

# Addressing SDGs Using Emmanuel Asante’s Kingship of Onyame Theology: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract	Journal of Policy and Development Studies (JPDS)
<p><i>In the extensive discourse on the kingdom of God, it is almost assumed that all cultures converge in meaning and application of the symbol kingdom of God. Asante charts a novel path in discussing the kingdom of God in a manner that is loaded with meaning and significance from a distinctly African (Akan) perspective. Through content analysis, this work critically reviewed the kingship of Onyame theology and its suitability for African Christian theology. It was observed that kingship of Onyame has significant homogeneity with Christian faith and serve as a catalyst to address poverty and gender inequality. As a theology of inculturation, it emphasized that indigenous knowledge systems are apt for engendering social cohesion and reconfiguration. It is valuable for exploring the “already” or “present” aspect of the kingdom of God for human and social development. Its main challenges is generalization of Akan construct for universal application and limited application of this contextualized theology to the eschatological dimension of God’s kingdom.</i></p>	<p>Vol. 18 Issue 3 (2025) ISSN(p) 1597-9385 ISSN (e) 2814-1091 Home page: <a href="https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds">https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds</a></p> <p><b>ARTICLE INFO:</b> <b>Keyword:</b> Decolonization, Onyame, Kingship, SDGs, Ecotheology</p> <p><b>Received:</b> 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025 <b>Revised:</b> 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025 <b>Accepted:</b> 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025 <b>DOI</b> <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v18i3.4">https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v18i3.4</a></p>

## 1. Introduction

Literature on the kingdom of God, copious as it may be, is predominantly rooted in Western epistemic traditions. Such discourses frequently explore the Jewish conception of the kingdom, detailing origins of the Messianic hope, Western Christian traditions of the kingdom such as Calvin's two kingdom theology, and the kingdom sayings of Jesus. The latter also leads to broader dialogue in eschatology, with favorable consensus on inaugurated eschatology against realized and consistent strands of eschatology. In the extensive discourse on the kingdom of God, it is almost assumed that all cultures converge in meaning and application of the substance of the kingdom. However, reflecting on the kingdom of God in America (Niebuhr, 1988), Niebuhr identified how Puritans and revivalists envisaged an earthly utopia in the then "New World" as an opportunity to realize the kingdom of God on earth, while emphasizing personal salvation, moral transformation and social reform. Additionally, Niebuhr critiqued the shift towards liberalism, and cautioned against equating political movements with divine purposes (Niebuhr, 1988). Conversely, Kuyper (1909) encouraged establishment of all kinds of Christian societies, such as Christian universities, political parties, media, and trade unions in the Netherlands, based on the kingdom of God, and each of these were understood as manifestation of the visible church, *ecclesia visibilis*.

However, literature on the kingdom of God contributed by African writers mostly discusses the kingdom of God from such Western perspectives without necessarily detailing how Africans envision the kingdom of God within their ontological framework and existential paradigm. Hence, even though the field of inculturation studies has witnessed many advances (Nche *et al.*, 2016; Duncan, 2025), there have been little effort to articulate the theology of the kingdom of God in distinctly African terms. The problem this research sought to address therefore has to do with the paucity in situating the theology of the kingdom of God within African Christian theology, specifically Akan Christian theology. This work critically reviewed the kingship of *Onyame* theology advocated by Asante<sup>1</sup>, and assessed its suitability for African Christian theology. The significance of the research is to contribute to attempts to situate the theology of the kingdom of God within the ontological context and existential philosophy of the Akan people of West Africa.

In this exploration, Asante is commended for charting a novel path in contemplating the kingdom of God in a manner that is loaded with meaning and significance from a distinctly Akan-African perspective. Hence, the study sought to answer the question "how relevant is the kingdom of God framework for resolving societal challenges as expressed in Asante's theology? Informed by this research question, this present work sought to examine the concept of the kingdom of God as expressed in African spirituality, leveraging on Asante's theological processes focusing on Akans. Thus, the paper provides a fresh vision towards the development of a theological reflection as a response to contemporary challenges including those specified in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals 1 (poverty), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). It offers an indigenous framework to address contemporary societal challenges. This enables a new generation of scholars, and the wider global community to appreciate the contributions of a contemporary African theologian's outlook on the kingdom of God.

