Trajectories of Religion in Africa
Essays in Honour of John S. Pobee

Edited by Cephas N. Omenyo & Eric B. Anum

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EDITED BY
CEPHAS N. OMENYO AND ERIC B. ANUM

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Contributors
If my memory serves me right, I first came into contact with the Very Reverend Canon John Samuel Pobee in the early days of my own priestly ministry. That was late 1970s. He was then lecturing in the University of Ghana and a good friend of Reverend Father Patrick Ryan, a Catholic Jesuit priest and fellow lecturer in the same university. At the time, John Pobee's simplicity and humble demeanour belied his immense erudition and versatility in Church History, Holy Scriptures and Sacred Theology.

A scholar is known to have said that of all the attributes of God, it seemed rather strange to him that Christianity never mentions humour. God is indeed full of humour. The Holy Bible abounds in this.

Coming into contact with Prof. J. S. Pobee, one cannot but acknowledge that God endowed a very good measure of his divine humour to J. S., as many of his colleagues in the ministry simply call him. Behind his sense of humour, John S. Pobee always nourished an unquenchable hunger for the golden fleece in his chosen vocation. And this pursuit is amply evident in his very prolific output of academic and scholarly writings, but most especially in his love for the Christian Scriptures and his burning zeal for the spread of the Word of God.

J. S.'s sense of mission has led him to search for God as God could be found in the various areopagi of human existence, be it in the traditional religions of Africa or in the historical struggles for political freedom on the African Continent.

Prof. Pobee is however known and always remembered both at home and abroad for his very insightful and academic contributions on Ecumenism, on Christian Mission and Religious Education. In this context, I can well say that the emblematic topic for the festschrift in his honour is most apt, and the array of contributors speaks volumes of the man being thus honoured.

Very Reverend Canon Professor John Samuel Pobee indeed made himself 'all things to all people... ', and I can say without any doubt that he continues to attract many to Christ Jesus, whom he so loves and for whom he has dedicated his whole heart and soul, mind and might. Who will not be proud of such a man of God!

Most Rev. Charles G. PALMER-BUCKLE,
Catholic Archbishop of Accra.
1 May 2013
Foreword II

A keen observer of modern Ghanaian society and academic life will quickly notice the significant contributions that Professor John Pobee has made to the study of religion in Africa and the encounter of Africans with the outside world. Pobee’s writing, scholarship and teaching have made long-lasting impacts on the shape of our scholarship today. He stands tall above all others in ways that are reflected in the varieties of essays in this first *festschrift*.

Pobee has been awarded numerous academic honors and much recognition for his work in theology, and he has also served on several national and international boards and committees for the study of religion. He has lectured in the continents of Africa, Europe, Asia, North and South America, and served as a mentor to students in many of these parts of the world as well. Since Pobee’s work cuts across numerous disciplinary boundaries, he has been involved in societies of disciplinary as well as regional studies.

First, Pobee is a true and thorough intellectual and scholar, whose works and many publications on African theology and culture remain unmatched in his generation. He addresses many issues, many questions and several themes in the study of African theology, both as a thought-system and as practice. He reflects profusely on theological education and by so doing, creates models for the training and the scholarship of those who are engaged in theological studies of the African continent, in addition to various regions around the world.

Secondly, Pobee has served as a board member of several theological institutions and their collective academic contributions have been responsible for the production of knowledge in the field of African Studies and religion. As a result, many scholars have benefited from his wealth of knowledge and his experience in the field. He has proven to be an excellent mentor, and as such, he has succeeded in raising the bar for rigorous studies of religion and theology. He has become a role model *par excellence*, teaching others such as myself, how to be an intellectual both generally speaking and, how to be an African intellectual, in particular. By that, I mean that he demonstrated to many of us in my generation how to be confident in oneself, how to navigate the complex academic realm, and how to overcome and penetrate the iron curtain of color prejudice, which has prevented many from participating in academic discourse, due to their color, nationality and religious background.

Thirdly, I see Pobee as a veritable public intellectual, who is able to explain very complex theoretical concepts to a broad and diverse audience. His
kindness and generosity know no bounds. Several years ago, when Professor Sulayman Nyang and I conceived of a project to honor one of our own, Professor John S. Mbiti, with a similar festschrift, we turned to him for his support. We approached Pobee for guidance and financial assistance, and he gladly obliged us without a moment’s hesitation. Though it was my first encounter with him, this left a lasting impression on me. Pobee has, through his work, defined himself as a scholar of religion, and as an administrator, who pioneered numerous projects for the World Council of Churches. He serves as a priest in the Anglican Church, to which I also belong, and I must confess that I was quite disappointed that he was never made an Anglican bishop. I believe that Pobee would have become for Ghana what the late Professor Bolaji Idowu represented for the Nigerian Methodist Church, as the latter instituted what might be called an indigenous church. Pobee, by training, certainly has all of the credentials, but as we say on the continent, ‘Man proposes and God disposes.’

The essays in this volume speak to many of the interests Pobee pursued in his own research platform. One of the central debates in the academic world of learning today is the relationship between theological enterprise and the academic study of religion. Despite the fact that theology resonates deeply in Pobee’s scholarship, it was not theology in the narrow sense, but one that engages other methods and critical approaches for the study of religion. He took gender seriously, and supported the work of several women scholars. He was also one of the first to give African theology its own unique tone and identity, thereby revealing its value of study.

In this collection, we recognize some of the same themes that Pobee himself helped to define, explore and advance in the study of religion. In particular, the contributing scholars of this volume consider the importance of theology and education, as well as the notions of religious pluralism and multi-faith learning environments. Other essays examine some of the distinctions between European theology and African theology, also recognizing the important role of African Indigenous Religions in the collaborative religious spaces of the African continent. Due attention is given to semantics and the importance of language in the study of religion, and a nod here is given to expanding notions of African ontology with regard to individuals and the community. A number of articles also consider the importance of gender and power within spheres of religion in West African cultural contexts. These articles also point out the need to better understand the relationships between African religions and political and structural violence, ethnic conflict and human rights on the continent and elsewhere.

1 Though this is considered to be a proverb from Benin, the sentiment is similar across the continent.
Ultimately, this *festschrift* in honor of John Pobee includes a variety of scholarly voices. In the chorus of their essays, the authors expertly consider both the local and the global dimensions of themes in African religion and theology, an impressive feat, and one that John Pobee has insisted upon in his own contributions to the field. I sincerely hope that the younger generation that Pobee has helped to train will continue his legacy in both the breadth and depth of his scholarship, and fortunately, this collection demonstrates as much.

Jacob Olupona, PhD.
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Sciences,
Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.
7 March 2013
Pobee's diversity

The idea of doing a Festschrift for J.S. Pobee came out of a discussion we had on the contribution of African theologians towards the development of religious disciplines on the continent. J.S. Pobee has mentored and supported many in their academic careers. Consequently, we decided to do our homework as to the possibility of doing something for such a great African who has done so much in his areas of study and involvement with so many people in so many respects. Our search led to our realization that there are so many people who would like to contribute towards such a work in honour of Pobee. The only complexity was that he is a man of many parts so it was difficult to limit the work to just one discipline or one area of study.

Pobee, for instance, is well known in biblical studies as a New Testament scholar from his Cambridge days as a post-graduate student. However, he is also credited with the writing of Church history books like Politics and Religion in Ghana, which he did in 1977. He also worked as a theologian writing on Towards an African Theology. He also taught these courses as well at the University of Ghana, Legon. He not only contributed numerous articles on Ecumenism but actually worked with the World Council of Churches at its Programme for Ecumenical and Theological Education (PETE) unit and this saw him being referred to by many as 'theologian in residence' at the WCC in Geneva during his period of service in that area. He also had very keen involvement in promoting theological education by his commitment not only in finding funds for students but also in organising conferences and workshops to build up capacity for both residential and non-residential theological education programs. One distinctive outcome of most of his workshops and conferences was to get the conference proceedings published. Theological Education by extension saw a lot of boost during his tenure of office at the WCC as program coordinator of the PETE unit then. He also made sure that theological institution were provided with both a platform and resources to hold regional conferences during his stint with the PETE program with the WCC. This is where Conferences of African Theological Institutions (CATI) and its regional counterparts were assisted to bring their members together for various programs. It is also worth mentioning his involvement in mis-
sions. He was also involved with the International Association of Missions (IAMS) and served as its President and has now been honored as a life member. In keeping with Prof. Pobee’s scholarly and ecclesiastical engagements the essays in this festschrift reflect not only the African context but also the global ecumenical realm.

He is also through and through Church person. This is in his famous statement that “Theology is conceived in the womb of the Church”. He participated actively in both the worldwide Anglican Communion as well as that of Ghana. We still have very fond memories of Pobee leading devotions during ecumenical meetings which made great spiritual impact on us and many others. He has remained connected to the Church all through the decades that he worked as a scholar either with the University or with the ecumenical bodies. Until recently, he served as the Provost at the Holy Spirit cathedral during the tenure of office of Archbishop Justice Akrofi of the Anglican Church of Ghana.

Presently as professor emeritus at the University of Ghana, Department for the Study of Religions, he has been nicknamed ‘living ancestor’ which is an indication of his contribution being put in the context among others as part of the heritage of the Department. It came as no surprise when the University of Ghana honored him with an honorary doctorate, together with two other scholars, for his outstanding contribution to scholarship, as part of the University’s 65th anniversary celebration in 2013.

So in putting together a book in honor of such a person, one cannot but do justice to the diversity of his involvements by collecting the wide variety of articles from the different fields that he has been involved in. Indeed we cannot give a better title to such a work than Trajectories in Religion in Africa. Indeed Pobee was in this respect all things to all people being All Things To All People looking at the commitment and diligence with which Pobee worked and continues to work in all these areas that have been mentioned above. There are many others but we believe they all fit into one or the other of the divisions that we have given to the articles.

Indeed Pobee in his life has shown what it means to be able to contribute effectively to the development of various aspects of one’s area of study as well as one’s vocation in the non-academic area and make enormous impact in both areas in diverse ways. In sum, we see Pobee making a strong statement in his life and works that it is possible to work at the cutting edge of the intersection between biblical studies and theology, church and society, denominational communion and ecumenism, mission and history.
The diversity of this volume

This work contains articles that cannot be unified and put under a single theme or field of study. This posed a little difficulty in the initial stages in finding a publisher for the work since most publishers we contacted were interested in having a volume that can be clearly identified with a particular area, like Church history, missions, theology, ecumenism etc. However, none of the areas singularly fully captures Pobee’s life and works and that his career has been a combination of areas that he had been involved in which to him together conveys the message of who he really is. So that explains the various sections of the work which we have and the title of the work itself.

The first section of the work is devoted to ecumenism, mission, and theological education. Here, the work of Werner, focused on the World Council of Churches’ contribution to ecumenical theological education, particularly discussing the challenges that the various units of WCC faced in making available theological training to Churches and ecumenical bodies that they were related to. The article raises questions about leadership development in the Church in contemporary times.

Platvoet’s article on ‘A battle won or lost’ reflects what he terms the ‘ecumenical experiment in academic theology in the Netherlands’. Here he looks at the attempt made between 1970 to 1975 to provide theological and ministerial training for future ministers and priests for Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches respectively together at Utrecht University. The significance of Platvoet’s contribution lies also in the fact that Dutch universities over the years have trained students from multi-cultural contexts, particularly Africa and Asia. Furthermore, graduates of the Dutch theological institutions end up serving in crosscultural contexts, an experience he himself had in Africa.

Ross focuses on issues related to Edinburgh 1910 and the preparation of the Scottish Churches on whose land this memorable Conference took place that re-defined and re-positioned world mission for decades to come. Ross is particularly interested in the way forward in forging ahead in the mission thrust of the world Church as one looks at a whole century of global mission in the 21st century.

Jongeneel discusses the different positions taken by scholars regarding the meaning and use of the terms ‘Christendom’, ‘Christianity’, and ‘Christianization’. Continental Europeans (especially Germans and the Dutch) do not know or acknowledge the difference between ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’. Consequently they ascribe a positive sense to the latter term, whereas most Anglo-Saxon authors opt for a more or less negative connotation to term ‘Christendom’, over against the positively interpreted term ‘Christianity’. The present article challenges the Anglo-Saxon view, because it views
both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ as imperfect results of earlier Christianizing processes. It pleads for a basically positive understanding of the term ‘Christendom’, stating that ‘Christendom’ produced the Christian calendar, nowadays known as the common era, and the Sunday as the most widely accepted free day in the world among others.

Nkomazana’s contribution examines the role played by the multi-faith religious education curriculum in basic and secondary schools in Botswana, and how it impacts children’s values and moral standards irrespective of their religious, political and social orientations.

The article co-authored by Omenyo and Kwakye, titled ‘Authentically African and authentically Anglican’, examines the contextualization and the role of Ghanaians in the establishment of the Anglican Church in Ghana. In other words, how a typical English Church took roots on Ghanaian soil and gained its own identity as a Ghanaian Church through the efforts of Ghanaians.

The second section contains articles related to religion and public space. Kalu, who died in 2009, employs in his article on political violence in Africa the metaphor of the tangled mangrove roots in the Rivers State in his country Nigeria to put forward an argument on how identities are formed in Africa and to discuss the relevance of their framing through cults which are related to the types of political violence that are perpetuated in the Republics in Africa.

Asamoah-Gyadu’s article on Religion and Politics in Africa seeks to address the relationship between religiosity and political development in Ghana, particularly as Ghana emerged out of colonialism and developed her religiousness in the post-independent era. He analyses the implications of the inseparability of religion from politics among Ghanaians.

Ammah’s article looks at women’s interfaith ventures in Ghana from a Muslim woman scholar’s point of view. She focuses on the Talitha Cumi Centre’s work through the circle of women theologians that employed an interfaith dialogue approach through women of all faiths including Muslim women as the way forward in transforming the African society by focusing on issues of feminism.

Ganusah’s paper examines the relationship between the Church and its developmental efforts in the Africa. Ganusah argues that despite the negative image of the Church and its involvement in conflicts, it also played a positive role in nation building in terms of development. She therefore highlights the areas for which the Church needs to be commended and to be encouraged to do more in Africa in improving the lot of its communities.

Butselaar examines the centrality of religion in the life of Africans against the background of Mozambique.
Atieno’s article, which is the last in this section, uses a Ghanaian case study to analyze the relationship between tradition, religious human rights, and the modern nation state in Africa. This work examines the prevalence of conflicts between traditional authorities and Christian groups and how human rights could be applied in religious circles.

Section C centres on religion and culture. Amenga-Etego’s article does a critique of the African traditional culture of chastity. The paper is interested in female sexuality in Africa. It uses the Nankani peoples of Northern Ghana to explore the traditional conception of chastity in the face of complex traditions and the challenges that change poses to it in contemporary times.

Weber’s article on biblical faith and culture argues that there is the need to re-examine the translations of the bible that were done in the past. Where necessary, the bible ought to be retranslated to meet the demands of the times or to make it more relevant to the needs of its present readers.

Amanze’s article reviews the relationship between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He summarizes the ‘push and pull’ relationship between ATR and Christianity as that of conflict and cooperation respectively. He notes the negative demonizing attitude of the missionaries towards African culture and values in the beginnings of Christianity in most parts of Africa and the attempts that were made later to inculturate Christianity into Africa making it an African religion.

Sundermeier’s article, which follows Amanze’s, is an attempt at the inculturation of spirituality in the African context. It examines the concept of spirituality and its implications for the inculturation of spirituality among African Christians.

The fourth section is titled Bible and Culture. Dubé’s article focuses on reading the Bible with women leaders in African Instituted and mainline churches. This marks a paradigm shift from people in the academy reading the Bible exclusively among themselves to reading it with women who are leaders in their Churches who use the Bible in leading their churches and as basis for their leadership roles in their Churches but have no academic interest in reading the Bible.

West picks up the issue of liberation hermeneutics which was developed during the apartheid era and examines its role in the post-apartheid era. West argues that there are new elements of subjugation that need to be dealt with in the post-apartheid era. He identifies poverty, crime, corruption, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, which need to be confronted with liberation hermeneutics in a renewed manner with the commitment of those in the academy cooperating and working together with those in the deprived areas and less endowed areas of the South African communities.
Nsiah and Anum focus on an intertexture reading of Galatians 4: 21-31 of the Sarah Hagar story and its application to the Ghanaian context. The article looks at the issues of freedom and justice as they interplay in the two contexts.

Finally Ekem picks up the mother tongue hermeneutical methodology, which was popularised by the late Kwame Bediako. In his article he used the translation of the Apostle’s creed into Mfantse by Jacobus Capitein and its relevance for the development of Mfantse understanding and appropriation of the creed among Christians whose mother tongue is that language. Ekem used this to illustrate how mother tongue biblical hermeneutics works.
Part One
Mission, Ecumenism and Theological Education
Challenges and Major Tasks for Ecumenical Theological Education in the 21st Century

Dietrich Werner

This article examines the involvement of the World Council of Churches in ecumenical theological education through its units and collaborative bodies. Among others the following questions are examined, and proposes the way forward: How can we help and assist those countries and churches where the establishment and consolidation of institutions for higher theological education has barely begun? What kind of role regional associations and the community of World Organization of the Associations of Theological Schools (WOCATI) can play with regard to the need for elaborating national or regional master plans for the development of theological education in weaker areas? How do we provide answer the growing needs for the well-trained pastors and church leaders particularly in those churches with fast growing rates but short history in terms of higher theological education?

When the Gospel of Jesus Christ arrived in the ancient city of Thessaloniki in the first century by the teachings of St. Paul in one of the synagogues of this city, according to Acts 17:5, a ‘riot’ was caused in the whole of Thessaloniki marking the disturbing and challenging character of the liberating hope in Christ. When some 60 representatives of theological faculties, colleges and associations of theological colleges came to Thessaloniki some two thousand years later, in June 2008 for the IVth Congress of the World Organization of the Associations of Theological Schools (WOCATI) this did not create a massive riot in the city, but it certainly was a remarkable event causing some publicity. Theological educators from all over the world returned for a week of intense dialogue and meetings to Greece, a country which historically can be regarded as the place and culture which played a unique role for the very formation of theology – the reflective understanding and systematic formulation of Christian faith. As it was the encounter between the Judeo-Palestinian tradition and the values and philosophical traditions of Greek culture which gave rise to the emergence of Theology, the reflected understanding of God, and its first forms emerging in the works of the so-called apologists in the second and third century like Justin, Aristides, Athenagoras and the letter of Dionysius.

Theological education is vital for the transmission of Christian tradition from one generation to the other. Theological education is essential for the
renewal and continuity of the church and its leadership. Theological education is a matter of survival for an authentic and contextual mission of the church in contemporary contexts. Theological education is crucial to the interaction between church and society where many issues demand a sharpened stand and position of Christianity. This has become a common conviction in western and eastern churches, in Christianity of the South and Christianity of the North.

Ecumenical theological education and broad-based ecumenical formation is a vital priority for Christianity in the 21st century and the continuation of the ecumenical movement; this was affirmed by the last assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre. Without an increased commitment towards the ecumenical agenda (in its broad understanding), the unity of the church and its holistic mission and service in today's world in theological education we might see an increased fragmentation of world Christianity; we might see growing trends of religious fundamentalism and a severe lack of properly trained Christian leadership for many fast-growing churches in the southern hemisphere.

These are key convictions of the World Council of Churches Program on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) which not only was the driving force behind the formation of the global WOCATI network, which originated some 20 years ago during a conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in June 1989, but also was instrumental to revive this only platform for global dialogue on strategic questions of theological education on a global level. This was made possible because of some good cooperation between the former President of WOCATI, Prof. Petros Vassiliades from the Theological faculty of Thessaloniki, and the new global coordinator of ETE.

John Pobee, who for many years was Executive Staff member of PTE and later Global Coordinator of the Program on Theological Education (ETE) in WCC, would have liked very much to be present also during the WOCATI assembly in Greece, as it was his passion and untiring commitment which substantially contributed to global dialogue on theological education. It was taking up and continuing his heritage which he left behind with the Oslo World Conference on Theological Education in 1996 when we planned for the World Conference on Theological Education with the WOCATI network some 12 years later. Being hindered by unfavourable health John Pobee

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2 Cf. documents of WOCATI Congress 2008 on WCC website under Resources http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-
nevertheless delivered a substantial paper for the WOCATI congress in which he reviewed the history of PTE/ETE as originating in the Theological Education Fund (TEF) – which was founded 1958 during the International Missionary Council in Ghana – and reminded both WCC and WOCATI of the ongoing and strategic importance of ETE which continues to have a distinctive role at least in the following areas:

- ‘Programmatic dialogue on key themes of theological education at the world level’
- Project-related networking between regional associations and donor agencies
- Promotion of common standards in ecumenical curriculum and ecumenical teaching
- Programmatic efforts to facilitate the access of women in the theological education institutes both in the North and South

As WOCATI is a loose network of regional associations meeting every fourth year, it should not be seen constitutionally or functionally as gradually replacing ETE which understands itself not only as a forum for dialogue but also as a strategic instrument of the missionary calling and ecumenical movement, ETE should maintain structural links with WOCATI by being present on its executive board but it cannot be absorbed into its structures’.

In the report from the first WOCATI meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1989 it was mentioned that WOCATI should serve the ‘twin goals of both contextualization and globalization in theological education’. The WOCATI Congress in Greece provided a unique occasion to demonstrate in what ways these goals have been partially achieved, what new challenges for theological education in the 21st century can be identified and what priority issues for an updated working agenda of the ETE program in WCC could be named. It might well be asked whether in the light of contemporary challenges and recent changes we have to revisit our key slogans, to be honest about what really was achieved and to also move beyond and to sharpen again our global agenda for ecumenical theological education in more precise terms.

The following 8 points which have been formulated in the context of encounters of the WOCATI congress and beyond are meant to serve as a first orientation and discussion starter for a process to reformulate our common mandate in considering key challenges and major tasks for theological educa-
tion in the 21st century. There are no ready-made answers for many of these issues, therefore many of suggestions conclude with open questions.

Adjusting institutional capacities of theological colleges and faculties to growing demands for theological education

According to the UNESCO Report on Higher Education in the world 2007 the twenty-first century has begun with an explosion in the number of higher education students. According to UNESCO, enrolment has increased approximately from 72 million in 1999 to 133 million in 2004. Excluding North America and Western Europe, enrolment in the rest of the world more than doubled in these five years, with an increase from 41.1 million to 99.1 million. China alone increased its share from 6.4 million in 1999 to 19.4 million in 2004, giving it the largest higher education enrolment in the world at more than 23 million in 2005. This massive expansion is taking place for at least two reasons: an increase in social demand for higher education and an increase in the economic need for more highly educated human resources.

What is shown in these global figures concerning dramatic increase in demands for general higher education due to younger and dynamic populations in Asia and Africa also is reflected in growing demands for theological education and theological study programmes in many countries of the South. There are grave regional discrepancies in terms of availability and accessibility of institutions of higher theological education between different countries (for instance compare South India and Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh or Vietnam and Cambodia) and also between different regions within one country.

The impression is that in some areas the institutional capacities for theological education are not keeping pace with the growing needs and demands for theological education. In Nepal for instance where the number of Christians has grown from zero to 800,000 in the past fifty years, although many pastors have only a rudimentary 5-month training programme which enables them to read the Bible and to pray. There is an enormous zeal to serve God, but an enormous lack of well-trained trained pastors and theological educators and still no M.Th. course can be offered in that country. Another example is China where for a growing number of Christians there are only some 3000 ordained pastors many of which each have to shepherd 4000 Christians or more due to lack of well-trained pastors. There is an enormous challenge in China to equip a new generation of leadership and to bridge the wider generation gap between church leaders and theologians that exists after many years of inadequate theological training. How can we assist those countries

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nevertheless delivered a substantial paper for the WOCATI congress in which he reviewed the history of PTE/ETE as originating in the Theological Education Fund (TEF) – which was founded 1958 during the International Missionary Council in Ghana – and reminded both WCC and WOCATI of the ongoing and strategic importance of ETE which continues to have a distinctive role at least in the following areas:

- 'Programmatic dialogue on key themes of theological education at the world level'
- Project-related networking between regional associations and donor agencies
- Promotion of common standards in ecumenical curriculum and ecumenical teaching
- Programmatic efforts to facilitate the access of women in the theological education institutes both in the North and South

As WOCATI is a loose network of regional associations meeting every fourth year, it should not be seen constitutionally or functionally as gradually replacing ETE which understands itself not only as a forum for dialogue but also as a strategic instrument of the missionary calling and ecumenical movement, ETE should maintain structural links with WOCATI by being present on its executive board but it cannot be absorbed into its structures'.

In the report from the first WOCATI meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1989 it was mentioned that WOCATI should serve the 'twin goals of both contextualization and globalization in theological education'. The WOCATI Congress in Greece provided a unique occasion to demonstrate in what ways these goals have been partially achieved, what new challenges for theological education in the 21st century can be identified and what priority issues for an updated working agenda of the ETE program in WCC could be named. It might well be asked whether in the light of contemporary challenges and recent changes we have to revisit our key slogans, to be honest about what really was achieved and to also move beyond and to sharpen again our global agenda for ecumenical theological education in more precise terms.

The following 8 points which have been formulated in the context of encounters of the WOCATI congress and beyond are meant to serve as a first orientation and discussion starter for a process to reformulate our common mandate in considering key challenges and major tasks for theological educa-
than their share of global wealth at 28% of GDP and the school-age population (29%).

The opposite scenario is found in South and West Asia, where 7% of the world's public education resources are spent on 28% of children and young people.

This is just the tip of the iceberg with regard to general inequalities in support for higher education structures and programmes. It would be worth analyzing how this is reflected in the area of theological education both regionally and globally. We might leave it with some very tentative observations which are just meant to indicate some of the problems:

a. There is a huge demand for grants for theological PhD and MTh studies particularly in African and in Asian Churches which cannot be met at present as neither on regional nor on global level there exist sufficient funds for this demand; thus leadership and capacity building in the area of theological teaching and expertise in quite a variety of different fields falls by the wayside;

b. In most of the church budgets in Asia, Africa and Latin America funding is provided only for the lower levels of theological education (up to BD-level, those degrees sufficient to become a pastor) but not for higher levels of theological education because this is seen as a matter for the colleges or universities (or external partners). For instance in India, the majority of the grants for post-graduate theological study still comes from ecumenical partners outside India; thus the sense of ownership for higher theological education and prioritization for higher theological degrees in order to do leadership development is not sufficiently developed;

c. Only a minority of mission boards see theological education as a major part of their agenda and budgets for development and North-South partnership; most of the funding, if at all, is given on bilateral projects between partner-churches, but less and less funds are available for global programmes and global solidarity in theological education;

d. In fundraising initiatives in WCC it apparently is more easy to get funds for development work than for projects of capacity building in theological education or theological library development;

e. Only very few experts are aware of the global discrepancies between investment in higher theological education in Christianity in the global South and investments in higher Muslim education which are promoted by some very powerful and financially strong Muslim countries in the Arab, Asian and African world which have established a number of high standard centres of theological education and Muslim universities all over the globe – a situation which needs to be reflected also with regard to the
future of Christian-Muslim dialogue and the need for well-educated Christian experts in this field? This is just outlining a few sketches of a very complex global picture. But some basic questions are becoming obvious: How to challenge the structural injustices in the allocation of financial means available to higher education institutions? How to challenge governments to recognize (and to support) the contribution which churches and institutions of theological education have made historically and at present to the advancement of education in general and research on religion and vital social ethics issues in particular, in many countries? How to challenge churches and church leaders to give higher theological education a sufficiently prominent priority in their budget plans? How to develop new mechanisms of regular support (annual donations, regular budget allocations etc.) to be made available for regional and local institutions of theological education in the churches and congregations in order to overcome one-sided dependency from external agencies?

Encountering the ongoing proliferation of theological colleges and the need for common standards in theological curriculum plans

Myanmar (Burma) is an example of success as well as of continuous challenges in the landscape of theological education institutions: Following the Commission for the Cooperation of the Churches for Higher Theological Education which was founded in 1980 only one year after the political opening which took place in 1979, the Association of Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM) was formed in 1986 and has grown from 8 member schools to almost 32 member schools in this complex and multi-ethnic country today. But despite the fact that some member schools have grown too big, the sad fact is that still each institution seem to work under the motto ‘Each for himself’ and common standards and common planning are difficult to establish in the institutional systems. Besides there is a considerable number of new colleges and Bible schools beyond the ATEM constituency as there are also other organizations funding theological institutions or Bible Schools from outside (e.g. from South Korea) but without much cooperation with ATEM.

This is only one example in a picture which is characteristic of some other Asian countries: What has shaped and inspired the formation of ecumenical associations of theological schools under the motto ‘ecumenical unity in theological education’ in the early phase to some extend today is bypassed

Indonesia might be an interesting example as it is said that there are some 50 Muslim state universities and some 150 private Muslim universities in this country.
and outdated by recent developments in a dramatically changing ecclesiastical landscape which leads to a proliferation of institutions of theological education many of which are working independently, not considering any binding commitment to an ecumenical network of theological education or process of any common planning.

