

A SPOTLIGHT ON:

# Kwame Bediako



*Getting to know the  
INFEMIT pioneers*



Akropong, Ghana

# Context



# Biography

## "A Life of Scholarship as Vocation"

Kwame entered the University of Ghana in 1965 to study French. As he himself told this story, while continuing his studies at the University of Bordeaux in France, during the summer break alone in the shower, **he suddenly had a conversion experience. "It was that dramatic. And it changed his life completely."** He completed his Ph.D. in french literature and then went to the London School of Theology to pursue further Christian scholarship.

# Biography

Mentored by



Andrew  
Walls

Kwame returned to Ghana to teach briefly, and then pursued a doctorate in theology in Aberdeen, **studying under Andrew Walls.** His dramatic conversion experience brought him to appreciate that **he could serve Jesus Christ as a theologian.** He combined his spirituality with his academic work, and that integration helped him in focusing on **Christian scholarship,** seeing it as an opportunity to serve.

# Dreams for a Center

From Kwame's experience in Bordeaux and his participation in the Lausanne Congress of 1974, a dream of setting up a center to advance Christian scholarship was born. He and his wife, Gillian, started gathering materials and resources for the establishment of such a center. **In 1984, with the blessing of the Presbyterian church of Ghana, Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Center for Mission Research and Applied Theology (now Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture- ACI) was founded in Akropong-Akuapem.**



# “Kwame's contribution to theology is monumental”

"Kwame has been described as **maybe the greatest African theologian of his generation** - he was able to change the thinking of a generation."

The impact that he made was far-reaching. His ideas prompted people to think afresh, especially appreciating the African Religious heritage in Christian expansion, **"affirming how Africans can remain truly Africans and at the same time Christians without identity crisis."**



# Themes of his work

## Culture and Theology

A theme throughout Kwame's work is **the importance of engaging with context and cultural heritage**. He believed that when we encounter Jesus Christ, we hear the Gospel in terms of who we are, how God created us, our own languages and contexts, and other elements of self-definition. In that sense, it becomes important to engage with our pasts and see how they can be brought to the feet of Jesus Christ for service.

"It is the integration that we bring to our Christian faith as Africans that enables us to live out our faith in a manner that will bring honor and glory to God."