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## 2. Review of Related Literature

In his theological process, Asante adapts Perrin's symbol kingdom of God to conceptualize the kingdom of God within the African context in developing his African, specifically Akan<sup>2</sup> Christian theology of the kingdom of God. Perrin's elucidation of the kingdom of God as a symbol is based on the ancient Israelite myth of God as king, who acts on behalf of his people (Perrin, 1976). The symbol therefore invokes various possibilities. Thus, Asante's *magnum opus* offers at least two important contributions to African theological enterprise. First is the detailed exploration that vividly establishes continuity between Christianity and Akan religio-cultural traditions. Secondly, he authentically grounds proclamation of the Christian symbol kingdom of God within Akan cosmology.

Dialoguing with Perrin on the symbol kingdom of God, Asante (1995) affirms that the symbol evokes manifests and mediates the reality of the everlasting creator God who was, is and will always be active in history as King on behalf of his creation. He notes that the symbol evokes confrontation between God and the hearers of Jesus in an initial disorientation to life, which equally results in a reorientation of life towards God and his will (Asante, 1995). Thus, it challenges the listeners to encounter God in the concrete history of their daily life experiences, dismantling conventional standards. It is precisely due to the ongoing internal and cultural alienation of Africans that he rightly asserts this ethic for reorientation to life. By making use of Perrin's tensive symbol designation of the Kingdom, Asante finds linkages that incorporate both Western and African epistemology, although there exists considerable resistance to Perrin's kingdom symbol (Perrin, 1976). Significantly, Asante has succeeded in entrenching his distinctly African perspective of the Kingdom of God within familiar grounds.

### Why a Distinctly Akan/African Christian Theology of the Kingdom of God?

Decrying the tension existent through internal and cultural alienation of many Christianized Africans, Asante posits this as due to the conscious and unconscious undermining and condemnation of religio-cultural traditions by the early missionaries (Asante, 1995). Asante (1995) further remarked that alienation is expounded as the state of being estranged or indifferent from one's culture and this was attributed to early missionary attitude and education. Thus, choosing Western culture was at the expense of African people and culture while choosing traditional values to the neglect of Western cultural values was to live in the fossilized culture of the past, a cultural romanticism (Asante, 1995; Busia, 1951). This does not imply that Asante is entirely against Western education given that he has benefitted significantly from it. His concern dwells on the uncritical imposition of Western culturing systems inherent within Western forms of education that disparages Africans and makes them prone to denigrate themselves and malign their cultural moors together with their philosophical and epistemological processes. Thus, Biko (2002) alludes to elements of defiance, self-assertion, group pride and solidarity, all of which derives from shared oppression among people, to anticipate the surviving essentials of African culture. Consequently, African intellectual renaissance in recent years is beginning to reconstruct and reclaim its indigenous wisdom, dignity and relevance across the spectrum of global narratives among the intelligentsia.

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<sup>2</sup> Akan refers to the ethnolinguistic grouping of West African people found mainly in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Mali, Guinea, Niger who speak various subdialects such as Guan, Twi, Fante among others. They are settled as matrilineal clans who practice ancestral cults although many present day Akans are Christians. See: Kofi Abrefa Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti: A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Changes on Ashanti Political Institutions* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1951); Kofi Ayim, *The Akan of Ghana: Aspects of Past and Present Practices* (West Orange, NJ: Kofi Ayim, 2015).