How to promote unity and common standards and accountability in the area of theological education in a situation in which commercialization of tertiary education systems seems to have crept into the area of theological education? How to enter into dialogue with those who have kept a certain distance from institutionalized ecumenical circles and do their own mission without consulting existing national councils of Christian churches or existing associations of theological schools?

*Enlarging the circles of ecumenical dialogue on theological education – bridging the divide with evangelical and Pentecostal institutions of theological education*

This is leading to another similar global issue: a striking un-simultaneity between the growing missiological convergence between evangelical and ecumenical circles engaged in Christian mission and theological education – both in many cases affirm basically common convictions in the understanding of mission and education – and the institutional structures and ‘camps’ of theological schools and colleges which remains structurally divided or in some areas are even marked by identities which are shaped in opposition to each other. There will be no major progress in ecumenical orientation and contextualization of theological education unless there are deliberate attempts for *bridging the institutional divide between global ecumenical networks in theological education and global and regional evangelical and Pentecostal networks of theological education.*

There are well-developed evangelical networks of theological education (e.g. International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE)) under WEA which play an important role in some regions and levels of theological education and which are neither part of WOCATI nor of any ecumenical networks in WCC for a number of reasons. Bearing in mind what was called for during the Global Christian Forum in Nairobi in November 2007 in terms of widening the networks of cooperation, one should explore in each region what kind of signals could be developed to invite some of these networks for a process deliberately designed to strengthen mutual cooperation. In India for instance there is the family of colleges linked and recog-

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http://www.icete-edu.org/
ized by the Senate of Serampore. Some 50 colleges belong to this family. On the other hand there is the Asian Theological Association (ATA) with more than 100 member institutions in Asian countries and around 70 member institutions in India, which understands itself as a community of ‘theological educational institutions, committed to evangelical faith and scholarship, which are networking together, to serve the Church in equipping the people of God for the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ... (established in 1970 it aims at) serving its members in the development of evangelical biblical theology by strengthening interaction, enhancing scholarship, promoting academic excellence, fostering spiritual and ministerial formation, and mobilizing resources to fulfill God’s global mission within diverse Asian cultures.’

There is dual affiliation for some of the colleges but structurally there are two distinct bodies dealing with issues of and curriculum development in theological education though ATA cannot do this at university degree level. There even is a third accrediting association which is the Indian Institute of Missiology (IIM). It was founded in 1994 and brings together some 70 institutions of theological training and education in the area of mission work within and outside India – but only in 2004 equivalency and mutual recognition was worked out between ATA and IIM concerning their curriculum and degrees in mission and theological studies.

While the historical reasons for the formation of a distinct evangelical network of theological education (in the context of the emergence of the Lausanne movement) are obvious, relating to the polarization in the understanding of mission in the late 1960s and 1970s it should be asked today what is the distinct common task and what are common objectives for all major stakeholders in theological education. Whether it still makes sense to have separate networks for theological education and how the given picture really presents the unity of the church and the strategic importance of theological education for future generations, need to be justified. We have to ask: how should the situation be transformed in order to secure a common and not fragmented future for theological education in Asia and Africa? How can we best contribute to visible unity in the area of theological education in the different parts of our global community?

70% of the students coming and joining in programmes of major institutions of theological education in Chile today come from a Pentecostal back-

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8 Comp. Ravi Tiwari, Senate of Serampore College (University) at Ninety: Issues and Concerns, Article from July 2008; website: http://www.senateofseramporecollege.org/overview/mission.htm


ground. In both Latin America and Asia the number of theological colleges providing only ‘fast food theological education’ without any clear and substantial curricula and without sufficient libraries, but all with impressive titles and degrees to be sold, is increasing. There are growing anti-ecumenical tendencies in many denominations and many books and materials for theological education which are based only on one denominational identity. Commercialized Christian religion, shallow ‘prosperity-Gospel’ variations and ‘cheap’ theological training and courses have an inroad and outreach now in all sectors and layers of churches in Asia, Africa and Latin-America. On the other hand there are also some Pentecostal schools and theological colleges which are now looking out for new models of theological education and are becoming interested in dialogue with ecumenical partners in search of help in terms of upgrading their degrees, contextualizing their theological teaching and becoming more open to the ‘mainstream of theological education’ (if this term is appropriate) and oriented towards a holistic understanding of theological education.

What does all of this entail for the self-understanding, for the style and the curriculum in established institutions of theological education? Where are proper bridges to enlarge and broaden the dialogue between the different ‘families’ in the different denominational associations of theological schools? After fifty years of work in TEF, PTE and ETE much has been achieved in terms of contextualization of theological education for some circles and WCC member churches, but on the other hand the fragmentation of the landscape in theological education has become even larger and proper ‘unity in diversity’ in theological education in some regions seems to be more utopian a vision than ever before. How do we strengthen the ecumenical orientation in theological education in order to develop a sense of unity, of global catholicity and of ecumenical cooperation between churches from different denominational background as well as a commitment to interfaith dialogue within theological education? How do we avoid a growing trend of mushrooming colleges and bible schools with each denomination preferring to have its own theological education kingdom without much reference to other church traditions in the same region?

With the diminishing number of courses, teaching positions and chairs teaching ecumenism, history of the ecumenical movement, ecumenical missiology and interfaith dialogue in many contexts the ‘transfer of the ecumenical memory’ from existing generations to the next generation no longer seem to be guaranteed. This is a serious issue for the whole of the ecumenical movement. Thus the task of promoting ecumenical consciousness, engagement and formation has become more critical than ever. It is of great necessity and urgency to create a generation of ecumenical theological educators
and leaders who have a clear grasp of the evangelical, diaconal, missionary and ecumenical nature of Christian faith. In other word, transforming theological education in mission is not enough without transforming of the quality and patterns of leadership in the churches, and theological and ecumenical institutions, together with the accompanying policy and decision-making organs of the institutions. 12

Attempts have been made to re-translate the notion of ‘ecumenical theological education’ and its proper meaning for contemporary situations of dialogue among theological educators. 13 Though knowing that ‘ecumenical’ is a bad and rejected term still in many churches in the Asia and Africa and also in some evangelical and Pentecostal circles, there is no alternative than just to try again and again to circumscribe what is a biblically founded and sound meaning of this concept which – even if in some instances we might drop the term and rather speak of catholicity of theological education or its holistic nature – points to an understanding of theology and the church which is fundamentally rooted in Scripture and in the tradition of the Universal Church as expressed in the Creeds (the church as being one, holy, catholic and apostolic in essence).

**Quality improvement in theological education**

Many regional associations of theological schools are committed to improving the quality standards in theological education by regular accreditation and evaluation visits to their member schools. There is a new debate on what ‘quality improvement’ is and what it means for theological education. Latin American networks have introduced an important study document with the new manifesto for ‘A quality theological education’ (Servicio Pedagógicos y Teológicos, SPT). ‘Quality’ of theological education according to their statement cannot just be defined in the seemingly neutral terms of academic excellence or ‘effectiveness-standards’ as applied and sought for in many training and education programmes of the business world and industry. There is a special and distinct approach of theological institutions speaking of ‘quality theological education’ which is defined by seeking ‘quality in the theological undertaking... by combining in an imaginative way the search for theological relevance in the overwhelmingly pressing reality of Abya Yala regarding the


pertinence of a discipline that has its own epistemological identity and demands.\textsuperscript{14}

The theological approach to quality of (higher) education undeniably is related to the quality of life which God has promised in the prophethical vision of abundant life for all and an explicitly missiological orientation of the paradigm of theological education in the context of the concept of Missio Dei.\textsuperscript{15}

For patterns and models of theological education geared towards that abundance of life for all which constantly is denied by existing systems of exploitation and globalization, some essential requirements are identified in the statement which would lean towards inter-disciplinary and intercultural methods, clear account of pedagogy and teaching methods, inclusivity in terms of multiple forms of rationality and human potentialities (emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual, moral, intuitive, creative) and contextually and historically rooted discourses on theological concepts. There are consequences of this for the "quality management" of the life of institutions of theological education which ought to be measured 'by the level of learning, security, welfare, mutual trust, initiative, as well as by other general criteria linked to an inclusive character, diversity, gender equity'.

The document is an indication of how the debate on quality of theological education is both advancing in some regions and essentially needed still in other regions.\textsuperscript{16} The international debate on comparable quality standards of theological education has barely begun among existing associations of theological schools, though it was becoming clear during WOCATI conference that this is a field of strategic importance which has much potential for mutual learning between the associations of theological schools.

\textit{What are common standards for quality assurance and evaluation in theological education in the 21st century?}

There are also external reasons for intensifying this debate, as looking beyond one's own nose it is soon becoming clear that there are enormous and rapid developments going on with regard to quality assurance and interna-

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\textsuperscript{14} For A Quality Theological Education, Manifest from Latin America, June 2008, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{15} For the debate on Theological Education in a Missional Paradigm, see among many other publications: 'Transforming Theological Education in Mission', \textit{IRM} 94, No 373 (April 2005); Peter F. Penner, \textit{Theological Education as Mission}, (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2005); Lothar Engel/Dietrich Werner, \textit{Ökumenische Perspektiven Theologischer Ausbildung}, (Beiheft ÖR, Frankfurt 2001).

tional standardization of higher education systems in the secular field which are of crucial importance also for higher institutions of theological education.

Since the first UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 (WCHE) there has been an intense debate on quality of higher education at UNESCO level which theological colleges and regional associations should not despise but explore with interest as to what they can learn and benefit from. In the ‘World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action’ from 1998 it was stated that ‘Developing quality in higher education and mechanisms for its assurance is crucial for the future of education in the 21st century’. The definition given here was:

Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment, internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality (Art. 11).

In 2004 there was the important First International Barcelona Conference on higher Education on the theme ‘The Social Commitment of Universities’, organized by GUNI (Global Universities Network for Innovation), a network created by UNESCO and the Universidad Politecnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, which is very rich in terms of deepening insights and experiences in quality assurance in higher education institutions. In the GUNI network on global level it was emphasized:

♦ There is diversification and increased social demand for higher education
♦ National states have no longer the capacities to finance this high education explosion (alone)
♦ New and different kinds of providers for higher education emerge both from public and private sector – diversification of higher education markets
♦ There is an enormous increase in degree mills, academic fraud and corruption in higher education
♦ There also is increase in demand and supply for cross-border higher education schemes
♦ There are urgent needs for proper governance concerning quality assurance in terms of quality audit, quality assessment and accreditation

It is worth exploring what institutions of theological education can learn from the set of criteria concerning quality higher education which were developed among others by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which is linked to UNESCO. The realm of theological education is and should not be an isolated island which introvertly circles only around itself, but rather is part and parcel of the higher education systems and the ongoing dialogue between culture, education and society in a given country even if church-state relations might vary considerably. The more church related theological colleges and seminaries are seeking recognition and compatibility for their curricula and degrees with universities and institutions of higher education at national level or in other countries, the more crucial it becomes to be related and to be open to the quality standards and the debates on quality assurance which are emerging in the secular field – though not without critical scrutiny concerning its own Christian identity.

How can we learn from one another within the fellowship of regional associations of theological schools at the global level? And how is our discourse on quality of theological education enriched and related to the secular debate on quality assessment and quality assurance in the UNESCO network of ‘Global University Network for Innovation’ (GUNI) which has developed some special expertise in this in many regions? What can we learn from the ongoing international debate on quality assurance in higher education and where do we differ as theological institutions from standards and values offered to us from the world of business and modern technologies?

Understanding global migration, the changing ecclesial landscape and the consequences for inter-contextuality in theological education

Contextualization in theological education was the key-slogan used and applied in the Theological Education Fund already in late 1960s and 1970s. The emergence of different contextual theologies and new forms of theological education (social exposure periods, field research etc) was the outcome and invaluable contribution of this paradigm shift in theological education for which TEF/PTE helped considerably. While contextualization continues to be a priority in many regions, the shifting landscape of ecclesial realities gives rise to an additional dimension. How to understand for instance the Asian identity of theology and theological education – which played a prominent role in formulating the ‘critical Asian principle’ within ATESEA – when large sectors of Asian populations now no longer live geographically in Asia, but in the United States, in Australia or in Canada? What about African iden-

18 Comp. http://www.guni-rmics.net/
ility of theology and theological education if sizeable and growing immigrant groups of Africans and African churches are living in Western Europe?

The realities of global migration have profoundly transformed conditions and frameworks for theological education in both the southern and the northern hemisphere. During the 16th to early 20th century migration from Europe to countries of the South has brought models of theological education from the northern hemisphere to be planted (and later transformed) in contexts of the South. In the process of de-colonialization which started in the late forties in Asia and in the fifties in Africa, the cry for self-determination led to the concern for contextualization of theological education in the realities of the South. But in the last two decades of the 20th century and in the beginning 21st century there are new realities emerging with regard to the presence of African and Asian Christian and non-Christian communities emigrating to Europe and the US due to trends in global reverse migration and many are gradually forming their own churches and new patterns of theological education. It has been estimated that approximately 10 million people migrate globally every year and both sending as well as receiving countries bear the consequences which include the religious sphere (reviving, transforming, opening religious identities or seeking refuge in fundamentalist religious identities).19

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ‘Migration is considered one of the defining global issues of the early twenty-first century, as more and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history. There are now about 192 million people living outside their place of birth, which is about 3% of the world’s population. This means that roughly one of every thirty-five persons in the world is a migrant. Between 1965 and 1990, the number of international migrants increased by 45 million an annual growth rate of about 2.1 per cent. The current annual growth rate is about 2.9 per cent’ Women accounted for 49.6% in 2005.20

These migration-based new global church realities of large sectors can have a profound impact on theological education systems both within the northern and the southern hemisphere if the proper partners are brought into contact with each other in an appropriate way.

With John Pobee coming from Ghana it might be appropriate to just cite the example of Hamburg, Germany, where some 7000 Africans, the majority of which are from Ghana and Nigeria, are living permanently. There are some 70 African Churches now in Hamburg. Some people are arguing that

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19 We owe some of this information to a presentation of Henry Wilson from FITSSEA during a consultation on the future of SEAGST in Malaysia in July 2008; cf. H.L. Wilson: Changed Ecclesial Realities in the World Church and Theological Education.

20 Comp. [http://www.iom.int/jahia/page3.html](http://www.iom.int/jahia/page3.html)
there are more Africans attending church services regularly in the secular city of Hamburg than Germans. Africans have formed an African Church Council of Hamburg, assisted by ecumenically committed members of the Northelbian Lutheran Church. Due to initiatives in the Missions-Academy of the University of Hamburg a special programme African Theological Training in Germany (ATTIG) was formed and has worked for more than four years providing a series of weekend workshops and lectures in cooperation with the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University of Hamburg. Some representatives of African immigrant churches in Hamburg are now considering how they can also assist mother churches in Africa and theological education systems in their own home context. The key question in facing consequences of long term and irreversible migration trends all around the globe is:

*What can the Asian or African Christian Diaspora community outside Asia or Africa contribute for the advancement of theological education both in their Diaspora situation as well as for their home-churches in Asia and Africa?*

Where do we see the vital mutual assisting and complementary role of regional communities of theological education for each other?

Is it worth reassessing and exploring new models of inter-contextuality in theological education for the future in order to release new energies and commitments which come from migrant populations and their potential? In the case of the SEAGST – a programme of ATESEA in Asia, this kind of question has already led to the formation of something like a community of Asian Theologians at Large (ATL) (outside Asia) who are committed to contributing their resources to strengthening higher theological education in Asian countries in a reformed structure of the SEAGST programme.

*Diversification of theological education with regard to changing patterns in the global ICT context*

Nothing has a more profound impact on the patterns of education globally than the rapid transformation processes going on with regard to new information and communication technologies (ICT) which are both opening up new potentials in theological learning (e-learning, research exchange groups via internet, distant master courses using digital formats; digital libraries) as well as creating new problems and discrepancies. While the 'global digital divide' in terms of accessibility to the web and electronic libraries still is a major problem and challenge particularly in many African and some Asian countries there is no halt to the global spread of modern ICT in principle.

Experts in global higher education have assured us that there is a historically unprecedented acceleration of knowledge in science and education
which goes hand in hand with improved means of rapid dissemination of knowledge by modern means of ICT, though we also face the widening digital or knowledge divide (but this not only between North and South, but very much also within many nations depending on educational and socio-economic level of development in certain groups of society). 31

Although some theological colleges have a department on Christian communication, little has been done in terms of studies and research on how theological education institutions should plan to make proper use of modern communication and information technologies for theological teaching, for mutual cooperation, for exchange and dissemination of information to larger sectors of their societies as well as between member institutions of WOCATI.

What kind of curricula and courses on theological education can be more easily shared with each other by being made available online or on a CD-ROM? What diversified forms of theological education in a non-residential pattern (TEE-programmes) can benefit from proper and contextualized use of the new ICT? In some Evangelical and Pentecostal as well as many mainline colleges there is much use of modern ICT already but an ethics of modern communication means for theological education is still missing in most settings.

**Strengthening regional centers of excellence in theological research and post-graduate studies**

Since its inception the TEF was concerned about the development of regional centres of excellence in theological research and post-graduate education which would allow churches in the South to invest into long-term theological leadership development programmes. 32

A prominent example for a regional centre of excellence in theological research and post-graduate education is the SEAGST programme of ATESEA which in fifty years has grown from a community of 16 colleges to a community of 104 colleges in South Asia at present. A consortium style of higher theological education institute, the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) was established in 1966 under the auspices of the

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31 Comp. Wadi D. Haddad, Ph.D, President, Knowledge Enterprise, Inc. (USA): Tertiary Education Today: Global Trends, Global Agendas, Global Constraints, presented 19 August 2003 at the ICETE International Consultation for Theological Educators High Wycombe, UK.

http://www.theoledafrica.org/ICETE/Files/Haddad_TertiaryEducation.htm

Association of the Theological Schools in South East Asia. In cooperation with and on behalf of member schools of the Association, the Graduate School conducts programmes of advanced theological studies at the master and doctoral levels and grants the degree of Master of Theology (M.Theol.) and Doctor of Theology (D.Theol.). The programme makes available to graduates of approved theological schools in South East Asia the combined academic resources of the participating accredited schools so that suitable students may have the opportunity of continuing their studies within South East Asia.

Four specific aims were designed for this Graduate School:

1. To assist in the intellectual and spiritual development of Asian theologians so that their Christian ministry will be enriched and be more effective;

2. To contribute to the emergence of contextual and Asia-oriented theology by providing the facilities, and opportunities of research into, and reflection upon, the Christian faith as it relates to the living faiths, cultures and traditions of Asia, and to contemporary Asian society and its problems;

3. To further the training of competent teachers for the theology faculties of the region and of leaders for Christian ministry in the church and society;

4. To promote opportunities for the interchange of the graduate students and faculty members between the different participating institutions with a view to enhancing both a regional consciousness and Christian fellowship across the barriers of race, cultures and nations.

The SEAGST is a Christian institution, which is entirely ecumenical in doctrine and in its relationship to the churches and participating schools. The faculty and students represent a broad spectrum of Christian belief and denominational affiliation. The umbrella of the consortium covered 27 participating schools from 7 areas in 9 countries. There are 2 schools from Hong Kong, 9 schools from 2 areas in Indonesia, 4 schools from the area of Malaysia-Singapore-Thailand-Sri Lanka, 4 schools from Myanmar, 5 schools from the Philippines and 3 schools from Taiwan. In the last 40 years SEAGST has successfully developed theological scholars and faculties to meet the needs of Asian churches and their theological institutions. There are more than 60 D.Theol. graduates and hundreds of M.Theol. alumni, who are serving churches and theological education over Asian countries and beyond.²³

²³ This information is from: Huang Po Ho, Contextualization of Theological Education in South East Asia – Challenges and Responses, Contribution to WOCATI Congress, Greece, June 2008.
The SEAGST programme is both a success story and an illustration of new challenges and difficulties due to the complex nature of the region and the successful impact made which demand a serious reconsideration and re-shaping of SEAGST:

- Vast distances between the different regions make it difficult to sustain a common level of quality control and similar orientation;
- Many ATESEA member schools now appear to be able and ready to start their own advanced degree programmes and offer degrees which parallel those granted through SEAGST on their own. The duplication of programme has sometimes created confusion and a waste of theological education resources that calls into question the existence and participation of SEAGST programmes for those participating schools;
- The identity of SEAGST is less visible as no central campus is linked to its programmes.

The case of SEAGST and the ongoing debate within ATESEA for its re-shaping and re-orientation illustrates the challenges and needs for a serious re-consideration of the role of regional centres of excellence in theological research and education (which might be called ‘hub-colleges’) also for other parts of the global theological community. It is a fundamental task of strategic importance for regional associations of theological schools:

a) to review and reassess their own landscape of institutions of theological education with regard to the number, localization and appropriateness of regional centres of excellence in theological research and theological education;

b) to strengthen the financial and institutional viability and distinct role of regional centres of excellence in theological research and theological education even in a situation where some individual colleges offer their own post-graduate and doctoral degrees in order to strengthen interconnectedness and mutual cooperation over against fragmentation and mutual isolation in theological education;

c) to identify key areas and theological disciplines or research areas in which investment in high level expertise and theological competence is vital for the future mission, witness and contextualization of churches in a given region and without which contemporary challenges in rapidly transforming societies cannot be addressed professionally by representatives of Christianity (areas like bio-ethics, ecological issues, Christian-Muslim dialogue, gender issues, international law and human rights issues). Each regional association should develop its own priority list for disciplines and research areas which need to be reinforced and qualified in terms of creating more theological excellence in a theological dialogue which is vital.
for the contextualization of the Gospel as Christianity in many Asian and African regions still is in captivity due to being shaped in western garments;

d for each regional centre of excellence in theological research and theological education strategies should be developed to strengthen inter-contextual partnership and enrichment programmes involving theological educators from other parts of the world, in order to strengthen global solidarity and inter-contextuality in theological education.

Exploring new models for interfaith-learning theological education

Ecumenical formation in theological education fourthly is guided by a vision of sharing and mutual discoveries reaching beyond the realm of Christianity to the human community in the whole inhabited earth (oikumene) and taking into account the challenges of Christians living in close neighbourhoods and experiencing mutual sharing and solidarity with people of other faith traditions in many church contexts. Thus interfaith encounter and learning about what can be affirmed in common action for peace, justice and human dignity with people of other living faith traditions is an integral component of ecumenical formation (interfaith dimension of ecumenical formation) which is not endangering one’s own Christian identity but rather deepening it in processes of communication and sharing with people of different faiths. With the recent Letter of some 140 Muslim Leaders (‘A Common Word between Us and You’) to Leaders of Christian Churches around the world at the feast of ‘Eid al-Fitr al-Mubarak’ 2007, which marks the end of Ramadan, and the answer from WCC, this whole dimension again becomes an urgent priority also for institutions of theological education.

✦ Space and time does not permit the development of this priority issue here, but it should be mentioned at least briefly
✦ that there is a growing demand for new models of Christian-Muslim dialogue in theological education, particularly from Christian minority churches in Muslim countries;
✦ the eruption of communal clashes and violent attacks on Christian churches in India, in some areas of Indonesia and in some African countries is an indication that more emphasis needs to be given to interfaith-encounter and interfaith-theological learning in many theological institutions both in the North as well as in countries of the South;
✦ many of the materials and teaching resources which are available worldwide for interfaith learning are not available in local and regional languages and therefore the question of proper translation and dissemination needs to be addressed;
there are situations in which, due to political and religious factors on the national level, no or only limited official participation from Christians in non-Christian programmes of religious studies or official dialogue occasions is possible. Ways need to be identified to increase dialogue even in complex situations with limited mobility and freedom to operate in inter-faith-encounters.

Promoting new systems of global solidarity partnerships for theological education

The ETE program of the WCC or its predecessor, the Theological Education Fund (TEF), owes its existence to a marvelous act of global solidarity for funding and strengthening theological education in churches of the South in the late fifties in which mainly churches and mission boards of the United States and from Western Europe (including the Rockefeller Foundation) were involved. As many mainline churches in America and Western Europe face decline in membership and financial resources due to demographic reasons and also because the changing ecclesial landscape sees some new and financially very gifted churches in countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and also in other parts of the world it should be explored whether there can be a new system of global solidarity for promoting ecumenical theological education worldwide. Time has come to reconsider the (one-sided) international division of labour with regard to making available grants and scholarships for theological education and theological library development. The number of applications by far outweighs the resources available for TE in the WCC at present. It might be explored whether the WCC or other organizations should mobilize for a new global solidarity fund for theological education or whether it is more appropriate to establish regional solidarity funds for ecumenical theological education which exist already in some regions (e.g. South Asia Solidarity Endowment Fund for Theological Education).

But it is also true that working for global solidarity in ecumenical theological education cannot be reduced to increasing efforts in fundraising and presenting ETE mainly again as a funding instrument though this remains an important dimension (as institutions without any funding and grant-giving functions are often regarded as superfluous). But there are dimensions for global solidarity in theological education which are not solely measured in terms of budgets transferred and financial powers accumulated. Networking, accompanying expertise and programmatic work in the area of global ecumenical theological education by far exceeds purely monetary dimensions; it also involves in-kind contributions and low-cost programmes with innovative potential. Let us mention three recent examples from ETE’s work in the recent past:
a) Global Digital Library on Ecumenics (GDLEC)

Theological colleges in the South and in Eastern Europe have sent important signals with regard to a dramatic shortage of proper teaching resources for ecumenics, history of the ecumenical movement and proper understanding of ecumenism in their context.  

There is a:

- Lack of proper library resources for teaching ecumenics and history/present stage of the ecumenical movement in many theological colleges of the South
- Diversification and pluralization of resources on ecumenism, church unity, ecumenical missiology and interfaith dialogue stored in a wide variety of different places and libraries in the world
- Digitalization of academic resources on ecumenism, ecumenical movement and globalization of world Christianity
- Increased accessibility and spread of digitalized library systems in theological colleges of the South
- Acceleration of the production of theological books and materials, deceleration of the trickle-down and dissemination effect of recent publications to regional theological libraries in the South

To equip all theological libraries in the South with a proper physical collection of books teaching Ecumenics, Ecumenical Missiology and Interfaith Dialogue would take at least half a century and would cost a lot. An alternative vision was developed (though tangible theological books are still held in high esteem...).

The goal of a project explored by ETE at present is to create a Global Digital Library on Ecumenics in order:

- To increase and improve global individual and institutional access to theological journals, books and articles in the theological discipline of Ecumenics (including history of Ecumenism, church unity, ecumenical missiology, interfaith dialogue, contextual theologies).
- To improve theological education and research into these areas particularly for institutions of theological education in countries of the South and for Eastern and Central Europe.
- To establish a global digital library on ecumenics (GDLEC) in order to support and enable qualified participation in teaching Ecumenics, ecumenical research and participating in the international discourse on the future of Ecumenics and the ecumenical movement (follow-up project for the International Bibliography on Ecumenics IOB which stopped two decades ago).

24 The PTE publication Teaching of Ecumenics which was produced in 1983 by the WCC, edited by Samuel Amirriham and Cyrus Moon, is no longer available.
To seek better integration and cooperation of different partners and stakeholders working and publishing in the field of ecumenism, intercultural theology etc. and providing mutual access to their resources.

Ways of cooperation and innovative working alliances are sought (for example with Globethic.net) to develop this idea further.

b) Senior Expert Exchange programs in ecumenical theological education
It is one of the key tasks of ETE to promote exchange programs for theological educators to get involved in ecumenical dialogue and exposure to other contexts. All experts know how expensive it is becoming to provide transport and accommodation for people who are still employed in their home context. In secular fields so-called Senior Expert Exchange programmes have been developed in areas of secular developmental cooperation. People in retirement positions offer half a year or one year of their expertise and knowledge in a different social and political context – financially dependent for support only in terms of traveling costs. Similar models are practised by some mission agencies for retired pastors or senior church experts. There are only few instances where this model has been applied also to retired professors in theological education. One should carefully explore whether assisting for the development of a programme like this could contribute to the advancement of global solidarity in theological education and identify proper and adequate condition for a two-way system of exchanges. Being aware of grave discrepancies in terms of retirement regulations and pension levels one needs to develop proper mechanisms to ensure that this does not become a one-sided export model for senior experts in ecumenical theological education from the West to be transferred for limited period to the South but that equal chances are given to representatives of Southern theological institutions to serve in the North or in other parts of the world.

c) New global journal on ecumenical formation in theological education
For some 30 years Ministerial Formation has played a unique and absolutely indispensable role for providing an international platform for theological educators to share new approaches in terms of contextualization and globalization in theological education. As the WCC sees itself no longer able to continue this publication on its own due to shrinking finances and reduced staff positions, alternative scenarios are being developed to explore some creative alternative while not giving up the important history and common platform for dialogue. As WOCATI did not have its own journal or newsletter and remained a rather fragile organization, so far it is being explored whether a joint journal between the regional associations of theological
schools, WOCATI and ETE can be developed to continue the tradition of Ministerial Formation in a new format. If each year two Associations of Theological Schools would feel responsible for producing their own thematic issue of a small Journal, the sense of ownership of a Journal of Ecumenical Theological Education would increase and a new style of shared responsibility between a central ecumenical organization like WCC and networks in the region could evolve. It remains to be seen whether this approach could safeguard the global platform for the ongoing debate on ecumenical theological education which is as urgently needed as ever before.

