

An Evangelical Christology for the Weak: Exploring Christ's Sufficiency for the Challenges of Poverty, Oppression, and Marginalisation in Africa

Anthony Oladayo Fawole

Anthony Oladayo Fawole PhD
Institute of Pastoral and
Theological Training, Egbe, Kogi
State

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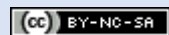
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Correspondence

Anthony Oladayo Fawole
dayoanthonyfawole@gmail.com



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ABSTRACT

Poor, oppressed, and/or marginalised people are often weak people who are at the mercy of powerful people who impoverish, oppress, and marginalise them. The persistent, prevalent challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa make some Africans resort to diabolical practices and thus deny Christ's sufficiency for them. Consequently, many Christian theologians discuss how Christ overcomes these challenges, often using the Christus Victor approach, so that Africans can consider Christ sufficient to solve these problems. This study acknowledges this approach but argues that it is not adequately evangelical, so it seeks to develop an approach that retains all the core features of evangelicalism. The researcher utilises a purely literary research approach. The study identified sin as the main cause of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa, and then argued that Christ's sufficiency to deal with the problem of sin proves his sufficiency to address the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation that result from sin. It highlighted what Christ and his word, the Bible, teach about poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, and what they mean for dealing with these social maladies. This study, therefore, recommends preaching and applying the gospel message, which cuts straight to the problem of sin, to demonstrate Christ's sufficiency for the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa.

Key Words: *Poverty, Oppression, Marginalisation, Christ's Sufficiency*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The pervasiveness of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa is evidenced by events that have become normal. Poverty, multidimensional and extreme, continues to be a biting reality on the continent, while the socially oppressed increase in number despite struggles to overthrow their relentless oppressors. Many workers in Africa are underpaid and/or unpaid for long periods, culminating in labour emigration and a "brain drain" in recent times, beyond what has always obtained. There is also consistent abuse and denial of human rights by the rich and powerful. This is also true of marginalisation, which means to treat a person or a people group as insignificant or of lesser importance. In many African countries where democracy is practised, citizens from minority tribes are hardly, if ever, allowed to attain or hold any significant position. Even in some Christian denominations, tribal marginalisation is the order of the day when it comes to electing and appointing people to offices. There is also the problem of gender marginalisation in African society, where patriarchal structures are the norm in every aspect of life.

This paper argues that the inability of many Africans to break free from poverty, oppression, and marginalisation speaks to their weakness to fight the systems and structures that keep them in these conditions, and that the truth of Christ's sufficiency for Africans can help them experience the desired liberation. This paper explores what Christ's sufficiency means for the problems of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, from an evangelical perspective. An evangelical theology emphasises the following: personal conversion through believing the gospel, preaching the gospel to every human, the Bible as the supreme authority for Christians and the only source of the gospel message, and Jesus's atoning death on the cross as the main theme of the gospel message (Bebbington 1983, 19–20, 2021, 36–39). This study will develop a theology of Christ's sufficiency that maintains these emphases while addressing the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa.

2.0 POVERTY, OPPRESSION, AND MARGINALISATION: A TRIANGULAR CYCLE OF WEAKNESS

A keen observer would notice that poverty, oppression, and marginalisation actually work and walk hand-in-hand within the African context. It is very difficult to separate these three, as you hardly see one without the others in view. When people are poor, they are vulnerable to oppression and marginalisation; when people are oppressed and/or marginalised, they tend to become poor; and when people are marginalised, they feel oppressed. This cycle is a function of the divide between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the elites and the masses. People who are poor, oppressed, and/or marginalised have something in common: weakness. They are often powerless and unable to change their situation, not because they do not wish to, but circumstances beyond their control incapacitate them. While some are poor by choice and some who are oppressed and/or marginalised do not see themselves as being oppressed and/or marginalised, probably because they enjoy or benefit from the status quo, quite some people who are in these circumstances not only desire to escape their conditions but work assiduously to be free from poverty, oppression, and/or marginalisation. Subsequently, some escape their state of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, whether through legitimate or illegitimate means. However, many remain underdogs all their lives, always at the mercy of and at risk from the elites and their policies.

