their own needs, or for the needs of individuals with whom they are in personal contact; capitalism involves a nationwide, and often an international exchange market.”<sup>5</sup>

It is further illustrated that;

Every commodity, Marx states, has a ‘two-fold’ aspect: its ‘use-value’, on the one hand, and its ‘exchange-value’ on the other. Use-value, which ‘is realised only in the process of consumption’, has reference to the needs to which the properties of a commodity as a physical artifact can be employed to cater to. An object can have use-value whether or not it is a commodity; while to be a commodity a product must have use-value, the reverse does not hold. ‘Exchange-value’ refers to the value a product has when offered in exchange for other products. In contrast to use-value, exchange-value presupposes ‘a definite economic relation’, and is inseparable from a market on which goods are exchanged; it only has meaning in reference to commodities.<sup>6</sup>

Theory as it applies to this paper means a “supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.”<sup>7</sup> It is also “used to account for a situation or justify a course of action.”<sup>8</sup> Theory of capitalism therefore implies;

A system of largely private ownership that is open to new ideas, new firms, and new owners—in short, to new capital. Capitalism's rationale to proponents and critics alike has long been recognized to be its dynamism, that is, its innovations and, more subtly, its selectiveness in the innovations it tries out. At the same time, capitalism is also known for its tendency to generate instability, often associated with the existence of financial crises, job insecurity, and failures to include the disadvantaged.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Antony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory. An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Marx Weber*. (New York: Cambridge University Press 1971), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Antony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory. An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Marx Weber*. (New York: Cambridge University Press 1971), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>9</sup> <https://capitalism.columbia.edu/theory-capitalism> (Accessed on March 1, 2024).

Defining development on the other hand is complex. This can be viewed from a multifaceted perspective that includes but is not limited to;

- Moral development
- Social development
- Economic development
- Cultural development
- Spiritual development
- Political development etc.

However, development can be defined as the;

Process that enables human beings to realize their potential, build self-confidence, and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. It is a process that frees people from the fear of want and exploitation. It is a movement away from political, economic and exploitation. Through development, political independence, acquire its true significance. And it is a process of growth, a movement essentially springing from within society that is developing.<sup>10</sup>

Development from a Christian perspective can be seen as;

A process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their aspirations. This view embraces the restoration for the victims of gender injustice, and of human freedom, dignity, love, holiness, power, and creativity.<sup>11</sup>

This Christian definition of development highlights justice, dignity, and restoration, offering a holistic alternative to capitalism. It emphasizes people's well-being and sustainable growth, critiquing capitalism's exploitative impact on Africa's development.

A comprehensive Christian definition of development for this paper would be:

Christian development is the process through which individuals and communities grow in their moral, social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and political capacities, in alignment with God's will. It involves the restoration of human dignity, justice, and equality, fostering sustainable and equitable progress that nurtures the flourishing of all people. This development seeks to empower individuals and societies to mobilize resources, cultivate creativity, and engage in acts of love, stewardship, and holiness, all while promoting peace, freedom, and solidarity.<sup>12</sup>

The explanation above offers a holistic and transformative understanding of development from a Christian perspective. It goes beyond material progress to include moral, spiritual, social, and political dimensions, aligning human growth with God's will. It emphasizes restoration of

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<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. (London and New York: Zed Books 2002), 8-9

<sup>11</sup> Zablon Bundi Mutongu, *Theology of Development. The Integral Mission Model of God- Centred Development*. (Nairobi: Nairobi Academic Press 2011),10

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,16

dignity, justice, and equality, and promotes sustainable, inclusive progress rooted in love, stewardship, and community empowerment.

### **Capitalism Influences Development in Africa**

#### ***Political Development***

Capitalism influences political development in Africa by shaping power structures and policy priorities that often benefit external actors and multinational corporations. This system can lead to inequality, corruption, and political instability, weakening local governance. As Kwame Nkrumah noted, "The political independence of African countries is a hollow victory if it is not accompanied by economic freedom."<sup>13</sup>

The scramble for Africa by the colonialists had an impact on the political affairs of the continent. The following statement explains this well;

