




# The Roles of Christian Theologians in the Church, Academia, and Society in the Context of Matthew 5:13-16

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## Abstract

This article examines the vital role of Christian theologians in engaging the three public domains—Church, Academia, and Society—within the framework of David Tracy's "three publics" theory. The study is anchored in Matthew 5:13-16, where Jesus describes his followers as the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world," highlighting their transformative and preservative roles. Nigeria, a nation characterized by religious pluralism, socio-political challenges, and developmental needs, serves as the context for this investigation. While existing literature addresses the role of theologians in faith communities, there remains a gap in understanding their integrated contributions to ethical governance, intellectual leadership, and societal transformation in multi-religious and developing contexts like Nigeria. By situating the discussion in Nigeria and extending its relevance globally, the article underscores the potential of Christian theologians to provide innovative solutions to pressing socio-political and ethical challenges, ultimately inspiring global theologians to embrace their multifaceted responsibilities.

Anchored in David Tracy's "three publics" framework, this study examines how theologians contribute to moral leadership, intellectual advancement, and societal transformation, with a particular focus on Nigeria. As a nation marked by religious diversity, socio-political challenges, and urgent developmental needs, Nigeria provides a compelling context for understanding the intersection of theology and practical societal engagement. The article argues that theologians are pivotal in addressing ethical governance, fostering social justice, and encouraging interfaith dialogue—critical issues that resonate not only in Nigeria but also in other multi-religious and socio-politically complex nations. Ultimately, the study demonstrates how theological insights, when applied thoughtfully, can address both national and global challenges, offering a framework for Christian theologians worldwide to contribute meaningfully to the pressing issues of their times.

**Keywords:** Christian theologians, Matthew 5:13-16, David Tracy's three publics, Interfaith dialogue, Ethical governance.



## Introduction

The role of Christian theologians transcends doctrinal exposition, extending into shaping societies and fostering meaningful dialogue between faith and the broader world. Matthew 5:13-16 presents believers as "salt" and "light," metaphors that underscore influence, visibility, and transformation. According to Luz (2007, 211), these metaphors highlight the active presence and moral responsibility of Christians in societal engagement, calling theologians to bridge the gap between sacred teachings and secular realities. Similarly, Davies and Allison (1988, 470) note that "salt" conveys preservation against societal decay, while "light" symbolizes guidance and hope, making the theologian a vital agent of transformation.

No major religion can accept an almost private self-understanding of what it purports. Given this notion, and context, theologians thus need to state that a religious belief-system cannot be only for individuals and a particular religious group.

David Tracy's theoretical framework of the "three publics" provides a structured approach to understanding how theologians engage these distinct yet interconnected spheres. Tracy (1981, 5) emphasizes the Church as a domain for moral and spiritual guidance, Academia as a platform for intellectual and ethical discourse, and Society as the arena where these values influence practical realities. This model encourages theologians to balance spiritual reflection with active participation in addressing pressing global and local challenges (Tracy, 1981, 6).

In the Nigerian context, theologians operate in a multi-religious society grappling with ethno-religious tensions, economic inequality, and environmental concerns. These challenges demand theologians who can bridge spiritual principles with pragmatic solutions. Ayegboyin (2018, 47) highlights the Church's significant role in mobilizing communities toward social reform and education, positioning theologians as mediators in fostering national cohesion. Furthermore, Ojo (2020, 25) underscores the involvement of Nigerian theologians in policy discourse and interfaith collaboration, particularly in addressing ethno-religious violence and poverty.

This paper builds on the insights of Matthew 5:13-16 to explore how theologians in Nigeria and beyond can integrate their faith into societal transformation. By contextualizing the "three publics" within Nigeria's dynamic socio-political landscape, the article offers a framework for theologians worldwide to engage effectively in their respective contexts.