Invariably, Asante (1995) utilizes a decolonial approach to knowledge to theologize on the kingdom of God. Accordingly, he addresses the failure of African theologians to establish real continuity between Christianity and African religio-cultural traditions in their attempt to contextualize theology in Africa either through ethnographic or liberation approaches. His consideration coincides with that of Bediako, who affirms that culture does not restrain faith but rather serves as a means for faith development, and thus, via translation of the gospel, the Christian message is reconfigured and inculturated in each context (Bediako, 2000). Tacitly, Bediako (2000) underscores that African traditional religions and culture, primes indigenes for God's ultimate revelation, which is Christ. Asante (1995) then rightly posits the continuity between Christianity's kingdom of God symbol and the religio-cultural traditions as well as socio-political setting of the evangelized people of Africa, specifically the Akan ethnic group across West Africa.

Exploring the kingdom of God through the lens of Akan-African Christian theology subjective as it may be is nonetheless culturally relevant. It provides empowerment and identity for African Christians, which is necessary for the contextualization of faith. As a result, it capable of being utilized for social transformation. That it contributes to the dialogue of the global theological enterprise is an additional benefit.

### **Kingship of *Onyame* Theology**

Asante (1995) developed his discourse on the myth of God's Kingship, which for the Akan is termed as kingship of *Onyame* (God). This stepwise development commences with the Akan self-understanding, which is founded on *sensus communis*, sense of community and on Akan royalty. In the first instance, Akan ontology is articulated in the words of Pobee (1979) and Mbiti (1990) as *cognatus ergo sum*, I exist because I belong, and all the members of this communal society are *Onyame mma*, children of *Onyame* as noted by Asante (1995). Akans therefore see themselves as related through their universal ancestor, *Onyame*. In the second instance, the *ohene*, Akan king, has the unique role of representing the fullness of his community, including the ancestors, and executes duties as *ohene-komfo*, a priest-king at special religious occasions (Asante, 1995). Royalty therefore does not exist for its own sake except to serve the unity of the community as well as its physical and spiritual wellbeing. Thus, the sacred office of the monarch stands in relation to *Onyame*. Sacredness of royalty is entailed in the Akan maxim *Onyame ne hene*, to wit *Onyame* is King, thus Akan understanding of royalty is steeped in the myth of kingship of *Onyame* (Asante, 1995).

The Akan self-understanding as people participating in a divine source reveals their conception of human community as sacred community requiring sacred norms for the ordering of life. Akan's are therefore conscious of their encounter with *Onyame*'s kingship in daily life. Thus, both royalty and community which constitute Akan identity are held to be sacred. Akan identity therefore illustrates absolute dependence on the Creator-King, without whom there can neither be community nor royalty (Asante, 1995). Akan self-awareness therefore is simultaneously informed and defined by *Onyame*, who is also recognized as King or Overlord of the Akan community (Asante, 1995). Subsequently, Asante asserts proclamation of the kingdom of God not in terms that alienate Africans from their religio-cultural traditions but reasonably engender psychosocial recognition of the God already known to Africans (Asante, 1995).

### **Influence of Kingship of *Onyame* Symbol for Some Selected African Religio-Cultural Values**

According to Mbiti (1996), belief and action are considered as a single whole in African traditional societies; people's actions are inspired by their beliefs, which is also inspired by experience and action. Accordingly, the kingship of *Onyame* is argued to have significant influence on African values. The argument Asante advances for understanding the Kingship of *Onyame* is that it helps Akan/Africans come to terms with new dimensions of God who confronts systems that undermines the value of individuals in society (Asante, 1995). Proclamation of the kingdom in such terms advocated by Asante is envisaged to have positive influence on specific Akan religio-cultural values as marriage, motherhood and motherliness, religiosity, group solidarity and attitude towards suffering. Although such religio-cultural values are discussed within the setting of Akan people, it has applications for the wider African milieu.