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the drive to industrialization had managed to capture most of the attention, time, and money of the capitalists to "conquer, colonize, subjugate, and exploit the areas of the world lying outside the North Atlantic region where capitalism was born" (Hunt & Lautzenheiser, 2011, p. 347). The industrialized capitalist countries mercilessly subdued areas all over the earth to maximize profit. For example, nearly all (93%) of Africa had been forcefully subjugated to foreign capitalist rule. 40% was conquered by France, 30% had been seized by Britain, whereas Germany, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain about 23%.<sup>14</sup>

Since colonial times, there has been debate in Africa about capitalist versus pre-capitalist proponents. This argument sheds more insight into this cogent reality;

Chitonge (2016) attributed this capitalist versus pre-capitalist debate to the fact that capitalist formations in Africa were often analyzed based on some idealized model of the capitalist path. Since this idealized path often did not materialize in Africa as expected, there has often been a strong temptation among analysts to see African societies as non-capitalist. This conclusion tends to imply that African societies and economies are pre-capitalist. For instance, Iliffe (1983) suggested that the nature of capitalism in Africa is partly a function of its pre-capitalist cultural context, and the 'very late stage in the global history of capitalism' reached when capitalism penetrated Africa (cited Leys, 1994: 22).<sup>15</sup>

From a theological perspective, Chitonge's argument calls for a critique of capitalist models, advocating for development rooted in justice, dignity, and community, aligned with God's vision of equitable flourishing and stewardship.

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<sup>13</sup>Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), 26.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ipl.org/essay/The-Effects-Of-Capitalism-In-Africa-FKFPKCQ74ACFR> (Accessed on March 2, 2024)

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Amaeshi, Ed et al. *Africapitalism Rethinking the Role of Business in Africa*. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press 2018,) 16

Since independence in Africa, three forms of capitalism have taken place as illustrated in the following argument;

The first was the ‘anticapitalist’ regime, which was avowedly committed to socialist development and thus systematically sought to suppress the development of indigenous capital (e.g., Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Ghana). The second category was ‘parasitic capitalism’, as in the case of Liberia and Zaire at the time, where state officials and politicians often used their hold on state power and access to resources, via neo-patrimonial networks, to promote their private accumulation and that of their supporters with little regard for individualism or free market principles. The third category took form in countries like Nigeria and Kenya, where the governments were committed to ‘nurture capitalism’ via some genuine attempt to promote the development of an indigenous business class in some segment of the economy while recognizing the advantages of competition and free market.<sup>16</sup>

Political capitalism in Africa faced a huge challenge. The concept of individualism propagated in the West doesn’t augur well with the African communal system. It is argued that;

Consequently, while Lutz (2009) notes that theories that were created within and for individualistic cultures are often not at home within communal cultures, Blunt and Jones (1997) assert that Western approaches to management and leadership are often incompatible with the cultural context of Africa. Similarly, Zoogah (2008) has argued that there is a need for a contextualized approach to management theory that incorporates the African context and the lived experience of its people in its theorizing and modeling (see also Edoho, 2001). In addition, Lutz (2009) suggested that such a theory is needed not only in the interest of moral integrity and social stability but also in the interest of economic productivity.<sup>17</sup>

Capitalism theory has effects on governments and politics. Capitalism is more about private ownership and business. However, these concepts, private ownership and voluntary trade, “are antagonistic with the nature of government. Governments are public, not private institutions. They do not engage voluntarily but rather use taxes, regulations, police, and military to pursue objectives that are free of the considerations of capitalism.”<sup>18</sup> It should further be understood that;

Capitalism is a type of economic system in which trade and industry are driven by private owners and individuals rather than the government. Voluntary trade dominates, with resources vying to snag consumers and consumers vying with each other for resources. Both the ideas of private ownership and voluntary trade conflict with the government, which is a public institution. Most proponents of capitalism, from libertarians to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.google.com/search?q=effects+of+capitalism+on+african+politics&rlz=1C1CHBD\\_enKE808KE808&oq=&aqs=chrome.0.35i39i362j46i39i362j46i39i199i291i362j35i39](https://www.google.com/search?q=effects+of+capitalism+on+african+politics&rlz=1C1CHBD_enKE808KE808&oq=&aqs=chrome.0.35i39i362j46i39i362j46i39i199i291i362j35i39) (Accessed on March 2, 2024)



Keynesians, support the idea of the government having some involvement in the state of the economy.<sup>19</sup>