Ecumenical Theological Education remains crucial for the future of the mission of the church — this was our starting point. The humble service a small program like ETE in WCC can contribute to the global scenery of theological education institutions might seem almost invisible and insignificant. But enthusiastic responses and a constant flow of many daily demands faced in ETE office weekly still teach a lesson of its continued relevance. But it is not only its professional effectiveness or institutional strength which guarantees the ‘viability in theological education’ in its broadest sense. Viability in theological education (this having been a favourite term of John Pobee) in its deepest sense, as its capacity to sustain and to nurture life of faith, of the church, of humankind and of God’s creation is always dependent on more. It depends on God’s grace and on the working of his Spirit.

In this perspective it holds true that in theological formation, as in any work of WCC, excellence in academic or organizational professionalism will not do it alone; it is the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit which validate and qualify a proper theologian, an institution of theological education or the work of a WCC programme. Because remarkably enough, when Jesus was entering the temple during the Jewish feast of the Tabernacles, according to the Gospel of St. John, the experts of the scriptures and the pious crowds listening to him were amazed and surprised and asked: ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ (John 7:15).
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A Battle Lost or Won?
The 1970-1975 Utrecht Ecumenical Experiment in Academic Theology

Jan G. Platvoet

This contribution reports on a remarkable event in Dutch academic theology: the attempt, between 1970 and 1975, to develop an institutional setting at Utrecht University in which both the future ministers of four Protestant churches might receive their theological training as well as the future priests and pastoral workers of the Roman Catholic (RC) church. I have selected this experiment, because a battle was fought over it in 1974/75, in the very year in which I first met John during the 13th IAHR congress on The Nature and Destiny of Man at Lancaster University, UK, from August 15 to 22, 1975.

The existential conditions of Europe and Europeans offer room for deep theological reflection.¹

This contribution in honour of John Pobee reports on a remarkable event in Dutch academic theology: the attempt, between 1970 and 1975, to develop an institutional setting at Utrecht University in which both the future ministers of four Protestant churches might receive their theological training as well as the future priests and pastoral workers of the Roman Catholic (RC) church. I have selected this experiment, because a battle was fought over it in 1974/75, in the very year in which I first met John (as well as Elizabeth Amoah) during the 13th IAHR congress on The Nature and Destiny of Man at Lancaster University, UK, from August 15 to 22, 1975.

² The International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) was founded at Amsterdam in 1950 by scholars of religions from the Netherlands, Italy, France, Sweden and Israel as an umbrella for their then emerging national associations. Even though the large and much older, Japanese Society for the Study of Religions was admitted as early as 1955, IAHR has become a truly global association only since 1980, when e.g. the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) and the Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA) were also admitted. IAHR currently has 42 affiliates (cf. http://
That congress has a special place in the history of the study of the religions of Africa, for it was at Lancaster that, for the very first time in IAHR history, scholarship in the religions of Africa featured prominently at an IAHR international gathering, as Geoffrey Parrinder proudly remarked in his Opening Address as Honorary President of the British Association for the Study of Religions. Thirty-two scholars of the religions of Africa attended: seventeen from Africa, twelve of whom read a paper, and fifteen from Europe and North America, of whom also twelve read a paper. In addition, for the very first time in the history of IAHR congresses, a section was devoted to the study of the indigenous religions of Africa. In that section, moderated by Andrew Walls, thirteen papers were read: seven by scholars posted in Africa: three in Nigeria, one in Uganda, and four in South Africa, and six by scho-
lars posted in universities outside Africa. Eleven more papers on the religions of Africa were read in other sections. John read his paper, ‘Towards a Christology in an African Theology’, in section IV on Christianity, as did four others. In section VII on Islam, also four papers on Islam in Africa were read, and two were presented in section XI on Comparative Studies & Phenomenology.

However memorable these papers were, it was on Wednesday 20 August, excursion day, that the foundation of a lasting friendship was laid when the three of us – John, Elizabeth and I – sat together on the long coach ride to and from Edinburgh and walked through the city centre and up to the castle to enjoy the view of the town from Castle Rock, meanwhile discussing the study of religions, most likely Akan indigenous religion, but also the developments in academic theology at Utrecht University in 1974/75 reversing some of the ebullient ecumenicity in theology at Utrecht of the previous decade.

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11 It was published as chapter v in John S. Pobee, Towards an African Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), pp. 81-98.


I have selected the 1970-1975 merger of Protestant and RC theological traditions at Utrecht also because it is most appropriate to report on this unique ecumenical experiment in the history of Dutch academic theology in this Festschrift in honour of John. For John has been involved in the ecumenical movement throughout his life, and specifically in relation to theological education and the RC church. He was a member of an Anglican-RC International Commission. As Head of the Department for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana, he negotiated an agreement by which students of RC seminaries in Ghana could take the degrees of the University. He was Associate Director of the WCC Programme on Theological Education from the mid-1980s to his retirement in 2002. And when he finally did marry, in 1994, it was to Martha Ama Akyaa Nkrumah, his RC spouse.\footnote{Cf. John Samuel Pobee, *Celebrating the Jubilee of the World Council of Churches: A Christian Council of Ghana Contribution to the World Council of Churches’ 8th Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe* (Accra: Asenpa Publishers, 1998), pp. vi, X, 131-160.}

This report is written from the curious double perspective of being at home in theology without engaging in it. By 1970 I had been schooled for over a decade in RC theology, had graduated in missiology, but was posted in a ‘public’ (actually Protestant) faculty of theology as a junior lecturer in the empirical study of religions. I approach theology therefore from the outside, as an object of study, rather than from the inside, as my subject, as do theologians. John, to be sure, has remained a theologian pur sang throughout his distinguished career, academic and ecclesiastical. Even so, he too is thoroughly attuned to the double perspective from which I report, for critical scholarship has been endemic in most theology as *fides quaerens intellectum*, as I will argue below. It was certainly at home in the theology in which John was trained, first, in the Department of Divinity of the University College of Ghana between 1957 and 1961,\footnote{Renamed Department for the Study of Religions in 1962 after the University College had been granted full university status in 1961 (cf. John Samuel Pobee, ‘Christian Goncalves Baêta: A Personal Appreciation’, in John Samuel Pobee (ed.), *Religion in a Pluralistic Society: Essays Presented to Professor C.G. Baêta in Celebration of his Retirement from the Service of the University of Ghana, September 1971*, by Friends and Colleagues Scattered over the Globe [Leiden: Brill, 1976, 1-4], p. 3; cf. also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Ghana).} and then in New Testament Studies in the
Faculty of Divinity of Cambridge University till 1966. And he has practised this insight seeking theology ever since.

My article has six parts and a conclusion. I first describe the fusion of the numerous Dutch RC major seminaries into four institutions of RC academic theology between 1965 and 1970. In the second part, I present the history of the ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’, as the attempt at demolishing denominational separation between Protestant and RC academic theology at Utrecht between 1970 and 1975 was called. And in part three, how it was reversed in part in 1975. The battle about its reversal caused a great deal of stir in the form of proposals and counter-proposals in the Utrecht Faculty of Theology in the academic year 1974/75. It also generated six position papers on the ‘throbbing heart of theology’. I summarise five of them in part four, and in part five present an English version of my own position paper. One of its purposes was to uncover the contribution academic theology was making to the secularisa-

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tion of Dutch society. In the final part, I present a few glimpses of how Dutch academic theology has fared since 1975 in the ever more rapidly secularising Dutch society. In my conclusion, I confront John Pobee’s spirited defense of theology with the data uncovered in this article.

1965-1970: from seminary to academy
One sign that ‘de-pillarisation’ and secularisation were gathering speed in Dutch society in the 1960s was the massive drop in vocations to the priesthood in the Dutch RC church in the early 1960s. The number of seminarians

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19 I understand by ‘secularisation’ the complex set of social processes by which religion, defined as reference to a postulated meta-empirical (and/or infra-empirical) realm, is increasingly weakened as a privileged (‘established’) institution in the modern societies of West Europe and is disappearing fast from the minds and hearts of many of its members as a reality which they formerly sensed as ‘ever-present and ever-relevant’ (D.H.-W. Gensichen, ‘World Community and World Religions’, in Pobee, Religion in a Pluralistic Society, [27-37], p. 29. Cf. also the sociological definitions of secularisation of Dobbelnaere and Dekker. Dobbelnaere defines it as the process by which reference to the supernatural vanishes; and Dekker as the decline of engagement with another reality [than the empirical world] which believers perceive as the decisive realm (in J. Peters, A. Felling & P. Scheepers, ‘Individualiseriing van godsdienst en levensbeschouwing in de jaren tachtig en negentig’, in Andre Kobbem e.a. (red.), Homo prudens: Religie, cultuur en wetenschap in de moderne samenleving (Leiden: DAMON), [182-199], p. 183.


taught in its thirty-two major seminaries,\textsuperscript{22} with a teaching staff of 383 professors, had dropped to 1929 in 1963, and to 1550 in the academic year 1964/65,\textsuperscript{23} i.e., on average, one member of staff for fewer than five seminars. A speedy reduction of the number of seminaries was therefore in order. Between 1964 and 1967 they were clustered, with the approval of the Dutch RC bishops, into four\textsuperscript{24} theologische hogeschoolen,\textsuperscript{25} or KIWTOS: the Katio-

\textsuperscript{22} In 46 locations, because 14 seminaries had a philosophicum (a separate institute for teaching the two years of philosophy) as well as a theologicum (a separate institute for teaching the four year theology course) (cf. Smits, 'De reorganisatie van het aantal groote seminaries', pp. 5-6, 8-9; cf. also Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland 1964-1974, pp. 28-29; A.J.M. van Paassen, 'Priesteropleiding en theologische studie', in Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, [53-60], p. 53. By 1950, 31 religious orders and congregations and 7 dioceses ran minor and major seminaries in The Netherlands. That exceptionally great number of seminaries was mainly due to the fact that many French and a few German societies of priests, regular, missionary and other, had established seminaries in the southern parts of The Netherlands after 1880, when the French government had closed down their seminaries in France as part of its policy of laicisation of French education (cf. e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Third_Republic), as Bismarck had done in Germany during his Kulturkampf against the German RC church between 1873 and 1879 (cf. http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulturkampf).

\textsuperscript{23} Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{24} Actually seven at first, but the three at Cuijk/Venray, Nijmegen-Albertinium, and Eindhoven soon collapsed because its participants opted to join one of the four other concentrations (cf. Lodewijk Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap: Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Theologische Universiteit Amsterdam en de Katholieke Theologische Universiteit Utrecht (Utrecht: KTU, 1992), pp. 16-25, 126-127; Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{25} At the time, hogeschool designated a one-faculty institute of academic learning, e.g. in agriculture at Wageningen, in engineering at Delft, in economics at Tilburg and Rotterdam (cf. also G.Ø. Jensma & H. de Vries, Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940. Hilversum: Verloren, 1997, pp. 13-14), or in theology. The Gereformeerde Kerken-wrijgemaakt (GKv) had changed the title of their Theologische School ('seminary') at Kampen, to Theologische Hogeschool in 1936 (cf.,http://www.tukampen.nl/cgiperl/site/uitvoer.pl?var=pagina&menu=algemeenmenu&pagina=info_geschiedenis), as had the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) in 1939 for its Theologische School, also at Kampen (cf. http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologische_Universiteit_Kampen_%28Oudestraat%29); and the Christelijk-Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) in 1962 for their Theologische School at Apeldoorn (cf. J. van Genderen & W. van 't Spijker (eds.), Luisteren en leren: Jubileumboek van de Theologische Universiteit
lieke Theologische Hogeschool Amsterdam (KTHA); the Katholieke Theologische Hogeschool Utrecht (KTHU); the Stichting Theologische Faculteit (STF) at Tilburg; and the Hogeschool voor Theologie en Pastoraat (HTP) at Heerlen. In 1973, the Dutch government granted them the right to apply for aanwijzing, i.e. for the right to confer degrees and to request government funding. Which right and funding KTHA, STF and HTP received on 9 September 1974, and the KTHU on 23 January 1976.

They attained thereby an academic status equal in Dutch civil law to that of the *duplex ordo faculties of theology* of the three rijksuniversiteiten (pu-

van de Christelijk-Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Amsterdam: Buyten & Schipperheyn, 1994), pp. 48-49. All hogescholen became (one-faculty) universities under a new law on tertiary education in 1987.

Katholieke Instellingen voor Wetenschappelijk Theologisch Onderwijs, ‘Roman Catholic Institutes for Academic Theology’.


The text of the royal decree was published in Staatsblad 1974: 539; cf. also Koc-voets, Katholieke wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland 1964-1974, pp. 16-17. The right to confer degrees was granted in 1975 also to the GKN-, GKV-, and CGK-theologische hogescholen. Of these, only the GKN-theologische hogeschool applied for, and received, full state subvention. The CGK-theologische hogeschool applied for, and was granted, a 49% subvention. The GKV-theologische hogeschool did not apply for funding by the state in 1975.


In these *duplex ordo* faculties of theology, the professors of dogmatic and pastoral theology were appointed by the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK) or other church: Baptist, Lutheran, or Armenian, but they were remunerated by the Dutch state (David J. Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk: Beroepsontwikkeling van hervormde predikanten in negentiende-eeuws Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1999), pp. 152, 346, and by law placed in an annexe, termed kerkelijke vakgroep, that was not part of these faculties. They did, however, have certain rights in these faculties by law, such as that of advice, and the *ius examinandi*, taking part in examinations, and the *ius promovendi*, the right to confer doctorates (Carola J.L. Kloos, ‘Bolwerk der vrijheid; De theologische faculteit als strijdtoncel’, in P.A.H. de Boer & P.J. van Koningsveld (eds.), *Honderd jaar ‘Uit Egypte’: Leidse opstellen over de scheiding tussen kerk en staat aan de openbare theologische faculteit* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), [12-26], pp. 12-13; P.J.) van Koningsveld, ‘Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap: de maat is “vol”’, in de Boer & van Koningsveld, *Honderd jaar ‘Uit Egypte’*, [31-37], pp. 31, 36; Jensma & de Vries, *Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940, 268, 271* – though Kloos (‘Bolwerk der vrijheid’, 19-22) and van Koningsveld (‘Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap’, 36) deny that they had the *ius examinandi et promovendi*. Church-appointed professors stressed these rights by speaking of the *duplex ordo unius facultatis*, ‘the double order of the one faculty
of theology] (cf. Luco J. van den Brom, ‘Freedom of Theology and the Bounds of the Church’, in Martien Brinkman e.a. (eds.), Theology between Church, University and Society (Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003 [= Studies in Theology and Religion, 6]), 36-46, 42 n.4). Which is remarkable because several church-appointed professors regarded the *duplex ordo* faculties as faculties of the secular study of religions rather than as faculties of theology (cf. G.E. Meuleman, De Godgeleerdheid volgens de Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs van 1876 (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1982), pp. 4-6; van Koningsveld, ‘Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap’, 32-35. The members of staff of the faculty ‘proper’, appointed by the university to teach OT, NT, History of Christianity, History of Religions, Philosophy and Ethics, and recently also Social Sciences, were free, however, to pursue their research and teaching not only ‘in and for themselves’ without regard to the doctrines of their church (P.A.H. de Boer, ‘Voorwoord’, in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar ‘Uit Egypte’, vii; P.A.H. de Boer, ‘Honderd jaar “Uit Egypte...”’, in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar ‘Uit Egypte’, 1-11, pp. 2, 3, 4, 10, 11; Noortje Evertsen, ‘Een vraagteken achter de studie in de godgeleerdheid’, in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar ‘Uit Egypte’, 27-30], p. 29; van Koningsveld, ‘Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap’, p. 35, but also as they saw fit (cf. Jensma & de Vries, Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940, 269), i.e. in neutral as well as in religiously inspired ways. E.g., Prof. Hulst admitted in an interview that his OT exegesis was tied to his confessional theology: he regarded the Bible as the ‘Holy Scripture’ that must be proclaimed in the church (Arie van Houwelingen, ‘Interview: A.R. Hulst, hoogleraar in het O.T.’, in Areopagus 8, 6 (November 1975), 4-8], pp. 4-5, 7. Hulst, therefore, admired Terzake (cf. below note 79 [= 104]). The close interaction between secular and confessional scholarship in *duplex ordo* faculties of theology is also apparent from the many instances of professors appointed by a church (NHK, Baptist, Lutheran, Arminian, etc.) being subsequently or simultaneously appointed to a chair in the faculty (cf. Jensma & de Vries, Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940, pp. 273, 274, 276, 280, 283, 290, 291, 293, 295, 296, 304, 305, 306, 314, 318, 323, 328; Kloos, ‘Bolwerk der vrijheid’, pp. 5-26; Bos, *in dienst van het Koninkrijk*, p. 99); and *vice versa* of faculty staff being appointed by their church to teach also confessional subjects, as well as from the fact that virtually all faculty staff had been a minister in their church (Bos, *in dienst van het Koninkrijk*, p. 305). This academic freedom and the intimate interaction between *duplex ordo* faculties and churches or modalities gave rise, apart from a lopsided attention to Christianity (Eversten, ‘Een vraagteken achter de studie in de godgeleerdheid’, pp. 27-28), to many shades of secular and theological scholarship in Dutch *duplex ordo* faculties of theology, blurring the disciplinary boundaries between (religiously inspired) Protestant theologies (mostly of the modality of the NHK-church or other church with which a particular *duplex ordo* faculty of theology was traditionally allied) and secular scholarship of Christianity and other religions. Which blurring had already been anticipated in 1875, when the law on Higher Education instituting the *duplex ordo* was being discussed in Parliament (cf. Meuleman, De
blic universities) at Leiden, Groningen and Utrecht and of the municipal University of Amsterdam; and also equal to that of the *simplex ordo* faculties of the theology\(^{31}\) of the two pillar-bound universities: the Free University of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN) at Amsterdam,\(^{32}\) and the RC


\(^{31}\) In Dutch *duode ordo* faculties of theology, staff appointments had to be approved by the ecclesiastical authorities and all theological disciplines were usually of a confessional nature, be it in varying degrees. That was explicitly so for the core disciplines of systematic (dogmatic) and pastoral (practical) theology, which held pride of place in *duode ordo* institutes. Teaching might be subjected to scrutiny by the church authorities.

\(^{32}\) The relationship of the Faculty of Theology of the Free University was more remote to the GKN-church than that of the Faculty of Theology of the RC University at Nijmegen to the RC Church. The Free University was founded in 1880 by the *Vereeniging voor Hoger Onderwijs op Gereformeerde Grondslag* (Association for Higher Education based on the Christian Reformed Faith) in order that it, and in particular its faculty of theology, might pursue academic studies, and in particular its militant theology, on the basis of the 'Reformed' – orthodox Calvinist – confession 'without interference from state and church'. That is 'free' from the Dutch state, which it said had 'debased' the faculties of theology of the 'pub-
[of theology]' (cf. Luc J. van den Brom, 'Freedom of Theology and the Bounds of the Church', in Marten Brinkman e.a. (eds.), Theology between Church, University and Society (Assem: Royal van Gorcum, 2003 [= Studies in Theology and Religion, 6]), [36-46], 42n4). Which is remarkable because several church-appointed professors regarded the duplex ordo faculties as faculties of the secular study of religions rather than as faculties of theology (cf. G.E. Meuleman, De Godgeleerdheid volgens de Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs van 1876 (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1982), pp. 4-6; van Koningsveld, 'Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap', pp. 32-35. The members of staff of the faculty 'proper', appointed by the university to teach OT, NT, History of Christianity, History of Religions, Philosophy and Ethics, and recently also Social Sciences, were free, however, to pursue their research and teaching not only 'in and for themselves' without regard to the doctrines of their church (P.A.H. de Boer, 'Voorwoord', in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar 'Uit Egypte', vii; P.A.H. de Boer, 'Honderd jaar "Uit Egypte..."', in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar 'Uit Egypte', 1-11, pp. 2, 3, 4, 10, 11; Noortje Evertsen, 'Een vraagteken achter de studie in de godgeleerdheid', in de Boer & van Koningsveld, Honderd jaar 'Uit Egypte', 27-30, p. 29; van Koningsveld, 'Dogmatiek en godsdienstwetenschap', p. 35, but also as they saw fit (cf. Jensa & de Vries, Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940, 269), i.e. in neutral as well as in religiously inspired ways. E.g., Prof. Hulst admitted in an interview that his OT exegesis was tied to his confessional theology: he regarded the Bible as the 'Holy Scripture' that must be proclaimed in the church (Arie van Houweiningen, 'Interview: A.R. Hulst, hoogleraar in het O.T.', in Areopagus 8, 6 (November 1975), 4-8, p. 4-5, 7. Hulst, therefore, admired Terzake (cf. below note 79 [= 104]).

The close interaction between secular and confessional schoolarship in duplex ordo faculties of theology is also apparent from the many instances of professors appointed by a church (NHK, Baptist, Lutheran, Arminian, etc.) being subsequently or simultaneously appointed to a chair in the faculty (cf. Jensa & de Vries, Veranderingen in het hoger onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1815 en 1940, pp. 273, 274, 276, 280, 283, 290, 291, 293, 295, 296, 304, 305, 306, 314, 318, 323, 328; Kloos, 'Bolwerk der vrijheid', pp. 5-26; Bos, In dienst van het Koninkrijk, p. 99); and vice versa of faculty staff being appointed by their church to teach also confessional subjects, as well as from the fact that virtually all faculty staff had been a minister in their church (Bos, In dienst van het Koninkrijk, p. 305). This academic freedom and the intimate interaction between duplex ordo faculties and churches or modalities gave rise, apart from a lopsided attention to Christianity (Evertsen, 'Een vraagteken achter de studie in de godgeleerdheid', pp. 27-28), to many shades of secular and theological scholarship in Dutch duplex ordo faculties of theology, blurring the disciplinary boundaries between (religiously inspired) Protestant theologies (mostly of the modality of the NHK-church or other church with which a particular duplex ordo faculty of theology was traditionally allied) and secular scholarship of Christianity and other religions. Which blurring had already been anticipated in 1875, when the law on Higher Education instituting the duplex ordo was being discussed in Parliament (cf. Meuleman, De
also, and to the gradually growing number of middle-aged or elderly students, male and female, who registered because of a personal interest in theology, studied at a leisurely pace, and often part-time, or took part of the courses only, and often did not intend to put it to use for pastoral work in the RC church. At the same time, six of the seven Dutch RC dioceses began to appoint lay pastoral workers after 1968 to supplement the rapidly dwindling number of priests. That professional option caused most of the (quickly declining number of) young male students of RC theology to opt for a career in the RC church as lay pastoral workers rather than as ordained priests, or

environment. The Vatican Office for RC Education expressed misgivings about the poor environment the KIWTOS offered for seminaral formation to candidates for the priesthood as early as 1969 (Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, p.105).

37 Their number rose from 12 in 1965/66 to 36 in 1971/72 at the Faculty of Theology of the RC University at Nijmegen; and from 5 in 1968/1969 to 43 at the KTHU in 1974/75. The KTHA had 44 female students in 1972/73 (cf. Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 30-32).


40 The number of RC priests had dropped to 2,750 in 1984, to 1,556 in 1996, and to 1,060 in 2000. By 2010, their number is expected to be as low as 675 (cf. http://www.ecclesiadei.nl/erstat/evaluations.html, graph 16; Bernts & Spruit, 'Priesters onder pressie', pp. 10-13).

41 By 1970/71, the total number of students at the four KIWTOS had already dropped to 725. 542 of them were looking forward to serve in a diocese either as ordained priest or as lay pastoral worker (Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, 64). But most of them were reluctant to opt for celibacy and priesthood early on their studies (Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 82, 84). On the problems of the spiritual formation of future priests in the context of the KIWTOS, cf. Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 78-92, 109; Gerard Zuidberg, ‘Indrukken van een pastor van theologiestudenten’, in Areopagus 8, 1+2 (April 1975), pp. 47-55.

42 The number of lay pastoral workers, male and female, stood at 60 in 1974 (Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, 108), at 302 in 1980, at 485 in 1989 (Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, 89), and at 727 in 1996. By 2010, 201 (permanent) deacons, most of them elderly and married and over half of them unsalaried, had also been ordained and were serving on pastoral teams together with priests and lay pastoral workers, each of which ministered a cluster of parishes (cf. http://www.katholieknieuwsblad.nl/actueel/kn1651a.htm).
for one in ‘religious education’ (RE) in RC secondary schools, or social
work, or the media, or some other lay profession, e.g. that of specialising as a
lay theologian in one of the disciplines of (RC) theology for a research and
teaching career in these new institutions of academic theology.\footnote{44}

\textit{1970-1975: the Utrecht Gentleman’s Agreement}

The KIWTOs were eager to explore options for close collaboration with a
faculty of theology as a means of upgrading their academic standards. The
earliest attempt by a few seminaries to link up with the RC Faculty of Theol-

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The number of priests below retirement age available for service in 1,425 parishes
had dropped to 741 in 2006 (KASKI, Report 561\cite[1]{1} \url{http://www.ru.nl/kaski/publicaties/2007/}).

The liberal theology being taught to them caused the ultra-orthodox bishop, Jo-

\cite{2}hannes Gijsen, appointed to the see of Roermond in 1972, to withdraw the
approval his predecessor had granted to HTP and to establish, with the support of Vati-
can authorities, his own major seminary at Rolduc in 1973 in order to regain his
sole right to determine the theology in which candidates for the priesthood in his
(and other) diocese(s) were to be trained to the exclusion of the other Dutch
bishops, the superiors of the religious orders participating in HTP and other
KIWTOs, their boards, their staffs, the students themselves and RC laity. Even
though HTP was the KIWTO that emphasised training for pastoral work in its title
and program, he it for ordained priest as well as for lay persons, male and female
(cf. Koevoets, \textit{Katholieke wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland},
1964-1974, pp. 22, 49, 50, 60-62). HTP students were disqualified by Gijsen for
pastoral work in the diocese of Roermond on the ground that HTP failed to satisfy
directives of the Vatican office for their education (cf. Koevoets, \textit{Katholieke weten-
125-130). Some 170 (highly traditionalist) priests have been educated at the Rol-
duc seminary since it was established in 1974 (\url{http://www.rolduc.nl/Priester
worden/seminarie_info_4.htm}). The seminary has maintained a strict isolation
from the KIWTOs and the liberal academic theology developed in them till now.
Pastoral workers were appointed in the diocese of Roermond only from 2005 on-

\cite{44}

The KIWTOs, therefore, soon began to de-clericalise, at first by some of the
members of staff opting out celibacy (see below note 58), and then, after a decade
or so, by lay theologians, males at first and females later, being appointed to re-
search and teaching posts in the KIWTOs. Cf. A. van Schaik \textit{e.a.}, ‘Nota over de
relatie van de theologie-opleiding tot de beroepsmogelijkheden voor theologisch
gevormden’ [1971], in Koevoets, \textit{Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onder-
59-65, 91, 101; W. Sleddens \textit{e.a.}, ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, in \textit{Ape-
\end{quote}
ogy at Nijmegen from 1964 to 1966 was unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{45} HTP at Heerlen, however, concluded agreements with the Nijmegen faculty in 1967 and 1970 by which HTP-students obtained degrees in theology with civil effect.\textsuperscript{46} The KTHA approached the the University of Amsterdam and its (Protestant) Faculty of Theology in 1968 with a plan for a twin faculty, but was cold-shouldered.\textsuperscript{47} The very name of SFT\textsuperscript{48} expressed its aspiration to function as Faculty of Theology in the (RC) Economische Hogeschool at Tilburg. But it was admitted into its successor, Tilburg University, only in 2006, with a much reduced status.\textsuperscript{49}

Only Utrecht University warmly welcomed discussions with the KTHU about a close collaboration. It proposed to explore whether the KTHU, though a simplex ordo institution, might for the greater part\textsuperscript{50} be ‘integrated’ into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology after the duplex ordo model. As a preliminary step, the KTHU moved into Transitorium 2, a high-rise building on de Uithof, the new out-of-town campus of Utrecht University, on 1st September 1969. It was allocated floors adjacent to those of the Faculty of Theology. A Gentleman’s Agreement was concluded in May 1970 by which KTHU-students became students of the Faculty of Theology on 1st September 1970, and the staff members of the KTHU in Biblical Studies (OT and NT), History of Christianity, godsdienstwetenschap (History of Religions, Sociology of Religion, Psychology of Religion), and in Philosophy & Ethics were appointed to the parallel vakgroepen (departments) of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology for a trial period of five years.\textsuperscript{51} The KTHU systematic and pastoral theologians were grouped into an annexe to the faculty as the RC Vakgroep Kerkelelijke Vakken (department of church-tied disciplines) after the model of the duplex ordo.

