A Sign of the Times


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Abstract

The Ghana Catholic Church’s advocacy for social justice predated Vatican II thanks to her early encounter with independence in 1957. Throughout 1958, the Church in Ghana engaged the government of Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah in a robust dialogue on social justice. Through *The Standard*, her National Catholic weekly, the Church directed a steady stream of communication to the state on issues of social justice that approximate key lessons of Catholic Social Teaching on respect for human dignity and concern for truth and justice. The Ghana Church’s advocacy for justice was a sign of the times that reflected the mind of Pope John XXIII and what happened at the Second Vatican Council.

Introduction

By the end of the 1950s and during the Papacy of Pius XII, the Church had realized that it could no longer afford to engage the modern world in an uncritical contest of wills or with an attitude of passiveness and skepticism. She could no longer afford to wait for an invitation before engaging the world in dialogue. Soon after his election in October 1958, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to convene an ecumenical council and proceeded to set its preparatory mechanism in place. It was time to bring the Church up to date, to equip it with the tools and the spirit it needed to deal with the emerging modern world of science, technology, and ideology within the context of increasing human prosperity that, paradoxically, existed alongside increasing human misery and vulnerability. It was the
Church’s mission to embrace all of humanity and to enhance and protect the dignity of the human person regardless of religious affiliation. The Church’s mission was to fight social injustice regardless of who its victims or perpetrators were. By the end of the 1960s, the Catholic Church had positioned itself at the forefront of the fight against oppression, injustice and the abuse of human rights around the world.

By 1960, the Catholic Church had grown anxious about the “signs of the times.” While sections of humankind were making momentous strides towards scientific and material progress, other sections stood in dire need of the barest necessities of life. Atheistic ideologies ruled nations and inspired violent revolutions. The Cuban revolution and its incipient communist ideology threatened to spread to other Latin American countries where tyrannical regimes oppressed and exploited millions of hapless citizens. The tendency to oppose material realities for spiritual concerns was gaining momentum in some parts of the world. While some nations and individuals wallowed in the laps of luxury, the vast majority of humankind lived under enduring conditions of poverty, misery, exploitation, and oppression. According to Vatican II thinking, the imbalances manifested in those signs of the times could be corrected only by a sustained assault upon that “more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man” (Paul VI: 10). That basic imbalance, unfortunately, proves particularly resilient as manifested by the abiding controversy over the social questions and the preferential option for the poor advocated by Gaudium et Spes.

The process of European colonization of Africa accelerated with the scramble for colonies and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where the powers signed the Berlin Act laying down the rules for a peaceful partition of Africa. However, colonial rule proved surprisingly short-lived in Africa. Within half a century of the Berlin Act, Africans were clamoring for independence and a Europe devastated by the Second World War almost willingly granted self-rule to the plethora of arbitrary political units into which the continent had been carved in the wake of Berlin.

Before and during the conciliar years of Vatican II, the movement for political independence in Africa was culminating in what Orobator calls a “precipitated transfer of political power from bewildered and beleaguered colonialists to exuberant and inexperienced African leaders” (285).

The developmental colonialism launched by some European nations in the face of American anti-colonialism and African nationalist agitation was cut short by a surprising explosion of nationalist fervor that thrust Ghana into independence in 1957, followed by Guinea in 1958, and the entire French Sub-Saharan Africa in 1960. As the Council progressed in Rome, the European colonial empire withdrew from Africa and a plethora of barely-formed nation-states emerged across the continent. Africa’s new nation-states were born right into the middle of a global ideological battlefield. Caught in the cross-fire, the new African countries inspired another scramble among the powers, this time involving the United States, the Soviet Union, Communist China, and the traditional parties to the scramble of the 1880s, the western European powers. The international politics of global ideological containment made each African country’s foreign policy a matter of interest to all blocs. Each bloc did whatever was necessary to keep the other out of Africa. All blocs gave blanket support to whichever African leader or government professed support for their
ideologies. The conditions of the African people, the methods of government employed by individual leaders, and respect for human rights and the rule of law were of no concern to the ideologically warring parties.