The interconnectedness of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa is also evinced in how some researchers trace the trio to colonialism (Hagen 2002, 149; Edogiawerie 2011, 135; Ismail 2023). During colonialism, the colonial masters were "worshipped and served" by the people, especially those who became the educated elites; so, after the colonial masters had left, these few educated elites who served the colonial masters "saw it as their right to be worshipped and served just like they served their masters by virtue of the fact that they were educated and therefore superior to those their black brothers that were not educated" (Edogiawerie 2011, 135). This resulted in the oppression of the less privileged by those who are privileged to be in the corridors of power, a situation that continues to this day in many African societies.

3.0 AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY FOR THE WEAK: CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY FOR THE AFRICAN CHALLENGES OF POVERTY, OPPRESSION, AND MARGINALISATION

Looking at the main topic of this study, the average reader might wonder what relationship exists between developing a Christology for the weak (the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised) and exploring the sufficiency of Christ for them. This section discusses this relationship, with particular reference to the African context. In times past, Christology [the doctrine of Christ] included soteriology [the doctrine of his salvific work] (Oguike 2003, 192), and this has informed Christological discussions to this day. Christology is, therefore, a comprehensive elucidation of Christ's person and work, and the relevance of both for humans, the world, and the relationship between humans and God (Keck 1986, 362; Ukpong 1994, 41; Nwaoru 2003, 70; Dada 2003, 259). Thus, African Christology involves Africans' attempts to appreciate and appropriate Christ for them in their context. Similarly, Christ's sufficiency for Africans connotes that he can fully supply *all* their needs in *all* aspects of their lives within their various contexts (see Imasogie 1985, 228). Therefore, African Christological discourses are attempts to explore and appropriate Christ's sufficiency for Africans, demonstrating how he can ensure their total well-being.

Part of what makes for Africans' total well-being is freedom from poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, germane realities of life that this study focuses on. A sufficient Christ for poor, oppressed, and marginalised Africans can overcome the various factors that keep them in such circumstances, liberate them from such conditions, and ensure their holistic well-being. This explains the pervasiveness of the *Christus victor's* approach to Christology in Africa and of Christ's sufficiency for Africans (see Mbiti 1972, 51, 55; Nyamiti 1991, 4; Bediako 2004, 22), especially in the more common depictions of Christ as a divine conqueror and liberator. The divine conqueror approach demonstrates Christ's sufficiency from a spiritual perspective whereby Africans invoke Jesus's name [and blood] to defeat spiritual powers that impoverish, oppress, and marginalise them (Mbiti 1972, 54; Oduyoye 1986, 102; Nwankpa 1994, 9; Manus 1998, 13; Asamoah-Gyadu 2000, 181; Githii 2007, 31–32; Agyarko 2017, 19; Boaheng 2023, 25–26; cf. Milingo 1984; Oshun 1998). The liberator approach derives from liberation theology and demonstrates Christ's sufficiency to overcome the various societal manifestations of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, by applying biblical records of God's deliverance of the poor, oppressed and marginalised (as in, e.g., the exodus and Jesus's ministry) to instances of dehumanisation and oppression in Africa (Imasogie 1985, 225; Appiah-Kubi 1987, 74; Bujo 1992, 130; Pobee 1992, 16; Nyamiti 1994, 66; Stinton 2004, 201; Bohache 2008, 75; Gener 2015, 77; Martínez-Olivieri 2015, 90). Both approaches share the same undergirding philosophy, but they differ in that the former approaches Christology from above while the latter does so from below (Agyarko 2017, 11, 14).

The researcher, however, is of the view that, though both approaches discuss Christ's sufficiency for the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa, and recognise that human sinfulness is responsible for these challenges, they do not fully conform to core evangelical tenets. This is because rather than accentuate the need for people to, first and foremost, be saved from their sins through believing the gospel message so that they can deal with challenges appropriately, they accentuate Christ's victory over these through prayers [as in the divine conqueror approach] or an imitation of his concern for the poor, oppressed, and marginalised. This study does not invalidate either approach as ineffective or irrelevant; in fact, its popularity among Africans attests to the contrary. Rather, this study argues that preaching the gospel, from an evangelical perspective, remains the most viable way to demonstrate Christ's sufficiency for poor, oppressed, and marginalised Africans.