\textsuperscript{46} Cf. Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, 60. HTP obtained the right to confer degrees itself in 1974.
\textsuperscript{47} Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, pp. 22, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{48} Stichting Theologische Faculteit, ‘Foundation Faculty of Theology’.
\textsuperscript{49} To Department of Religious Studies & Theology in the Faculty of Humanities of Tilburg University (http://www.uvt.nl/faculteiten/lgw/drt/).
\textsuperscript{50} The different structures of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology, duplex ordo, and of the KTHU, simplex ordo, precluded a complete integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology (cf. R. van den Broek, ‘Integreer: wenselijk en mogelijk? Enkele overwegingen en suggesties’, in Areopagus 7, 7 (december 1974), [23-30], 26; Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, pp. 36-37).
\textsuperscript{51} For the text of the agreement, cf. Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 105-106; Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, pp. 3-4.
It constituted the fifth such annexe to the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. The other four were first of all, by the law of 1876, the Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken NHK of the staff members for Systematic and Pastoral Theology and other confessional subjects, appointed by the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK) for grooming its future ministers. And secondly three seminaries of churches that had likewise decided in 1970 to have their future ministers trained in theology at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology, the Oud-Katholieke Kerk, the Federation of Free Evangelical Congregations in The Netherlands, and the Union of Baptist Congregations in The Netherlands.

This partial 'integration' of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology proved an exciting and rewarding experiment for both students and staff of the faculty and the KTHU in the next five years. This was especially so in respect of research and teaching in the departments of Philosophy & Ethics, godsdienstwetenschap, and New Testament Studies, in which the staffs were fully merged and all students took courses and exams from irrespective any members of their staffs, whether RC or Protestant. The fusion was a bit less complete in the departments of History of Christianity and Old Testament.

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52 As required by the law on secondary and tertiary education promulgated in 1876 that imposed the duplex ordo (cf. above note 30) on the Faculties of Theology of the public universities at Leiden, Groningen and Utrecht. The (Municipal) University of Amsterdam applied that model also to its Faculty of Theology.

53 Cf. J. de Graaf e.a., 'Rapport van de Commissie voor Integratie', in Areopagus 7, 7 (December 1974), [36-42], 38.

54 The Oud-Katholieke Kerk originated from an episcopal secession from the Dutch RC church in 1723. In 1997 it had some 10,000 members, two dioceses, 30 parishes, 24 priests and 5 deacons. It introduced Dutch as liturgical language in 1909, and abolished celibacy in 1922 (Hoekstra & Lepenborg, Wegwijs in religieus en levensbeschouwelijk Nederland, pp. 440-444).

55 An association, since 1881, of 45 congregations with some 6,800 members in 1997 and 28 ministers (Hoekstra & Lepenborg, Wegwijs in religieus en levensbeschouwelijk Nederland, pp. 580-581).

56 A federation, since 1881, of 90 autonomous Baptist congregations with some 30,000 members and some 60 ministers in 1997 (E.G. Hoekstra & M.H. Lepenborg, Wegwijs in religieus en levensbeschouwelijk Nederland: Handboek religies, kerken, stromingen en organisaties. Kampen: Kok, 2000, 554).


58 Van den Broek, a lecturer in that department, however, praised the collaboration in research and teaching between Protestant and RC staff members in his department as 'very stimulating' and a 'great enrichment' for both. He strongly advised
Studies, and quite weak, if not close to nil, between the Vakgroepen Kerkelijke Vakken NHK, RC, and the three ‘seminaries’, which remained separate islands due to their ties with, and focus on, their particular churches. But the latter four were quite happy that their students were trained in the Utrecht faculty with its highly diverse student population and staff, which greatly reduced misunderstandings, biases and mistrust between them.  

1974/75: the battle
There were also frictions, however. RC students were not happy with the faculty’s virtually exclusive preoccupation with the philological-historical approach to its various objects of study and its neglect of the social sciences. They also resented having to master Hebrew thoroughly in addition to Latin and Greek. The Protestant view of a minister as primarily an (academically trained) preacher (verbini divini minister, predikant) and teacher (leraar) also did not sit well with the broader RC emphases on the liturgical, sacramental and especially the pastoral functions of a priest. Another tension was that between the preponderantly orthodox atmosphere of the Utrecht faculty which traditionally drew quite a large number of its students from the Gereformeerde Bond (GB), the right-wing modality of the NHK-church with an outspoken anti-papist tradition, and the liberal theological mindset of the RC students and staff inspired by la théologie nouvelle of e.g. de Lubac, Daniélou, Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Vaticanum II, and more recently by ‘Marxist’ social criticism and liberation theology. Thereby they disproved and overthrew not only the views about the RC church as superstitious popery that were dear to orthodox Protestants, but also, by their reputedly ‘Marxist’

against discontinuing the collaboration between the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and the KTHU that the Gentleman’s Agreement had made possible. The alternative, the Utrecht faculty and the KTHU collaborating as independent academic institutions would in his view be quite ‘a step backwards’ from the one that the Gentleman’s Agreement had made possible through the (partial) ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology (van den Broek, ‘Integratie: wenselijk en mogelijk?’, pp. 24-26).


It had 180 students in the Utrecht faculty in 1974/1975. They constituted, however, only ‘a sizeable minority’, the Utrecht faculty having over 500 students at that time. Cf. Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, p. 33.

Cf. de Graaf e.a., ‘Rapport van de Commissie voor Integratie’, p. 104.
social criticism, provided GB-students with new ammunition for battling what they perceived as an imminent RC take-over of the Utrecht faculty.\textsuperscript{63}

The academic year 1974-1975 was an exciting one, full of tensions between the two camps: the majority\textsuperscript{64} that strongly favoured the ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology be made permanent, and the GB-opposition to that integration and to the introduction of the social sciences into the Utrecht teaching programme in theology for fear the Utrecht faculty would shift from its traditional focus on the exegesis of the Bible in its original languages, Hebrew and koine Greek, towards a theology infused by the social sciences teaching students to be critical of the unjust structures of modern human societies.\textsuperscript{65} GB-opposition was voiced in particular by H. Jonker, professor of pastoral theology in the NHK Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken, who had a seat in the Faculty Council as an adviser by law.\textsuperscript{66} His fears that the integration of the KTHU into the faculty and the introduction of the social sciences would fundamentally alter its character found a ready ear with two faculty members who held crucial positions in the Faculty Council in 1974-1975: the Dean, prof. A.R. Hulst, who chaired its sessions, and the

\textsuperscript{63} Cf. J. van de Graaf, ‘Zorgelijke ontwikkelingen aan de Utrechtse theologische faculteit’, in De Waarheidsvriend 12 september 1974 (quoted from Koevoets, Katholieke wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, 106-108; also in Areopagus 7, 6: pp. 29-31 bis), 106. J. van de Graaf was Secretary of the Gereformeerde Bond. As its spokesman he incited opposition to the partial merger of the KTHU with the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. Cf. also Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, 9, pp. 29-31.

\textsuperscript{64} The entire KTHU, staff and students, the greater part of the staff of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology ‘proper’ (cf. Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, pp. 5-6, 9-11, 17-18; van den Broek, ‘Integratie: wenselijk en mogelijk?’, pp. 24-26; de Graaf e.a., ‘Rapport van de Commissie voor Integratie’), and most of the students from the other NHK-modalities than GB and from the other churches (H. Kleyer, ‘De enquête “pasen 1972”’, in Areopagus 8, 1+2 (April 1975), [18-24], 23). The Chair of the Committee for the Integration reported in the meeting of the Faculty Council (Faculteitsraad) of 14.03.1974 that the survey it had conducted showed that ‘everyone was in favour’, but also pointed to quite a few ‘repressed reservations’ because the several sections of the faculty had been involved in the integration process in different degrees (Areopagus: blad van de theologische faculteit Utrecht 7, 4 (July 1974), bijlage verslagen, p. 70; de Graaf e.a., ‘Rapport van de Commissie voor Integratie’, 37).

\textsuperscript{65} Cf. Areopagus 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlage verslagen: pp. 30-38, 44-50; Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, pp. 9, 16, 32-33.

\textsuperscript{66} Cf. Areopagus 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlage verslagen, pp. 33-34, 38, 45, 46, 49; Sleddens e.a., ‘De gang van zaken rond de integratie’, 8; Winkler, Om kerk en wetenschap, 76n91.
Secretary of the Faculty Council, prof. J.W. Doeve. Jonker's views were supported, moreover, by the Board of the NHK-church.\textsuperscript{67} GB-opposition also found its case strengthened by external developments: the rise of discord among Dutch RC bishops after the appointment of two conservative RC bishops, Simonis to the see of Rotterdam in 1970, and Gijzen to that of Roermond in 1972; and rumours that Vatican authorities were increasingly alarmed at developments in Dutch RC theological institutions.\textsuperscript{68} GB pleaded therefore that the integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht faculty of theology be replaced by co-operation between them as separate academic institutions in order that their distinct identities be safeguarded and protected.\textsuperscript{69}

To forestall that staff and students were excluded from the policy discussions about the integration,\textsuperscript{70} TSU\textsuperscript{71} invited a eight members of staff and students in late 1974 to write brief position papers on the question whether the disciplinary and denominational diversity of theology as taught at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology was compatible with its students being trained for the ministry in their different churches. It wondered whether theology as taught

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. Areopagus 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlagen verslagen: pp. 30-38, 44-50; Sleddens e.a., 'De gang van zaken rond de integratie', pp. 7-8, 11, 16-17.

\textsuperscript{68} One development was the increasing number of married priests (20) on the staffs (150) of the KIWTOS despite Vatican vetoes in 1971 and 1972; and in particular the much publicised case of Prof. H. van Luijk whom the KTHA tried to keep on its staff after his marriage in addition to the four staff members that had already married. It was, however, forced to dismiss him by bishop Simonis who threatened that he would withdraw his approval of the KTHA if it retained van Luijk on its staff after his marriage (Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, pp. 97-102, esp. 98-100; Winkeler, On kerk en wetenschap, pp. 72-75). Another was the unfounded allegations by bishop Gijzen against unspecified HTP lecturers by which he gained Vatican approval for disowning HTP and for transferring the training of priests to his seminary at Rolduc (cf. above note 68). Vatican authorities, however, denied explicitly that they wished to see the KIWTOS terminated (Koevoets, Katholiek wetenschappelijk theologisch onderwijs in Nederland, 1964-1974, 108-109). On these developments, cf. also Van den Broek, 'Integratie: wenselijk en mogelijk?', pp. 27-28.

\textsuperscript{69} Cf. H.J.A. Wegman, 'Eerstel tot voortzetting van de integratie', in Areopagus 7, 6 (November 1974), [5-6], 5; Sleddens e.a., 'De gang van zaken rond de integratie', pp. 8, 9-10, 20.

\textsuperscript{70} Cf. Sleddens, 'De gang van zaken rond de integratie', pp. 16-17, 26.

\textsuperscript{71} Theologische Studievereniging Utrecht. TSU is the umbrella organisation of the disputen, debating societies of students of theology at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and of its entire multi-denominational student body. It publishes Areopagus, organises conferences on topics of interest for the entire student body as well as sports events, and other activities.
in the faculty did have a ‘point of integration’, a centre that served as its ‘throb
ing heart’. It requested that the contributors indicate whether, in their view, theo-
logy had such a ‘point of integration’; and if so, what it was, or where it might be found.
By framing the problem that way, TSU was actually using the discussions on the future of the Utrecht ecumenical experi-
ment in academic theology to ask the contributors to address once again the perennial problems of the encyclopedia of academic theology and the dup
lex ordo. Six contributions were published.

The six position papers
Two were by J.M. Hasselaar, Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the NHK Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken. He held that ‘obedience to revelation, i.e. to the word of God’, is the point of integration and ‘throb
ing heart’ of [Christian] theology. The crucial point, in his view, was, therefore, whether or not hu-
mans will allow God to address and command them. Unlike the other sciences, theology, he wrote, is not free to determine its object and method, for it has received them [from God]. Even so he held that theology is a real science, Forschung, ‘research’, because dogmatic as well as historical-critical
theology should always be ready to have their finds tested. And the duplex ordo was fine as long as research on one side [of the duplex ordo faculty] presupposes research on the other side [the church-tied disciplines]. True the-
ology, he wrote, mirrors the liberating truth revealed in the Lord."

The third paper was by Antoon Vos, junior lecturer in the Dept. of Philo-
osophy & Ethics. Deploring [Christian] theology’s ‘epidemic disintegration’, he located its point of integration in ‘God-in-Christ and God-with-us’. He contended that theologians had failed to achieve a critical renewal of theol-
yogy and a creative consensus about how to do theology because they were absorbed in historical-critical research and had not kept up with develop-
ments in philosophy and science. However, he regarded the link, and alli-
ance, between methodological and ideological atheism as the most pernicious recent development, for it had virtually eliminated the concept of God from

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73 Hasselaar, ‘Integratie en ambtstoeleiding’, p. 22; van Houwelingen, ‘Wat is theo-
logie?’, pp. 6-7.
the arsenal of scholarly notions and caused scholars to regard theism as falsified.\textsuperscript{76}

The fourth contribution was by Otto J. de Jong, professor of History of Christianity. He regarded [Christian] theology as thoughtful reflection on how one might assist one’s fellowmen in the practice of humaneness. His discipline’s purpose was to enable students to meet the great Christian thinkers of the past as their inspiring teachers. He viewed church history as world history shaped by the message of the Bible.\textsuperscript{77}

The fifth was by W.J. Veldhuis, junior lecturer in systematic theology in the RC Kerkelijke Vakgroep. He regarded [Christian] theology as \textit{fides quaerens intellectum}: faith founded on God’s revelation but with human critical rationality and scholarly reflection built into it. It is faith in search of intellectual perspicuity by a thorough reflection on the contents of the faith and their scholarly articulation. Theology must be part of modern communities of faith, because scientific thought is an integral part of modern humankind. The [Christian] faith is a multidisciplinary object of research and reflection in biblical studies, church history, etc., because it consists of numerous coherent insights and structures that need to be tested. Theology should not [merely] identify with past expressions of the faith in esoteric ways. Rather, it should be part of, and at the service of, modern men in a self-reflexive, critical manner. Veldhuis distinguished three ‘points of integration’ of theology. He located the first point in the faith of the modern Christian communities as inspired by the witness of Scripture and the tradition of the church and as focusing on God revealing Himself in human history. He set the second one at a deeper level: in God Himself, theology being the ‘science of God’; and in Scripture as testimony to God’s original revelation in human history. Veldhuis, therefore, also stressed that theology must be obedient to God’s revelation in history and Scripture. Systematic, or dogmatic, theology serves in his view as the third point of integration of multi-disciplinary theology.\textsuperscript{78}

\textit{My position paper}

Mine was the sixth contribution. It discussed the questions put to us from the external point of view of \textit{godsdienstwetenschap}, the empirical sciences of religion(s). I was, however, also very much concerned with the metaphor of the ‘throbbing heart’ of theology, introduced by Hasselaar in October 1974, for two reasons. One was Hasselaar’s contention that something above and be-

\textsuperscript{76} Antoon Vos, ‘Desintegratie van de theologische studie’, in \textit{Areopagus} 8, 1+2 (april 1975), [8-12], pp. 8-10.


\textsuperscript{78} W.J. Veldhuis, ‘Denkend geloven’, in \textit{Areopagus} 8, 1+2 (1975), pp. 22-25.
hind ‘a dialogue of methods, disciplines, dogmatic treatises and churches’, and scholarship in religions, to wit obedience to revelation, should be the emotionally charged centre that breathes life into the study of theology and unifies its disciplinary diversity. However correct that thesis was from the point of view of Christian dogmatic theology, it ignored in my view the real problems Utrecht students of theology were facing in their study, not merely in terms of how to integrate the disciplinary and denominational diversity of the Utrecht programme of study into a coherent whole by and for themselves, but also of squaring it with their personal faith,79 the shifts in it,80 their own denominational backgrounds, and their goal to be a minister, priest or pastoral worker in their own churches. The other reason was that the metaphor of the ‘throbbing heart’ was also used in the discussions then raging in the faculty as a strategic device by GB to disfavour the integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. It implied by it that theology should be governed by the confessions of particular churches rather than by academic learning in the ecumenical setting of a public faculty of theology; and that academic learning poses a threat to ‘theology proper’, as water does to fire. Though I was sympathetic to this antiintellectualist claim, I argued in my paper that the blame should not be laid with academic learning but with theology itself as fides quaerens intellectum.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES AND THEOLOGY:
WATER AND FIRE?

The editors of Areopagus request that I formulate a few thoughts about two sets of questions.81 First, what is theology? Does it have a point of integration,

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79 A case in point is the Theologisch Werkgezelschap Terzake (Theological Study Group For-the-Sake-Of [Holy Scripture]) founded on 16 May 1975 by a number of Utrecht students of theology in protest against the historical critical exegesis of the Bible they were taught in the Utrecht faculty which they could not reconcile with their view of Scripture as proclamation (cf. Areopagus 8, 4 (juni 1975), pp. 52-53).


81 Jan G. Platvoet, ‘Empirie en theologie: water en vuur?’, in Areopagus 8, 1+2 (April 1975), pp. 16-21. I have kept the English translation as close to the Dutch original as the idiosyncrasies of the two languages will allow. The few changes I made are indicated by square brackets. They are mostly precisions required by the methodology of the study of religions I have developed in the course of my career.
a throbbing heart? If it does, where might that be located, and how might it be found? Secondly, how do the several disciplines of a faculty of theology relate to that "theology", and in particular, how do the empirical sciences of religions relate to "theology"? Can they be integrated into "theology", or are they at loggerheads with it? Or, from the point of view of students of theology: do the empirical sciences of religions deepen, enrich and broaden the study of theology in harmonious ways, or are they an alien body that one must reject if one is intent on forestalling that one's own theology and faith disintegrate?

In respect of these two important complexes of problems I can present only a few strictly personal thoughts [first on "theology", and then on "theology and the empirical study of religions"], mostly of the [non-theological] kind an empirical scholar of religions would develop. They do not presume to formulate what the other members of the department of the Sciences of Religions\textsuperscript{12} [of this faculty] hold about them. And their aim is merely to shed a weak light on your and mine existential predicament to have to think in both empirical and theological ways. It is most likely that other scholars will be able to illuminate the field of problems much better than I do.

"Theology"

Theology is the systematic and reflective articulation\textsuperscript{13} of a religion, i.e. of the network of mutual relationships existing, according to the believers, between themselves and the being(s) which they believe to exist, because [they believe that] that or being(s) have revealed his-, her- or themselves to them. The [postulated] communication with that or those beings is expressed in all

\textsuperscript{12} In Dutch: godsdienstwetenschap[pen]; in German: Religionswissenschaft. This designation was used throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the continental universities of Europe. It is not adequately translated by Religious Studies after the model initiated by Parrinder at Ibadan University in 1948, because, especially in Anglophone Africa, Departments of Religious Studies are much closer to Christian theology than are Departments for Science(s) of Religion(s) in the universities of continental Europe, at least after 1960 when methodological agnosticism emerged as the major paradigm of the academic study of religions in continental Europe. The theological nature of Religious Studies in Anglo-Africa is apparent from e.g. the Welcome Address of Professor Akpenpoon Dzurghi of the Dept. of Religious Studies of Ibadan University. He refers to the department as, on the one hand, as 'a true community of scholars', and on the other speaks of the 'secular-divine nature of Religious Studies or Theological Studies' (my italics; at: http://www.uio. edu.ng/?q=node/194; cf. also Jan G. Platvoet, "GBT-NS, Ahwaab 'oo!", in AASR Bulletin 26 (November 2006), pp. 39-44).

\textsuperscript{13} I understand by 'articulation' the lucid presentation of connections in a complex system by which the coherence of that system is made transparent.
religions in rites and in certain other kinds of prescribed behaviour. The believers also tell at least a few stories about that being or those beings, and interpret events that occur [in their lives] as blessing from him, her or them, or as punishment. We notice that the beliefs about who is revealing himself, herself or themselves and what he, she or they desire were gradually developed into doctrine in a few religions in the past, when specialists had acquired the ability to formulate important parts of a religion in consistent ways; and that their teaching was handed down, orally or in written form, from one generation to the next when they had succeeded in formulating it succinctly. Among religions with well-developed doctrine one finds some that became the religion of one or several highly developed societies, [economically, politically and intellectually] with numerous specialisations, often of peculiar kinds, also in the formulation of doctrine and in reflection on it. These proto-theologians and theologians were found in particular, though not exclusively, among the priests of temples, especially in temple schools, in the communities of monks and mystics, and among those of the upper ten of a society who had a philosophical inclination.

Theology has the following marks. First, it is the attempt to link up closely with systematic reflective or 'scientific' thought in as far as that had been developed at a particular time and in a particular society. Secondly, it fosters the founding of schools: theologians train their disciples in their own manner of systematic reflection and in their own conceptual apparatus, and these develop them further and pass them on again to their pupils. Thirdly, it engages in polemics between schools and in schools about the correct formulation [of doctrine]. A theologian is never completely satisfied with the manner in which his abstract thought portrays the warm reality of the web of religious relations as lived by the believers. But he perceives even more sharply how imperfectly, or even clearly wrong, other theologians, or other schools of theologians, formulate the religion, his religion.

Fourthly, theology creates a huge distance between the more or less inarticulate religion of 'common' believers and the religion of theologians. Their systematic-reflective thought affects the way they believe. The important differences that emerge between their religiosity and that of common believers may, generally speaking, though perhaps a bit too sharply, be opposed as the fides maiorum to the fides minorum. But it is clear that the study of theology [at the university], especially its first phase, is a big transition that contains elements of a crisis and may cause deeply felt doubts, for it forces students to relinquish some of the certainties they had cherished till then. A sense of security is lost at a time when one is still far away from a new synthesis.
Fifthly and finally, a fundamental tension between theology as articulation of belief and theology as a science is revealed in the praxis of theology. For science has always a double goal: to make the reality in which we live intelligible by discovering the meaningful and significant relations in it which enable us to dwell in a world we understand, which is meaningful to us, not absurd, and which we can experience and furnish as our world; and to test the relations that were discovered. Are the connections discovered actually present in our factual world(s)? Are they not illusionary mirages? As scholarship grows more critical in testing the meanings that are imposed on connections discovered, and demands more insistently that they be proved in verifiable ways, theology gets stuck in an uncomfortable straightjacket. For theology articulates belief in patterns of relationships with beings that are not perceptible. Their existence [and activity] can neither be verified nor falsified in conclusive and unambiguous ways. Moreover, theology founds its system of meaningful relationships on belief in ‘revelation’, i.e. on either one specific revelation or a number of revelations in the historical and/or mythical past, to which the believers attach normative purport with respect to how they should model their relationships with the beings in the existence [and activity] of which they believe. But the contents of these normative (or canonical) revelations are also by their very nature inaccessible to scientific verification.

This tension between the bestowal of meaning and its critical testing is further increased by theology’s inveterate habit of incorporating any reliable, critically tested knowledge that the other sciences offer into its contemplations, even if that means, as it often does, that quite a few familiar and significant connections postulated by one’s faith turn out not to be as meaningful as one presumed, or [even not tenable at all, so] that one, with pain and regret, must take leave of them completely.

Such discoveries may be that painful, and leave-taking may cause so much insecurity, that a particular theology may opt to shield itself from them and retreat into isolation for some time. It may then be practised exclusively for the fortification and defence of the familiar system of meanings for a period, and a moratorium may be imposed on their critical testing, and on the communication with the sciences that contribute to that critical testing, as well as on the communication with other schools of theology. That isolationist theology then turns into vehement apologetics and becomes polemic, like a mother animal fiercely defending its lair and young when attacked.

These five marks may be summarised as follows. Theology is the reflective, systematic and critical articulation of the religion a theologian confesses. Theology certainly has a vibrant heart in the concern to formulate, or reformulate, the beliefs the theologian him/herself and his/her co-believers entertain in order that they may (continue to) feel securely at home in them and be
at ease with them. That concern demands that the beliefs be exposed to whatever surfaces as a critical test of them. Theologians must think through, live through and undergo that confrontation with all their faculties [and in particular their intellect], in order to be able, from this passio, — in the double meaning of suffering as well as passion —, to formulate, or reformulate, the belief system not only systematically and critically, but also authentically. That vibrant heart is, therefore, also a tense heart. In theology’s heart itself we find the tension between the reflectively and systematically formulated system of meanings, or ‘doctrine’, and its critical testing. If, and when, that tension becomes too much to bear for that heart, then it may be banned for some time. But theology will always seek out it again because it exists for the sake of it, by it and from it.

Theology and the empirical study of religions
I must be brief about the second set of questions to forestall that this contribution becomes oversized. I make two remarks only.

The first is that it is clear from what I have remarked above about the tense heart of theology, that the empirical sciences of religions are clearly not, in my view, an alien body in the study of theology. They do not introduce a new stress into theology. But it is also clear that they may, and often do, cause the pressure inherent in theology to mount considerably, for they contribute many well-tested data that force students of theology to abandon some of the views about other religions they cherished in the past. The other religions prove far less dissimilar, far less foreign or barbaric than it had been convenient for them to assume (and at times for reasons far less respectable). The empirical sciences of religions also proffer much reliable knowledge about how religions, foreign as well as one’s own, are conditioned and constrained by their [historical, cultural, social, political, intellectual, academic, etc.] environments or contexts. And here again students may find to their dismay that matters often prove to turn out to be different, or more complex and finely tuned, than theology had so far presented them.

The other is that, though the mounting of this tension is not illegitimate, it is quite a real pressure, as I know from personal experience and from what several students tell me. Some patently seek liberation from formulations of their faith, which they feel are obsolete or inadequate. These students are very receptive to the scientific study of religions, at times in an uncritical manner. Other students are greatly disturbed by it. On top of the several quite tasking transitions overtaking them, one of which is the academic study of theology itself, they have to face information about extra-Christian religions that overthrows their views of these religions and moreover affects their perception of their own religion. Because ‘state’ and ‘confessional’ subjects are
separated in our faculty, and especially because its departments fail to signal
these problems and to enter into consultation about them, students must cope
with them, existentially and theologically, by themselves or together with
their fellow students.

Even though I am well aware that, in the final resort, students need to solve
these problems themselves in their own way, I still think that the faculty
(the confessional department included) should also explore this field of
problems and provide counsel to students who are in need of help. The initia-
tive for organising such help might best be taken by the student body. It
might drop the problem with either the Curriculum Committee or some of the
departments of the faculty. That committee or these departments might begin
by organising a consultation in which, apart from students, lecturers from the
department of the Empirical Study of Religions and the confessional depart-
ment should take part as well as the missiologist. I am aware that such a con-
sumation will not be able to provide solutions at short notice, for lecturers in
the faculty entertain quite diverse views about the scientific study of religions
and other religions. It will be difficult to get the consultation going and to
keep it on course. There is no need, however, that those who take part deve-
lop a unified theological view on the empirical study of religions and other
religions. What is, however, necessary is that one learns to understand [the
views of] the other [participants] and is ready to jointly explore this problem
and coach students in coping with it.

In conclusion

Quite a number of relevant points have not been discussed in this contribu-
tion. E.g. what place and task does the empirical study of religions have in
the study of theology, and how useful is it for theology, and for a student’s
future professional practice, e.g. as a minister in a church. These matters
could not be covered in the space allotted.

Odijk, February 9, 1975

1975-now

The final outcome of the battle about the partial integration of the KTHU into
the Utrecht Faculty of Theology was, at first, a big deception for its many
champions in the faculty and the KTHU. In view of the strong GB-
opposition, recent developments within the Dutch RC church, and the strong
reservations of a few faculty members in crucial positions, the Curatorium

84 They rejected the unanimous report of the Committee for Integration and replaced
it with their own proposals that the faculty and KTHU remain separate but co-operate
closely in research and teaching (cf. Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, 76;
Kleyer, ‘De enquête “pasen 1972”’, 24; Hans Vossenaar & Marian Wisse 1975,
(Board of Governors) of the KTHU concluded reluctantly in April 1975 that it should no longer press for a pact with Utrecht University by which the partial integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology might be made permanent.\textsuperscript{85} Instead it also filed the formal application with the Dutch government for aanwijzing – the right to confer degrees and receive state subvention – in 1975,\textsuperscript{86} as the other KIWTOS had done in 1973. After it had been granted by royal decree of 23 January 1976, it signed an agreement with the Utrecht Faculty of Theology on 20 December 1977 by which the intimate co-operation in research and teaching of the 1970-1975 period was continued virtually unimpared for nearly two more decades.\textsuperscript{87}

In this way, the champions of integration did carry the day after all.\textsuperscript{88} Since 1975, they have continued to contribute significantly to the invigoration of scholarship in Dutch academic theology; to the significant weakening of confessional divides in it;\textsuperscript{89} and to the laicisation of RC academic theology, in the double meaning of clerical professors being increasingly succeeded by married laity, male and female; and of theology being part of, subject to, and contributing to, the rapid secularisation of the Netherlands. Below, I will describe first how it was hit by secularisation; and then how part of it contributed, part of it resisted secularisation.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{85}Verslaggeving van de ontwikkelingen in de afgelopen vijf maanden omtrent de samenwerking tussen de theologische faculteit en de KTHU', in Areopagus 8, 7 (December 1975), [21-26], pp. 21, 22.