This exclusive Cold War focus on leaders and governments had tragic consequences for Africa. It nurtured corrupt tyrants like Mobutu Sese Seko in the former Belgian Congo and Samuel Doe in Liberia, and zealously ideologues like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Sekou Ture in Guinea. Almost all the new African leaders took personal ownership of their countries to the exclusion of everyone else. The imposition of single party regimes, one-man rule, and life presidencies led to coups, counter-coups, and the emergence of brutal military dictatorships often worse than the civilian regimes they dislodged. Within the context of this widespread political disorder and indigenous tyranny, it was inevitable that “in the aftermath of independence, tension surfaced promptly between the missionary church and nascent political regimes around issues of schools, political system of one-party rule, and an elitist cast of ideologues eager to appropriate the spoils of independence” (Orobator: 286).

Ghana: The Fight before the Council

One of the most zealous and outspoken among what Orobator calls the “elitist cast of ideologues” was Ghana’s first prime minister and president, Kwame Nkrumah. Baptized into Catholicism at an early age in his home village of Nkroful, Nkrumah admits that he considered becoming a priest but grew increasingly skeptical of organized religion (1957). Much like Machiavelli, Nkrumah believed that religion “should play a very minor part in a man’s life” because if it “gets the upper hand, man becomes a slave and his personality is crushed” (1961: 12). He seems to have followed Machiavelli’s advice that religion should be used or not used according to political expedience. Nkrumah described himself “as a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist” (1961: 12), openly professed communist sympathies and was critical of organized religion, especially Christianity, as a vestige of exploitative western imperialism. Figures from Ghana’s National Catholic Secretariat show that about 13 % (876,473) of the country’s population of about 6,700,000 were Catholics in 1958.

Prior to Vatican II’s documents and position on social justice, the Catholic Church was openly critical of Nkrumah’s persecution of his opponents and critics as well as the “godlessness” in Nkrumah’s Ghana where the president was given an almost divine status by his party faithful. The Church particularly frowned on blasphemous utterances that compared Nkrumah to Christ, Moses, Muhammed, the Buddha, and many other prophets and saints. One cartoon published in the ruling party’s mouthpiece, the Evening News, shows Nkrumah as the risen Christ, surrounded by a circle of light, his right arm raised in blessing; another shows him holding a little lamb with the inscriptions “Osagyefo, the Good Shepherd: The Nation’s Fount of Honor” (see Figure 1). He is depicted in various renditions as “Hero of African Redemption” (see Figure 3), “Africa’s Man of Destiny,” “Our Liberator, Teacher, Guardian, and Leader,” the “Apostle of African Freedom and Unity” (see Figure 4), among many other flattering titles and representations (see the figures below). The Evening News virtually turned Nkrumah into a political cartoon by its extravagant praises and adorations of the Ghanaian leader. Anglican Bishop of Accra, Reverend Richard Roseveare, was deported from Ghana in August 1962 for publicly deploring slogans like “Africa has her
own god and Nkrumah is his Jesus,” uttered by Nkrumah supporters and published in the *Evening News* (Asante).
During the early post-colonial days, Catholic advocacy for social justice in Ghana was largely conducted through The Standard, Ghana’s National Catholic Weekly, founded in 1933. Through this paper, the church occasionally issued outright condemnations of social ills, as in the “blasphemy” of the divine Nkrumah, but rarely carried editorials critical of the government. That function was played by a small, rather inconspicuous column on the left hand side of the front page whose by-line read only “From Our Special Correspondent.” This column closely followed political developments in the country and consistently expressed the Church’s views on them in no uncertain terms. Several key themes emerged in the Standard: the threat of idolatry, arbitrary detention without trial, the need for political opposition, and the desirability of a democratic system of government in the new nation.

The Catholic Church opposed the construction of a statue of the prime minister outside the Ghana parliament. As Nkrumah’s statue neared completion, “Our Special Correspondent” cautiously welcomed the artwork but sounded a subtle alarm at the dangers of idol worship (Standard 1958a: 1). Perhaps she feared that, given the unbridled zealotry of the ruling party faithful, it was not inconceivable that they could start worshipping the statue. Indeed, a February 1960 editorial in the Evening News goes so far as to declare, “All day, all night, we are reinforced in our belief that the whole phenomena (sic) of Nkrumah’s emergence is second to none in the long history of the world’s Messiahs from Buddha and Mohammed to Christ.” The implication was that Nkrumah was “Messiah after the order of
Jesus” (Pobee: 144). Indeed, the Evening News implied that the Nkrumah phenomenon was greater than even that of Christ since it was “second to none.” Commenting on the statue, “Our Special Correspondent” remarked that, of course, the Church understood that “Dr. Nkrumah deserves a place in the country’s annals.” However, “photographs and statues of people dear to us do not mean much to us when they are with us as they do when they are no more with us.” She hoped that since the prime minister was still “in our midst his statue will not be all that important to us except to criticize and admire the workmanship of the Italian sculptor. . . Why chase after the shadow when you have the real object before you?” (Standard 1958a: 1). Apparently, an Italian sculptor was flown in to build Osagyefo’s statue at what must have been considerable cost to the newly independent, resource poor country. This was no mean indictment of Nkrumah’s egalitarian socialist pretensions.