4.0 TOWARDS AN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY OF CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY FOR THE POOR, OPPRESSED, AND MARGINALISED IN AFRICA

In contrast to liberation theology that makes the Sermon on the Mount the crux of the Christian message and social reform as the church's mission, evangelicalism reiterates Christ's atoning death and triumphant resurrection as the crux of the Christian message. Subsequently, it engages social and

societal maladies because the gospel message itself has social implications (see Bloesch 1978, 19). While the *Christus victor's* approach prioritises the application of the gospel message to poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, through prayers, actions, and/or advocacy above preaching the gospel itself, evangelicalism prioritises the preaching of the gospel message and the need to believe this gospel and be saved from our sinful nature that causes poverty, oppression, and marginalisation. However, it also applies the gospel to these problems through the provision of social services that simultaneously serve as avenues for preaching the gospel message, enabling people to be saved, and for eradicating poverty, oppression, and marginalisation.

Beyond applying surface-level solutions to the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, this study cuts straight to the heart of the matter: sin. It argues that poverty, oppression, and marginalisation persist in Africa because of human sinfulness, and that the solution to these problems is the gospel message. Therefore, if the problems of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation are to be eradicated in Africa, we must address them at their roots by preaching the gospel and applying it to every aspect of human life. Applying the gospel, which is the message of Christ, to every aspect of human life explains how Christ is sufficient to solve humanity's problems and ensure their total well-being. Subsequent paragraphs discuss how preaching the gospel demonstrates Christ's sufficiency in addressing the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa.

4.1 Christ's Sufficiency and the Challenge of Poverty in Africa

This study starts with discussing the problem of poverty because, as noted earlier, poverty can be a result of oppression and marginalisation on the one hand, and poverty makes people prone to oppression and marginalisation on the other hand. Jesus lived in a context where economic exploitation was a systemic reality (Teklu 2017), resulting in having two groups of poor people, namely, the "working poor" and people in need (Beavis 1994). People in need were marginalised economically, socially, and politically (Kraybill and Sweetland 1983, 233–35). In considering Christ's sufficiency for poverty, the first thing to note is Christ's *disposition* towards the poor during his incarnation. He neither despised the poor or hated poverty seeing that he was born into a poor home (Luke 2:7, 22–24; cf. Lev. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:7) and had no house of his own as an adult (Matt. 8:20), though his family's economic status improved from one that could not afford a lamb but instead offered two pigeons for his dedication (Luke 2:22–24; cf. Lev 12:7–8) to one that could afford the entire family's trip to Jerusalem even when it was only the adult males that were required (Exod. 23:17). This teaches both contentment and the willingness to improve one's standards of living through legitimate means. With a Christ-like mindset of contentment and genuine socioeconomic development, poor Africans will not resort to activities that undermine Christ's sufficiency in overcoming their poverty, such as diabolical rituals and corruption.

The second thing to note is Christ's *emphasis* on poverty. His focus was on people's spiritual status regardless of socioeconomic status, their attitude towards wealth, their means of acquiring wealth, and their use of wealth (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; cf. 1 Tim. 6:10). As Jones (2016) rightly noted, Christ "never condemned wealth or poverty itself; rather, he confronted sins that often led to wealth or poverty—sins including greed, pride, laziness, injustice, and theft, among others." The Bible attests that poverty can result from one's sin (Prov. 23:21; 28:19; see also Deut. 28:30–42; Jer. 5:17–19; Mic. 6:13–16), including personal sins and the sins of others.¹ When sins cause poverty [moral evils], whether the poor person is the perpetrator or simply a victim of such sinful act(s), preaching the gospel message remains the solution as it demands repentance from sins that cause poverty and presents Christ's power to save from such sins (cf. Matt. 1:21). In this way, Christ's sufficiency to overcome the problem of poverty is entrenched in the minds of the people.

¹ For example, oppressive acts such as "common theft (Ps 12:5), delayed wages (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15; 1 Tim. 5:18), excessive taxation (2 Chron. 10:1–19), biased justice systems (Lev 19:15), and exorbitant interest rates on loans to the needy (Exod. 22:25–27)" (Jones 2016).