### **Kingship of *Onyame* Theology for Harmonious Heterogenous Marriages**

Concerning the religio-cultural value of marriage for example, Asante rightly noted instances of over indulgence of Akan families in the marital lives of couples in which case success of the marriage sometimes depends on the goodwill of members of the families. Absence of such goodwill results in undue pressure that wrecks the marriage. He critiques this practice in light of the Kingship of *Onyame* who is intent on the welfare of individuals as much as the community (Asante, 1995). Asante stated again that given that *Onyame* confers significance upon individual members of the Akan community, personal liberties ought not to be annulled by the collectivity of community. It is however noteworthy that the Akan value of group solidarity while opposing excessive individualism does not suppress individuals per se, thus the individual Akan is individuated in the community, not outside or against it (Asante, 1995).

Aptly, Ogbujah (2014) remarked that this ethos of the individuated Akan who still shares life with the community, and thus lives in conformity to shared communal values makes the Kingship of *Onyame* theology a potent response to the perceived threats of homosexual marital unions advanced by the globalist agenda of contemporary ultra-liberals. This is vital for Akan people even though marriages may not be directed primarily towards the benefit of the family group or lineage since people are individuated within communal Akan setting. However, the inter-relatedness of Akan people through their universal ancestor necessitates preservation of family and communal values towards ensuring harmony. Herein, the sacredness of the traditional community envisaged by kingship of *Onyame* theology accords with the sacral unity cherished in traditional Catholicism (Appiah, 2014), and indeed in Christianity in general. Thus, while people should have personal determination in choice of spouses and management of their marital lives, nonetheless that should not violate the heterogenous marriage model for non-binary unions which among other reasons is undesirable among Africans because it cannot proliferate the community. Oyeshile (2007) therefore rightly asserts that irreconcilable values displayed in both private and public domains is responsible for the failure to attain a sense of community. Thus, the advisory role and positive moral influence of family and lineage groups in the marital lives of couples cannot be discarded entirely.

### **Kingship of *Onyame* theology for Resolving the Problem of Evil and Suffering**

Moreover, the Akan/African views religion in terms of usefulness. This implies that for the Akan-African, value of religiosity is gauged by religion's practicality, dynamism, propensity towards solving life problems both existential and supernatural, whiles helping individuals attain satisfactory life destiny which encompasses health, wealth, children and liberation from evil powers and witchcraft (Asante, 1995). Such conception of religion as problem solving is

however considered as being of dubious utility at best. Similar to an individual's subjection to the monarch, religion offers context for religious persons to exhibit creatureliness and absolute dependence upon the creator. Religion from the perspective of the kingdom of God symbol understood in terms of the kingship of *Onyame* therefore transcends problem-solving (Asante, 1995). It represents relationship with a Sovereign and thus contributes new attitude and approach towards categorical submission to the God of the kingdom.

Likewise, Akan-Africans view suffering chiefly as a sign of anger and retribution from the Supreme Being and his emissaries. This notion naturally triggers an inquiry into the causes and sources of human suffering. Although this conception has some parallels in Christian tradition, yet the Biblical revelation also presents narratives of innocent suffering. Accordingly, proclamation of the kingdom of God symbol understood in terms of the kingship of *Onyame* disorients the Akan/African ethos towards a reorientation of a righteous God who acts in history on behalf of his people and suffers in solidarity with suffering people (Asante, 1995).

### **Eschatological dimension of Kingship of *Onyame* Theology**

Consequently, Asante (1995) indicated that the influence of the kingdom of God on various African religio-cultural values exhibited through the kingship of *Onyame* symbol attests to the kingdom ethic of hope, which Akans term as *anidaso*. Though existing in doubt, *anidaso* survives in faith. Thus whiles the kingdom shatters self-illusion, it leads to more meaningful understanding of self and reality. This for the Akan/African is a challenge to liberate themselves by confronting stark realities of the present in order to transform it. Moreover, this *anidaso* sees beyond oneself in anticipating Christ who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. Thus, proclamation of the kingdom for the Akan/African offers prayerful expectation of the infinite rule of God, which opens up history into eschatological dimensions of a new horizon (1995). Moltmann (1965) similarly anticipates a meaningful partnership of Christianity with society in which Christianity discloses its own hope to society, and this is essential because hope alone keeps life, both public and social, flowing and free.