Two weeks after the statue comments, “Our Special Correspondent” sounded another alarm, this time at the proposed introduction into parliament of what turned out to be Ghana’s most notorious law, the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) of 1958 (1958b). This law empowered the prime minister to order the arrest and detention of any person without trial for a period of up to five years or more. A 1964 version of the draconian code extended the period of detention by presidential fiat for up to ten years. In November 1957, the Avoidance of Discrimination Bill outlawed all ethnically-based, religious and regional parties and associations in Ghana. A month later in December 1957, the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) gave the government arbitrary power to detain or deport any person from Ghana if, in their estimation, “his presence in the country is not conducive to public good” (Ghana National Archives 1957b). What was conducive or not conducive to public good was often determined by the executive, with the ready support of the Convention People’s Party’s (CPP) legislative majority. The EPA was closely modeled after an old colonial legal code, the Emergency Orders in Council 1939, and represents yet another question mark about just how fiercely independent Nkrumah was. His rhetoric of anti-imperialism was certainly second to none in Africa, but his government could resurrect the ghost of an old colonial law and impose it upon his supposedly fiercely independent people.

The Avoidance of Discrimination Bill and the Emergency Powers the Preventive Detection Act represented a further tightening of the noose around the neck of civil liberties in the newly independent country. “Our Special Correspondent” clearly spelled this out in the February 16, 1958 issue of The Standard. The dangers posed by the PDA to civil liberties were such that the law was acceptable only within the context of an emergency, and then only as a temporary measure. Since there was no emergency in Ghana, “we are not at all sure the country needs such a bill. . . It may put unnecessary fear into members of the Opposition and limit considerably their activities as they will not know which action of theirs will bring them into the claws of this law.” By July it became clear that the PDA would become law. “Our Special Correspondent” expressed her “greatest reservation, which even amounts to our disapproval of it . . . imprisonment or undue detention without trial is an assail upon the individual liberty” (Standard 1958c: 1).

In the face of the Nkrumah government’s intention to muzzle all opposition in Ghana, “Our Special Correspondent” regularly insisted on the need for a strong political opposition in the country. She firmly insisted that the opposition would become redundant only if, and when, the party in power achieved “development in all spheres” (Standard 1958c: 1).
maintained elsewhere that “It has always been our view that since Ghana claims to be a
democratic country, the rule of the majority should prevail, although we do not mean by this
that the minority’s views should not be respected and that they should be trodden under
foot at all times” (Standard 1958d: 1).

The Nkrumah era in Ghana was marked by extreme hostility towards political
opposition. Opposition leaders were routinely harassed by both the state-owned media and
through preventive detention. Supporters of the ruling party took the law into their own
hands and physically attacked prominent members of the opposition. On August 3, 1958
“Our Special Correspondent” reacted sharply to newspaper reports that Dr. Kofi Busia,
leader of the minority opposition in parliament, had been “boooed, hit, pushed and kicked”
by supporters of the ruling CPP, who were led to believe that opposition leaders were
“attempting through subversion to overthrow by force the rightly constituted government.”
Indeed, Nkrumah routinely insisted that men like J. B. Danquah, Obetsebi Lamptey, and
Kofi Busia, among many others were involved in subversive activities under the direct
supervision of imperialist and neo-colonialist Western powers. “Our Special Correspondent”
remarked that “as long as these accusations remain unproved we can only regard them as
mere allegations, some of which could even be fabricated for political ends” (Standard 1958f:
1). Since Nkrumah was the source of these allegations, the Church positioned herself in
direct conflict with the state that the prime minister increasingly personified. “We do not
want to believe that the Government is only paying lip service to the idea of a strong
Opposition, for we are aware the Government itself knows too well that without an
Opposition, it will be nonsense to talk of parliamentary democracy” (Standard 1958f: 1).