## David Tracy's Theoretical Framework

David Tracy a hermeneutical theologian's work is regularly spoken to in order to study and better comprehend the important relationship between faith and public life. This study adopts the "Three Publics" theory by David Tracy which is rooted in his seminal work "The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism" (1981). In this book, Tracy introduces the idea of theology's engagement with the broader cultural context, introducing the concept of the three publics: Church, Academia, and Society, emphasizing the dialogical nature of these publics (p. 3). His concept of the "three publics" describes theology's interaction with these distinct societal spheres. Tracy identifies the Church as a community of faith, Academia as a space for rigorous intellectual engagement, and Society as the context for practical action and ethical reflection (Tracy, 1981, 4). His analysis emphasizes the interconnectedness of these publics and the theologian's role in facilitating meaningful dialogue among them.



For instance, theologians provide ethical guidance to the church as faith community by interpreting biblical teachings and addressing moral questions, doctrinal clarity, and spiritual leadership, while they contribute to scholarly discourse in the academia, using interdisciplinary approaches to development fostering critical engagement with issues such as ethics, justice, and environmental sustainability, and in the society, theologians also engage in public life, advocating for justice policymaking, and community development, influencing secular and interfaith platforms. These publics overlap, requiring theologians to adopt an integrative approach that reflects their calling as “salt” and “light” in a complex society like Nigeria. This framework suggests that effective theologians must navigate and integrate these publics to maximize their impact.

### **Conceptual Frameworks for Salt and Light**

Matthew 5:13–16 presents the metaphors of salt and light as distinct yet complementary elements in Jesus’ teaching on discipleship. Both images convey profound theological, ethical, and missional dimensions, each serving as a framework for understanding the roles of theologians in the church, academia and society.

#### **Salt: Preservation and Transformation**

The metaphor of salt in Matthew 5:13 is rooted in its multifaceted significance in the ancient world, particularly in first-century Judea. Salt was a vital commodity used for preservation, purification, seasoning, and covenantal rituals. These functions shape the conceptual framework for understanding the disciples’ role in the world.

##### ***Preservation of moral integrity***

Salt’s preservative property symbolizes the disciples’ responsibility to prevent moral and spiritual decay in society. As preservers, Christians are called to uphold kingdom values, fostering justice, compassion, and truth in environments prone to corruption and ethical compromise (Nyende, 2019, 90).

##### ***Catalyst for transformation***

Salt’s capacity to enhance flavor suggests a transformative role. This framework implies that disciples should actively influence their contexts, bringing vibrancy, hope, and positive change to communities. Oduyoye (2015) notes that this transformative quality aligns with the missional call to engage culture constructively without losing one’s distinctiveness (p. 48).

##### ***Covenantal fidelity***

Salt’s association with covenantal faithfulness in Jewish rituals (e.g., Leviticus 2:13) underscores the disciples’ commitment to their relationship with God. This aspect emphasizes consistency in ethical living and a steadfast witness to the Gospel message. Failure to fulfill these roles renders salt “useless,” symbolizing the consequences of compromised discipleship. Thus, the framework of salt is inherently tied to ethical resilience and the disciples’ active engagement in society.

#### **Light: Illumination and Witness**

The metaphor of light in Matthew 5:14–16 builds upon its universal symbolism as a source of guidance, clarity, and revelation. Light, as a framework, emphasizes the outward-facing dimension of discipleship, focusing on illumination and public witness.

##### ***Illumination of Truth***

Light symbolizes the revelation of divine truth through the lives of disciples. This framework highlights the importance of moral clarity and teaching that directs others toward God. As



Achebe (2021) suggests, Christians are called to shine as beacons of hope, illuminating paths of righteousness for those navigating spiritual darkness (p. 68).

### ***Public Visibility of Good Works***

The city on a hill and lamp on a stand portray discipleship as inherently public. This framework stresses the necessity of visible good works that reflect God's character, thereby drawing others to glorify Him. Nyende (2019) argues that the metaphor underscores the interplay between ethical conduct and evangelism, where actions serve as a form of proclamation (p. 93).