Eschatological dimension of new horizons implicit in the proclamation of the kingdom of God presents yet another clash of values for the Akan/African and a continuous discontinuity with Christianity. Akan eschatological view of life after death maintains that the departed soul reunites with the ancestors in the ancestral plane subsequently to be reborn. Thus, Akan eschatology alludes to reincarnation. The kingdom of God symbol however is opposed to reincarnation. Eschatological salvation of the kingdom anticipates an enormous universal family in union with the God of the Kingdom (Asante, 1995). This stands in continuity with Akan eschatology expectation of reunion in the ancestral plane albeit it entails a widening of the Akan eschatological viewpoint. It is nonetheless discontinuous with new birth through the process of reincarnation as it anticipates an infinite, inexhaustible and non-historical new horizon. Asante however does not provide much analysis on the eschatological aspect of the Kingship of *Onyame*. Perhaps this is due to the African view of eschatology, which as Mbiti (1969) asserts does not look forward to a future and better life.

Thus, Shaw (1994) notes that the utmost imminent paradox of Africa is that the continent devoid of a robust indigenous eschatology is the continent, which renews kingdom consciousness to the world. Shaw therefore notes that what African tradition could not provide, African Christian theology of the kingdom has supplied.

### **3. Methodology**

The study embarked on thematic analysis of secondary data sources from online journals and books. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data, and it is not tied to any particular epistemological or theoretical perspective, thus allowing for a diversity of work (Moirira and Delahunt, 2017). It is imperative to add that while the work focused primarily on Asante's theology by critically examining the key themes that are advanced by him, other literature was consulted to bring clarity to identified issues. Through this approach, we identify interesting and important themes in Asante's work to address challenges identified within the selected SDGs.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

This section critically dialogues with Asante, using key themes of his theology to proffer solutions to some selected SDGs namely; 1 (poverty), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

##### **Implication of the Kingship of *Onyame* Theology on Achieving Zero Poverty (SDG 1)**

The main objective of this paper was to examine how the theology of the kingship of *Onyame*, as enshrined in Asante's theology thought could provide a fresh look into poverty alleviation. The kingship of *Onyame* theology is relevant for elucidating creative human community, which promotes relationships and sense of belonging. This is premised on the Akan self-understanding of being *Onyame mma* (to wit: *God's children*). Thus, no member of the community is conceptually expected to perish from impoverishment due to hunger or homelessness, since as *Onyame mma*, there is shared ownership of natural resources and to some extent material resources (Asante, 1995;2007). Thus, this understanding could be leveraged on in poverty alleviation as it encourages communal living, the principle of common good. As indicated by Gutierrez and other liberation theologians, God has preferential option for the poor, the marginalized, oppressed which are key characteristics of poverty (Gutiérrez, 1988). Asante's theology hence provides strong biblical and ethical foundation for Christian's action towards poverty alleviation.

With this understanding, the social actions of the church such as building of schools, provision of livelihood support programs with the sense of common good could be beneficial. This is notable within the Ghanaian Christianity, where several efforts are made to address the issues of poverty. It is common to find churches engaging in activities that are geared towards addressing poverty. Indeed, while many of the churches may not be conscious of the Kingship of *Onyame* as the basis for their actions, the humanistic view of God within the Akan ontology, seem to resonate with these actions. Thus, consciousness of this theology has the tendency to prevent abuse, marginalization, exploitation and oppression of the poor. It further corresponds with the Christian expectation of *koinonia*, through shared participation within the organic Body of Christ imagery, exhibited through early church historical practices of fellowship meals, care for the sick, poor and vulnerable. This imposes a sense of mutual responsibility towards the well-being of the faith community. This contribution finds justification both in Gutierrez's liberation theology (Gutierrez, 1988) and Moltmann's theology of hope (Moltmann, 1965).