\textsuperscript{86}Vosse Earl & Wisse, ‘Verslaggeving van de ontwikkelingen’, 23. Other objections reported were that the Dutch RC bishops opposed it for fear of losing control over the appointments of part of the KTHU staff by their integration into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology; and that the Dutch government refused to fund parallel chairs in Biblical Studies and History of Christianity in the Utrecht Faculty of Theology for the KTHU professors in those subjects. Neither of these objections were essential, however, for procedures were available in Dutch civil law by which they might have been nullified or circumvented.

\textsuperscript{87}Cf. Gerard Pieter Freeman, ‘De bestuursstructuur van de KTHU: een beknopt overzicht’, in Areopagus 8, 6 (November 1975), [17-21], p. 17.

\textsuperscript{88}Major elements of this co-operation were already in place in 1975. One of them was that all the KTHU members of staff who had been appointed to a department of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology in the 1970-1975 period remained members of those departments, be it formally as ‘advisers’ (Freeman, ‘De bestuursstructuur van de KTHU’, p. 19; Vosse Earl & Wisse, ‘Verslaggeving van de ontwikkelingen’, p. 25).

\textsuperscript{89}Cf. Winkeler, Om kerk en wetenschap, p. 77.


I will present more ample data on how academic theology has fared in Dutch secularising society since 1980 in a forthcoming article.
Dutch academic theology has been hit hard by secularisation on, in market terms, its two most essential fronts: its ‘customers’, the mainline churches, which it supplies with trained ministers; and its intake, the students registering to read theology for the ministry in a church. The mainline churches have shrunk ever more rapidly since 1975 by massive defection and de-registration of its members. They are now – October 2008 – a ghost of their former selves. But the number of students of theology has declined at a rate that exceeds even the shrinking of the mainline churches.

That has set fusions of institutions of academic theology in motion. The five RC ones – the four KIWTOS at Amsterdam, Utrecht, Tilburg and Heerlen, and the Faculty of Theology of Radboud University at Nijmegen – were reduced to three in 1991, and to one Faculteit Katholieke Theologie (FKT, Faculty of RC Theology) for ministerial training at Utrecht in 2006.

91 In 1970, 75% of the Dutch were members of a church; in 2000, only 40%. There seems to be a causal relationship between the theology a church espouses and the rate at which it shrinks: the more liberal its theology, the faster the defection. Between 1970 and 2000, the three liberal churches (Arminians, Baptists, and NPB) lost 61% of its membership. In the same period, the three churches that now constitute the PKN-church (NHK, GKN, and Lutherans), lost 51%; and the RC church lost 16%. The defection from the RC church is, however, much larger that 16%. RC believers do not de-register. They merely cease to attend. The number of the Roman Catholics that attend church regularly is down to 8%. The state of the RC church is much more apparent from the dramatic decline of the number of convents, the fusion of parishes because of the rapid decline of the number of priests (cf. above notes 21, pp. 40-43) and the sale and demolition of church buildings (cf. Knippenberg, ‘The Netherlands: Selling Churches and Building Mosques’, p. 88). There is also growth on the religious market: Evangelicals and Pentecostals increased their membership between 1970 and 2000 by 138%. However, their growth signifies no turning point in the de-churching of Dutch society, for Evangelicals and Pentecostals constitute only 2% of the Dutch population, and 5% of the Dutch that are members of a church (Esther van den Berg & Joep de Hart, Maatschappelijke organisaties in beeld: Grote ledenorganisaties over actuele ontwikkelingen op het maatschappelijk middenveld. The Hague: SCP, 2008, table 2.7).

92 I will present more ample data about this decline in forthcoming article. Students reading theology are, however, so few that theology was reported recently by the daily paper Trouw to be the surest way to a job for university students.

93 The students and staff of the KTUA – the former KTHA – at Amsterdam were moved to the KTU – the former KTHU – at Utrecht; and those of UTP – the former HTP – at Heerlen were fused with the RC Faculty of Theology of the (RC) Radboud University at Nijmegen.

94 Though located at the out-campus of Utrecht University, it was incorporated formally into (the RC) University of Tilburg. This curious construct is but a part of a
NHK-church reduced its four Kerkelijke Vakgroepen, at the duplex ordo faculties of theology at the universities at Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen and Amsterdam, in 2000 to two: at Leiden and Utrecht. The GKN-church likewise reduced its two institutions for ministerial training, the Faculty of Theology of the Free University at Amsterdam and its Theological University at Kampen (ThUK), in 2000 to the one at Kampen by rescinding the treaty that had defined the special relationship of the Free University to the GKN-church in the past century. And after the NHK-, GKN- and Lutheran churches had merged into the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN) in 2004, this church founded its own (simplex ordo) Protestantse Theologische Universiteit (PThU) at Kampen, Utrecht and Leiden in 2007 as a merger of ThUK at Kampen and the two Kerkelijke Vakgroepen at Leiden and Utrecht.\(^95\) Hardly anybody noticed that this signified the death of the duplex ordo.

The latest developments, however, were not merely a response to the dwindling numbers of students of theology opting for a career as minister, priest or pastoral worker in their church. They were also meant to address another growing concern of the RC and PKN-churches: their worry about the vergodsdiensweekenschappelijken\(^96\) of academic theology and the need they perceived, therefore, to ‘re-theologise’ the theology taught to their future ministers. The invigoration of scholarship throughout Dutch academic theology in the last four decades has promoted significant shifts in the balance, traditionally prevailing, between theology ‘proper’ – theology that is at least in part inspired by the faith a theologian confesses and ‘has God for its object’;\(^97\) – and the neutral study of religions in all major institutions of Dutch

\(^95\) Cf. http://www.pthu.nl/
\(^96\) ‘transformation into science of religions’.

academic theology, towards ‘theology’ that does not have God for its object of study but the faith(s) of humans in God or gods. 98 Those shifts, of various kinds and degrees, caused much of academic theology to become neutral and secular, 99 and to contribute to the secularisation of Dutch society by its scholarly detachment and rationality. Though this shift from ‘theology proper’ to godsdienstwetenschap (the unbiased study of religions) is, in my view, inherent in theology, 100 it was also correctly perceived by ecclesiastical authorities, RC and Protestant, as the gradual but continuous ‘de-theologisation’ of academic theology, and as one over which they either had no control – in the duplex ordo institutions –, or as one over which their control was constantly being eroded – in the simplex ordo institutions. The FKT at Utrecht and PThU at Kampen/Utrecht/Leiden were founded in 2006 explicitly as institutions of church-supervised confessional theology for the purpose of ‘re-theologising’ theology, and of restoring the primacy of confessional dogmatic theologiasies in the simplex ordo institutions in which future ministers of the RC and PKNN churches were to be trained. 101

The reconfessionalisation of this part of Dutch academic theology has widened the gap between the re- and de-theologising parts of Dutch academic theology and has made it more manifest institutionally. Not only did the (former) duplex ordo faculties of theology clearly drift towards, or transform into, faculties, departments, or institutes of godsdienstwetenschap, 102 many

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98 Denaux, Katholieke theologie in een context van (post)moderniteit, pp. 10-11.
99 ‘Theology is changing at a fast pace into godsdienstwetenschap (the neutral study of religions)’, (Denaux, Katholieke theologie in een context van (post)moderniteit, 9).
100 As I argued in my 1975 position paper.
The PThU-President, van der Sar, read psalm 146 at the opening of the academic year 2008/09 because it should be publicly and clearly stated he said that the God praised in that psalm is the object of theology at PThU; cf. http://www.protestantsetheologischeuniversiteit.nl/uploadedDocs/Opening_Acaemisch_Jaar_sep_2008_overdenkning.pdf
102 The RUG Faculty of Theology at Groningen changed its title to Faculteit Godegeleerdheid & Godsdienstwetenschap (Faculty of Theology & ‘Science of Religions’/Religious Studies) as early as 1988. Its Religious Studies section has cur-
of the latter have moreover recently lost their status as faculties and were relocated as departments or institutes in the new Faculties of Humanities, an environment that both institutionalises their de-confessionalisation and will further enhance it.

In conclusion
In an early article, John Pobee put up a spirited defence of theology as an academic discipline against those Christians who suspect it of undermining ‘the faith’ and regard it as a road, not to Heaven but to Hell. Though the latter is certainly an outrageous polemical overstatement, the data and analysis presented in this article may perhaps cause John to reconsider his view that religions in general, and Christianity in particular, are in need of critical testing by theology, and that theology must therefore have a place in a modern, secular university; and also his view that every single Christian ‘has a theological vocation’. His long sojourn in Europe made him aware that the Enlightenment has had a great impact upon academic theology and caused it currently many more students than its Theology section. Candidates for the ministry in the PKN-church can no longer do their full training in this faculty since the faculty lost its Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken in 2000. The Faculty of Theology of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) was closed down in 2002 and in part transferred to the UvA Faculty of Humanities as Institute of Religious Studies. The Faculty of Theology at Leiden University changed its title to Faculteit Godsdienstwetenschappen (Faculty of the ‘Sciences of Religion/Religious Studies’) in 2006. On the institutional changes at Radboud University at Nijmegen, and at STT at Tilburg, cf. above footnote 94.

Four universities (still) have a faculty of theology: the Free University at Amsterdam; Radboud University at Nijmegen; the University of Tilburg; and the RUG at Groningen. However, the Free University must send its candidates for the ministry in the PKN-church to PThU at Kampen for the final part of their training. Those of Radboud University do not qualify for the ministry in the RC church at all. The Faculty of Theology of Tilburg University is the Faculty of RC Theology at Utrecht. For the RUG Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies, cf. note 127.

Apart from the relocations of the Faculties of Theology of Amsterdam and Tilburg Universities as Departments or Institutes of Religious Studies in their Faculties of Humanities, noted earlier, two more transfers must be mentioned: at Utrecht University, the Faculty of Theology became Department of Theology in the Faculty of Humanities in 2006; and the Faculteit Godsdienstwetenschappen of Leiden University became the Leids Instituut voor Godsdienstwetenschappen (Leiden Institute of Religious Studies) in the Leiden Faculty of Humanities on 1.09.2008.

Pobee, ‘Europe as Locus Theologicus’, p. 196.
to become ‘rather humanistic and agnostic in tendency’. As an academic discipline, theology is governed not only by obedience to a revelation but also by the rules of *Wissenschaft*. Therefore, ‘there is no getting away from the scientific method’. Theology must be ‘captive to the scientific method’. As a historian of religions, I suggest however that even though theology has been a great asset to (the intellectual elite of) a very few religions, the foremost being Christianity, history proves it, as ‘scientific discipline’, also to be a severe liability to them as soon as societies begin to secularise rapidly.

In view of this outcome, the question may be asked again, which of the combatants in the 1974/75 battle did carry the day after all? Is the confessional(ist) GB the victor, or have the ecumenically inspired students and staff of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and KTHU, eager to merge RC and Protestant theological traditions into a high quality academic theology that aimed to transcend denominational separation, emerged as champions? I refuse to declare a winner, for there are gains and losses on both sides. But it is certainly significant as well as ironic that it is the KTHU/KTU which has been reconfessionalised into the TKF, the Faculty of – emphatically – RC Theology, now; and that the former Utrecht Faculty of Theology, now Department of Theology in the Faculty of Humanities, is in a limbo between ‘theology’ and *godsdienstwetenschap*, the neutral study of religions, now that the *duplex ordo* theology has passed away quietly.

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100 Pobee, ‘Europe as *Locus Theologicus*’, p. 194.

101 Pobee, Europe as *Locus Theologicus*, p. 195.

102 Pobee, Europe as *Locus Theologicus*, p. 201.


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Edinburgh 1910: Memory, Hope and Courage

Kenneth R. Ross

The year 2000 saw Professor John Pobee in Edinburgh, giving a millennium lecture on the future direction of Christian mission. During his visit Prof Pobee urgently raised the question of the forthcoming centenary of the ‘Edinburgh 1910’ World Missionary Conference and challenged Scottish-based churches, mission agencies and academic institutions to embark on a process of preparing for the centenary. Why was he so motivated about this particular memory? For any student of world Christian history, ‘Edinburgh 1910’ is a key reference point. As Andrew Walls remarks: ‘The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, has passed into Christian legend. It was a landmark in the history of mission; the starting point of the modern theology of mission; the high point of the modern Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; the launch-pad of the modern ecumenical movement; the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like.’ John Pobee stands out as someone who lived the new reality of the world church which was promised by Edinburgh 1910. Institutionally, intellectually, spiritually, collegially and personally he embraced and expressed the vision which had first come clearly into view at Edinburgh. No way was he going to let us forget about it!

Introduction: John Pobee and Edinburgh 1910

The year 2000 saw Professor John Pobee in Edinburgh, giving a millennium lecture on the future direction of Christian mission. During his visit Prof Pobee urgently raised the question of the forthcoming centenary of the ‘Edinburgh 1910’ World Missionary Conference and challenged Scottish-based churches, mission agencies and academic institutions to embark on a process of preparing for the centenary. Why was he so motivated about this particular memory? For any student of world Christian history, ‘Edinburgh 1910’ is a key reference point. John R. Mott the Conference chairman called it: ‘the most notable gathering in the interest of the worldwide expansion of Christi-
anity ever held, not only in missionary annals, but in all Christian annals." Marking its golden jubilee in 1960, Hugh Martin observed that:

By the general consent of all competent judges the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in June, 1910, was one of the most creative events in the long history of the Christian Church. Its significance is all the more clear in the perspective of fifty years after. In many respects unique in itself, it was also unique in the impetus it gave to Christian activity in many directions. It opened a new era in the missionary enterprise but it was also the beginning of what we now call 'the ecumenical movement'. 'Edinburgh 1910' was in fact a fountain head of international and inter-Church co-operation on a depth and scale never before known."

This assessment was given at what was perhaps the high water mark of the ecumenical cooperation which sprang from the Edinburgh 1910 Conference. Yet the passing of a further fifty years has not diminished its significance as a point of reference in regard to world Christianity. As Andrew Walls remarks: 'The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, has passed into Christian legend. It was a landmark in the history of mission; the starting point of the modern theology of mission; the high point of the modern Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; the launch-pad of the modern ecumenical movement; the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like.' John Pobee stands out as someone who lived the new reality of the world church which was promised by Edinburgh 1910. Institutionally, intellectually, spiritually, collegially and personally he embraced and expressed the vision which had first come clearly into view at Edinburgh. No way was he going to let us forget about it!

*Edinburgh 1910 after a century*

Acknowledging the spell cast by the 1910 Conference is not necessarily to be blind to its limitations and shortcomings. From today's perspective there is no mistaking the reality that Edinburgh 1910 was a deeply flawed occasion. With the benefit of hindsight we can see how much the Conference was limited by the conceptual landscape of its participants.

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A territorial idea of Christian expansion

The thinking of the Conference was premised on a territorial idea of Christian mission. A key distinction was drawn between ‘fully missionised lands’ and ‘not yet fully missionised lands’. The task of mission was to ‘carry’ the gospel from the ‘Christian world’ to the ‘non-Christian world’. This Christendom model of Christian expansion would be obsolete within half a century. As Andrew Walls points out: “Today some of what in 1910 appeared to be ‘fully missionized lands’ are most obviously the prime mission fields of the world.” Meanwhile parts of the ‘non-Christian world’ have become heartlands of Christian faith. The century which followed would expose the destructive potential of the dualism inherent in unbounded confidence in the ‘Christian’ West and the belief that the ‘non-Christian world’ must give way to its steady advance. The use of the territorial principle also meant that Latin America was excluded from the consideration of the Conference on the grounds that it was a ‘missionised land’ – a recognition of the integrity of the Roman Catholic Christianity of the continent on which Anglo-Catholics insisted as a condition of their participation. Hence it belied its title as a ‘world’ missionary Conference and its understanding of mission was distorted by Christendom assumptions which would soon be manifestly outdated and of questionable validity.

Complicity with imperialism and colonialism

As a century of critique has made plain, the Conference did not acquire sufficient distance from the Western imperialism which was at its height at that time. The fact that the Western ‘Christian’ powers dominated world affairs underlay a great deal of the optimism of the Conference regarding the missionary enterprise. The enthusiasm and drive which marked the Conference drew much more than it realised on the optimistic self-confidence of imperial expansion and technological advance. Much too easily the Conference bought into the colonial assumption of the inferiority of the colonised. Much too easily, for example, they accepted a colonial caricature of Africa as a savage, barbaric and uncultured continent. While abuses of colonial rule such as the opium wars or the atrocities in the Congo might be subject to criticism, there was almost no awareness that colonialism, in itself, was damaging and that there would be a heavy price to pay if Christian mission were too closely allied to it.

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Mission in military metaphor
The territorial understanding of Christian expansion was allied with an activist mentality and a military metaphor. The Conference was marked by the mood of the Protestant missionary movement described by David Bosch as ‘pragmatic, purposeful, activist, impatient, self-confident, single-minded, triumphant’. This mood unfortunately was often expressed in the vocabulary of aggression, attack, conquest and crusade. In the discourse of the Conference, missionaries were often described as ‘soldiers’ or Christian ‘forces’. The reports and speeches abounded with metaphors such as ‘army’, ‘crusade’, ‘council of war’, ‘conquest’, ‘advance’ and ‘marching orders’. Participants saw nothing incongruous in using the language of violent military campaigns to describe their missionary engagement and aspirations. The aggressive and confrontational understanding of Christian mission which characterised Edinburgh 1910 has provoked much resentment and does not serve to commend Christian faith today. This is not to say that Christians should lack confidence in the message they proclaim. The issue is one of respect for those who adhere to other faiths. For all that the Report of Commission Four showed the sympathetic appreciation of other faiths which many missionaries had developed, its militaristic and triumphalist language strikes a note of antagonism which could hardly be expected to make for cordial inter-faith relations or for a culture of peace. It concludes by celebrating: ‘the spectacle of the advance of the Christian Church along many lines of action to the conquest of the five great religions of the modern world...’ As we approach the centenary of Edinburgh after a century of sickening violence, amidst neo-imperial wars and in face of the ever-present threat of nuclear holocaust, it has become all too clear how unsuited is the military metaphor to the purposes of Christian mission.

Patronising attitude to the emerging churches
The Conference was marked by an unmistakable ambivalence towards what it described as ‘the church on the mission field’. On the one hand, the objective of the missionary movement was the emergence of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches. On the other, the missionaries were jealous of their ‘field’ and showed an ill-disguised interest in retaining the initiative. The new churches emerging in the mission fields were regarded

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as ‘infant’ churches and it was expected that they would require the care and direction of their ‘parents’ for many years to come. This led to a somewhat distant and patronising relationship to the leaders of the churches which were already emerging as a result of the missionary movement. One of their number, V.S. Azariah, in what proved to be the most remembered speech of the Conference, expressed both appreciation and exasperation in his concluding peroration: ‘Through all the ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS!’ Much of the journey ahead in the 20th century would be occupied with answering this request.

Restrictions to discussion stored up problems for the future
Tactically, in order to achieve the widest possible participation, it was a stroke of genius to exclude doctrinal and ecclesial issues from the consideration of the Conference. Pragmatically, it made for a Conference which could find focus and energy by concentrating on the key issues which were facing Western missions as they engaged with the non-Western world. However, there was a price to pay. It meant that the discussion of mission was abstracted from theological debate about the content and meaning of the gospel, and from ecclesiological debate about the nature and calling of the church. This meant that it was necessarily an incomplete discussion. When it was taken forward in the course of the century which followed the Conference, it was necessary to attempt a more integrated discussion of faith, church and mission. Insofar as Edinburgh 1910 was achieved through a papering over of the cracks, doctrinal and ecclesial divisions reasserted themselves. While the conscious thrust of Edinburgh 1910 was aimed at achieving greater unity, the structure of its discussion traded short-term gains for long-term struggles as the years ahead would see more fragmentation than integration.

History reveals that confidence was ill-founded
It has to be recognised that, in many respects, the Edinburgh Conference was over-heated and over-ambitious. It was carried away by the self-confidence of the Western powers at the height of the age of empire. Its slogans proved to be hollow. The world was not evangelised in that generation. The gospel was not carried to the entire non-Christian world. Within a few years of the Conference, the energies of the Western ‘missionised’ nations would be con-

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umed by a war more destructive than any experienced hitherto and a great deal of the worldwide evangelistic effort would be put on hold. Nor was this to prove to be a temporary interruption. Edinburgh 1910 which understood itself to be on the brink of a great new surge of missionary advance was, in fact, the high point of the movement. Never again would the Western missionary movement occupy centre-stage in the way that it felt it did at Edinburgh. For most of the mission boards and societies represented, the 20th century would be one of remorseless decline in their operations. The scenario envisaged by the Edinburgh delegates never came to pass.

Nonetheless: a great new fact
Despite the many limitations of the Conference, however, the 20th century has witnessed a vindication of a fundamental conviction of Edinburgh 1910: that the good news of Jesus Christ can take root in every culture across the world and produce fruit in church and society everywhere. The great drama of the coming century, in terms of church history, would be the growth of Christian faith in Asia, Africa, Oceania and Latin America. In some respects it has surpassed even the most sanguine expectations of 1910. The extraordinary growth of Christianity in Africa, for example, was not foreseen by any of the Edinburgh delegates. Nor had they anticipated how Latin America would become the theatre of a powerful renewal of Christian faith. This worldwide flourishing of the faith stands as a demonstration of the validity of their missionary vision that the gospel could be received and find expression in completely new contexts. As Andrew Walls notes, ‘The fact remains that, by a huge reversal of the position in 1910, the majority of Christians now live in Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Pacific, and that the proportion is rising. Simultaneously with the retreat from Christianity in the West in the twentieth century went – just as the visionaries of Edinburgh hoped – a massive accession to the Christian faith in the non-Western world. The map of the Christian Church, its demographic and cultural make-up, changed more dramatically during the twentieth century than (probably) in any other since the first.’

Without the missionary impetus represented by Edinburgh 1910, the prospects for Christianity as a world religion might well be doubtful today, particularly as its long-time European homeland is proving inhospitable. Largely as a result of the seeds planted by missionary endeavour, vigorous and numerous expressions of Christian faith are to be found on all six continents today. The delegates who gathered in Edinburgh in 1910 caught a vision of something which did not then exist: a ‘world church’ with deep roots and

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vigorousexpression widely apparent on every continent. Certainly so far as Protestantism is concerned, no event was more definitive for the emerging shape of Christianity in the 20th century than Edinburgh 1910. It was the first clear glimpse of what William Temple would describe as ‘the great new fact of our time’ – a truly worldwide Christian church.11 This epoch-making vision of the church as a truly global missionary community has continued to inspire subsequent generations, making it an enduring point of reference for those who hear Christ’s call to a mission that extends to the ends of the earth.

Four key characteristics of Edinburgh 1910
As the centenary approaches, there appear to be four features of the 1910 Conference which carry particular resonance at this time.

1) Imagination
Though it has sometimes been derided as a highly pragmatic ‘how-to’ Conference, it ought to be recognised that it was premised upon a bold attempt to transform the world’s religious demography. Never did the modern missionary movement articulate its ambition more comprehensively than at Edinburgh in 1910. It was a moment of imagination when people came together to think seriously about something which had never existed before: what a truly worldwide church would look like and how it would exercise its missionary obligations. It cast the vision, as Bishop Gore of Birmingham expressed it, that: ‘A universal religion, a catholic religion, needs a common message such as is contained in the Apostles’ Creed, and as is recorded in the Bible, but a common message comprehended by very different and various peoples and individuals, each with very different gifts, so that each in receiving the one message brings out some different or special aspect of the universal truth or character which lies in the common religion.’12

2) Gathering
Within its limitations, the Conference succeeded in bringing together a wider range of Protestant Christians than had ever cooperated before. It also lifted the eyes of Western churches to the emerging significance of churches and Christian communities outside Europe and North America. Vastly influential was the work of Commission Eight on ‘Cooperation and the Promotion of

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Unity'. Though the Commission's work was hedged around by limitations, particularly in regard to doctrinal and ecclesial questions, nonetheless a vision of the unity of the church broke surface at Edinburgh and remained a guiding light for many in the century which followed.

3) Reflection
Much of the enduring value of the Edinburgh Conference stems from the depth and range of its reflection. This found expression not only in the debates of the Conference itself but, remarkably, in the eight study commissions which prepared reports for the Conference. The quality of the reports is such that they did much to stimulate the development of the science of mission, often termed 'missiology', as a distinct academic discipline. Though their limitations are apparent today, it is equally evident that their authors were grappling with profound questions of perennial importance to Christian mission.

4) Movement
The ethos of the Conference was characterised, as Kathleen Bliss explained, by '... the common living convictions of practical men and women who are working together for the evangelization of the world.' At its heart was a pressing sense of urgency about the fulfilment of the Christian imperative for mission which could find its proper expression only in action. As Latourette explained, it aimed to be a 'consultation through which the missionary agencies could plan together the next steps in giving the Gospel to the world.' Analysis was offered as a basis for action and the ambition of the Conference was to generate energy and fresh movement in worldwide mission.

The centenary: retrieving the genius of Edinburgh?
Professor Pobee's instinct, ten years ahead of the centenary, was not mistaken. 2010 has proved to be a suggestive moment for many around the world who have the mission and unity of the church at heart. Those who have responded to the centenary include not only those who stand in a direct historical succession to the Protestant mission agencies which sent their delegates to Edinburgh in 1910. It has struck a chord with branches of the church which had no part in the 1910 Conference, even with those which scarcely existed at

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that time. Why has it had such a wide appeal? Could it be that the churches again find themselves in need of the imagination, gathering, reflection and movement which distinguished Edinburgh 1910? The contention of this essay is that the energy and the hope being stimulated by the memory of Edinburgh 1910 is not so much about then as it is about now.

1) Time for imagination

We live today with the awareness, notably articulated by David Bosch in *Transforming Mission*, that the paradigm of mission which prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries has run its course. New models of mission are needed but we do not yet know what form they will take. An act of imagination is needed and has begun to be expressed. The broad coalition which is preparing for an Edinburgh centenary event in 2010 has made the following commitments:

1. Rather than being centred in Edinburgh, a polycentric approach will be taken. Facilitation will be offered by a variety of centres in different parts of the world. In 2010 it is anticipated that significant events will take place not only in Scotland but in many locations around the world.

2. Whereas 1910 was confined to mainline Protestantism, the participants in 2010 will be drawn from the whole range of Christian traditions and confessions. Particular effort will be made to involve new and indigenous streams of Christian witness from different parts of the world.

3. Instead of being largely limited to the North Atlantic, there will be an intentional bias to the South, recognising that Christianity's centre of gravity has moved markedly southwards during the past century. The vision is that 60% of the delegates at Edinburgh 2010 will be from the Global South. The process will aim to be truly worldwide in its scope.

Imagination is needed to detect the contours of a missionary movement which is no longer 'from the West to the rest' but rather 'from everywhere to everyone'. What will it mean for initiative in mission to lie not with those who hold political and economic power but rather with the poor and marginalised? Perhaps a clue is found in the prophetic words of David Bosch: 'It is... a bold humility - or a humble boldness. We know only in part, but we do know. And we believe that the faith we profess is both true and just, and should be proclaimed. We do this, however, not as judges or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers but as envoys of peace; not as high-pressure salespersons, but as ambassadors of the Servant Lord.'

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Bosch, p. 489.
but there remains a clamant need for an act of imagination which generates a compelling vision of Christian mission for our time.

2) Time to reconnect

The history of mission in the 20th century led to major divisions opening up within the missionary movement. The controversial integration of the International Missionary Council (the institutional outcome of Edinburgh 1910) into the World Council of Churches in 1961 led in 1974 to the formation of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, committed to sustaining the agenda of world evangelization which it believed had been lost in the 'churchy' and 'liberal' agenda of the WCC. These tensions and divisions are widely apparent around the world. One constructive response to this situation is to re-gather, to listen to each other, to share perspectives and to seek direction from the Holy Spirit in face of contemporary challenges. Could the centenary provide an opportunity for both streams to re-engage with the Edinburgh 1910 heritage and with each other? As Andrew Walls suggests: "both "ecumenical" and "evangelical" today have their roots in Edinburgh 1910. If each will go back to the pit whence both were dug, each may understand both themselves and the other better."  

The historical perspective opened up by the centenary also creates the possibility, for both traditions, to recognise how much they represent a mid-20th century response to world affairs and theological trends. Major new movements lay down the challenge that it may be in new paradigms that Christian mission discovers the cutting edge it needs for the very different world of the 21st century. While there are traditions arising from the 1910 Conference which deserve all due respect, it may be that their renewal will come from reconnecting fragments which have broken apart and making new connections among contemporary movements of Christian mission. A process taking its inspiration from the 1910 Conference but thoroughly contemporary and forward-looking would give an opportunity for connections to be made which will be fruitful in shaping Christian mission for a new century. Indeed the world of the early 21st century provides greater opportunity for listening attentively to one another within the world church than anything the Edinburgh delegates could have dreamed of in 1910.