Most African states therefore suffered in this system of political capitalism economy because they could not directly own the means of production and attempts to direct economic activity towards politically identified goals. Capitalism assumes strong institutional contexts as it requires strong governments, strong civil society, and strong and effective regulation and governance. On the contrary, most African states are weak politically as explained below;

However, nation-states and governments in Africa are weak. This weakness makes it difficult for the states and governments to play effectively the roles of protecting lives and properties, as well as ensuring social well-being, infrastructure development, and the development of enabling institutions for the production and consumption of goods and services within Africa. In addition, and unfortunately, the benefits of capitalism are Africapitalism unevenly, some may say, unjustly distributed, partly due to structural and power imbalances in the global polity and partly as a result of weak local (national) governance systems.<sup>20</sup>

Capitalism requires a strong government, a strong market, and a civil society to bring meaningful development into society. It is argued that;

Capitalism, although possibly the best economic system currently known to man to create wealth, is sub-optimal. In its current state, it is perceived to result in, or continue to allow an unacceptable level of poverty and social injustice, insufficient participation, and a lack of democracy. It is also frequently associated with corporate malfeasance, misuse of economic and political power by governments, and a cavalier attitude by supranational entities towards environmental, security, and cultural-related issues.<sup>21</sup>

The negative vices of poverty, social injustice, insufficient participation, and lack of democracy mentioned above characterize most of the states in Africa. This implies that capitalism theory has not solved our political development.

The African colonial masters influenced political systems in our continent. “African leaders copied their mode of administration and governance structures and the style of exercising power and authority from the colonial administrators”<sup>22</sup>. This led to poor political leadership in many countries resulting in chaos. We have witnessed “constitutional reforms, end of single party and adoption of multiparty democracy and electoral reforms”<sup>23</sup> done in many countries in Africa and perhaps these changes haven’t guaranteed peace and prosperity among the citizens. Ayitey says that “the anti-development environment that prevails in most African

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/040615/what-role-does-government-play-capitalism.asp>  
(Accessed on March 2, 2024)

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Amaeshi, Ed et al. *Africapitalism Rethinking the Role of Business in Africa*. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press 2018,) 23-24

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>22</sup>James Nkansah-Obrempong, Lecture Note for TH 904 Theology, Social, Political and Economic life of Africa, Africa International University, Karen Campus, September, 2020.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

countries is characterized by political tyranny, instability, chaos, senseless civil wars, horrible carnage, corruption, and capital flight.”<sup>24</sup>

Our problems in Africa cannot be stereotyped. Each country has unique challenges and should be treated in its category. The following statement highlights this well;

The same can be said for understanding politics in Africa. While donor countries and international development agencies tend, in general, to focus on the “problems” such as deficiencies in governance, dictatorships, corruption, conflicts, and insecurity of multi-ethnic societies, the political realities of individual African nations, each of which has its unique characteristics, does not allow us to generalize them with such a stereotypical view. The elimination of such single-sided, generalized evaluation can be said to be the mandate for African political science research.<sup>25</sup>

Some methodology employed in certain countries seems to bear fruits of success but in other places same methodology seems to cause more trouble and anarchy. The democratization process employed by some states eliminated military rule and one-party dictatorship and brought peaceful co-existence in certain countries. Some countries, however, experienced a state of insecurity in the process of democratization. Other countries experienced free and fair elections while others saw election malpractices.

It is interesting to note that Rwanda and South Africa experienced peace after reconciliation from genocide and apartheid respectively. This seems not to have worked well for South Sudan after signing a peace accord agreement.

African politics is complex. “Many scholars of African politics face the dilemma of not being able to simply apply accumulated political science theories to analyze African politics.”<sup>26</sup> It is further argued that;

In comparing the cases of individual African nations, we simultaneously develop regional theories and identify unique characteristics of individual countries. In other words, these investigations capitalize on the ongoing reformulation of regional research and contribute to the eventual unification with existing political science theory. “African politics” serves both a research approach as well as a forum for that discussion.<sup>27</sup>

The same approach to political science research perhaps can be applied to evaluate why capitalism theory hasn’t brought meaningful development in Africa. Africa still needs a workable theory to influence development politically and economically.