As it turns out, Nkrumah’s definition of parliamentary democracy was not the same as
the Church’s. The Church spoke of Westminster and Washington-style parliamentary
democracy. Nkrumah had in mind the evolution in Ghana of a people’s democracy of the
sort found in China and the Soviet Union. His plan was to turn Ghana first into a republic,
which he did in 1960, and then into a one-party state, which he did in 1964. A program of
“Work and Happiness for All” would then gradually transform Ghana into a socialist
republic. This great program of Work and Happiness for All could not and would not be
derailed by opposing views or voices, in or outside Ghana. With the Emergency Powers Act,
the Non-Discrimination Act, and the Preventive Detention Act, the Nkrumah government
systematically muzzled both freedom of expression and association in Ghana. In the process,
the state committed massive human rights violations and other injustices against the people
of Ghana, making itself a legitimate target of criticism. Indeed, within about a year of
independence, the Christian Church remained the only institution in Ghana that could
repeatedly criticize the government without immediate drastic repercussions.

On a July 1958 visit to the United States, Nkrumah made remarks to the effect that
democracy was “perfectly safe” in Ghana. “Our Special Correspondent” could not help note
the stark contradictions between those words and the realities on the ground. Sounding
almost outright sarcastic, she remarked that “Dr. Nkrumah has so far given the impression
of saying what he means and meaning what he says. . . We wonder how many people took
him seriously when in 1949 he declared that party-politics had come to stay. Today, party-politics are a reality in this country and give the impression of having become part and parcel
of our political life” (Standard 1958g: 1). How could Nkrumah declare democracy safe in
Ghana with the Avoidance of Discrimination, Emergency Powers, and Preventive Detention Acts hanging over the country’s opposition like the proverbial sword of Damocles?

“Our Special Correspondent” hoped that by democracy, Nkrumah meant not the democracy of the “Eastern regime” countries, but the democracy of the country in which he was making his statement, “America, and also in the Commonwealth countries, and other countries of the West.” She observed that “democracy in the West differs from democracy in the East in this essential sense that in the West the people are given a choice, which is an essential element of true democracy; whilst in the East this is not the case.” Democracy spells choice and “choice implies the existence of MORE THAN ONE POLITICAL PARTIES (sic) from which the electorate can choose.” If Ghana wished to remain a member of the Commonwealth club, she must understand that “one big point about a club is that all members of it adhere to certain accepted principles and ways of life. In the Commonwealth club these principles and ways of life are the rule of law, respect for the individual justice, the four freedoms, and all that goes to make true democracy” (Standard 1958: 1).

Upon returning from the United States in August 1958, Nkrumah said in his usual post-visit broadcast to the nation that he was impressed with the strong feelings of loyalty the Canadian and American people showed their governments. “Our Special Correspondent” wryly commented that “unity and loyalty do not in any way imply that everybody in the country should think alike, or support blindly any plan that the Government may put forward.” Human beings are endowed with intelligence, and “it will be a sin against ourselves and our Creator not to make full use of this important quality . . . It is incumbent upon us therefore, to examine every plan that the Government puts forward, intelligently, and express our views on it.” She hoped that by unity and loyalty, the prime minister meant unity behind and loyalty to majority opinion in a purely democratic setting, “not blind support for government proposals.” After all, in Canada and the United States where “the Prime Minister and his party saw these qualities developed to such a high degree . . . the opposition is never branded as an enemy of the State, nor is any attempt made to discredit it in the public eyes” (Standard 1958a: 1). The opposition, branded “enemies of progress” and neo-imperialist stooges by Nkrumah, were depicted in the Evening News as horned devils and rats, shady characters working with external enemies to disrupt the Osagyefo’s great program of Work and Happiness for All.

In this context, it was inevitable that there would be at least one major confrontation between the Catholic Church and the CPP government. Pobee reports that “one morning in 1963, the Rev. Fr. Damoah of the Roman Catholic Church, Saltpond,” was invited to the local police station and promptly placed under detention.\(^1\) That evening Archbishop John