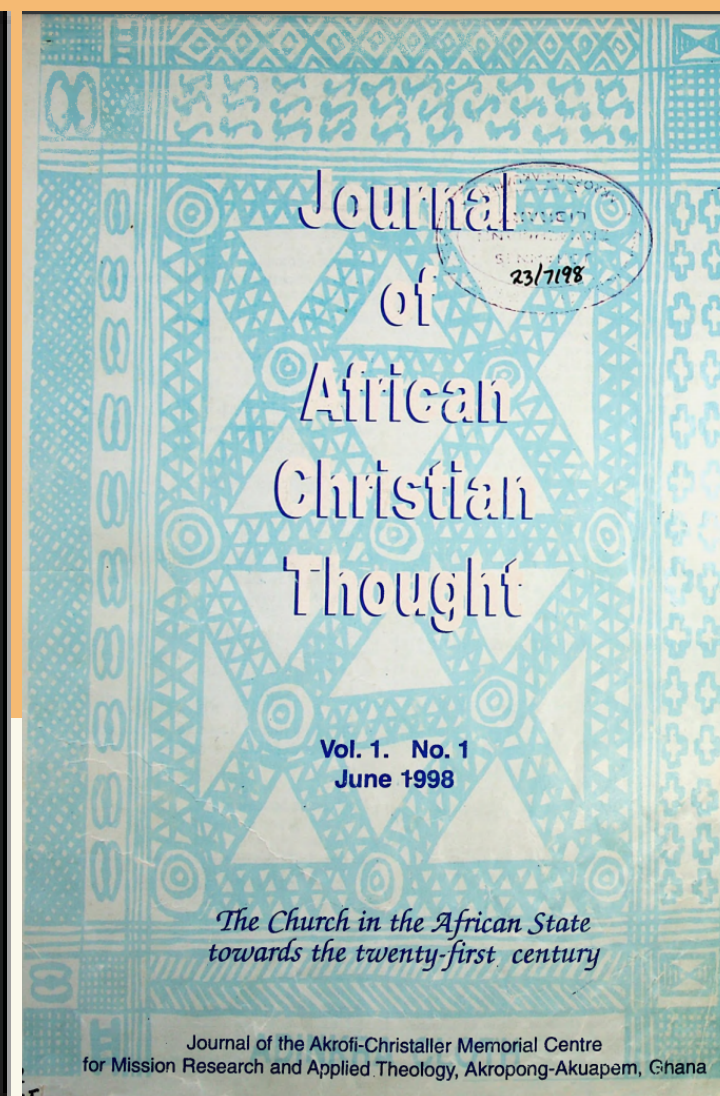
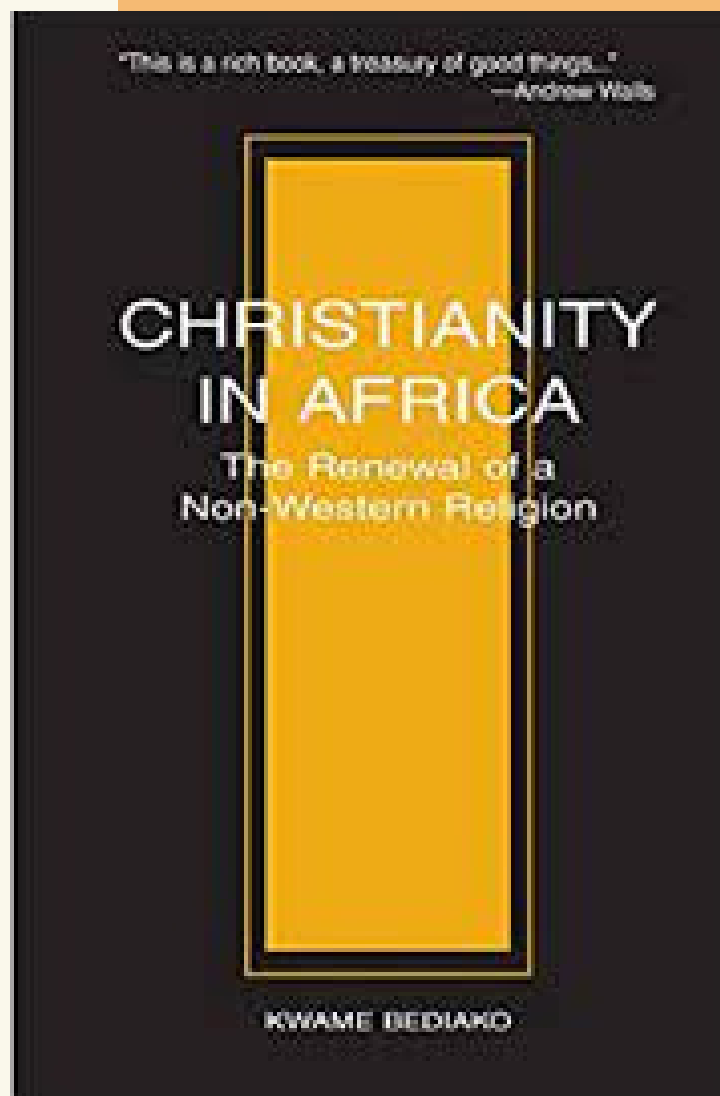
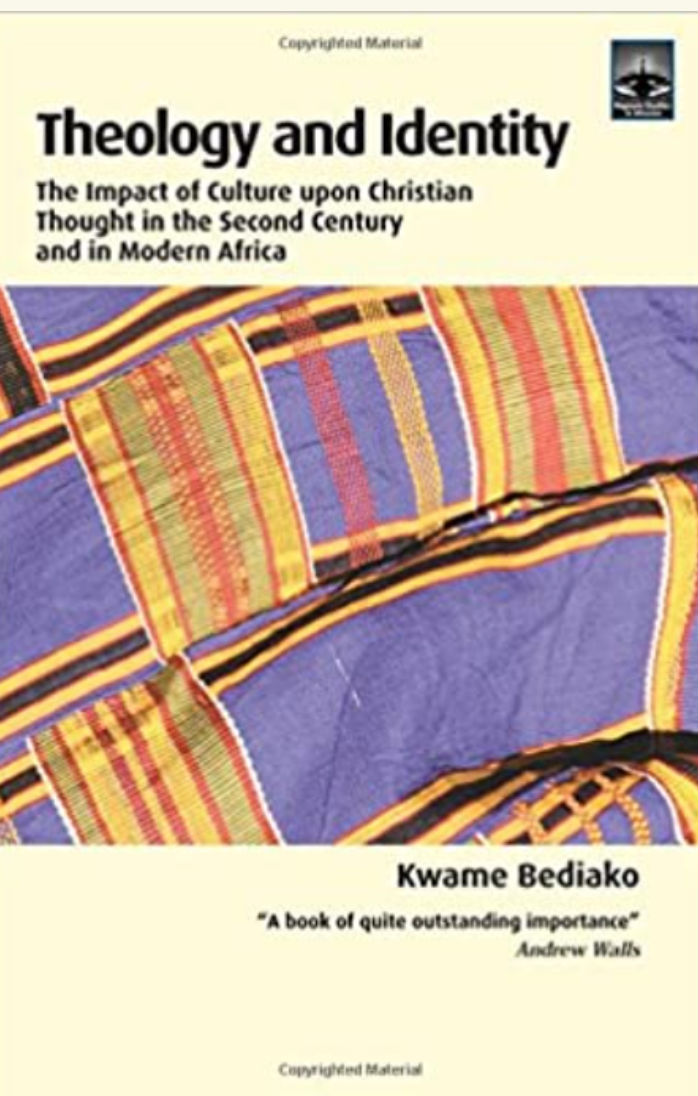
Kwame defined **Christian Theology as: providing Christian answers to culturally rooted questions.**

It is in so doing that the existential concerns of the individual African Christian can be dealt with to enable that person to live out his or her faith. It becomes a working testimony of the Goodness of God, and in so doing, it becomes an instrument for drawing other people into the kingdom of God.



# START HERE:

THE ESSENTIAL READER



Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa

Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion

ACI's journal, the Journal of African Christian Thought, contains many of the significant articles Kwame wrote

# LEARN MORE

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



## READ:

- *Theology after Colonization: Bediako, Barth, and the Future of Theological Reflection* by Tim Hartman
- *Kwame Bediako and African Christian Scholarship* by Sarah Fretheim

## WATCH:

- *Kwame Bediako: His Life and Legacy*- a documentary by James Ault

## FOLLOW:

- [Akrofi-Christaller Institute](#)





# SOURCE:

To learn about Kwame's influence, we decided to ask one of his colleagues and friends. Benhardt Quarshie has served as a minister of the Presbyterian church of Ghana for over 44 years and is also on INFEMIT's Networking Team. He remembers being approached by Kwame in 1988 with his vision for ACI. From that point on, he accompanied Kwame and his work. Ben currently serves as the Rector of Akrofi-Christaller Institute, carrying on the vision of Kwame Bediako.