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<sup>24</sup>George B. N. Ayittey, *Africa in Chaos*. (USA: MacMillan Press, 1999), 33

<sup>25</sup><https://WWW.ide.go.jp/English/Research/Topics/Pol/African/overview.html> (Accessed on March 8, 2024)

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



## Economic Development

"Africapitalism is the economic philosophy that the African private sector has the power to transform the continent through long-term investments, creating both economic prosperity and social wealth."<sup>28</sup>

Africapitalism is the economic philosophy that the African private sector has the power to transform the continent through long-term investments, creating both economic prosperity and social wealth. Economics is central to African life and it affects human existence in individual, family, and national life respectively. It is imperative to underscore the fact that,

The economy of Africa consists of trade, industry, agriculture, tourism, mining, and human resources of the continent. Africa's economic growth and activities involve sales of commodities, services, and manufacturing. Colonialism introduced a dual economic structure within the African economy. It also brought about dis articulation of the African economy, education, trade, market, transport, and currency institutions.<sup>29</sup>

Wealth promotes individual, family, society, and nation status. "The African celebrates the wealth that has come as a result of an individual hard work which is in itself one of the vital economic values of Africa."<sup>30</sup> It is also understood that modern "economics theories focus on the principle of utility, profit-making, and efficient production of goods and services."<sup>31</sup>

The African economy is at risk. "It is suffering from unjust economic systems, exploitation, and mismanagement of natural resources, bribery and corruption, foreign aid and debts, bad governance, unemployment, especially among the youth, weak political institutions and undemocratic values."<sup>32</sup>. This has far-reaching negative impact on capitalism theory.

Adeyomo asked if Africa was cursed. Why would a continent blessed with a big mass of land and natural resources continue to languish in abject poverty? "Ravaged nations including Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Angola and Liberia, have difficulty in paying their civil servants and teachers."<sup>33</sup>

Adeyemo further argues that - "modern economic theories focus on the principle of utility, profit-making, and efficient production of goods and services. This tends to lead to greed, exploitation, and extravagant lifestyles."<sup>34</sup> This has contributed a lot to non-equitable

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<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Amaeshi, et al. *Africapitalism: Rethinking the Role of Business in Africa*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Class Notes for TH 904 Theology, Social, Political and Economic Life of Africa. Africa International University, Karen Campus September Semester 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa's Enigma and Leadership Solutions*. (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers Limited 2009), 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

distribution of resources in our society thus we can see the wealthy people enjoying life while the poor continue to suffer in abject poverty.

African economy continues to suffer from exploitation and mismanagement of natural resources from our political elites. The world market continues to dictate the prices of our commodities. In many instances, the poor peasant hard-working Africans don't get value for their hard work.

Capitalism theory in Africa is affected by a number of factors as illustrated in the following statement;

A number of phenomena that are yet to be subjected to such a generative analysis 'in Africa', including transport and logistics, the financialization of households (e.g. via M-Pesa) and firms (through stock market listings or venture capital and private equity entries), prosperity gospel, the rise of the middle classes, the global land rush, and capitalist subjectivities and moralities (especially against the backdrop that capitalism has never been very welcome as an official ideology among postcolonial policy makers, even in pro-capitalist countries such as Kenya). These phenomena make it imperative to engage with economic dynamics in African political economies that are co-shaped or even driven by capitalist logic. It does not mean, however, that these phenomena can be reduced to capitalism or they can be couched into neat territorial boxes, as the panel's framing of "African capitalist society" suggests. Often, these are products of the articulation of a variety of economic, social, and material structures, relations, and practices, both local and global.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of globalization further has effects on the African capitalist economy. The prices of products such as oil, for example, produced in Africa cannot be fixed on our continent but from world global market. Under globalization, market controls of African products and the free movement of people affect the economy. The following statement explains that;

Ironically, more than a century after this experiment, the underdevelopment process has continued to intensify while the prescription for the disease of underdevelopment has not changed. Even when it is glaring that the Olutayo & Omobowale: Capitalism, Globalization 99 majority of the so-called developing countries cannot withstand the competition characteristic of the capitalist world order, due to the 'survival of the fittest' syndrome, the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have continued to forcefully integrate them into the global economy.<sup>36</sup>

African economy continues to suffer from the colonial past as further explained,

Africa entered into the world capitalist economy with a peripheral satellite status has been succinctly shown by Marxist and dependency theorists since the mid-twentieth century.....about two-thirds of the twentieth century during the colonial period, the understanding of Africa was inhibited by four great denials, including the denial of