The third thing to note is Christ's *sovereignty* over natural and moral evils, which may cause poverty. Natural evils such as ill-health, disasters, accidents, and the death of a family's breadwinner can cause poverty through inability to work and loss of property. Africans who link natural evils, and every evil occurrence, to a supernatural cause (see Idowu 1973, 190–202; Hastings 1976, 69; Opoku 1978, 149; Gehman 1989, 171; Mbiti 1989, 165; Sogolo 1991, 182; Mwaura 1994, 62–102; Ashforth 2005, 106–8; Magezi 2006, 6–8; Westerlund 2006, 75–76; Lugira 2009, 96–98; Darko 2020, 65, 171), especially their sin against one or more spiritual beings or powers, should find Christ's death to be a decisive solution to the problem of sin. The gospel message reiterates how Christ, by his death and resurrection, has definitively dealt with sin against God, so Christ is sufficient to deal with evils and their impacts, including poverty. Furthermore, the gospel message recognises and affirms that evils are a result of humanity's fall in Adam, but that Christ is sovereign over these evils and the poverty they cause. Included in Christ's sovereignty is his redemptive work by which he reverses the effects of the fall, of which poverty is one.

Preaching the gospel message demands that people refrain from and condemn all forms of corrupt and deviant behaviour that undermine economic stability and progress, and make others poor. Similarly, the social aspect of preaching the gospel message necessitates that victims of evils who become poor are helped through works of charity as commanded by Christ (Luke 14:13–14; cf. Matt 6:2–4) and practised by the early church (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35; Rom. 15:26–27; 1 Cor. 16:2–3; 2 Cor. 8–9). Churches and Christians can empower them by creating economic opportunities and advocating for "just policies, fair wages, and the elimination of practices that exploit the less privileged" (Boaheng, Boateng, and Boaheng 2024, 91–92). In applying the gospel message, church leaders should teach, or have other Christians teach, the people how to effectively manage all their God-given resources and "engage in business" with them through work (Luke 19:13; see Matt 25:14–30), rather than keep them away from work under the guise of prayer. This leads us to a fourth important point.

A final thing to note is Christ's *non-emphasis* with respect to poverty, which is attributing poverty [and wealth] to a spiritual cause, as is commonly reiterated by Christians who adhere to the prosperity gospel. These Christians consider religious activities, especially giving and positive declarations [prayers], as a means to defeat poverty. This attribution of poverty and wealth to a spiritual cause has its underpinning in the traditional African worldview (see Banda 2020, 121–22) and, though similar to what obtains in the Deuteronomic laws, it is absent in Christ's teachings and the NT corpus. This mindset breeds an attitude that prioritises religious activities over economic ones as the means to curb poverty, as people seek spiritual solutions from those who claim to have them. Preaching the gospel replaces such a mindset with one that sees work as God's means of eradicating their poverty, because Christ meets their own needs and those of others through their jobs, thus affirming Christ's sufficiency through them. Christ affirmed that the labourer is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7; cf. Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:9–14; 1 Tim. 5:18), reiterating an OT principle (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15; 25:4), so he considers work, not religious activities, as God's primary means of meeting one's needs (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:6–12) and other people's needs for food, clothing, shelter, health, and other necessities of life, all of which portray God's providential care for the world.

4.2 Christ's Sufficiency and the Challenges of Oppression and Marginalisation in Africa

This study merges oppression and marginalisation because of their interconnectedness. According to James (2:1–6), marginalisation [partiality] results in oppression. Though James' focus was on socioeconomic difference, marginalisation also manifests when tribal/ethnic, political, educational, or religious differences push those who are weak [socioeconomically and/or numerically] to the margins. The biblical truth that Christ created all human beings are created in his image (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; 3:10; Heb. 1:2; cf. Gen. 1:26–27; 5:1) implies that each person has a basic, inviolable right to life (Gen. 9: 5–6), which confers dignity and equal rights on everyone (Ramachandra 2017, 50; Keller 2010, 82; Wolterstoff 2008, 360). Therefore, no human should be marginalised because of their present condition

(Jas. 3:9). Seeing that many people in Africa suffer from the abuse of their human dignity and rights (see Bagu 2020, 205), churches and Christians in Africa must stand up to defend and uphold the human dignity and rights of the helpless and vulnerable because Christ created them in his image. They have equal dignity and intrinsic value (Boaheng 2021, 78–79). African Christians and churches must condemn all manifestations of oppression and marginalisation, and replicate Christ's ministry to the marginalised by empowering them "to integrate well with the rest of the society and to play an active role in the life of the society" (Boaheng 2022, 95). As Christ's story of the "good" Samaritan implies, they must eschew prejudice as they defend and uphold the dignity and rights of every human being.