### ***Dispelling Darkness***

Light's role in overcoming darkness symbolizes the transformative power of the Gospel to address societal and individual brokenness. As Kanyoro (2020) notes, this framework invites Christians to confront injustice, ignorance, and oppression with the redemptive light of Christ's teaching (p. 56). Failure to "shine" negates the purpose of the metaphor, implying a dereliction of the missional mandate. Thus, the framework of light is characterized by active participation in society as agents of moral and spiritual illumination. While the frameworks of salt and light have distinct emphases, they converge in their focus on active, outward-facing discipleship. Salt symbolizes internal integrity and transformative engagement, while light represents external visibility and revelation. Together, they form a holistic model for Christian life and mission. This dual framework is particularly relevant in defining the roles of Christian theologians in addressing contemporary challenges. For instance, salt motivates Christian theologians to address societal decay by promoting ethical governance, justice, and community care, while light inspires initiatives in education, advocacy, and public witness that bring clarity and hope to fractured societies. In essence, the metaphors of salt and light in Matthew 5:13–16 provide a conceptual framework that calls Christian theologians to embody the ethical and missional dimensions of their roles, serving as preservers and illuminators in a world that desperately needs the redemptive power of the Gospel.

### **Background to the Gospel of Matthew**

The Gospel of Matthew is a carefully crafted theological document that bridges the Old and New Testaments. It is a foundational text of the New Testament, revered for its theological depth, literary structure, and emphasis on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. As the first book in the New Testament canon, it serves as a bridge between the Hebrew Scriptures and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish hopes, authoritative teacher and the savior of the world. Its rich theological themes, intricate structure, and contextual relevance continue to make it a cornerstone of Christian theology and an essential resource for understanding the early Christian movement.

### ***Authorship***

Traditionally, the Gospel is attributed to Matthew, also known as Levi, a former tax collector who became one of Jesus' apostles (Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14). Early church fathers, such as Papias of Hierapolis (c. CE 125), affirmed that Matthew wrote a gospel, originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, though the text we have today is in Greek (France, 2007, 17). Despite this traditional attribution, many scholars believe the Gospel was compiled by a Jewish-Christian author deeply knowledgeable about Jewish traditions, scripture, and theology. This conclusion stems from the Gospel's use of the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) and its sophisticated literary style, which suggests an author working within a Greek-speaking context.



### ***Date***

The Gospel is generally dated to CE 80–90, after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in CE 70. This dating is supported by internal evidence, such as references to the Temple's destruction (Matthew 22:7; 24:1-2), which are seen as reflecting post-70 realities (Hagner, 1993, xxxi). The dating also aligns with the Gospel's emphasis on the tensions between Jewish Christians and the broader Jewish community, which intensified during this period.

### ***Audience***

Matthew's primary audience consisted of Jewish Christians navigating the integration of their Jewish heritage with their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. This community likely faced marginalization from mainstream Judaism, as reflected in Matthew's frequent critique of Jewish religious leaders (e.g., Matthew 23). Sim (1998, 23) notes that the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies sought to affirm the legitimacy of Christian faith within a Jewish framework. At the same time, Matthew addresses a broader audience by emphasizing Jesus' mission to the Gentiles (e.g., the inclusion of Gentile women in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20).

### ***Theological Themes and Christology***

**Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Matthew quotes or alludes to the Old Testament over 60 times, often introducing these references with phrases like, "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet" (Matthew 1:22-23; 2:15). This emphasis underscores Jesus' identity as the Messiah who fulfills Jewish expectations (France, 2007, 38).

**Kingdom of Heaven:** Unique to Matthew, this phrase reflects a central theme of the Gospel, highlighting Jesus' role in inaugurating God's reign on earth (Turner, 2008, 9).

**Jesus as Teacher:** The Gospel presents Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the law, delivering five major discourses (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7) that parallel the five books of Moses, reinforcing his identity as the new and greater Moses (Hagner, 1993, 68).

**Universal Mission:** While the Gospel is steeped in Jewish tradition, it repeatedly points to the inclusion of Gentiles, reflecting the universal scope of Jesus' mission (Matthew 2:1-12; 28:19-20).

### ***Literary Features***

**Structure:** Matthew is meticulously organized, alternating between narrative and discourse sections. This structure culminates in five major teaching blocks, interpreted by many scholars as echoing the Pentateuch (Hagner, 1993, 66).

**Use of Old Testament:** The Gospel's extensive use of Old Testament quotations demonstrates a theological emphasis on continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

**Dual Audience:** Matthew balances his message for both Jewish Christians seeking affirmation of their faith and Gentiles discovering the universal nature of Jesus' mission (Sim, 1998, 25).