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<sup>35</sup> <https://roape.net/2016/10/19/capitalism-africa-critique-radical-political-economy/> (Accessed on March 2, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Akinpelu O. Olutayo & Ayokunle O. Omobowale. "Capitalism, Globalisation and the Underdevelopment Process in Africa: History in Perpetuit" *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, 2007, 98. © Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2007 (ISSN 0850-3907).

history, the denial of science, the denial of poetry, and the denial of philosophy (including religious philosophy)..... Such denials, even if only of history, as Ajayi (1997:xxxiii-xxxiv) has posited, 'imply the denial of humanity and vitiate all expectations of development. It is not surprising therefore that development was (is) to be conceptualized based on foreign history. It is seen as a forward march towards the 'Western' model.<sup>37</sup>

The colonialists contributed to major economic effects in Africa. We are still looking at the West for help. The conceptualization by the West to have Africans continue to look to them was well choreographed to make Africa poor and hence continue to have dependency syndrome on the colonial masters. It is argued that,

This conceptualization was not a theoretical construct but purposely and consciously designed by colonial overlords. From the 'Dark Continent' illusion, the idea was (still is) to give 'light' or 'civilization to those living in 'darkness'. The Christian ideology was therefore a plausible instrument even when the bearers of 'light' might not be 'Christians' (see Olutayo 1991). The ideology was used to encourage slavery and later, for its abolition even when capitalism was the ultimate aim as enunciated in 'The Bible and the Plough'.<sup>38</sup>

The above quote exposes how colonial powers deliberately used Christian ideology to justify both oppression and "civilization" efforts, masking capitalism as a moral duty. It shows that the dependency of Africa on the West was not accidental but strategically designed to maintain economic control and dominance.

Capitalism is built on humanistic values such as individualism, competition, materialism, and profit maximization. These often contrast with God's character, which embodies justice, compassion, selflessness, and communal well-being.

When development is driven by capitalist values, it tends to neglect the poor, exploit creation, and elevate greed. In contrast, a theology of development rooted in God's nature promotes equity, stewardship, and love—values essential for shaping a just and holistic development agenda.<sup>39</sup>

The quote highlights that capitalist-driven development often leads to greed and injustice, while a theology grounded in God's character promotes fairness, care for creation, and love—key values for true, holistic development.

### **Biblical and Theological Solution to African Capitalism, Political and Economic Development**

Capitalism in Africa has often led to inequality, exploitation, and economic dependency, prioritizing profit over people. Its failure to deliver just and inclusive development calls for a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>39</sup> Zablon Bundi Mutongu, *Theology of Development: The Integral Mission Model of God-Centered Development* (Nairobi: Nairobi Academic Press, 2011), 15.

theological response. “A biblical vision rooted in justice, stewardship, and dignity offers a moral framework to correct these imbalances and promote people-centered growth.”<sup>40</sup>

Biblical theology is a discipline that helps Christians to understand truly who God is and how He relates to humanity. It also shapes our approach to life as we engage in the activities of men through our ethics of daily living. This should shape our behaviour as we deal with political and economic life in our society. The object of studying theology is to re-direct our daily walk with God. We need to be where God is and at the same time, God should be where we are.

Our conduct and activities must bring honour and glory to God. Oden illustrates below the fundamental facts about the object of studying Christian theology.

The object of study in theology must be carefully stated. It is God as known in the faith of the worshipping Christian community. This study seeks to know an investigable reality and thus is not merely speculation. For there exists in history a community of persons who hold steadfastly to faith in God. Yet since God is not an object, it is inexact to assert that God is directly, flatly, or empirically viewable as an object of theology. God does not, for our convenience, become a direct object of scientific investigation, since God by definition is not finite.....Nonetheless, Christian theology has a definite subject matter to which it devotes disciplined and sustained reflective attention: that knowledge of God as understood in the faith of the community that lives out of Christ’s resurrection (Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. Lect. 4.1– 17). The basis for the study of God becomes confused if theology is presented strictly as a privatized, individual credo, or as a limited confessional statement of a particular faction that views itself as the arbiter of Christian truth for all other communions.<sup>41</sup>

Denis Kinlaw put this in proper perspective when he argues that;