##### **Kingship of *Onyame* Theology for Promoting Gender Equality (SDG 5)**

The study again sought to examine the Asante's theology could be used as a framework in gender equality dialogue. Kingship of *Onyame* theology is useful towards promoting goal

five of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), namely gender equality. Petersen noted that many African women live in abusive relationships, and these victims often resort to their faith as a coping mechanism by seeking help from their religious leaders and faith communities (Petersen, 2016). Petersen (2016) at the same time, she noted that perpetrators of violent abuses against women also employ religious teachings through easily misinterpreted scriptures, and cultural practices to support abusive behaviour. Petersen therefore stresses that religion embedded in culture serves as a social determinant for gender-power relations, noting that in such settings, skewed gender-power relations are rationalized as mandated by God. Isaacs-Martin (2012) further emphasised that when culture is merged with religion, restricting women is codified with precarious implications for participation of women in education, the economy and politics.

Accordingly, by applying this theological framework, Akan-African women will be liberated to attain equality from domineering verdicts of inferiority to the opposite sex, which is composite in predefined motherhood roles, rigid ethnicism, and sexism (Asante, 1995). In his view the kingship of *Onyame* theology serves as a liberating symbol that deconstructs the Akan male's self-understanding as a superior sex and reconstructs a new understanding of human equality within the Akan setting (Asante, 1995). This works to redefine the context within which women and men in mutual recognition of differences will respect and appreciate each other and cooperate to actualize their individual and familial potential as *Onyame mma*, children of *Onyame*. Duly, both males and females are equally considered as *Onyame mma*. Moreover, since Akan matrilineal system reveres women (De-Whyte, 2018), this theology of inculturation is intrinsically a theology of empowerment for women. Consequently, Dery (2024) argues that the cultural reverence associated with reverential statues of women are to be understood as forms of agency and power for women. Dery thus notes that Ghanaian men and women understand their positions in the family in terms of performing distinct roles and responsibilities, which are not necessarily hierarchal, but complementary (Dery, 2024).

### **Kingship of *Onyame* theology for Promoting Ecotheology – Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)**

Asante (1995) strongly posited that the God presented in the kingdom of God symbol in the message of Jesus is the same creator-sustainer God acknowledged by Akans as *Onyame*. This encounter enables Akan people and Africans in general to transpose their religio-cultural traditions within the context of global Christianity. For instance, Akan understanding of nature as sacred reality deriving sacral character from God is maintained as congruent with Biblical tradition. This view of nature functions as a significant resource for ecotheology within the context of the Akan and African people by stimulating their unique relationship to nature, and inspiring commitment to love, revere and take good care of nature (Asante, 1985).

For example, various Akan communities have days dedicated to honor the spirit of the land or water bodies and also to reinvigorate the earth and aquatic life. As such, all farming and fishing activities are forbidden on such days and this observance to various degree of enforcement continue in contemporary times where artisanal small-scale miners, often referred to in local parlance as *galamsey* operators are prevented from mining on such days. These religio-cultural norms were most effective in times past, where there was pervasive fear of the deities considered by Akan-African people as *Onyame*'s custodians responsible for the care of the water and land. Duly, many Akan-African people preserved the earth to avoid imminent judgement from the powerful custodians (Blasu, 2025). Unfortunately, with the onset of modernization and Western intellectual tradition of rationalism, the reverential fear of the deities that encouraged preservation of water bodies has been wholly discarded leading



to regressive attitude toward the care of the earth. This makes it difficult to preserve water bodies and ensure clean and sanitation as outlined in SDG 6. Nonetheless, it is envisaged that kingship of *Onyame* theology will revive the consciousness of Akan-Africans towards the sacral character of the earth and water bodies (Ntreh *et al.*, 2019).