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\(^1\) Issues of The Standard for the period before 1958 and from 1959 to 1962 proved impossible to locate at the paper’s offices, at the Catholic Secretariat, and at the Ghana National Archives. At the latter location, they were said to be in a state of disrepair and taken out for maintenance. Repeated efforts over three weeks to gain access to the records of the Christian Council of Ghana proved futile because the Secretary General was said to be out of the office. It appears no one else at the Council had the authority to grant access to the records in the absence of the Secretary General.
Amissah of Cape Coast heard about Fr. Damoah’s arrest, and went to the police station and demanded to know why. When the police refused to explain, the Archbishop staged a sit-in at the station declaring, “I will not leave without my priest. But if I must leave without my priest, I must know what he has done” (171). Fr. Damoah and the Archbishop spent two days under police custody before they were released. During these two days, crowds of Catholics and other Christians gathered outside the police stations at Saltpond and Elmina where the duo had been transferred. They refused to budge until the Archbishop and Fr. Damoah were released. Apparently, Fr. Damoah was arrested under a PDA directive issued by the Regional Commissioner of Police, Mr. J. E. Hagan, who Pobee describes as “a Roman Catholic and a great bully” (172). Fr. Damoah’s arrest was in connection with a series of 1963 articles he had published in the Standard that were critical of the Nkrumah government.

A Lull in the Church’s Social Critique

The encounter with the PDA seems to have dampened the Church’s enthusiasm for the fight for social justice in Ghana during the latter part of the Nkrumah regime. “Our Special Correspondent” is conspicuously absent from issues of The Standard dating from at least January 1964. The small front-page column was no longer there and, once in a while, The Standard carried short editorials in which she cautiously and sometimes not so cautiously praises Nkrumah, whom she now also called Osagyefo. In one editorial after a failed attempt against Nkrumah’s life in the run-up to the referendum on the one-party state, The Standard sounded so much like the Evening News as to be alarming: “In a desperate bid to stop the Nkrumaist Revolution, about to be consolidated in the 24th January Referendum, the enemies of the CPP and the Leader wanted to kill the heart of the Revolution, Kantamanto (a Nkrumah title). As shots fell wide of their target to the relief of the country, the same bullets killed the hope that had inspired this evil act. Triumphantly, the masses swore allegiance and support to Osagyefo, thereby implicitly reassuring him of the support they want to give in the proposed referendum” (Standard 1964a: 1).

The Standard editorial almost adopted the tone of the praise-singing Evening News: ‘In that awful moment of the attack the work of the CPP and the Leader hung in the balance . . . In his fury the assassin struggled with Osagyefo and was overcome. . . The day the enemies had fixed for the disgrace and downfall of the Leader and the CPP became the day of their own disgrace and downfall. The Leader became more popular than ever and the plotters more hated than before. In that awful moment Osagyefo did not forget his Christian principles. He did not want to repay evil with evil. He spared the enemy the shame of being shot. Osagyefo nkwaso” (Akan for “Life to Osagyefo”; Standard 1964a: 1). This certainly expressed more than the normal Catholic abhorrence of murder and attempted murder. It was ironic that the Church could lend public support to the referendum that she knew would transform Ghana into an authoritarian one-party state in which all right to criticize the government was banned. This also was a sign of the times.

A May 17, 1964 editorial comment on the government’s new Seven Year Plan wholeheartedly supports the government and urges the public and especially the private sector “to participate in the dynamic construction of the national industries” because it is “workable” and because it “enhances the respect and concern the President and his Cabinet feel for the welfare of the population.” If the private sector and foreign investors
participated in the plan, the Church opined, “the sins of the past will be adequately redeemed on the basis of equality” (Standard 1964b: 1).

To further demonstrate the Church’s support for the president, The Standard carried the picture of a broadly smiling Nkrumah on the front page of its June 28, 1964 issue to mark Republic Day. Such unqualified support coming at the height of the Nkrumah dictatorship represents a rather confusing endorsement of a regime that thrived on political repression and church-bashing.

It appears that the Ghana Church’s newfound friendliness with the Nkrumah regime was endorsed and perhaps actively encouraged by the Vatican. In May 1965 Luigi Bellotti, Pope Paul’s Apostolic Delegate to Central West Africa and Ghana, arrived in Accra and paid a courtesy call on President Nkrumah; he was accompanied by Archbishop Ammissah of Cape Coast, Bishop Joseph Bowers of Accra, and Bishop Joseph Essuah of Kumasi. According to The Standard, Nkrumah “warmly” received the papal delegate and local prelates and “they took pictures together and talked about subjects of mutual interest.” Apparently, at least one Catholic church in Ghana had from 1963 held a monthly high mass to pray for Nkrumah’s wellbeing. This was revealed by a front-page story with Nkrumah’s picture on The Standard’s October 31, 1965 issue, headlined “Osagyefo Gives to Elmina.” Part of the story reads: “October 23, Osagyefo, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana donated C. 1,200 (or 500 pounds) today for the restoration of the St. Joseph’s Catholic Church here, the oldest Catholic Church in Ghana. . . Every month a High Mass is celebrated in the Church for the well-being of Osagyefo, asked for by Mr. J. I. M. Mensah, Port manager of Harbours. This tradition of a monthly High Mass was established two years ago.”