The relationship between the Father and Son is the prototype (original) of which all human familial relations are ectypes (copies). The relationship of which he is speaking is the original to which all human familial relationships are analogical.....The writer of Hebrews in 1:1–5 tells us of the superiority of the new dispensation. In the former dispensation, God spoke to us through prophets. Now God has spoken to us “by his Son,” one who is the “exact representation of [God’s] being,” through whom all things were created and all things are sustained.<sup>42</sup>

Dennis Kinlaw’s quote emphasizes that Christ is the ultimate model for how we should live and relate to others. In the context of this paper, challenges capitalist values by urging us to align political and economic systems with God’s justice and love, as revealed through Christ.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 10

<sup>41</sup>Oden Thomas C, *Classic Christianity: Systematic Theology*. (Harper One. Kindle Edition), 4.

<sup>42</sup>Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus*. (Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition), Location 281.

This Christ-centered approach calls for development that reflects divine integrity and care for all.

Kinlaw further states that Jesus has a unique role in the revelation of God. In John, he refers to himself as “the door” (10:7 KJV). Jesus thinks of himself not only as the door into salvation but also as the knowledge of the one true God. Logically this means we should begin our theological studies with Jesus, who, as John said, “has made him known” (John 1:18).

It is therefore imperative to say that at the political and economic level in our society, when we come into a personal encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ, our interaction will be positive, and therefore, evil deeds emanating from sin will be dealt with. This argument from this great theologian carries more weight as we approach theology at political and economic levels;

Jesus claims that he knows and sees God from the inside. What he sees is familial, and the familial character is not an attribute of God but his actual ontological nature. If there is life in God, it is a shared life between Father and Son. This is further proof that we should begin our theological studies with Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

In the Trinity analogy, we see God who is self-giving in love to the Son and Holy Spirit. When this is biblically and theologically taken as a vertical relationship to Triune God and a horizontal relationship to fellow man, it transforms our political and economic interaction for the better.

God is personal. He is not a force! Without revealing Himself to us we cannot know Him. He chose to reveal Himself to man through natural revelation. The universe declares His glory. The ontological, teleological, cosmological, human quest (for God in heart) and uncaused cause as explained by Thomas Aquinas explains this fundamental reality.

In the Old Testament, He revealed Himself to Moses as ‘I am who I am’. He continued to reveal Himself in the historical books, Poetry, and prophets. However, in the New Testament, John 1 says that in the beginning the word (Jesus) was with God, and the word made flesh and dwell among us. This is God’s special and final revelation to us in the person of His Son – Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews talks of God speaking to the Jews fathers a long time ago (Old Testament) through the prophets but in the last days, (New Testament) He speaks to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He reveals Himself to us.

The truth is, Christianity is not a religion but a relationship in which God came down to reach out to the lost man in the person of Jesus’ incarnation, conception, ministry, passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection with an aim of transforming both vertical and horizontal relationships to the Triune God and fellow man beginning at family social level all the way to political and economic levels in our society and government.

In his book ‘*Foundations of African Theological Ethics*, James Nkansah-Obrempong said that our unique relationship with our God motivates our moral behaviour as we engage in our politics and governance. He stated that;

The Triune God being the model and source of our moral life and we being his subjects or children of God, by creation and redemption respectively, are to reflect and imitate the behavior and character of God. How God rules and uses power becomes the standard for our moral

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid, Location 312.



actions. Politics and governance must reflect his being and character as a loving, compassionate, righteous, and just God. Our views on politics and governance must therefore be shaped by our Christian convictions on the moral character of God as a loving, compassionate, righteous, and just God.<sup>44</sup>

As we saw before, theology is a discipline that governs our moral behavior as we relate to God and fellow human beings. Nkansah-Obrempong further argues that the Triune God is our model for our ethical behavior. This, therefore, implies that in the area of politics and economics, we should emulate God in how we exercise power, govern the people, and do business.

John Mbiti said that “African people are notoriously religious (and) religion permeates into all the departments of life so that it is not easy or possible to isolate it.”<sup>45</sup> This religiosity should be seen as we address capitalism theory especially as we talk about political and economic development. We should be in the forefront to love God, neighbor and do justice and fairness to all people across Africa.

Our African politicians who profess to be Christians must model the character of God in doing politics and governing the people. Nkansah-Obrempong says “Any other way of exercising political power and governance other than God’s way will be morally bankrupt and destructive.”<sup>46</sup>

For us to engage in healthy politics in society, we must define the root cause of our problems.