The Global Christian Forum, which met for the first time in Nairobi in late 2007, is evidence of a new approach to ecumenism that includes Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformation Protestant, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches as well as Christian networks and para-church organizations. A similar spectrum can be found on the General Council now pre-

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paring to mark the centenary of Edinburgh 1910 which is possibly representative of a wider cross-section of the world’s Christians than any previous organisation. It includes representatives of:

- African Independent Churches
- Anglican Communion
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
- Council for World Mission / CEVAA / United Evangelical Mission
- International Association for Mission Studies
- International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
- Latin American Theological Fraternity
- Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation
- Lutheran World Federation
- Orthodox Churches
- Pentecostal Churches
- Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity
- Seventh Day Adventist Church
- World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- World Baptist Alliance
- World Council of Churches
- World Evangelical Alliance
- World Methodist Council
- World Student Christian Federation

Amongst all these constituencies there is a strong commitment to connect around the memory of Edinburgh 1910 which provides something of a ‘neutral’ space for them to encounter one another. As they share in the event of the centenary, will they find new ways to express the unity and common mission of the churches? Missionary engagement invariably raises the question of unity. A century after Edinburgh, this remains a primary challenge for the churches.

3) Time to take stock

Some of the missionary movement’s most perceptive participant-critics have observed that we have arrived at a time of fundamental change in the shape and direction of Christian mission. Andrew Walls suggests that: ‘The missionary movement is now in its old age. What is changing is not the task [of world evangelization] but the means and the mode.” Michael Amaladoss spoke for many when he said that: ‘We are living in an age of transition — a

liminal period.” There is need for new models to interpret and give coherence to new patterns of mission for a new century. Wilbert Shenk declares that: “Renewal will not come by way of incremental revisions of structures and liturgies inherited from the past.” Common to different schools of thought is an acknowledgement that the ‘old wineskins’ are no longer holding the new wine of the gospel and that new wineskins are required. In this context, the centenary of Edinburgh 1910 is an occasion which challenges the global missionary movement to re-gather and take stock again of how it stands in relation to its task. This is not with a view to nostalgia but rather to be forward-looking. It is about attempting to do for the 21st century what Edinburgh 1910 did for the 20th, i.e. catching a vision and setting an agenda which gives direction and energy to the missionary movement.

The major instrument of preparation for Edinburgh 2010 is a round of commissions, an echo of the eight commissions which reported to the 1910 Conference and aimed to engage with ‘matters of large importance and of timely interest at this stage in the missionary enterprise.’ The subject matter of the commissions has been carefully chosen to engage with the great challenges facing church and mission in the 21st century:

* Foundations for mission
* Christian mission among other Faiths
* Mission and post-modernities
* Mission and power
* Forms of missionary engagement
* Theological education and formation
* Christian communities in contemporary contexts
* Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission
* Mission spirituality for the Kingdom of God

4) Time for fresh movement
A clear focusing of the task which awaits Christian mission in the 21st century is widely felt to be needed and the Edinburgh 1910 centenary carries the historical meaning and emotional resonance to engage the required energy and imagination. An essential feature of the memory is that the analysis attempted by the Conference was geared to action. Hence any process of reflection worthy of the centenary must issue in clear direction and fresh impetus for the Christian missionary movement. It must identify, support and

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20 Cit. Hopkins, p. 344.
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1910? Will they have the courage to set forth a contemporary and compelling vision of what it means to witness to that Christ in the world of the 21st century?

References
‘Christendom,’ ‘Christianity,’ and ‘Christianization’: Terminological and Theological Considerations

Jan A.B. Jongeneel

Scholars differ regarding the meaning and use of the terms ‘Christendom,’ ‘Christianity,’ and ‘Christianization.’ Continental Europeans (especially Germans and the Dutch) do not know or acknowledge the difference between ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity,’ they only possess the term ‘Christendom.’ Consequently they ascribe a positive sense to the latter term, whereas most Anglo-Saxon authors opt for a more or less negative connotation of this term, over against the positively interpreted term ‘Christianity.’ The present article challenges the Anglo-Saxon view, because it views both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ as imperfect results of earlier Christianizing processes. It pleads for a basically positive understanding of the term ‘Christendom,’ stating that ‘Christendom’ produced the Christian calendar, nowadays known as the common era, and the Sunday as the most widely accepted free day in the world.

In 1986 I was appointed as the new professor of missiology at Utrecht University. In the same year I gave my inaugural address, entitled: *Het Christendom als Wereldzendingsgodsdienst.*) The literal translation of this title into English is: *Christendom as World Missionary Religion,* or *Christendom as Missionary World Religion.* Professor J.N.J. Kritzinger of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria wrote a valuable review of the address, in which the profound question was raised whether it is ‘possible to escape from colonial or corpus christianum thought patterns while retaining the term Christendom.’

Kritzinger seems to have been too little aware of the terminological differences between Continental Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world. Whereas the latter distinguishes between ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity,’ the former does not know and use such a distinction. I did not make an English version of my inaugural address but if I had produced an English translation, I would have opted for the following title: *Christianity* [and not: ‘Christendom’!] as *Missionary World Religion.* The German term ‘Christentum’ and the Dutch

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term ‘Christendom’ can be translated into English in two ways: both as ‘Christendom’ and as ‘Christianity.’ Continental European encyclopaedias deal usually with the Christian religion (as opposed to the primal religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc.) under ‘Christendom,’ whereas Anglo-Saxon encyclopaedias ordinarily cope with that issue under ‘Christianity.’

Continental Europeans object to the Anglo-Saxon misunderstanding of Continental European literature on ‘Christendom’ such as is demonstrated by Kritzinger in the above-mentioned review. At the same time, they accept that the Anglo-Saxon world distinguishes between ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity.’ They look very critically at the above-mentioned Anglo-Saxon distinction: is it really necessary to use two terms? And if so, what is the precise meaning of both terms? Is it acceptable to interpret ‘Christendom’ more negatively than ‘Christianity’? Finally, is the term ‘Christendom’ linked with the so-called corpus christianum and colonialism (cf. Kritzinger)?

In the Anglo-Saxon literature, ‘Christianity’ is often associated with developments initiated by Jesus, his male and female disciples and the early church, and ‘Christendom’ with developments since the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his conversion to the Christian faith. In the past, this conversion has usually been interpreted positively: after centuries of severe discrimination, suffering, and martyrdom, Christianity became firstly the permitted religion and finally the ruling religion in the Roman Empire. In recent history, however, critical voices have been heard. The scholars involved state that the conversion of the Roman emperor inaugurated a major paradigm shift in human history, with obviously negative effects: an originally pacifist and non-corrup ‘Christianity’ was transformed into a ‘Christendom’ which, as state religion of the Roman Empire, accepted and even propagated luxury and militarism. Due to its new position as the ruling religion, Christianity lost its credibility to represent Jesus Christ as the non-violent and suffering ‘Servant of the Lord’ (cf. Isaiah 53). This irreversible paradigm shift ultimately gave birth to ‘Christendom’ as civic religion and to the corpus christianum as the Christian culture of the West, with emphasis upon the glorious resurrection.

3 Compare, for instance, the recently published fourth edition of Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart in Germany with The Encyclopedia of Protestantism in the United Kingdom. The second volume of the former encyclopedia has long articles on ‘Christentum’ (pp. 183-246), whereas the index of the latter even does not have a single reference to the term ‘Christendom’.

Contemporary Christendom/Christianity is challenged worldwide by the increasing impact of secularization on the one hand and that of Islamization on the other. Therefore the meaning and use of the term ‘Christianization’ needs to be rethought. This article does not only pay considerable attention to the meaning and the use of the terms ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity,’ and to the positive aspects of ‘Christendom,’ but also to the term and phenomenon of ‘Christianization.’ It stipulates that both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ are products of ‘Christianizing’ people groups, societies, and culture. And it regards Jesus Christ as the sole absolutely trustful norm, or criterion, to evaluate the process of Christianizing people groups and their societies and cultures, resulting in Christendom and Christianity.

The term ‘Christendom’ over against the term ‘Christianity’
The term ‘Christendom’ is not at all per se negative. The 1962 edition of The American College Dictionary, for instance, gives the following positive explanation of this term:
1 Christians collectively;
2 the Christian world;
3 Christianity.

The dictionary suggests that this term is much more linked with people groups (‘Christians collectively’) and their culture and society (‘world’) than with their religion, belief-system, practices, and qualities. It associates the latter with the term ‘Christianity:’
1 the Christian religion;
2 Christian beliefs or practices, Christian quality or character;
3 a particular Christian religious system;
4 state of being a Christian.

Whereas the dictionary points to ‘Christianity’ in its article on ‘Christendom’ (Christendom is inter alia Christianity), it does, the other way around, not point to ‘Christendom’ in its short description and analysis of ‘Christianity.’ Does this imply that ‘Christendom’ (over against ‘Christianity’) is the overarching term? In passing the dictionary refers to the related term ‘Christianization,’ but it pays full attention to the connected verb ‘to Christianize:’
1 to make Christian;
2 to imbue with Christian principles;
3 to become Christian.

Various theological dictionaries and handbooks reflected upon the meaning and use of the three terms under consideration. The recently published Ency-
encyclopedia of Missions and Missionaries remarkably did not offer articles on ‘Christianity’ and ‘Christianization,’ but merely one on ‘Christendom.’ It distinguished between no less than four ways of using the latter term: linguistic, cultural, theological, and descriptive. The present author partly agrees with the author of this provoking article, and partly disagrees with him: he does not consider the descriptive use of the term as an independent category (the linguistic use of the term is also ‘descriptive’!). Therefore he considers it better to distinguish between the linguistic, historic, cultural, and theological (or normative) use of this term and the two other terms under consideration. The historic use of all three terms is, of course, closely linked with the linguistic one; since the early Middle Ages all three terms have been used in a variety of ways. Profound historical studies are needed to explore and clarify when, where and how each of these terms came into being and was used in the contexts of Continental Europe and/or the Anglo-Saxon world.

Although the term ‘Christendom’ is often linked with Christian culture and Christian civilization, it does not imply that the term ‘Christianity’ has nothing to do with culture and/or civilization. Some contemporary scholars speak and write about ‘territorial Christianity’ and ‘cultural Christianity.’ Others deal with ‘cross-cultural Christianity.’ Moreover, the classic book on Christ and Culture by Richard Niebuhr in the USA makes it very clear that ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ are items which Christians have taken seriously since the period of the New Testament, and not merely since the reign of the converted Emperor Constantine the Great. In other words: it is too easy to suggest that ‘Christendom’ is a more or less cultural phenomenon and ‘Christianity’ a more or less non-cultural reality. The whole terminological issue is much more complex.

Finally, it is not easy to find a good theological criterion to distinguish ‘Christianity’ from ‘Christendom.’ It has been suggested that ‘Christendom’ has nothing to do with the Christian message and Christian doctrine, but that is incorrect. It was nobody else than the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great who organized the first ecumenical council in Nicaea (325 AD), which accepted and ratified the Nicene Creed. Later ecumenical councils were also

8 Atchenemou Hlama Clement et al., Cross-Cultural Christianity (Jos: Evangelical Missionary Institute, 1989).
sponsored by the state. In line with the policy of the Roman administration, the fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon (451 AD) took the middle road between the ‘radicals’ in the debate on the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless ‘Christendom’ seems to be more linked with the praxis than with normative faith-issues. It may be that the Birmingham Professors Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, writing about developments in modern times, are putting us on the right track when they define ‘Christendom’ as ‘a society where there were close ties between leaders of the church and those in positions of secular power, where the laws purported to be based on Christian principles, and where, apart from clearly defined outsider communities, every member of the society was assumed to be Christian.’

The present author does not at all deny that there are differences between the terms under consideration. But he objects to (cultural and/or theological) constructs which are too schematic and artificial, beforehand viewing ‘Christendom,’ over against ‘Christianity,’ as negative. Due to the fact that Christians have created both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ and due to the fact that all Christians are, as is stated by Martin Luther (1483-1546), ‘justified and still sinner (simul iustus et peccator),’ there is no reason whatsoever to consider ‘Christianity’ as more positive than ‘Christendom.’ Both point to realities which in one way or another are characterized by sin; merely their final founding father Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Great High Priest, is ‘without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15). Messiah Jesus is the sole trustful norm, or criterion, to evaluate all ‘Christian’ realities past and present, ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ included.

The positive meaning of the term ‘Christendom’

Mission, church, and world history correctly refer to the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great as a major paradigm shift in human history. However, Constantine was not the first ruler in world history to become a Christian. He was preceded by Tiridates (ca. 261-317), the king of the Armenians. The oldest so-called ‘Christendom,’ therefore, seems to be the Armenian one. The Roman Empire under the reign of Constantine the Great developed a ‘Christendom,’ which has both similarities and dissimilarities with that in ancient Armenia. Some historians are so focused on the link between ‘Christendom’ and the West, that they do not consider to speak and write about ‘Christendom’ in Armenia; in their view, the situation in Armenia after the conversion of King Tiridates can sufficiently be described by the use of the term ‘Christianity’ see. The American scholar Peter Brown, however, is totally right in disagreeing with this group of scholars; his book *The Rise of*

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Western Christendom is quite innovative when speaking about Christendom in the plural: the ‘Eastern Christendoms’ are put over against Western Christendom.11

In the course of the centuries, Christianity has moved from a minority position to a majority position. This shift did not only occur in Armenia, the oldest ‘Christian nation’ on earth, and in the Roman Empire, but subsequently also in Western and Northern Europe as well in the Americas, Oceania, the Philippines, and various parts of sub-Saharan Africa. This switch to a majority position has given birth to both positive and negative developments and trends. Pre-Constantinian Christianity did not at all practice compulsion, violence, inquisition, crusades, and the like. At the same time, it did not engage in translating the Christian message into statements and rules for society at large. In other words: ‘Christendom’ and the corpus christianum cannot be viewed merely as a curse, a moving away from the gospel preached in the New Testament and in the early church (cf. inquisition, crusades); it must also be considered as a blessing, especially the blessing of ‘christianizing’ the traditional patterns of societal life, resulting in common rules and in a common life style. In this context it is needed to raise the question whether the various scholars writing about ‘Christendom’ are balanced in their description and evaluation of what really happened in Armenia, in the Roman Empire, and subsequently elsewhere when vastly growing churches were obliged to take the lead in not only their own circles, but also in society at large. The voluntary acceptance of the gospel by a majority of the population is a blessing for society at large. At the same time, ecclesiastic power in and outside the corpus christianum corrupts in the same way as other power structures.

Two concrete matters of fact and trends can illustrate that ‘Christendom’ in the corpus christianum is not merely a negative phenomenon. Both are connected with the Christian calendar. From the period of the New Testament onwards, the Sunday has been the day at which Christians gathered in the church for worship, the day of celebrating the unique resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the day of commemorating the unique resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the day of celebrating the Eucharist. After his conversion, Emperor Constantine the Great established Sunday as the first day in a seven-day week-a unit of time unknown in the original Roman calendar... all citizens other than farmers were ordered to abstain from work on dies Solis-the Sun’s day. He also ordered the courts closed for litigation and the commanders of the army to restrict military exercises so that soldiers could worship the

god of their choice."\textsuperscript{12} This imperial decision, favouring not only the emancipated Christians but also the adherents of the Mithras cult and other Sun worshipers, promoted Sunday over against Saturday and implicitly promoted the societal significance of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week. Due to colonialism in the past centuries and to the banking life-style in today's setting, Sunday has become the most commonly accepted free day in six continents. Even large societies such as Indonesia, where the Christians clearly are in a minority position, accept and even maintain the Sunday as the free day. This global effect of an originally \textit{corpus christianum} decision by Constantine the Great is, all in all, a great blessing to the human community. Wherever in today's world people honour Sunday as a free day, they explicitly or implicitly recognize the great significance of the Sun, primarily and ultimately the significance of the resurrected Jesus Christ as "the Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2).

The second illustration is the Christian era. The Roman Empire counted its years from the legendary founding of the city of Rome by Romulus and Remus (\textit{ab urbe condita}). The early church in the Roman Empire used this calendar. A specifically Christian calendar was born merely in the days of the great persecution of the church under Emperor Diocletian (284-305): some Christian communities, particularly in Egypt, started to date their calendars from 284 C.E., i.e. the 'year of the martyrs.' The Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and in the dispersion, understanding mission and church history from the viewpoint of conformity with Christ's passion, still uses the \textit{anni Diocletiani}.\textsuperscript{13} This first Christian calendar is clearly pre-Constantinian. The next Christian calendar, however, was shaped in the context of the \textit{corpus christianum}. It has no link whatsoever with the suffering and the cross of Jesus Christ. In the sixth century, Dionysius Exiguus ("Little Dennis"), a Scythian monk in Rome, was commanded to carefully investigate 'the years of our Lord Jesus Christ (\textit{anni Domini nostri Jesu Christi}).' He proposed the so-called Gregorian calendar (named after Pope Gregory I), which begins to count years from the birth of Jesus Christ onwards. In the course of the Middle Ages, the \textit{anno Domini} (A.D.) system came into use in most parts of Europe. In modern times this calendar has been spread by Western colonizers and missionaries outside the Western world.\textsuperscript{14} In 1873 Japan adopted this calendar and in 1949 communist China followed.\textsuperscript{15} Nowadays the vast majority of nations and people groups count in accordance with this calendar. This

\textsuperscript{12} David Ewing Duncan, \textit{Calendar: Humanity's Epic Struggle to Determine a True and Accurate Year} (New York: Avon Books, 1998), p. 44.
\textsuperscript{13} Duncan, Calendar, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{14} Duncan, Calendar, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{15} Duncan, Calendar, p. 231.
calendar is not only a blessing for the church, but also for the whole human community. It is now so widely spread and accepted, that the ‘Christian era’ can be viewed as the ‘common era.’ Whoever uses the Gregorian calendar, publicly or privately views explicitly or implicitly, the birth of Jesus Christ, or the incarnation of the eternal Word of God (John 1:14) as the most significant event in human history.

These two illustrations make sufficiently clear that the term ‘Christendom’ is not at all bad per se and the term ‘Christianity’ not per se good. The celebration of Sunday as the day of Christ’s resurrection is clearly pre-Constantinian, but its civic effect, introduced and at the same time enforced by Constantine the Great, adds a new dimension. Apart from the more or less strict enforcement, there is nothing wrong in this development. The same can be said about the Christian era. The idea of Christians having their own ‘Christian era’ was raised and realized by the Coptic Orthodox Church in pre-Constantinian times, but its final shape took place in the post-Constantinian context of the corpus christianum. The New Testament neither gave birth to the civic effect of Sunday nor to the concept of a Christian/Common era. Christians cannot run away from, but can add to, the message of the New Testament. The Christianization of Sunday and the Christianization of the calendar in the corpus christianum are enormous blessings both to the church and to society at large. In the post-New Testament era they express the significance respectively of the resurrection and the birth of Jesus Christ in (cultural) ways unknown to the apostles and the evangelists.

‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ as fruits of ‘Christianizing’ processes and activities
Past and present Christians are the creative subject of both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity.’ Today’s Christians are confused regarding the use of these terms. Philip Jenkins, lecturing at the Penn State University in the USA, did not solve their problem. His influential book The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity may even have enlarged the existing terminological non-clarity and uncertainty. He brought both terms together in the title of the book, but did subsequently not distinguish their meaning and function clearly. From one point of view, he typifies the term ‘Christendom’ as ‘archaic,’ and from the other point of view he projects ‘something like a new Christendom.’ His so-called ‘next Christendom’ is in essence nothing but the coming of a ‘global Christianity.’ In addition it must be stated that the term ‘Christianization’ does not play a key role in Jenkins’ reflections.

Christians are primarily the subject of activities of ‘Christianizing’ communities, cultures, and societies at large. This additional term became very popular in 19th century Germany. The mission leaders and scholars of that era engaged in a vehement discussion whether Christian mission needs to aim at ‘the conversion of individuals (Einzelsekherung)’ and/or at ‘the Christianization of peoples (Völkerchristianisierung).’ Pietistic spokesmen favoured the first position, Lutherans such as Ludwig Harms (1808-1865) the second position, and the Lutheran scholar Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), the founding father of mission studies as an academic discipline, took both positions.  

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) however, went beyond the more or less normative considerations of the above-mentioned authors, advocating both relativism and pluralism: ‘Christian mission cannot offer a salvation that is absolutely superior to other offers or aim at the Christianization of all mankind. It may, instead, try to contribute to cultural and ethical harmony.’

Although the term ‘Christianization’ is no longer loved by the vast majority of contemporary scholars, it is used by Pope Benedict XVI. Time and again he has pleaded for ‘the re-Christianization of Europe.’ The present author wants to rethink the meaning and use of this disputed term and the phenomenon implied, in order to give a new stimulus to the ongoing Christendom-versus-Christianity debate. Both ‘Christendom’ and ‘Christianity’ can be viewed as the products of Christianizing processes and activities. At least four stages can be observed in the past and present processes of Christianizing communities, their societies, and their cultures.

Some authors have viewed discipling, i.e. bringing not only individuals but also whole communities to commitment to Jesus Christ, as ‘the first stage of Christianization.’ They identify Christianization more or less with evangelization. The Church Growth Movement in the USA can be viewed as representing this view: it emphasizes the need of discipling the adherents of other religions, world-views, and ideologies, and it regards perfecting, i.e. nurturing the converted people and people groups in their faith and bringing about ethical change, as the needed follow-up of discipling. However, Christianization is much broader than discipling and nurturing people. It also

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implies Christianizing the structures in which individuals and communities are living. The first stage of Christianization is people-oriented, and not structure-oriented. But the next three stages (see below), dealing with the necessary transformation of structures, go beyond the perspectives of ‘discipling’ and ‘nurturing.’

Translating the Christian message into new language fields is the second stage of the Christianization process.\textsuperscript{21} To be effective, this message needs to create and introduce a thoroughly monotheistic vocabulary, which is lacking in past and present cyclical religions and world-views. Warneck in Halle University viewed ‘the Christianization of the language (Sprachchristianisierung),’ as an integral part of the Christian missionary endeavour.\textsuperscript{22} The continuing responsibility of creating and updating a Christian vocabulary in each language field does not only have significance for the new Christians and their churches in the field concerned, but also for the adherents of other religions and belief-systems. The tremendous impact of biblical language on non-Christians can best be illustrated by pointing to the Koran. There never would have been a Koran written if an excellent Jewish-Christian monotheistic vocabulary had not existed, ready to be used as vehicle by Mohammed in the polytheistic setting of the Arab world of his day. In modern times, the Christian vocabulary has clearly impacted other non-Christian people groups as well. New linguistic studies can illustrate how the language of secular world-views and ideologies such as humanism, Nazism, and Communism, consciously and unconsciously has undergone quite immense Christian influence.

The third stage is ‘the education of peoples (Völkerpädagogie).’\textsuperscript{23} In colonial times huge numbers of mission schools were established as appropriate tools for educating whole communities in Christ’s way. These institutions attacked illiteracy, wanting to see each individual and each community – Christian and non-Christian – being able to read in their own language, ultimately to study the Scriptures as God’s saving word in their mother tongue. The end of the colonial era is not at all the end of the many educational responsibilities of Christians. In today’s setting, Christianizing education is a never-ending task of taking each pupil seriously as a unique creature, reflecting God’s uniqueness. It also implies rethinking pedagogy in the context of growing global awareness.

\textsuperscript{21} Carl Meinhof, \textit{Die Christianisierung der Sprachen Afrikas} (Basel: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1905).


\textsuperscript{23} Hoekendijk, \textit{Kerk}, pp. 76-83.
The final stage in the Christianization process can be described as creating a Christian culture and life-style among all communities, societies, and cultures. This new way of life does not only concern Sunday as the public day of rest and the Christian or Common era calendar, but also and primarily, the basic norms of social ethics such as ensuring justice for the poor and the oppressed and sustaining God's good creation. Indeed, there is no sector of human life from which Christ's good and Holy Spirit can be excluded.

'Christendom' and 'Christianity' are more or less the results of long Christianization processes. The present author does not want to revive the term 'Christianization' in order to stimulate clashes with the adherents of other religions, world-views, and ideologies. But he seriously wants to counterbalance the increasing Islamization and secularization of the human community. He is convinced that merely propagating and practising the evangelization of 'neighbours of other faiths' at home and abroad is not sufficient to answer the enormous challenges of today's world, including globalization processes, migrant populations, and climate change. Christians must not be naive and merely concern themselves with personal problems, to be solved by a personal Saviour. They also need to reflect on transforming structures. Such reflection needs to begin with historical and cultural awareness: Christianizing processes and activities have had and still have an enormous impact upon the human community. For instance, Christians may rightly be proud of the Red Cross, (known in Israel and in the Muslim countries under quite different names) because it was established by Henri Dunant (1828-1910), a convinced Christian. They may also be proud of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, because its concern for the individual is deeply rooted in Christian ways of thinking. In fact, the representative of the World Council of Churches provided the text of the article on religious freedom in the Declaration. Both the Red Cross and concern for human rights issues are examples of the Christianizing influence on human life worldwide.

Christendom/Christianity is a missionary religion, which is concerned not only about Christians and their churches but also about the whole human community. Although 'Christianization' is a somewhat archaic term, it is clear that Christendom/Christianity has more to contribute to the human community than just the 'evangelization' of individuals and communities (saving human souls); it also is concerned with the thorough 'transformation' of structures. The evangelization of communities and the Christianization of their cultures and their societies aim ultimately at nothing less than the 'humanization' of the human community. Jesus Christ, not only truly God but also truly human, has shown the way to evangelize and Christianize, i.e. humanize people and the many and various structures in which they live.
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The Role of the Multi-Faith Religious Education Curriculum in Botswana’s Schools

Fidelis Nkomazana

The paper examines the role played by the multi-faith Religious Education curriculum in primary and secondary schools in Botswana. It argues that the teaching of the multi-faith based curriculum has contributed to the development of children's values and moral standards. The teaching of the subject has influenced young people to be tolerant to people holding divergent religious, political and social views. The paper also offers excellent background material for understanding not only how religion influenced the past, but also how it continues to contribute to society today.

Introduction
In recognition of the fundamental value that could be derived from having religion as a school subject, the 1994 Kediikile Commission on Education, placed Religion together with Science and other subjects classified as a scarce skill in Category 1. Theoretically, this was a critical development in as far as human power training and the status of Religious Education in schools was concerned. The decision was reached by the Commission after a series of consultation with teachers, parents and other stakeholders. The majority of the population increasingly believed that the increase in societal challenges could be addressed by the teaching of religion in schools. The high rate of moral decay, the high rate of HIV and AIDS infection, the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse among young people, were all causing much concern.

It must also be pointed out that the appropriateness of Religious Education in the school curriculum results from the fact that it is designed in such a way that it is constitutionally permissible, educationally sound and sensitive to the beliefs of students and parents. The curriculum stresses the importance of tolerance, respect and accommodation of other people’s views and faiths.

Another very important factor closely associated with the Report of the 1994 Kedikilwe Commission on Education was the introduction of a multi-faith based curriculum. The report held the view that the children's education is not complete without a comparative study of religion, as well as the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. The Religious Education curriculum introduced as part of the implementation of the report certainly shows that religion is worthy of study for its uniting, ethical, moral and historic qualities. It does this by including the teaching of the beliefs and practices of different religions, which have contributed to helping young people appreciate the role of religion in history and contemporary society. The religious themes within such subjects as music, art and literature, show how interested and closely related the purpose of religions is to the needs of the society. This shows the extent to which religion is propelled into a position of public responsibility even by other subjects. This also shows that our society is very interested in the functions of religion. People will always turn to religion in matters such as death, witchcraft, and see religion as playing an important role in society. All these factors point to the importance of religion and to the reasons why it must be studied in Botswana schools. It is critical that our children are equally exposed to religious issues as they are to mathematics, history, etc, from a very early age.

This paper therefore argues that in the face of deteriorating national values and rapid social change, the Religious Education programme in Botswana schools can be used to cultivate and preserve the moral and cultural values that kept Batswana a proud, united and healthy community in the past. Furthermore, the Religious Education programme has the potential to assist Botswana to rediscover a collective identity based upon shared values and a respect for ethnic or cultural differences, or differing views and religious beliefs as stated in the Vision 2016 pamphlet.  

### Historical development of the teaching of religious education in schools in Botswana

The development of the teaching of Religious Education in schools among Batswana has taken place in three major stages: the pre-colonial stage, the missionary stage and the present day stage, which came with the concept of a multi-religious approach curriculum in schools.