### ***Historical Context***

Matthew was written in a time of significant social and religious upheaval, particularly following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in CE 70. This event reshaped Jewish identity and intensified divisions between Jewish Christians and mainstream Judaism. Matthew reflects this context by addressing issues such as the role of the law (Matthew 5:17-20), the authority of religious leaders (Matt 23), and the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God.



## Exegesis of Matthew 5:13–16

Matthew 5:13–16 reads:

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (RSV).

This passage forms part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), emphasizing the transformative role of Jesus’ disciples in the world. The metaphors of salt and light underscore their function in preserving, illuminating, and testifying to God’s kingdom through righteous living.

### Text and Context

Jesus addresses his disciples, drawing from everyday imagery familiar to his audience. Salt and light were essential elements in first-century Jewish life, symbolizing preservation, purity, and illumination. In Jewish tradition, these metaphors often carried moral and spiritual connotations. The broader context of the Sermon on the Mount emphasizes righteousness and public witness (Matthew 5:20), aligning with Old Testament themes of Israel’s mission as a “light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). African theology interprets these metaphors in terms of communal responsibility and societal transformation, reflecting the continent’s emphasis on collective well-being and interdependence (Mbiti, 1969, 108).

### Lexical Analysis

#### 1. *Salt of the Earth* (ἅλας τῆς γῆς) ἅλας (salt)

The term “salt” (ἅλας) is rich with symbolic meaning across various cultures and contexts. According to Thayer (1901, 20), salt represents purity, preservation, and covenant faithfulness. This perspective aligns with its historical use in offerings and covenants in the ancient Near East, reflecting its role in maintaining integrity and commitment. Similarly, Vine (1996, p. 327) emphasizes salt’s dual role as a purifying agent and preservative, highlighting its significance in both physical and spiritual contexts.

However, from an African perspective, salt’s cultural significance extends beyond its preservative function. In African societies, it symbolizes hospitality and covenant, embodying the communal values of unity and moral responsibility. Ademiluka (2022) underscores this, asserting that the metaphor of salt points to the believer’s role in fostering societal harmony and integrity (p. 49).

ἀπολωσθῆ (loses its saltiness)

The phrase “loses its saltiness” (ἀπολωσθῆ) is an evocative metaphor for ineffectiveness or failure. Strong interprets the term as becoming foolish or ineffective, implying a departure from one’s transformative purpose (Strong, 1995, G576). This aligns with Jesus’ teaching that disciples must maintain their distinctiveness to influence the world effectively.

In the African context, this metaphor resonates with the church’s struggle against societal corruption. As Orobator (2008) notes, the church’s inability to preserve moral and social



order mirrors salt losing its flavor. The church must, therefore, act decisively to uphold ethical standards and address pervasive injustice (p. 91).

## **2. *Light of the World* (τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου) φῶς (Light)**

The concept of "light" (φῶς) carries profound theological and practical implications. Brown, Driver & Briggs (1906, 452), associates light with life, divine truth, and God's presence, portraying it as a symbol of revelation and guidance. Bromiley (1985, 227) in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) elaborates on this, highlighting φῶς as a representation of both eschatological hope and the believer's role in manifesting divine truth visibly.

In the African worldview, light is often linked to wisdom, leadership, and moral clarity. Ademiluka (2022) argues that this symbolism calls believers to confront societal evils such as tribalism and inequality, thereby illuminating paths toward justice and peace (p. 52).

*κόσμου* (World)

The term "world" (κόσμου) in this context signifies humanity and its structured systems. Thayer, (1901, 254) interprets it as encompassing physical and moral orders, including social and political institutions.

From an African perspective, the "world" encapsulates systems of injustice and exploitation. Tiénu (1990) emphasizes that disciples are called to act as agents of transformation within these systems, challenging inequities and fostering social renewal (p. 58). This aligns with the biblical mandate to be "in the world but not of the world," serving as catalysts for change in both public and private domains.