Just as the gospel message addresses sins that cause poverty, it also addresses the sins of marginalisation and oppression. Its declaration of reconciliation between God and humans who have been initially estranged from him (Col. 1:21–22) includes the restoration of harmony between humans, ending the marginalisation of the Gentiles by the Jews and bringing peace between them (Eph. 2:11–19; cf. Gal. 3:28). Similarly, when Africans believe the gospel message, they no longer discriminate against anyone because they have passed from death to life (1 John 3:14) and from darkness into light (cf. 1 John 2:9) so they cannot hate a fellow human being let alone marginalise them. Rather, they imitate Christ in embracing and practising the OT concept of *shalom* (peace), which includes "healing, wholeness and unity of relationships" (Chiroma 2020, 72).

Christ's preaching of the gospel restored the marginalised to their rightful position in society. It liberated the oppressed (see Acts 10:38), ensuing in the early church's countercultural approach to interpersonal relationships (cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:22–6:9; Col. 3:18–4:1; Philem. 15–16), an approach that contributed to the church's growth (Hendriks 2020, 61; Stark 1997; cf. Owojaiye 2020, 31–32). James' (5:1–6) condemnation of the oppression and marginalisation of the poor within the church and the society highlights God's attentiveness to the cry of the poor and oppressed (cf. Exod. 22:20–26; Deut. 24:14–15; Prov. 22:22–23; Mal. 3:5), and may indicate God's preference for the poor, oppressed, and marginalised (Maynard-Reid 1987, 98). James' call to repentance is a gospel call that confirms the researcher's position that the gospel, when preached, understood, and applied, eradicates the sinful tendencies and manifestations of all forms of oppression and marginalisation (see Boaheng 2022, 95). Boaheng (2024a, 16–22) provides a good example of this when he demonstrates how the concept of divine justice, as developed in Anselm's (satisfaction) atonement theory, can serve as a theological basis for confronting oppression and marginalisation.

5.0 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The entrenchment of Jesus's sufficiency to address the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation is not just a theoretical proclamation that will automatically translate into impact. It is not just about preaching the gospel and believing it; it is about ensuring that the gospel message informs people's thoughts, actions, and lifestyles. This section explores this paper's argument that understanding and applying the gospel message is the certain solution to the problems of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation.

5.1 Confronting Poverty in Africa

Poverty as a prevalent problem in the African continent is largely responsible for many societal ills in Africa, such as "violent crimes, commercial sex work, and early sexual activity among adolescents and youth" (Banda 2020, 116). Time and again, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, implements poverty alleviation schemes to address the prevalence of poverty. However, it seems the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer, even after these schemes. Likely, this is also the situation in many African countries. This can be blamed on the multidimensional and complicated nature of poverty as "the absence of *shalom* in all its meanings" (Myers 2011, 86). Myers (2011, 86) is right that, "Poverty is a result of relationships that do not work; that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable." He defines it as a consequence of four broken relationships: humans' relationship with God, with oneself, with one another, and with the creation.

This study focuses more on poverty because it is largely why many Africans are vulnerable to oppression and marginalisation; so, when poverty is squarely confronted, oppression and marginalisation become less possible.

The gospel teaches that Christians should always care for the poor (Matt 25:31–40; Jas 1:27; 1 John 3:17) and never neglect them (cf. Matt 25:41–46; Prov 14:31; 19:17). Therefore, the Christians and churches in Africa must take the problem of poverty seriously "because within God's eschatological framework of salvation, God saves the whole person, including the material component that will be transformed into a glorious imperishable component at Christ's return" (Banda 2020, 115). Therefore, "[t]o ignore poverty is to fail to live up to Christ's mission to lead people into abundant life (John 10:10)." The ruling elites in Africa often treat the poor as mere commodities to gratify their desires and meet their needs and African Christians need to show solidarity with the poor and to defend and restore their dignity (Banda 2020, 115–116). Christians in Africa are thus expected to discern how they can help achieve this either by providing Relief or empowerment, as the case may be, but this is to be done after discerning the cause(s) of an individual's poverty.