#### The pre-colonial stage

The teaching of Religious Education to Batswana children dates back to the pre-colonial times. It was through informal and formal education that young

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3 Vision 2016 (1986), Long Term Vision for Botswana: Towards Prosperity for All, p. 27.
people were taught by their parents and elders of the community. The first formal and informal instructions presented to children were to do with proper behaviour, respect and submission to authority in general.\textsuperscript{4} These values were not only an expectation, but obligatory for all young people. The broad terminology underlying these fundamental values and moral standards can be summarized by the word Botho.\textsuperscript{5} It was upon the concept of Botho that the life and aspirations of the community rested. It is on the premise of this understanding that the Botswana National Vision 2016 has challenged the nation to revive the concept of Botho and incorporate it into the education system, the economic and social systems as well as other development projects and programmes. Discussing the pillar with the heading ‘Building A Moral and Tolerant Society’, the National Vision 2016 points out that:

We must build both into a national principle. Botho must be central to education, to home and community life, to the workplace, and to national policy. Religious organizations must be assisted to play a full part in imparting a sound moral and human-rights education in schools, and in the community.\textsuperscript{6}

Botho, refers to the spirit of fellowship, co-operation, selflessness, compassion, tolerance, respect and sharing. Children had to learn these values in the home, at school, in the community and in the workplace. Botho remained the central theme of the traditional school curriculum. Religious Education of the time was recognised as central to the maintenance and transmission of moral and ethical standards. Religion and human spirituality were therefore seen as encouraging the qualities of human spirituality and confidence needed by the society. It was part of the traditional forms of education that assisted in imparting a sound moral education in schools. Religious Education is today expected to achieve the same goals.\textsuperscript{7}

In the traditional set up, instruction rested upon oral instruction, as opposed to reading and writing. Formal instruction encompassed children who had reached the age of puberty, during the initiation ceremonies, which were divided into two schools of bogwera, the school for boys, and bojale, the


\textsuperscript{5} Long Term Vision for Botswana, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{6} Long Term Vision for Botswana, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{7} Mgadla, Missionaries and Western Education, pp. 1-6.
school for girls.\textsuperscript{8} The teachers who were selected to instruct these boys and girls were themselves experts in cultural, religious and political matters of the community. The basic aim of this instruction was to prepare children to cope with society’s demands and to provide them with skills to successfully incorporate the values they required into their everyday life. Religion, therefore, always played a central role in the school curriculum, as well as in all levels of society. It always informed and influenced all the other subjects and, in fact, dictated terms to every sphere of learning that took place among the Batswana. This function of religion as a school subject confirmed by William Charles Willoughby, a London Missionary Society’s agent among the Batswana, who describes its centrality, as the ‘Soul of the Bantu’. He further writes: ‘Bantu life is basically religious... Religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doing and governs their leisure to an extent that it is hard for Europeans to imagine’.\textsuperscript{9}

It must be noted therefore that pre-colonial education largely aimed at strengthening the norms and values of the society, which were basically religious in nature and practice. This type of education made specific emphasis on character formation and development. As such, religion formed the basis of education on the traditional stage.

\textit{From the missionary stage to the early 1980s}

The pre-colonial stage and its form of education was weakened in the mid-1950s and/or in some cases replaced by the missionary form of education.\textsuperscript{10} The aim of the missionary education was closely associated with the missionary objectives, which basically aimed at propagating Christianity and converting Batswana to Christianity. The kind of education which the missionaries introduced was therefore influenced by their attitudes and aims. The missionaries considered their own European cultural and religious values and morals to be superior to those held by the indigenous people. It was for this reason that the educational systems of Batswana such as the bogwera and bojale traditional schools were referred to as heathen, barbaric and backward. Quoting A.J. Dachs, Part Mgadla, for instance, observes that:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Mgadla, \textit{Missionaries and Western Education}, p. 3; Nkomazana, ‘Gender Analysis of Bojale and Bogwera Initiation Among Batswana’, \textit{Boleswa: Journal of Theology, Religion, and Philosophy}, 1, No.1 (2005), pp. 26-49.
\end{itemize}
In Christian Faith, Mackenzie saw a means to God so that his entire life was transformed. The heathen was to be converted in his beliefs and customs, industry was to be encouraged, education fostered, and a new society created and western civilization established. Change was to be profound, but it was also to be peaceful and beneficial to the eyes of the Victorian Englishmen confident in their industrial and commercial wealth and their technological supremacy.11

The main reasons for educating Batswana was for the purposes of having them read the Bible for themselves, and that the promising students could later be trained to become schoolmasters, so they could forward education, and assist in teaching their students the Word of God. The teaching of religion, therefore, took precedence over literacy because the goal was to produce preachers who would do the work of the missionaries among their people, and in their own language. What is evident therefore is that even in the case of missionary education, religion remained central to the principle of education. The Bible was the major text used for reading and writing lessons. It was also used as the major text from which lessons on morality and behaviour were drawn. The various lessons on other subjects such as Geography, History and English also revolved around the Bible. Extracts for reading and writing classes were copied from the Bible, a thing which the missionary deliberately designed in order to kill two birds with one stone. As such the Bible was accepted as an important text in missionary education.12

In summary therefore, like the traditional education, the purpose of the missionary education was to develop the whole life of an individual. Education at both the traditional and missionary levels of development, promoted the bringing together of personal, social and moral values. It also equipped learners to contribute to society. To some extent, both these forms of education saw tolerance and compassion, which are also emphasized by the Botswana policies of Education and the Vision 2016 as crucial components of education.13 The missionary education, however, did not encourage religious pluralism or some form of a multi-faith curriculum. This was seen as contradicting their objectives and mission or even defeating their goal of ‘winning souls’ or converts.

In the 1970s, while the approach in the teaching of Religious Education changed slightly, the use of the Bible as the main text for learning and teaching of religion in both primary and secondary schools remained very strong. While a much simpler version of the Bible was used in primary schools, at the secondary schools, the Revised Standard Version of the Bible was com-

11 Mgdala, Missionaries and Western Education, p. 8.
12 Mgdala, Missionaries and Western Education, pp. 4, 39, 51, 107 & 192.
13 Mgdala, Missionaries and Western Education, pp. 22, 25, 26, 57, 67 & 73.
monly used. The Bible Knowledge programme remained in place in schools like Seepapitsi Secondary School, Moeding College, Mater Spei and Maun Secondary, until the mid-1980s. The programme, for instance, exposed students to the following Biblical themes: birth and infancy of Jesus; beginning of the ministry of Jesus; principles and duties of the Christian community; parables of the Kingdom; the mighty works of Jesus Christ; healing and teachings of Jesus Christ and the crucifixion and resurrection.

The programme introduced students to life in general and specifically to the ministry of Jesus. It therefore imparted to children moral values based on the Bible and generally contributed towards producing students who were socially independent and generally more committed to facing the challenges of life. Its critics blamed the programme for exposing students to indoctrination, especially since the majority of its teachers were either committed or practicing Christians who were not trained in comparative religions, philosophy and ethics. The programme was life-oriented, emphasizing what might be seen as the fundamental values of Botso, such as respect, unity, cooperation, hard work, self-reliance, tolerance etc. However, tolerance here referred to human beings in general and not to their religious practices and beliefs, while they could not support any form of persecuting those who belonged to other religions, they would not support any form of religious pluralism in schools.

The religious and moral education curriculum

The curriculum based on Bible Knowledge continued until the 1980s, when it was replaced by the Religious and Moral Education curriculum, which basically aimed at imparting desired moral values for everyday living and for the development of learners, who were to be responsible members of a plural society. The Junior Certificate programme was known as Developing in Christ. This was a life-centred Religious Education programme, which was a Bible-based Christian religious education programme. The programme was built around life, using as a starting point the life of young students. The materials were designed in such a way that students were enabled to talk of their life experiences, especially significant ones, and to discover the religious meaning of these experiences. It encouraged students to recognize human experience as belonging to the content of religious education. The idea was to help students to realize that they could find Modimo (God) in their everyday experiences.

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The Developing in Christ Programme

The Developing in Christ Programme, as already mentioned above, contained the Religious and Moral Education Course for junior secondary schools. The courses of the programme were presented in two teachers' guides and content books entitled Developing in Christ Book One and Two. Each book covered six life-centred Religious Education and student materials and courses with the following booklet titles:

1. Christ and my personal freedom
2. Christ and my work and relationships
3. Christ and my power to live
4. My responsibility in community
5. My search for values
6. My response to values

The first three courses were covered in book one and the last three were presented in book two.

Developing in Christ may be considered the most powerful, relevant, and contextual Religious Education programme ever taught to students in Botswana. It developed students and imparted them with the necessary values that prepared and empowered them to be independent, co-operative and responsible members of the community. It was however, replaced by a programme, which, while it introduced a very important element of tolerance and accommodation of other religious faiths, lost the beautiful approach of emphasizing life experiences, such as the importance of personal freedom, relationships, power, life, responsibility in community, values and our roles in society. This curriculum introduced relevance, independence and responsible living.

Methodology of the Developing in Christ Curriculum

The methodology of the Developing in Christ programme followed three important stages outlined below.

♦ The centrality of Jesus Christ – The centrality of Jesus Christ in the study of Religious Education was emphasized and taken as the starting point in the learning experiences of young people.

♦ The life experience of the student – moving from the known to the unknown and understood as a fundamental principle of educating the young. This meant starting from where the students are, with their own experiences, and the experiences of people around them, taking the culture and the wisdom of their people seriously. This was intended to help them to realize that God was calling them within their own time, place and circumstances.
The life situation context of their country and Africa – The life-situation with specific examples from the schools, work place and Africa was emphasized. Developing in Christ was offered as a school subject in the local context and within the context of Africa. One other important point is that the Developing in Christ courses were an ecumenical Christian religious education programme designed to meet the needs of children in Africa coming from different Christian backgrounds – Catholics, Protestants, including Pentecostals and African Independent Churches. They aimed to communicate the common core of the Christian message, thus avoiding areas of division and conflict. The programme aimed at educating students within their denominational traditions with emphasis on issues that strengthened and united the Body of Christ."

**Christian Living Today Programme**

The Religious Education programme for senior schools was known as ‘The Christian Living Today’. It followed the same approach as the Developing in Christ Programme discussed above. The methodology was also life-centred with topics following a cycle of five key themes:

1. Present situation
2. African tradition
3. Church history
4. Bible
5. Synthesis/analysis

The programme introduced the learners to four important categories of African life and experience by drawing examples from family, society, church, including the present situation, African tradition, church history and Bible. Through this programme learners were presented with the rich political, economic, religious and social experiences and values of their past and present community as well as those of other African people right from Bible times.

The Christian Living Today was made up of the following five themes:

1. Man in a changing society with three major sub-topics: living in a changing society, working in a changing society and leisure in a changing society. The central message here is that change is inevitable and thus a way of life. Learners were encouraged not only to accept change, but also to prepare and empower themselves, through education, training, exposure and experiences of other peoples and communities. The programme, in many ways, prepared learners for the global world since the world was becoming much smaller, dynamic and interdependent. They had to accept

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that through mass media, every part of the world was being impacted and changed faster than expected. The political, religious and economic forces of the western world were imposing their standards and expectations on Africa in an unprecedented manner. The impact of globalization was also so powerful that it either crushed or marginalized those who tried to resist or ignore it. Learners were therefore made to understand that it was time for change.

2 Order and Freedom in Society also has three important sub-themes: justice in society, service in society and loyalty in society. The questions of order, freedom, justice, loyalty and service were seen as critical for national stability, development and democracy.

3 Life – which also dealt with three sub-themes of happiness, unending life and success. The subject of life, its meaning, sustenance and the whole concept of *Boito*, discussed above, were critical to the development of learners.

4 Man and woman – which discusses matters of family life, sex differences, courtship and marriage, prepared and empowered learners for practical and community life. The expectations of the community were clearly defined and communicated to learners.

5 Man’s response to God through faith and love, covers the sub-themes: man’s quest for God, man’s evasion of God and Christian involvement in the world. The key message imparted to learners here is that the religious experience of people should inspire them to serve their community.

As the programme summarized above shows, the Christian Living Today\textsuperscript{16} was broad-based and contextual in the way it addressed issues. It drew examples from contemporary society, from tradition, from history and from the Bible. Finally, at the synthesis stage and as a way of conclusion and summary, it equipped and trained learners to draw lessons, implications and analysis from each topic. This stage challenged learners to re-examine issues learned and apply them to their lives, family, church and society.

The Multi-faith curriculum approach

In the 1990s some teachers who had studied comparative or world religions began to challenge the idea of the relevance of teaching a Christian based Religious Education curriculum in public schools. This led to a syllabus review, which coincided with the Kedikilwe National Commission on Education of

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1993, the result of which was the introduction of a multi-faith religious Education Programme in junior secondary schools in January 1996. A draft of the multi-faith syllabus for the senior secondary schools is experiencing lots of difficulties. As it was being finalized, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa strongly expressed their dissatisfaction with the syllabus. They complained to the Minister of Education and managed to stall the process of finalizing the syllabus. At the moment there are two draft syllabi, one drafted by the Government Curriculum Taskforce and another by the team of church representatives from the abovementioned churches.\(^{17}\)

It must also be mentioned that the Report of 1993 Kedikilwe Commission on Education strongly recommended the separation of Moral Education and Religious Education, which had from the 1980s been taught as one subject. The Commission recommended that Religious Education be taught as a multi-religious programme, while the Moral Education is taught as a different subject from Religious Education. It was hoped that the introduction of the multi-religious education curriculum in schools, would influence the way young lived. It was expected that different religious traditions would contribute towards producing a responsible, morally upright, committed and hardworking society. Both the government and parents were concerned about the level of morality in schools, and hoped that the teaching of Religious Education would impart positive religious values that would help in moulding children's behaviour and reduce the escalating levels of teenage pregnancy. The multi-religious approach, like the Bible knowledge curriculum introduced by missionaries and continued by government with the support of Christian churches after independence, aimed at inculcating morals and values. The only major difference between the two programmes was that the current curriculum has introduced the multi-faith approach.

The major themes of the religious education curriculum in primary and secondary schools
An analysis of the primary and secondary schools Religious Education materials and curriculum reveal that the subject aims at developing moral values and social cultural identity, self-esteem, good citizenship and desirable work ethics, etc.\(^{18}\) Despite the weight that is given to the subject in terms of what it

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\(^{17}\) Personal contact with Boitumelo Gaseitsiwe, the Senior Religious Education Officer, Curriculum and Development at the Ministry of Education, and Reverend Damnie Muuulefe, Senior official of the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa have played a leading role in the development of these draft syllabi.

is expected to achieve in as far as imparting moral values are concerned, and the significant contribution in promoting these values and qualities, it is taught as an optional subject at the junior secondary level. At both the primary and senior secondary it is taught as an enrichment subject. Its role and impact in schools is therefore seriously undermined by this arrangement. The Primary school syllabus, which is also multi-faith based covers the following themes:

1 Human experiences: culture and HIV and AIDS, morals within the traditional society, law, crime and punishment, caring for others and choices and consequences
2 Key religious elements: festivals, worship and rites of passage
3 Religious Laws
4 Rights and responsibilities: children, women and animal rights

The junior secondary School Syllabus, which laid a foundation for the Junior Certificate programme, covers the following topics:
1 Introduction to Religion: What is religion? Characteristics of religion and Origins of religions
2 Origin of the universe and humankind: myths of creation and African ideas of God
3 Religious practices and ceremonies: festivals and rites of passage
4 Basic beliefs, teachings, intermediaries and sacred literature and objects
5 Respect for life: abortion, murder, suicide and substance abuse
6 Family life: marriage, divorce, sex and sexuality, contraception
7 Others include HIV and AIDS, freedom and justice, human rights, capital punishment, authority, loyalty and friendship

Both the primary and secondary syllabi require that these themes are dealt with from a multi-faith approach. In each case examples are drawn from different religious traditions such as Islam, African Traditional Religion, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Bahai Faith. The discussion of family issues, for instance, shows that different religions are expected to produce children or future parents who will contribute towards the establishment of upright, strong and moral families. From the 1970s onwards, the rate of teenage pregnancy that also resulted in high school dropout of girls worried both Government and parents. This also worsened the problem of unemployment due to rural - urban migration.

As part of an effort to strengthen the family, the multi-faith programme covered the following topics:
- The challenges of single-parent families
- The roles of men and women
The advantages of the extended family
- The family and community life: functions and importance of the family and the role of children
- The views and attitudes of the different religions on the family
- The religious duties of family members such as parents and children
- Family and marital values – marital union is expected to produce an everlasting love, care, commitment, unity and completeness
- Cultural and religious values such as virginity are presented as something that is positive and that should bring pride, happiness and celebration to the family and the individuals. Virginity is strongly supported by all the major religious traditions
- Divorce – the attitudes and views of different religions on divorce is negative. Most religions generally discourage divorce and present it as destructive to the family
- Homosexuality – while it is seen as a human right issue, the views of different religions as well as the laws of Botswana are said to be against the practice
- HIV and AIDS – this is another important area through which different religions are expected to have the potential to make a meaningful contribution or influence the society through the school curriculum.

The new curriculum came at a time when the HIV and AIDS pandemic was escalating and many young people were dying. The views and attitudes of the different religions as well as their role in helping, counselling and accepting people living with HIV and AIDS was explored. Ways to prevent the spread as well as the various cultural myths and misconceptions, positive and negative practices and beliefs were surveyed.

The section on human rights, crime, violence and punishment are of particular interest, especially the discussions on children's rights and abuse and the role of different interest groups, such as religions, Government and non-governmental organizations. The importance of caring, compassion, tolerance in the light of Vision 2016, advocates for a moral and tolerant nation. Issues of gender, discrimination, justice, freedom, dishonesty, corruption, violence and tolerance are also crucial aspects of the school curriculum. Respect for life is another important topic of the Religious Education curriculum that contributes towards influencing the society. It includes things like abortion, murder, suicide and substance abuse. From the late 1990s there was a rise in ritual murders and the so-called love killings. Different religions were expected to respond to these challenges through the Religious Education programmes.
Is multi-faith religious education losing relevance and influence?
This is the central question discussed at any conference dealing with religion. In recent years there has been a surge of opinion that religion is losing influence. What needs to be underlined is that even where religion seems to be losing impact, it is evidently far from losing relevance. Opinion about religion may be changing rapidly and dramatically, but the sense that it remains relevant to contemporary problems has been remarkably constant for many years. The coming of modernity (whatever this means), gave the impression that religion's influence in Botswana was in a downswing or losing its ground. The growth of science and technology has pushed religion to the margins in the school curriculum at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. The majority of young adults have been influenced to believe that religion was rapidly becoming less important. This sentiment however tends to change when we talk to those young people who have been exposed to Religion Education in schools.

Why should the study of religions be included in the school curriculum?
I would suggest that religions should be included in the school curriculum because different religions play a significant role in history and society. They are also essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices and concepts of the various religions makes unintelligible much of history, literature, art and contemporary life. It is for this reason that it would be a mistake to think that we can as a nation do without the teaching of religious Education in our schools.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the study of religions is also important if student are to value religious liberty and tolerance. Moreover, knowledge of the role of religion in the past and present promotes the cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace.

Another very important point is that religion is more than just a belief in a deity; it is philosophy and a way of life. It can define who you are, how you view the world around you and how you interact with it.

One of the most relevant points, already emphasized above is that the teaching about religions relate to the teaching of values, which is important for maintenance and transmission of moral and ethical standards. It makes students aware of their civic duty and self-reliance. The multi-faith religious education curriculum recognizes that there are basic moral values that are recognized by the population at large, such as honesty, integrity, justice, compassion etc. These values can be taught in classes through discussion, by example and by carrying out school, community and national policies. How-
ever, teachers should not invoke partisan religious authority. What is important is that in teaching the various religious and non-religious perspectives concerning the many complex moral issues confronting society, perspectives must be presented without adopting, sponsoring or denigrating one view against another. The teacher of Religious Education must be balanced, informed and tolerant of views he/she does not personally subscribe to.

Overview and conclusion
In conclusion, therefore, it must be pointed out that the teaching of Religious Education to Baswana has always been part and parcel of their education system. It was inseparable from their formal and informal education and immensely contributed to the quality of people’s lives. Religious Education is about everyday life and draws its examples from everyday life. The subject has also immensely contributed to the prevention of drugs in our schools and community. It creates a positive social environment for our youthful populations. Furthermore, Religious Education, more than any other school subject, provides the educator with a great opportunity to mainstream HIV and AIDS into the schools curriculum. It focuses on social, moral and ethical issues of diverse kinds. It is also about decision-making.

Religion permeates the whole of human life. There are no human relationships that have no moral and religious implications. It demonstrates the inseparability between religion and culture. This is why the Religious Education programme agrees with the National Vision 2016 of Botswana that the concept of Botho (personhood) should be the most acceptable development paradigm. Being human is being morally upright. Hence the adoption of Botho as one of the central pillars of Botswana society makes sense. It confirms what Religious Education has been all about all these years.

In support of the National Vision 2016 pillar that calls for a moral and tolerant nation, the Religious Education system stresses the value of a multicultural society. Botswana must rediscover a collective identity based upon shared values and a respect for ethnic or cultural differences, differing views or religious beliefs.

Teaching Religious Education is teaching students to develop critical values of honesty, tolerance and to engage in the process of building relationships that are relevant to life especially at a time when some studies suggest that Africans are increasingly less tolerant of the religious views of others while being less likely to compromise when their religious views are at stake.

Religion has always played a significant role in shaping society. The nation’s pluralist religious heritage remains deeply intertwined with Botswana culture and identity. In recent years, however, the public voice of religious views has declined even as the nation’s religious diversity has in-
increased. In this context, maintaining a pluralistic democracy demands a corresponding advance in our citizens’ capacity to understand religious differences so as to maintain the ability and willingness to engage across differences of belief for the sake of the common good.

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Authentically African, Authentically Anglican

Cephas N. Omenyo & Abraham N.O. Kwakye

The Anglican Church in Ghana originally was the official church for the colonial authorities. The Holy Trinity Cathedral was the venue for all state functions. This gave the Anglican Church the label, the Governor’s church. Indeed to all intents and purposes it was a typical English church in Ghana. Interestingly, in spite of this history, one can discover typical African coloration in the history and development of the church. This essay discusses aspects of the history of the Anglican Church in Ghana delineating the roles indigenous African Christians played in rooting Anglicanism in Ghanaian soil right from its inception till present. It contributes to the bigger discussion on African Initiatives in the planting, nurturing and the growth of Christianity in Africa.

Introduction
In recent times, there have been calls for a paradigm shift in African Christian historiography. This paradigm shift calls for an African interpretation of the life of the church in Africa that does not overlook the African agency. Andrew F. Walls commenting on Kenneth Scott Latourette’s monumental work, A History of the Expansion of Christianity, argues that ‘since his [Latourette] time, much fundamental research has been conducted on the primary sources, oral and written, and new perspectives have been taken up in which Africans, Asians and Latin Americans figure as the principal agents of Christian expansion’. He has also said that ‘modern African Christianity is not only the result of movements among Africans, but has been principally sustained by Africans and is to a surprising extent the result of African initiatives. Even the missionary factor must be put into perspective’. This call is corroborated by Ogbu Kalu, a leading African scholar who has noted that ‘The history of Christianity in Africa is not only what missionaries did or did not do, but also what Africans thought about what was going on, and how they responded’. He further argues that missionary historiography, which

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refers to histories of missions written by missionaries and their protégés, is often hagiographic, triumphalist and disdainful of indigenous non-European cultures. Kalu therefore calls for a new African Christian historiography that examines African initiatives without neglecting the roles of various missionary bodies.

Invariably, these African initiatives have erroneously been limited to only the African Independent Church era. However, these African initiatives have spanned the various epochs of African Christianity. This is because Africans have consistently accepted the gospel in great numbers, appropriated and owned it because they have always been convinced that the gospel adequately explains their world. The ingenuity and yet resilience of African cultures has enabled them to pick and choose what they find as having the potential to enable them confront challenges in their context and own such innovation. Kwame Bediako’s reading of this tendency among Africans led him to describe African Christianity as a non-western religion.

One of the churches in Ghana that has strong roots in African participation and initiatives is the Church of the Province of West Africa or better still, the Anglican Church. Its present character often presents an impression of a church with great English tendencies and little African contribution. Indeed, the Ghanaian Anglican church is mainly elitist, very Catholic and orthodox in ethos, mainly characterized by high clericalism. Its liturgy and spirituality has been thoroughly characterized by Anglo Catholic spirituality. The following account by Paul Jenkins gives us an insight into the high Anglo-Saxon liturgical practices inherited by the Anglican Church in Ghana:

Bishop O’Rorke introduced a simple Anglo-Catholicism into the Diocese, and by 1920 the Communion was called, and treated as, the Mass; the Sacrament was reserved in some of the churches with resident priests; confession was encouraged; and the sacristan bell, some vestments, and incense were in use. The members of the Anglican Order of St. Benedict added further catholicities and by the end of

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6 Kwame Bediako, Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), particularly chapters 4 and 10.

1924 in the church at Cape Coast the Angelus had become familiar and the Benedictines' liturgy of Benediction was being celebrated on Sunday evenings.  

While arguing that the high church spirituality has some virtues, such as its attractiveness to the African, John Pobee is one of the foremost African scholars who actively engage in advocacy of the indigenization of Anglicanism. Interestingly a discerning observer can see indicators that give the Anglican church in Ghana not only a Ghanaian/African identity, but truly that of an African Church hence its persistence and vibrancy today.

This section seeks to show that the Anglican Church in Ghana has grown as a result of the roles played by African personnel as key players in the missionary enterprise. This essay situates the story of the Anglican Church in Ghana in three eras; The Early Stage (The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries), The Second Stage (Twentieth Century) and finally, the Post Western Missionary Era (last two decades of the 20th Centuries and early twenty-first century). One gathers from the survey of these eras that Africans have consistently played significant roles in the establishment and nurture of the Church.

**The first epoch (18th and 19th centuries)**

The story of Ghanaian Anglicanism can be traced as far as the eighteenth century. It is the story of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) which was established in eighteenth century England by Royal Charter in 1701. It was however in 1720 that the Royal African Company invited the SPG to 'recommend proper persons to be chaplains to their factories abroad, offering to allow them £80 or £100 per annum with diet at the Governor's table'. Although the SPG agreed to the request, nothing came out of it because of the rather ethnic orientation of the SPG which tended to limit itself to the spiritual care of the English in the North American colonies. However, in 1751 Rev. Thomas Thompson, a missionary from England, volunteered to pioneer mission in the Gold Coast. He stayed at Cape Coast for five years, and was involved in mission to Anomabo, Tantum

10 In 1965, the SPG and the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) came together to form the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG).
and Winneba, albeit without much success. His limitations as a European convinced him that it would take African church leaders to make mission successful in Africa. As John S. Pobee has shown, ‘Thompson decided that the future of the Anglican missionary endeavor on the coast lay with trained local people. The decision to go the Africanisation route was not only a matter of common sense and convenience but also more importantly because of a conviction rooted in the Anglican ethos’.  

This decision led to the selection of three young Africans for training in England. They were Thomas Kraba and two sons of Caboceer Kojo Mensah, Philip Quaque and William Cudjoe. 13 This Africanisation experiment was not without challenges as Thomas Kraba died soon after arrival of tuberculosis and smallpox and William Cudjoe suffered a mental breakdown and died in 1759 leaving Philip Quaque as the sole survivor. Quaque was ordained priest at the Chapel Royal in St. James on May 17 1765, becoming the first African to receive holy orders in the Anglican Church. He married Catherine Blunt, an educated English girl in England, a few days before his ordination. 14 The couple returned in February of the following year to Cape Coast where Quaque was to be employed officially as ‘Missionary, Schoolmaster and Catechist to the Negroes on the Gold Coast’. He served as an Anglican chaplain of the colonial forts for fifty years. Commenting on the work of Quaque and Jacobus Capitein, leading Fante converts, trained and Europe as ministers of the Gospel, Adrian Hastings observes, ‘In missionary terms they were all failures... gifted individuals, blossoming in Europe but tied in Africa to a tiny white slaving community and only serving beyond it a rather nominally Christian fringe of mulattos living in the shadow of a fort’. 15 Quaque faced a number of challenges. The first of these was the horrible trade in slaves. In a letter to Samuel Johnson, an S.P.G. missionary in Connecticut, he wrote that in Africa ‘the stir of religion and its ever-lasting recompense is not so much in vogue as the vicious doctrine of purchasing flesh and blood like oxen in market place’. 16 As long as the trade in slaves con-

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13 The Caboceer, derived from the Portuguese word *Cabocelo* meaning Captain, it referred to a middleman in the slave trading business. Such a person played the role of an agent of the castles.
timed, it was difficult for the young missionary to succeed, mainly because his own compatriots saw him as an ally of the Europeans who were involved in this obnoxious trade.

His second problem was linguistic-related. His dozen years in England had erased his native tongue from memory, and he never succeeded in re-learning it. He was therefore obligated to speak through an interpreter. Although an indigene, he had become a foreigner in his homeland. This created a barrier between him and the local people. Finally, the British authorities at Cape Coast Castle were indifferent, if not hostile, to the missionary work, and church services were infrequent. In spite of these challenges, Quaque pursued his mandate especially that of establishing and running a school to train indigenous young people. Branches of the school were opened at Anomabo, Tantumquerry, Winneba, Accra, Komenda, Sekondi and Dixcove which were all English trading posts.