## **3. *A City Set on a Hill* (Πόλις ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη) Πόλις (City)**

The imagery of a "city" (Πόλις) evokes ideas of collective witness and visibility. According to Strong's Concordance (G4172), the city symbolizes a collective body of believers whose communal life testifies to their faith (Strong, 1995, G4172).

In the African context, the visibility implied by a "city on a hill" brings accountability to the forefront. Orobator (2008) suggests that the church, as a visible entity, must exemplify ethical leadership. In a continent often marred by corruption and political instability, the church's role as a moral beacon is both a challenge and a necessity (p. 94).

The lexical analysis of these metaphors reveals their profound implications for discipleship and societal engagement. The symbols of salt, light, and a city on a hill serve as powerful reminders of the believer's call to influence the world positively. In the African context, these metaphors underscore the urgency of addressing societal issues like corruption, tribalism, and injustice, reinforcing the church's mandate to model ethical leadership and transformative action.

### **Theologians' Roles in the Three Public Domains**

#### **Roles in the Church**

The Church remains the bedrock of theological activity, where theologians perform critical functions of teaching, guiding, and mobilizing faith communities for action.



### ***Spiritual Leadership and Ethical Formation***

Theologians articulate moral frameworks derived from scripture, guiding the Church in addressing societal issues like corruption, injustice, and violence. According to Nyende (2019), the Church serves as a space where salt-like preservation of moral integrity is nurtured, helping communities resist societal decay through scripturally grounded ethical practices (p. 92). In Nigeria, theologians have used sermons and Bible study programs to foster a culture of integrity and community accountability (Ayegboyin, 2018, 47).

### ***Advocacy for Social Justice***

The Church, guided by theologians, often becomes a voice for marginalized populations. Through platforms such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), theologians advocate for justice and mediate conflicts. Drawing on biblical principles, such as Amos 5:24—“Let justice roll down like waters”—theologians frame their calls for equitable governance (Ojo, 2020, p. 25). Oduyoye (2015) emphasizes that theologians in the Church also challenge unjust systems by equipping congregants to become agents of transformation (p. 49).

### ***Challenges and Opportunities in the Church Context***

Theologians often face resistance when addressing controversial issues like gender equality or systemic corruption. Kanyoro (2020) notes that such resistance provides opportunities for innovation, including contextual Bible studies that link theology to pressing social concerns like poverty and ecological degradation (p. 55). These innovations enable theologians to respond effectively to the complexities of contemporary society while remaining faithful to their spiritual calling. Theologians in the Church play a dual role as spiritual leaders and societal reformers. They uphold doctrinal fidelity and challenge congregations to embody their faith in tangible ways, contributing to societal well-being and communal resilience.

### ***Roles in Academia***

Academia provides theologians with an environment to critically explore the intersection of theology, culture, and development.

### ***Interdisciplinary Contributions***

Theologians in academia often engage with other disciplines to address complex issues such as climate change, health equity, and human rights. Ademiluka (2022) highlights how Nigerian theologians collaborate with environmental scientists to advocate for sustainable agricultural practices, demonstrating how theology can inform ecological stewardship (p. 48).

### ***Shaping Theological Education***

Theologians shape curricula that integrate theoretical and practical components, equipping students to engage with real-world challenges. Tiéno (1990) emphasizes the importance of contextual theological education in Africa, addressing socio-economic issues like poverty and unemployment (p. 58). Mbiti (1986) supports this by asserting that theological education must remain culturally rooted while addressing contemporary global issues (p. 125).

### ***Global Implications of Academic Theology***

Nigerian theologians contribute significantly to global scholarship by offering African perspectives on liberation theology, post-colonial Christianity, and ethical frameworks for development. Their work enriches international theological discourse, making theology a relevant tool for societal transformation (Orobator, 2008, 92). Achebe (2021) adds that their contributions on community-centered discipleship foster global discussions on inclusive and socially engaged theology (p. 69). Theologians in academia bridge faith and reason, ensuring theology remains relevant in addressing both local and global challenges. Their





interdisciplinary approach and contextual focus allow them to tackle complex societal issues holistically.