Yet another Standard editorial of November 21 expresses solidarity with Nkrumah in his ongoing “battle” against Ian Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Southern Rhodesia. In 1965, an act of parliament gave Nkrumah the power to raise a people’s army for possible action against the Smith regime. The state-controlled papers were flush with calls for the people to come out and enlist in the president’s private army which, in reality, might have been meant as a counter force to the increasingly alienated Ghanaian armed forces. In her November 21 editorial, The Standard quoted extensively from John XXIII’s Paem in Terris to make her case. Ian Smith was asked to heed the words of Pope John, and to “take a clue from the greatest African theologian and philosopher, St. Augustine, who says: ‘What are kingdoms without justice but bands of robbers?’ . . . What is your U.D.I. other than a UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INJUSTICE? . . . You are not the first-born in Rhodesia. You were adopted, but the sons and daughters of the House have the first right. Your usurpation brings misery on the whole house” (1965c).

As fate would have it, Nkrumah was overthrown three months after Pope Paul closed the Second Vatican Council on December 8, 1965. News of the February 24, 1966 coup reached the president in Peking, en route to North Vietnam at the invitation of Ho Chi Minh. It seems reasonable to conclude that Catholic advocacy for social justice in Ghana would have been suspended as long as Nkrumah remained in power. In a worst case scenario, the church in Ghana could have been reduced to a likeness of her Latin American

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2 Ghana became a Republic on July 1, 1960.
counterparts under Trujillo, Anastatio, and Somoza; placed directly under the thumb of the state and encouraged to assist in the exploitation and suppression of the country’s poor and needy.

Conclusion

Compared to the Latin American dictatorships of his day, Nkrumah left the Church in Ghana relatively alone. There was, of course the constant stream of dehumanization spewed by the Evening News against government critics including priests like Bishop Roseveare and Archbishop Amissah. And there was Father Damoah’s brief detention under the Preventive Detention Act. However, the exploitation and persecution of Christians in Ghana approached nowhere near what Don Lito and other campesinos of El Salvador and other Latin American Christians suffered at the hands of the state. His government, however, systematically proscribed all opposition and all private secular newspapers or, as in the case of the Daily Graphic, buy them off. By the end of 1963, only state-owned papers were published in Ghana. The act announcing the single-party state in 1964 spelled the definitive end of all party political opposition to Nkrumah’s CP.P In 1965, the People’s Parliament passed an act empowering the President to establish and train a people’s militia for military action against Ian Smith’s rogue regime in Southern Rhodesia. Ostensibly, Nkrumah also had in mind using the people’s militia as a counter force to the regular army whom he increasingly viewed with suspicion.

Dubbed Operation Cold Chop, the February 1966 coup gave birth to the first of five military regimes to hold power in Ghana between 1966 and 1992: The National Liberation Council (NLC) 1966-69; the Supreme Military Council I (SMC I) 1972-78; the Supreme Military Council II (SMC II) 1978-79; the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (1979); and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) 1981-92. The second and third Ghana republics rose and fell in between these military dictatorships. The current Fourth Republic followed the country’s longest period of military rule in January 1993.

As I hope to demonstrate in a forthcoming study, throughout the post-Nkrumah period of political upheaval, the Catholic Church in Ghana remained resolutely engaged with issues of social and political justice. If the Church in the first republic fought injustice “in the tradition of the Church’s heroes of faith” (Pobee: 173), Vatican II afforded her the added impetus of universal support and a body of novel doctrine from which she drew to buttress her claims for social, economic, and political justice in Ghana. Orobator writes that “the temptation is strong to conclude that just as the promise and hope of political independence failed to deliver progress and development, so too did the aggiornamento of Vatican II become tepid in Africa” (286). But while aggiornamento “progressed along a checkered part on the African continent” (286), in Ghana, the Catholic hierarchy and press has remained consistently engaged with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. From 1968 to date, the Church has addressed issues of social justice not only through the editorial pages of The Standard, but also through pastoral letters, communiqués, and memoranda occasionally issued by the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference.
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Paul VI, Pope


Pobee, John S.


*The Standard*

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Vigil, María López