5.1.1 Discerning the Cause(s) of Poverty

The starting point in addressing poverty is identifying its causes to proffer a comprehensive solution. Biblically, poverty can be as a result of slothfulness, joblessness or a poor work ethic (Prov 6:10–11; 10:4; 14:23; 19:15; 1 Thess 5:14; cf. 2 Thess 3:10). It may also be caused by a lack of self-discipline, stubbornness, drunkenness, and gluttony (Prov 13:18; 21:17; 23:21; 28:19; Luke 15:11–16; 1 Tim 6:9–10). In addition, natural evils such as natural disasters, ill health, and even death of a family provider can result in poverty (see Mark 5:25–26; Luke 18:35). Furthermore, poverty can be caused by oppressive acts such as theft (Psa 12:5), delayed wages (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15), excessive taxation (2 Chr 10:1–19), unjust systems (Lev 19:15), and extortionate interest rates on loans to the poor. Understanding and applying the gospel message helps discern which category of poverty affects an individual and decide on appropriate measures to alleviate it. It seeks to determine whether the person needs aid or development.

5.1.2 Providing Relief

Providing Relief to people experiencing poverty is an act of free will, indicating how individuals manage their God-given wealth and resources to address the problem. Jesus teaches that giving should be done in secret (Matt 6:2–4) and that the less privileged should be the beneficiaries of one's feast (Luke 14:13–14). This shows that Jesus commands charity, so it is not optional. The early church ensured that none of its members lacked anything through voluntary communal sharing (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35). As taught by Paul (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8–9), giving should be periodic, personal, planned, proportionate to one's income, and plentiful (Jones 2016). The church and Christians in Africa, too, should imitate this approach of providing Relief to those who are poor within the church and beyond. This means that rather than accumulate wealth in which there are pitfalls (such as selfishness, pride, envy, false sense of security, waning loyalty to God, and exploitation of others, especially the poor), African Christians should share their resources with the needy (Boaheng, Boateng, and Boaheng 2024, 92; see Boaheng 2024b, 335–336).

5.1.3 Economic Empowerment

The church and Christians in Africa need to go beyond providing Relief so as not to indulge those who will rather depend continually on financial handouts than work legitimately to earn their living. This means that people are taught to do their best to properly manage all their God-given resources and "engage in business" with them (Luke 19:13; see Matt 25:14–30). Since "religion plays an important role in economic sense-making" and "[t]his role can be positive when religion creates economic opportunities" (Banda 2020, 121), the church and Christians in Africa should create economic opportunities that empower people and free them from poverty. They must also ensure and advocate

for "just policies, fair wages, and the elimination of practices that exploit the less privileged" (Boaheng, Boateng, and Boaheng 2024, 91–92). They must also refrain from and condemn all forms of corrupt and deviant behaviours and activities that undermine economic stability and progress. Interestingly, many churches in Africa engage in business activities that provide jobs for many people and, consequently, empower them economically. However, some of these church-owned businesses exploit workers in ways that are not different from non-Christian organisations. Nevertheless, employment opportunities provided by churches and Christians in Africa remain an effective way to confront poverty on the continent. This confirms that taking one's work life seriously is crucial to improving one's economic situation. However, even churches sometimes fail to ensure it.

An important aspect of taking one's work life seriously is the proper use and management of time. Many churches in Africa keep members away from work during the day for prayers, and many working hours become unproductive and of no economic value to the people; rather, it is the church leaders who become "richer" after collecting offerings from the people during such prayer sessions. In the same vein, many Africans are deprived of proper rest at night by participating in vigils (especially those that run consecutively for days). Some people eventually become inefficient during the day after the vigil(s), hampering their productivity. All this also affects their economic flourishing. Collum Banda (2020, 121) explains that all these religious activities are sequel to the traditional worldview (which is similar to neo-Pentecostalism's understanding) which views wealth as "a product of religiosity, good luck and powerful magic rather than of hard work" and blames poverty or a lack of economic success on "witchcraft, bad luck or angry ancestors and not on the quality of one's work, one's diligence or the nature of the investment undertaken". Hence, they are "less diligent and careful with their economic activities but are "extra diligent with religious rituals and activities that are believed to enhance their fortunes. This exposes the need to engage the traditional worldview while confronting poverty in Africa.