Noting that nature depends on humans for its well-being inasmuch as humans depend on nature, Asante (1995) emphasizes the usefulness of traditional values of nature in resolving contemporary ecological problems through development of distinct African ecological theology. This view of nature is harmonious with Christian doctrine and only becomes disharmonious and discontinuous with Christianity only in instances where nature is treated as a self-sufficient entity. Such a theological enterprise therefore will aid to regulate the excessive exploitation of natural resources, which threatens the ecological structure of the world presently.

### **Kingship of *Onyame* Theology for Resolving Inequalities and Promoting Justice (SDG 10 and 16)**

Evidently, normalization and trivializing injustice makes it thrive in any society. Consequently, considering that Goals 10 and 16 of the UN-SDGs are geared towards reducing inequalities and ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions respectively, the ethic of justice in kingship of *Onyame* theology will also help to mitigate against other forms of inequality, injustice and marginalization such as ethnicism, xenophobia, and racism.

Akan-African culture can be vulnerable to the normalization and trivialization of some forms of injustice. For instance, Asante opines that the importance Akan people and Africans in general place on group solidarity, makes them susceptible to promoting favouritism, nepotism and corruption because it enables bias towards felonious members of one's kinship (Asante, 1995). For instance, observation is made that Akan/African people sometimes prefer to shield their kinsfolk involved in vices from due punishment and justice. Within Akan disciplinary context, Asante notes that offenses are categorized as private offenses or household cases known as *Efisem*, and public offenses or State Taboos referred to as *Oman Akyiwade*. The former is usually arbitrated by the elder of the lineage group whereas the latter is adjudicated by the monarch. *Oman Akyiwade* is thought to be capable of devastating the community's welfare by incurring the displeasure and threatening to estrange *Onyame* and his emissaries and ancestors, thus it is also considered as religious in nature (Busia, 1951). Vices such as nepotism and corruption, being public offenses then constitute an assault to the Akan community which is understood as sacred in relation to *Onyame*.

Hence, misdirected group solidarity which insulates felonious kinsfolk from justice therefore has undesirable effect on the whole community. Considering that the symbol kingdom of God via the kingship of *Onyame* entails the ethic of justice and impartial values, it invariably constitutes for the Akan and African, a clash of values, a disorientation which necessitates a new paradigmatic reorientation. Asante therefore proposes Kingship of *Onyame* as effective in curbing corruption and such social ills. The effectiveness of it lies in the realization that all members of the community are related through *Onyame*, their universal ancestor and are regarded as *Onyame mma*, children of *Onyame*. Therefore, favoritism, nepotism and corruption perpetuated against anyone within the Akan-African community is conceived against the entire community as well as *Onyame*. Accordingly, commitment to the God of the kingdom necessitates re-evaluation of Akan and African kinship responsibilities (Asante, 1995).

As indicated earlier the contribution of kingship of *Onyame* theology is its relevance for justice. The Akan king is at the same time a judge and arbitrator of human-human and

human-divine transgressions. In analogical terms, the God whose mediatorial role in human affairs is invoked by the symbol kingdom of God is concerned with injustice (Asante, 1995). This corresponds with several injunctions by the Biblical prophets about the day of the Lord as punitive for the wicked and sinners of Israel. Moreover, the prophets associated various calamities with divine judgments for national sins. Particularly, God's justice is concerned with the oppression and subjugation of the poor, vulnerable and marginalized. This theme is explicit in the theology of liberation (Gutiérrez, 1988) and resounded in the kingship of *Onyame* theology.

### **The Kingship of *Onyame* theorizes good leadership/governance (SDG 16)**

One of African and Ghanaian problem that has festered the high poverty is poor leadership. It is a common knowledge that many leaders in Africa and Ghana are corrupt and biased. A further import of kingship of *Onyame* as creative human community is its effect on ecclesiastical leadership. As seen from Akan cultural context, the lineage head, king or monarch embodies the fullness of the community. Thus, ecclesiastical leaders through insight from kingship of *Onyame* theology ought to characterize the unity and harmony of the believing community in which all members regardless of social status and gender co-exist. Moreover, since the fullness of the Akan community is not limited to the living, the community is argued to grow continuously and not diminish. The same can be argued for the church community as an inclusivist community comprising of the unborn, living and dead, thus opposing exclusivist ecclesiology and excessive individualism among individual members (Asante, 1995).