Our problems lie in our sinful nature. That is why our politics and governance are defined by greed, nepotism, corruption, injustice, murder, and ethnic balkanization.

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Africa has been bleeding for many years without political and economic solutions to her problems. We have always been persuaded by political elites that the Constitution will guarantee our prosperity and peaceful co-existence. This has been a mirage never to be achieved.

We all share in our political and economic failures in society. We have always elected corrupt leaders to govern our resources. Paradoxically, the hyena can be hired to look after the goats. When the goats are eaten we complain. We need both biblical and theological change from within and without so as to see our society prosper in the right direction. We should practice the doctrine of inclusivity by bringing everyone on board in the way we do politics and governance as illustrated here;

Give the vulnerable people to take part in society. This enhances their ability, opportunity, and dignity. Identity is the key driver of social exclusion. Individuals and groups are excluded or included based on their identity. Among the most common

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<sup>44</sup>James Nkansah-Obrempong, *Foundations for African Theological Ethics*. (Carlisle: Langham Monographs 2013), 137-138.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?q=Mbiti+Africans+are+religiously+notorious&oq=Mbiti-Africans+are+religiously+notorious&aqs=chrome..69i57j2l146> (Accessed on March 8, 2022)

<sup>46</sup> James Nkansah-Obrempong, *Foundations for African Theological Ethics*. (Carlisle: Langham Monographs 2013), 138.



group identities resulting in exclusion are gender, race, caste, ethnicity, religion, age, occupational status, location, and disability status.<sup>47</sup>

In his submission to good politics and governance, Nkansah-Obrempong affirms and the author of this paper agrees with him that;

If we follow these biblical values and principles which are love, justice, righteousness, Integrity, honesty, and compassion and shun certain social vices like greed, dishonesty, evil, perverse ideas, and pride which destroy leaders, we will have a political system that will seek and promote the well-being of its citizens. We will have a political system that helps its citizens to experience God's shalom.<sup>48</sup>

When Biblical theology shapes our political engagements in life, our economic life can be sustained. As mentioned earlier, the economy is the heartbeat of both family life and national affairs, influencing how politics is conducted. Proverbs 29:2 says "When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan."<sup>49</sup> (New Living Translation). Another version says when the righteous rule, people prosper. This prosperity perhaps relates to the economic well-being of the people.

### Conclusion

We see inequality in the sharing of resources in our society. Many people cannot access basic services such as food, shelter, and clothing. Getting access to education and medical care is a nightmare for many people. We witness poor road networks in many areas of our society. On the contrary, the political elites continue to dine in the economic prosperity of many nations in Africa.

While offering an economic solution to our predicament, Nkansah-Obrempong says;

Humanity is made in the image of God. They are free to make choices, as God is free. However, they are responsible for the choices they make. Human beings find their "fulfillment in serving God, not in going for their own way. Human choices require "a change of our values, our objectives, our preferences,". They must conform to the purposes and will of God.<sup>50</sup>

Economic injustice is what colours our society. God gave us enough resources for all of us to enjoy here on earth. There are enough of God-given resources for all of us to enjoy. However, because of greed among many of our leaders, these resources are not equitable. Our politicians and leaders have the mandate to protect our resources. Through legislation in parliament, they should ensure that equitable resources are shared to benefit all in the country. This reflects the very character of a just and loving God who makes rain, oxygen, and sunshine to reach everyone without pay. Leaders should be transformed from within to reflect God's character in order to positively affect the outside world. This calls for just, moral, and servant leaders

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<sup>47</sup>Class Notes, TH 904 Theology, Political and Economic Life of Africa, Africa International University, Karen Campus, September 2020.

<sup>48</sup>James Nkansa Obrempong, *Foundations for African Theological Ethics*. (Carlisle: Langham Monographs 2013),164

<sup>49</sup><https://biblehub.com/proverbs/29-2.htm> (Accessed on March 10, 2024)

<sup>50</sup>James Nkansah-Obrempong, *Foundations for African Theological Ethics*. (Carlisle: Langham Monographs 2013), 168

who put the interest of others above their own as was demonstrated by Jesus in the Kenosis theory of Philippians chapter 2:1-11.

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