5.1.4 Mindset Transformation

The foregoing reality requires that Africans should not pay attention to the popular promises of miraculous solutions to people's poverty but instead should "critically engage with the theological beliefs that promote poverty... and... undermine the value of work" (see Banda 2020, 122). This will get rid of the various "unhelpful convictions, distorted perceptions and ideological (theological) justifications" that poverty thrives on (Nürnberger 1994, 131). This also means exploring the gospel message in ways that promote theological ideas that determine "people's relationships and attitudes to material things and how they should be used" (Moyo 1999, 50). Therefore, African Christians must develop and imbibe a holistic biblical perspective of wealth and poverty. So they "embrace a profound understanding of stewardship, generosity, and unwavering trust in God, contextualised within the realities of the African continent" (Boaheng, Boateng, and Boaheng 2024, 90–92). Church leaders and Christian ministers have the responsibility to teach and promote this biblical perspective, so that it informs Africans' mindset as they confront the problem of poverty in their contexts.

5.2 Confronting Oppression and Marginalisation in Africa

Churches and Christians in Africa have the divine mandate to stand up in defence of the human dignity and rights of the oppressed and marginalised, especially in the face of persistent gross abuse of human dignity and rights. The starting point for this is acknowledging that all human beings, no matter their status or deficiencies, are created in God's image by Jesus Christ (John 1:2; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). Therefore, every human being is naturally endowed with dignity and rights (Gen 1:26–28; Jas 3:9). It is because every human being is created in God's image that everyone has a right to life and not be killed unjustifiably (Gen 9:5–6). It is also why everyone has equal dignity and intrinsic value irrespective of their natural endowments, status, and identity markers (Boaheng 2021c, 78–79). This truth implies that African Christians must eschew, oppose, and condemn all manifestations of exploitation, discrimination, oppression, and injustice. In addition, they are to replicate Jesus's ministry

to the marginalised by empowering them "to integrate well with the rest of the society and to play an active role in the life of the society" (Boaheng 2022b, 95).

The gospel message motivates and empowers Africans to fulfil the second part of the great commandment, as reiterated by Jesus Christ, that human beings shall love their neighbour as themselves (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; cf. Lev 19:18). When African Christians love their neighbours as themselves, they will put in all efforts to restore and advocate for the rights of their neighbours. Looking at Jesus's definition of a neighbour in the story of the "good" Samaritan, a neighbour is anyone who is in need and who meets the needs of others, irrespective of differences in location of residence, nationality, tribe, religion, and other such identity markers (see Luke 10:36–37). The Samaritan was a neighbour to the wounded man whose rights to property, movement and health (life) were violated by the robbers. Paul notes that the command to love one's neighbour condenses the second part of the Ten Commandments (Rom 13:9; see Exod 20:12–17; Deut 5:7–15).

The second part of the Ten Commandments, referred to merely as "the commandments" in Jesus's response to a young ruler's question on what to do to inherit eternal life (Matt 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23), has to do with the humans-to-humans relationship in contrast to the first part of the Ten Commandments which has to do with humans-to-God relationship (Exod 20:3 – 11; Deut 5:7–15). Jesus affirmed these commandments as sacrosanct in his discussion with the young ruler, and Paul says that this love for one's neighbour means that one does no wrong to him (Rom 13:8–10). When a Christian loves his neighbour, which is anyone in need or trouble, s/he will rise to the occasion. Therefore, when any person or a group of people is oppressed and/or marginalised, African Christians should arise to defend such people and help restore their dignity and rights. Furthermore, as the story of the "good" Samaritan highlights, they eschew tribalism and prejudice in interpersonal relationships while upholding human dignity (Boaheng 2022b, 95).

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the interconnectedness of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa, as well as the interrelatedness of Christology and the subject of Christ's sufficiency. It identified *Christus victor* as the most popular portrayal of Christ's sufficiency for the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa, but considers it as not adequately evangelical because it prioritises the application of the gospel and structural reforms over the preaching of the gospel and individual transformation. In contrast, structural reforms are only possible with individual transformation. This study thus affirms that preaching the gospel remains the most biblically accurate and surefire way to demonstrate Christ's sufficiency in addressing the challenges of poverty, oppression, and marginalisation in Africa.

When Africans understand the gospel message and live by its truths, they not only avoid actions that promote poverty, oppression, and marginalisation, but also confront and oppose them. They demand and offer just wages and fair treatment of workers of all categories. They identify and oppose policies and systems that allow for poverty, oppression, and marginalisation on the continent. All this results from their acknowledgement of Christ's sufficiency to address the challenges that continually bedevil the continent.

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About the Author

Anthony Oladayo Fawole holds PhD in Theology from the South African Theological Seminary.