In essence contribution of kingship of *Onyame* theology is its usefulness in critiquing ruling institutions. Akan ruler as *ohene-komfo*, priest-king acquires and maintains veneration through personal submission to the sacred norms of the kingly office (Asante, 1995). This makes the ruler accountable to the community and to *Onyame*. Kingship of *Onyame* therefore becomes useful for critiquing the actions of Akan traditional rulers from a divine command perspective. This can also be adopted for civic leaders. The relevance of this theology is even more necessitated to respectfully address ethical and policy deficiencies of those who lead at all levels (family, church, corporate, and civic), in a culture where leaders are easily and frequently absolved of responsibility for wrongdoing, even when such faults and failures are glaring with effect on the general public. Thus, the theology reinforces realization that leaders are accountable to *Onyame* and the community, in whose mutual interest leaders exercise their authority. It is therefore apt to mention that, Asante's theology promotes good governance which is needed to end poverty and other socio-ecological challenges highlighted.

Furthermore, the relevance of kingship of *Onyame* theology is its suitability for problem-solving. The social utility of religion among other factors is to solve problems. Kingship of *Onyame* is vested with copious functionalities for resolving ontological and existential challenges. For the Akan, *Onyame* is the source of *nkrabea*, destiny, which gives purpose to individual souls (Asante, 1995). Accordingly, *nkrabea* cannot be evaded, and humans rely on *Onyame* for the fulfillment of their *nkrabea*. *Onyame* is also in control of nature, times and seasons resulting in bumper harvest. *Onyame* also works miracles, subdues devils, preserves from danger and many others. This is compatible both with Jesus' kingdom proclamations in which he liberates the afflicted, heals the sick and casts devils. Thus, the existential problems of Akan-African can be directed to *Onyame*, who is willing and able to mitigate the problems confronting people in their respective lives. Herein, *Onyame* is the ideal leader who is genuinely interested in solving the problems of his subject. This realization should inspire leaders at all strata of society to emulate *Onyame* so as to work to ensure that they do not

only pay lip service to the multifarious challenges people encounter but offer tangible resolutions.

## 5. Conclusion

It was observed that kingship of *Onyame* theology has significant homogeneity with Christian faith and does not become susceptible to the charge of watering down Christian faith as it realizes important consensus with Christian theology. It is useful for considering the “already” or “present” aspect of the kingdom of God and its contribution towards human and social development. The kingship of *Onyame* also becomes especially relevant in specifying themes of ecological and economic management to ensure human flourishing. Some of its prominent themes are equally advanced in other notable theological works. Themes of God’s kingly activities towards justice, the poor and the proper ordering of society strikes harmonious chords in the theologies of such renowned twenty-first century Christian thinkers as Gutierrez and Moltmann in particular. Asante navigates very well particularly in presenting the myth of God’s kingship in African context without over indulging in ethical sentimentalism and cultural heroism.

As a theology of inculturation, it emphasizes that indigenous knowledge systems are apt for engendering social cohesion and reconfiguration. Notwithstanding, the primary challenges of Asante’s scholarly contribution to the discourse of the kingdom of God is twofold. It has some brief moments of tension between what is indigenously ethnic or cultural-specific for the Akan against its utility for all Africans and more importantly for universal application. Here, the Akan eschatological outlook of reincarnation, being cyclical, is at conflict with the beatific vision anticipated by Christian hope. Apocalyptic aspect of this theology therefore cannot be coterminous with Christian theology. Hence, it was observed to have limiting contributions for the apocalyptic dimension of God’s kingdom. It is nonetheless a good reflection of Akan philosophical and ontological perspectives to the discourse of the Kingdom of God in which African voices are still noticeably scarce.

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