### **Roles in Society**

In society, theologians extend their influence beyond ecclesiastical and academic boundaries, acting as advocates, mediators, and reformers. Conradie (2021) asserts “Tracy's argument is based on a double commitment to the particularity of Christianity, notably of Jesus the Christ and the need for a public defence of truth claims Universality is not possible despite particularity, but precisely on the basis of particularity”

#### ***Faith-Based Advocacy***

Theologians partner with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community organizations to address systemic issues such as gender inequality, health disparities, and interfaith conflicts. Oduyoye (2015) argues that faith-based advocacy rooted in biblical justice principles fosters reconciliation and promotes societal healing (p. 52). Initiatives like the Nigerian Inter-Faith Action Association exemplify how theologians combat malaria and promote peace among religious groups (Ojo, 2020, p. 27).

#### ***Policy Influence and Governance***

Theologians engage with policymakers to ensure ethical considerations shape public policies. Mbiti (1986) contends that theologians bring moral clarity to governance, advocating for transparency, accountability, and equity (p. 123). Kanyoro (2020) adds that theologians play a critical role in influencing policies related to environmental justice and sustainable development (p. 56). Religion thus very often tends to play an overt role in molding public life in both positive and negative ways (Tracy, 1987).

#### ***Cultural and Contextual Engagement***

Theologians use their understanding of local cultures to design interventions that resonate with diverse populations. Ademiluka (2022) highlights how culturally sensitive theological frameworks have been pivotal in addressing Nigeria's ethno-religious diversity (p. 50). By embodying the biblical metaphors of “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13–16), theologians preserve moral values and illuminate pathways for societal progress. Theologians in society ensure that theology has a transformative impact on public life by navigating complex socio-political landscapes with wisdom and compassion. (See also Okey, 2018) The roles of theologians in the Church, academia, and society underscore their importance as spiritual leaders, intellectual contributors, and societal reformers. By integrating scriptural principles with contextual realities, theologians serve as agents of ethical renewal and societal transformation, embodying the call to be “salt and light” in an ever-changing world.

### **Synthesis of the Three Roles**

While most theologians operate within distinct domains of the Church, Academia, and Society, these roles are interconnected. Insights from academia often inform their work in the Church, while societal engagement provides practical grounding for theological reflections. This integrative approach is crucial for addressing the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century, particularly in a context like Nigeria, where socio-political and religious dynamics are deeply intertwined.

#### ***Synergy Across Publics***

Theologians leverage their influence across all three domains to create a ripple effect. For instance, academic research on peace-building can inspire church-based reconciliation programs, which in turn influence societal attitudes toward conflict resolution.



### ***Global Lessons from Nigerian Theologians***

The Nigerian context, marked by its vibrancy and complexity, offers valuable lessons for international audiences. Nigerian theologians' work in interfaith dialogue, environmental advocacy, and social justice highlights the universal applicability of theological principles in addressing global issues.

### **Conclusion**

Theologians' roles in the Church, Academia, and Society are foundational to fostering holistic development and ethical governance. Their engagement with spiritual, intellectual, and societal dimensions equips them to address pressing issues such as moral decline, social injustice, and governance failures. Drawing on biblical teachings, such as Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 5:13-16, theologians are called to serve as "salt" and "light," actively preserving societal values and illuminating paths toward transformation.

In the Nigerian context, where ethno-religious tensions, political instability, and developmental challenges persist, theologians stand out as vital agents of change. Their ability to integrate theological insights with practical strategies positions them to influence ethical governance, champion social justice, and promote interfaith dialogue. Empirical evidence suggests that communities with strong theological engagement often experience improved ethical standards and enhanced social cohesion, demonstrating the far-reaching impact of their contributions.

Moreover, the application of David Tracy's "three publics" framework underscores the necessity of theologians to bridge the gap between faith and public life. By interacting with Church, Academia, and Society, they create a synergy that inspires intellectual growth, spiritual depth, and societal reform. This integrative approach not only addresses the complexities of the Nigerian experience but also provides a replicable model for theologians globally. Ultimately, the transformative potential of theologians lies in their ability to harmonize theological principles with actionable solutions, offering visionary leadership that transcends denominational and cultural barriers while fostering a just and thriving society.

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