Two of the products of Quaque’s educational work, John Martin and Joseph Smith, became leaders of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a local Christian group, which was also known as ‘The Meeting’. This society was “... resolved to study the Word of God as the best rule for Christian living...”17. It was this society that sent an invitation through one Captain Potter to the Wesleyan Missionary Society which led to the beginning of Methodism in the country. Philip Quaque is therefore not credited with only laying the foundations for the Anglican Church in Ghana but also the conversion of Fantes to Christianity, particularly, conversion to the Methodist Church.18

Following the death of Quaque in 1816, the SPG sent four European missionaries who died in rapid succession from malaria. The work of the SPG did not however cease as some lay Africans continued the work of evangelisation under the supervision of visiting clergymen from Sierra Leone. Although Quaque’s short stay of four months at Accra between 1772 and 1773 did not yield substantial fruits, a century later, a group of thirty Africans came together to establish the Church in Accra. They included Edmund Bannerman, Alex Bruce, E.B. Addy, C.T. Nylander, J.O. Brown, R.W.B. Bruce, Thomas Bruce, P.C. Reindorf, Chief John Barnor, William Quaye, F.P. Fearon, J.E.M. Baskin, C.Cuthbert Brown, J. Fleischer and J.L. Crabbe.19 African initiative was at work here before the creation of a Gold Coast diocese.

19 Pobee, The Anglican Story in Ghana, p. 133.
Paul Jenkins has also noted that by the time Bishop N.T. Hamlyn of the Church Missionary Society arrived in the Gold Coast in 1904 to inaugurate the second phase of Ghanaian Anglicanism; there were pioneer congregations that had developed without missionary support.20 These were the two colonial chaplaincy congregations at Cape Coast and Accra, a congregation started in Axim in the 1890’s by the African legal and commercial community and a small Yoruba Anglican group in Sekondi dating from 1902.

One of the colonial chaplaincy congregations was that of an outstanding indigenous Ga minister, A.W. Hanson. Hanson was described by Andreas Stanger of the Basel Mission as a minister of the American Episcopal Church (American Anglicans) and a Chaplain of the Cape Coast Castle and a native of British Accra.21 In 1843 when the Basel Mission was about to start her renewed activities in the Gold Coast, the British and Foreign Bible Society published *Saji Kpakpai – Boni Mateo ke Yohane nma ha* (The Gospels of Matthew and John). J.G. Christaller, the renowned Basel mission linguist said that ‘This translation is remarkable by its originality and attempted exactness in representing the various sounds and tones of the language’.22 Johannes Zimmerman, the Basel missionary credited with the translation of the Bible into Ga, acknowledged this work of Hanson as ‘of great value, especially for grammatical researches’.23 Here too, we notice clearly the efforts of the indigenous African people in starting churches and expansion of the Anglican Communion. It goes to show that without much European agency, the Anglican Church had spread in many parts of Southern Ghana in the eighteenth and nineteenth century under the influence of many Africans. It confirms the theory by many African scholars that African Christianity is largely the result of African initiatives.

The second epoch
The Second Stage of Ghanaian Anglicanism is dated from 1904 when Bishop N.T. Hamlyn was charged with reviving the abandoned Anglican missionary work there. As Pobee has shown, this revival came from two routes. The first was the prompting of an unnamed indigenous African contractor who was constructing the Sekondi-Kumasi railway line. He asked the SPG to send a

clergyman to the many white men and thousands of natives employed on the construction. The second route was the petition by two indigenous Africans, John and Isaac Vanderpuije, presented to Rt. Rev. Dr Henry Cheetham, Bishop of Sierra Leone, in 1879 that requested the establishment of a parish. It was in response to these calls that N.T. Hamlyn, a CMS missionary based in Lagos, left Lagos for Accra. The mission was however dealt a heavy blow with the death of Hamlyn which left the Church without a priest or Bishop. Despite the absence of the expatriate priests, the congregations did not disintegrate. The indigenous Christians kept the faith, lived it and sustained until the arrival of a succession of bishops like Mather, O’Rorke, Aglionby, Daly and Rosevarce who continued to offer leadership to the young church. Anglicanism in the country therefore was sustained and grew more as a result of the involvement of indigenous people.

One of such indigenous people who made an impact was John Swatson, a former Methodist teacher-catechist. Swatson was a follower of William Wade Harris, the Liberian prophet whose movement brought great impetus to Christianity in West Africa in the period of the First World War. Harris has been described by Bediako as ‘a trail-blazer and a new kind of religious personage on the African scene, the first independent African Christian prophet.’ Swatson had a love for the English Church Mission though it was not as active as the Roman Catholics and Methodists in that part of the Gold Coast, namely Nzimaland. Indeed, Swatson maintained that it was Harris who told him that he must now be a member of the Church of England as captured by Hans W. Debrunner as follows:

Harris imposed on Swatson the duty to evangelise... Early in 1915 John Swatson took up his cross and staff and started off on his evangelistic tour, and performed the same wonders as Mr. Harris. Mostly those whom he baptised joined themselves to some mission such as the Wesleyans or Roman Catholics, but in some cases they did not do so, but became little independent bodies calling themselves ‘Church of England’ or ‘Christ Church’... So he traversed Appolonia [Nzima], Aowin, Wassaw and Denkyira and arrived in Sefwi at the end of 1915.

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26 Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 91.
Soon after, in 1916, he visited Gresham Wynter Morrison, Archdeacon of the Accra Diocese with his seat at Kumasi, and offered him the fruits of his labour, a list of 1077 names of people Harris had baptised himself.²⁹

When Morrison visited Swatson’s mission field, he was well received and consequently, he appointed Swatson and his workers as agents of the Anglican Church. Swatson settled in his home of Beyin, Nzima, where he sought to make the Christian faith relevant to his people by translating the Prayer Book and hymns into Nzima.³⁰ Thus he was able to conduct a purely vernacular Anglican mass for people who hitherto ‘... could not participate meaningfully in the English Prayer Book services’ because of illiteracy in English.³¹ It is noteworthy that in Swatson let congregations, dancing in African style, and attempts to ‘baptise’ traditional rites in the church was allowed. Cephas Omenyo regrets that ‘Unfortunately, this clear opportunity to have a mainline church with obvious local roots in its liturgy was lost when the Anglican Bishop O’Rorke insisted on a high Anglican liturgy in Ghana, thus aborting developments towards an authentic mainline African liturgy.’³²

Debrunner describes Swatson as “a man of strong and sober character”, [who] was “influenced in time in the direction of order and restrained”. He was licensed in the diocese as a “preacher” and “whilst having full freedom for the exercise of his great gifts, is pledged to conform to all proper authority”.³³ Following the style of his mentor, Harris, he made converts for the Anglican Church ‘in torrents while ministries under the leadership of Western missionaries made converts in trickles’.³⁴

As a result of the mass conversion which led to the a vibrant Anglican church in the field that Swatson worked, the Anglican Church found the need to post some of its key indigenous agents to support Swatson. Ezra Douglas Martinson, a native of Larneh and the second ordained African minister of the Anglican Church, after Quaque, was put in charge of the new work, and his brother Christian Martinson readily offered his assistance. This is a clear indication of the fact that the Anglican Mission authenticated the fruits of the toils of Swatson. Furthermore, the indigenous people had received, identified, and internalized the gospel and were committed to be key team players in the

management of the budding church, which was a concerted effort of the indigenous Christians and the Anglican missionaries.

Another face of Anglicanism in Ghana, like any other European denomination, was in education. The Church was involved in the provision of western classroom education in the country. This western system of education aimed at making the converts literate for two main purposes. Firstly, it was meant to help in promoting the gospel and secondly to prepare indigenous people for public service. The S.P.G. Grammar School at Cape Coast was one such school. Mr. S.R.B. Nicholas, a former head of the school, returned to the Gold Coast in 1922 after acquiring a degree at the Durham University in 1922. His contribution to Christian education led the Anglican Church to name the school St. Nicholas Grammar School.

Within this period, there emerged a number of lay persons who played significant roles in the development and expansion of the Anglican Church. R.O. Ashley (1892-1985), proprietor of Wisdom Stores in Accra, was a server at mass and Sunday School teacher. He contributed not only his time but also his funds to the church. Bishop Aglionby wrote: ‘vestments and frontals he tends with the care of a nurse. Flowers he arranges on the altar with a deftness of touch rare in this country... he is always buying things for the Church with his own money – a vase, a picture, etc.’ E.W. Adjeiye, a native and a personal secretary to Bishop Aglionby, was also a celebrated lay preacher and Superintendent of Sunday Schools. He found the need to enable native Ga feel at home with the church by playing a significant role in translating many hymns, collects, prayers and services into the Ga language. Pobe, has described his work as ‘no mean contribution towards the pursuit of the vernacular paradigm, characteristic of Anglicanism’. Many others like J. Buckman, J. Patrick C. Chinery, Randolf Griffiths, Kate Kwakai Nettey and T.O. Vanderpuije also played other roles. Kate Nettey for example is remembered for her pioneering role in the Ga Choir of the Holy Trinity Church, Wednesday Ga Instruction Class and her skills of weaving of the chapel decor. All these examples and others showed that the Anglican Church, although an English minting of the Catholic Church, developed and expanded in Ghana through the instrumentality of African people who sought to make the vernacular paradigm the basis for their work.

The complementary roles native Africans played, by working in concert with the western missionaries of the Anglican tradition was recognized by Dom Bernard Clements, second principal of St. Augustine’s College, in

1940, when he said: 'I think God sent me to Africa five years ago so that I might learn from you some lessons of humanity and love and service which my rough heart didn't learn in Europe and you Africans whom God has used as tutors to teach me these things'.

The third epoch
In 1968, Rt. Rev. Ishmael Samuel Mills Lemaire was elected the first Ghanaian diocesan bishop. His election and enthronement marked a new era of placing the church completely under African leadership. This is not to say that Lemaire was the first African bishop of the church. Earlier, Samuel Ajayi Crowther had been elected Bishop of the Niger Mission. Unfortunately, this was met with great disapproval. Henry Venn, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society was reminded that 'it was unacceptable to subsume European missionaries under a black man as bishop'. This disapproval, which was followed by the disconnection of nearly all the Sierra Leonean agents from the Niger Mission, known as the 'Niger purge', led to breakaway Niger Delta Pastorate Church in 1892 under the leadership of Archdeacon D.C. Crowther, son of Samuel Crowther.

One must also not fail to add that even in Ghana, Ezra Douglas Martinson, a native of Larthe Akuapem had risen to become assistant to the Bishop in 1852. Lemaire's election and consecration, however, marked the beginning of a new era. Although late in comparison with other mainline churches which had African leaders, it showed that the church had become completely indigenised. The Basel Mission Church had been taken over by African leaders in 1919. In the same manner, the Methodist Church had become autonomous in 1961. Following Lemaire's election, there has been a succession of bishops with the creation of more dioceses.

Henry Venn, also an Anglican, popularly credited for his seminal work in preparing indigenous churches to own the Christian mission, proposed a strategy for local devolution in the African church which was captured in the principle of the three-self, namely: self-governance, self-support and self-propagation. Indeed Venn offered a foundation and agenda for an authentic African Christianity. John Pobee has suggested that a fourth-self, self-theologizing, ought to be added to complete the package. Indeed Africans did

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41 Wariboko, Ruined by Race, p. 40.
self-theologizing particularly during the third epoch of our discussion. During this era, the African role has not been evident only in the provision of ecclesiastical leadership. There has also been the emergence of eminent African theologians within the church, such as Sawyer, Baeta, Nyaniti, Mbiu, Idwu, Dickson, and many others.

One of the leading African theologians of this period is Rev. Prof. Emeritus John Samuel Pobee. Having served on the Inter-Anglican Theological Doctrinal Commission (1981-1986), the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (1983-1994), Department of Mission Advisory Committee of Selby Oak College, Birmingham, England; he has gone on to serve as the first and only African President of the International Association of Mission Studies (1988-1992) of which he has been honoured with life membership. For fifteen years, he served as Director of the Programme on Theological Education, World Council of Churches, Geneva. He has to his credit over 280 publications, including 25 monographs, 21 edited works, 117 chapters in books and 117 articles in journals.

Conclusion
John Pobee, through his academic research has not minced words in asserting that African identity is prior to Christian identity. He is convinced that the African identity is prior his Christian identity because, for him, his Africaness was taken in with his mothers' milk as a baby and later he acquired the Christian identity. He declares without any reservation that 'I am first an

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African and second, a Christian. Interestingly, Pobee was born into a staunch Anglican family, tracing his ancestry to Philip Quaque, the first African to be ordained Anglican Priest, in 1765. He remained an ardent member of the Anglican Church and a faithful lay scholar until he was later, in 1988, ordained priest of the Anglican Church, Ghana, which is heavily a high Anglican, heavily theological, and puts emphasis on sound reasoning. Pobee has been one of the pioneers in African Theology clearly struggling with the agenda to arrive at a consensus in the ongoing encounter between African culture and the Gospel. This struggle led to one of his earliest key publications on the subject, *Towards an African Theology*, one of the earliest publications by an African on African theology. Pobee articulates the paradox of being an African and an Anglican in the following words:

I have no doubt that aspects of High Church spirituality suit Africans. On the other hand, the idiom of 1662 is not the African idiom... The virtues of our High Church spirituality and worship, which prima facie must be attractive to Africans, are obscured in effect because its precise idiom does not speak to the Africans and their condition. The telling thing is that Anglicans who by day are in the Anglican Church, by night are in the African Independent Church.

Interestingly a discerning observer can see indicators that give the Anglican church in Ghana is increasingly becoming truly that of an African Church hence its persistence and vibrancy today. The Church has responded positively to calls by it theologians, particularly John Pobee, as exemplified in the following words expressed by a workshop of the Anglican Diocese of Accra where Pobee serves as its Vicar General:

We share the view that not many people understand the doctrine of the church, as a result of which the Liturgy is not appreciated. We support the call for indigenization of the liturgy. However, in presenting a revised liturgy that will be relevant to contemporary spiritual needs of our people, we may syncretize ideas from other Christian denominations or employ certain values of African culture.

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The attempt by non-western Anglican churches, particularly those in Africa, to root the Gospel in African soil, thus making it look distinctive, caught the attention of Sydney E. Evans, who made the following observation:

The growth of indigenous churches of the Anglican Communion in the Third World brings into the Anglican experience fresh interpretation of Christian response in art, music, dance, patterns of community and spontaneity less fettered by history. All this together with 'Pentecostal' expression of prayer and praise in the older churches, open up possibilities of faith response undreamed of by our forebears.\(^\text{54}\)

Evans’ discerning observation of the realities of the non-western church, articulates attempts by these churches, including the Anglican Churches in Africa to assert their true Africanness while at the same time they express their love for their inherited Anglicanism. African do not seek to reject their western missionary structures wholesale but rather attempt to transform it to suit their peculiar circumstances. As Kwame Bediako points out, ‘Accepting Jesus as our savior always involves making him at home in our spiritual universe and in terms our religious needs and longings.’\(^\text{55}\) Complementarity has consistently marked all successful missionary encounters. Mission has achieved the best results when indigenous people complement the efforts of ‘foreign’ missionaries. This can take place when the two respect each other’s culture and concerns. The resultant church thus bears the mark of both the indigenous culture and the ‘foreign’ culture that bears the gospel. The Anglican church in Ghana is an example of this amalgamation. John Pobee, who has spearheaded this encounter, very early in his theological and ecclesiastical life realized the legitimacy in this struggle. He, together with his colleagues who believed one can be truly African and truly Anglican, deserve to be celebrated.

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Part Two
Religion and Public Space
Tangled Roots in the Mangrove Forest:
The Cultural Landscape of Political Violence in Africa

Oghu U Kalu

Recently, I began to see a comparison between the cultural roots of violence in Africa with the imagery of tangled roots in the mangrove forests of the Cross River. As the tangled roots are nourished by the nutrients in the marshy waters, so are the complex forms of violence in the political culture nurtured by the nutrients of the religious cults. I became keenly aware that the study of religion and violence could become so heuristic that it might miss the crucial function of turning knowledge into commitment unless it uses a specific context or benefits from an ethnography that explores how religious and cultural roots inform and nurture the phenomenon of violence in the African Republic spaces, and how this model of exploration of the substratum of the political landscape could serve in policy making and social transformation of violent contexts. This method asserts that the African context is different from the cultural terrain in the northern globe and offers new theoretical possibilities as we reflect on the relationship between knowledge, power and culture. At the theoretical level, we are dealing with cultural framing as a means of engaging the dynamics of contention or violence. Cultural framing leads to emphasis on relational processes, acknowledges the importance of environmental and cognitive mechanisms, but urges that in Africa, the most sustainable mobilization of interest groups and identities are often forged through cults.

This reflection will use the less familiar African case study. The backdrop consists of two dimensions: first the high incident of political violence in Africa in the post-1989 period; and second, the tendency to root political violence in rituals of indigenous religion.

The argument here is that the cocktail of religion and political violence intoxicated the new political players and blocked the realization of the hopes of a second liberation. The elitist politics engendered by neo-liberal ideology excluded, disempowered and disenfranchised the masses. Thus, a chemical analysis of the cocktail has immense value for the wellbeing of communities in Africa. Some questions will guide: what are the characteristics of political violence? What are the causes? How is political violence connected to religion especially in the African context? The conclusion is to argue that theories of religious violence based on Western epistemology and enlightenment worldview may be unhelpful for many regions of the global south where religious violence is endemic.
The religious substratum of the cultural landscape in African has in many ways fuelled the rising intensity of religious violence in the continent. The cost of violence may negatively impact the development of a continent that is already embattled.

Introduction: The ethnography of political violence
I grew up in Calabar, a town that nestles on the banks of the Cross River in south-eastern Nigeria, situated about eighteen nautical miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The Cross River builds up from numerous creeks bounded by a marshy terrain and the mangrove forest sporting gigantic outcrops of tangled roots. I was always amazed how these tangled roots supported and nurtured such huge trees and luscious green forests. Recently, I began to see a comparison between the cultural roots of violence in Africa with the imagery of tangled roots in the mangrove forests of the Cross River. As the tangled roots are nourished by the nutrients in the marshy waters, so are the complex forms of violence in the political culture nurtured by the nutrients of the religious cults. I became keenly aware that the study of religion and violence could become so heuristic that it might miss the crucial function of turning knowledge into commitment unless it uses a specific context or benefits from an ethnography that explores how religious and cultural roots inform and nurture the phenomenon of violence in the African public spaces, and how this model of exploration of the substratum of the political landscape could serve in policy making and social transformation of violent contexts. This method asserts that the African context is different from the cultural terrain in the northern globe and offers new theoretical possibilities as we reflect on the relationship between knowledge, power and culture. At the theoretical level, we are dealing with cultural framing as a means of engaging the dynamics of contention or violence. Cultural framing leads to emphasis on relational processes, acknowledges the importance of environmental and cognitive mechanisms, but urges that in Africa, the most sustainable mobilization of interest groups and identities are often forged through cults.¹

The political field constitutes the best mirror precisely because it provides a composite site where the various forces in social structures and institutions intersect. The political field encapsulates the core dynamics in their relationship. To use Foucault’s concept of power as consisting of forces that exist in various fields, all the forces (economic, social, cultural, ethnic, gender and class) surge together into the political space. Since power is not always repressive, Foucault recaputured the capacity of power to be productive and to

¹ This reflection utilizes but modifies the contentions in Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, Dynamics of Contention (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
serve the public good.\textsuperscript{2} Political violence becomes an attempt to grab, control, and redirect the dynamics of the forces along vested interests. The interests may be advocacy for certain ideals, agitation based on ethnic or atavistic allegiances, attempts to seize and determine the outcome of electoral processes, monopolize the governance of the polis, or to achieve the sectarian ascendancy of a particular religious passion and belief system.

Political violence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East could provide examples of the interlocking relationship between religion and political violence. This reflection will use the less familiar African case study. The backdrop consists of two dimensions: first the high incidence of political violence in Africa in the post-1989 period; and second, the tendency to root political violence in rituals of indigenous religion. This period is important because it has been dubbed as the \textit{second liberation of Africa} and analyzed with the "new realism" discourse. It was surmised that after the collapse of the Communist Soviet regime and the victory of capitalism, a new democratization process would be deployed to rid Africa of local dictators and install a neoliberal, democratic political economy. In some quarters, optimists raised the hope of an African Renaissance. A new realism greeted the failed dream and wallowed in the pessimism that African pathology was incurable. The argument here is that the cocktail of religion and political violence intoxicated the new political players and blocked the realization of the hopes of a second liberation. The elitist politics engendered by neo-liberal ideology excluded, disempowered and disenfranchised the masses. Thus, a chemical analysis of the cocktail has immense value for the wellbeing of communities in Africa. Some questions will guide: what are the characteristics of political violence? What are the causes? How is political violence connected to religion especially in the African context? The conclusion is to argue that theories of religious violence based on Western epistemology and enlightenment worldview may be unhelpful for many regions of the global south where religious violence is endemic.

The African case study should begin with certain theoretical musings. We observe two levels of political violence or \textit{intra-state conflict}: elitist violence as the ruling elite prey on the ruled, and \textit{collective} violence when the ruled use violence to express frustration and aggressive instincts. Such instincts may arise from failed expectations, unearned entitlements, relative deprivation and poor resource distribution. Elite predation is expressed at various levels of the dynamics of politics-electoral processes and habits of gov-

The quality of politics is clarified in patterns of state presence, pursuit of legitimacy and the space allocated to the civil society. This space could be restricted by the reality or absence of social contract and responsibility of power (ordinarily called culture of accountability). Political actors weave the political culture with ideologies of leadership ethics, use of media and exploiting identity markers such as ethnicity, religion and class. These, in turn, may be affected by historical facts such as the colonial experiences, level of past conflicts and level of military interventions and militarization of the society. This political culture represents internal forces that aid analysis of elite predation. External geopolitical factors are equally important especially under the globalization canopy. We should, therefore, paint a brief canvas of both the globalization and democratization processes and how these forces underscored the environment that breeds political violence. Whilst globalization may be culture free, it has enormous economic consequences. Collective violence is largely a response to economic forces – production, population pressure, resource mobilization, distribution of wealth and the impact of international economic order or supra state shifts in perceived entitlement. Admittedly, it is argued that aggression and frustration may not lead to collective violence. The people devise subterfuges to mask their pain with jokes about leaders and policies. Others exit the scene of disaster. People emigrate, demuring the inhospitable state of productive human resources, or at least seemingly so. It is now argued that emigrants are like exiles who mourn the loss of home and dislocation and re-engage through financial remittances. But we cannot avoid the connection between poverty and collective violence as could be illustrated with food riots of the mid-2008 and xenophobic assault on immigrants in South Africa and Kenya.

Electoral process, governance and elite violence
In place of democratic competition, political violence has become the most visible aspect of political rivalry across the continent. All over Africa, ostensibly elected leaders have obtained their positions by demonstrating an ability to use corruption and political violence to prevail in sham elections. In violent and brazenly rigged polls, government officials have denied millions of citizens any real voice in selecting their political leaders. Politicians recruit, pay and arm the gangs to disrupt elections by assassinations and intimidation of opponents and the public. Such gangs attack polling booths, carry away the ballot boxes and stuff them with the fake ballots of the patrons. The goals are to spread fear and ensure that supporters of political opponents are denied access to exercise their rights. Human Rights Watch calculated that in Nigeria, 481 large-scale incidents of political violence claimed over 15,000 lives
and destroyed properties between the years 1999-2006. Meanwhile, small-scale incidents became regular features of the political landscape.³

Gangs control the public space by sending the wrong people into powerful political positions. When immoral people control the governance of nations, the opportunities for healthy development are lost. Worse, the gangs may grow stronger than those who hired them and could scuttle the prospects of consolidation after the elections. At the same time, corruption and mismanagement lead to the waste of revenues from mineral resources that could have been expended to tackle poverty and improve access to basic health and education services. The experience of Nigeria has been repeated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe and many others. In 2008, the fear of violence threatened the run-off presidential election in Zimbabwe. From the Horn of Africa to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, political violence has proved the single most important blockage to the socio-economic transformation of communities.

Elite aggression is a complex social and agnostic behaviour to acquire power resources. It could be satisfying, self-rewarding, perceived as necessary for maintaining status and for ensuring control of the public space. This reflection argues that both elite and collective violence in Africa are expressed in a peculiar manner: in Africa, political violence often masks religious forces. Some may argue that religion is manipulated by political actors. But this begs the question as to why religion should energize the ethnic, class, and gender fault-lines. Why do people avoid ideas, public debates and media advocacy and agitation as happens in the global north? A cultural discourse or ethnography of violence points to the importance of worldview and resilience of primal values in the modern public space. In Africa, political violence, like the tangled roots of the mangrove forests, succours failed states, collapsed economies and scorched political terrains. This is because political violence masks a religious substratum. Resilient indigenous religions and cults still dominate the political cultures in the modern public spaces and inspire the roles of godfathers and gangs in politics. These tap into the violent dimensions of religion when religion is used as an instrument to instil fear and achieve one’s goal by force in a competitive, pluralistic public space. This is an aspect of counterfeit modernity. The direct connection between cults and violence is that religious cults confer the illusion of invincibility,

protection and numinous power to control others and destroy opponents. It empowers (or beguiles?) dictators, corrupt politicians and gangs.

Political violence in the contemporary Africa is also an aspect of the negative side effect of the democratization project or the dark face of the globalization process. First, the asymmetrical power relationship in the globalization process exacts a price. Second, as the globalization process confronts various forms of assertive local identities, violence ensues. As the African versions of carpetbaggers, certain individuals pose as political godfathers by seizing, mobilizing, controlling and funding the apparatus of negative politics. Political godfathers often expose the deep connections between money, corruption and cultism. They do not just build political machines but weld them with oaths and covenants made with rituals in shrines.

Africans inflict political violence on themselves and are also victims of political violence from the West. On one front, most wars in Africa are mineral resource wars in which Westerners arm Africans and mercenaries to perpetrate mayhem. On a second front, there is need for an adequate analysis of the relationship between the renaissance of neo-paganism (often referred to as churchless religion) and political violence in the global north. Sarah Pike and others point to the commodification of witchcraft through films, television, music and art or the profitability of ritual seasons such as Halloween in the market place. Less attention has been paid to the ritual significance of political violence against other religions and against immigrants in the global north. Gary Jensen’s theory in the Path of the Devil may be used to see right-wing extremists’ violence in three interlocking dimensions: in terms of a sacrificial ceremony in which through organized ritual someone is put forth to pay for the veritable sins of the disordered world; in terms of a strategic persecution in which a group is persecuted in order for dominant or status quo interests to be maintained; and in terms of scapegoating in which anxiety over social crises is displaced onto a particular religion or people.

The concept of ‘social suffering’ has also been used to make the connection between religion and politics in Africa because severe stress in the political economy compels people to turn to the things that mattered and sustained order in the past. Ancient religious traditions that had suffered from lack of patronage during the heydays of modernity are easily revamped.

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Thus, in universities, instead of fraternities, students form violent cults rooted in indigenous religion. Politicians hire them to terrorize the public. Competitors in the modern public space feel compelled to ‘fortify’ themselves with cultic power from indigenous sources and ancient pasts.

The harvest of military coups in Africa between the years 1960-1990 yielded a rich tradition of corruption and militarization of the society. The ethical register of the military consisted of easy dispensation with the rule of law, personality cult, graft and nepotism, a culture of impunity, abuse of human rights, language of force, availability of weapons of destruction and sexual immorality. The democratization project could not exorcise this violent spirit because of mimicry as the general society imitated the military overlords. Meanwhile, many military officers are still engaged in formal politics, hold political positions, and call the political tune from behind the curtains precisely because they amassed enormous wealth and could control many hungry politicians.

Violence is intricately intertwined with poverty. Democracy cannot function on empty stomachs. Poverty could be noted in its many forms: spiritual, material, capacity to attack the theology of life and as a deficit in contemporary world civilization. Once in a while, the poor go on a killing rampage splitting the veneer of civilization.

The religious substratum of African political culture

I have argued elsewhere and Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar have elaborated in their book, *The Worlds of Power* that in Africa, there is a substratum of religious cult beneath the contemporary political structures. Religion provides the dynamo, the engine that moves and shapes the modern political culture through the force of cultural ‘villigization’ of the modern public space. Most of the inhabitants of the towns carry medicine made in the villages to empower their successful foraying in the towns. As Ellis and ter Haar observed, ‘many Africans today who continue to hold beliefs derived from the traditional cosmologies apply these to everyday life even when they live in cities and work in the civil service or business sector. Religious worldviews do not necessarily diminish with formal education’.

Among Muslims, mallams and seriki provide such services for a fee. The syncretism in their rituals has been noted. The sacralization of political order

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and ethics in primal society informs the political culture in the modern public space. The political elite tap the resources of primal religion in their competitions in the modern space. Legitimacy crises intensify the process and provide enormous opportunities for primal religiosity to influence the dynamics of modern politics. Thus, the political space is literally bedevilled with an occult explosion. For instance, a close look at militant groups will show that every militant group in Africa uses indigenous cultic rituals to bond, motivate and keep members from desertion: the Lord’s Army among the Acholi of northern Uganda, the Katare among the Gombe of Central Nigeria, the Egbesu among the Niger Delta communities who are allegedly fighting against oil companies for a viable environmental ethics, the Mungiki (Kikuyu) of Kenya and the al-Shabab (‘The Youth’) that serves as the militant wing of the Union of Islamic Courts in Sudan.

Rosalind Hackett adds another dimension by showing how new spiritual science movements from the global north have invaded Africa – the Freemasons, Rosicrucians and others have immense political significance. They are forms of cultural invention, some deriving and all ‘consonant with the world-affirming and pragmatic orientation of traditional religious beliefs and practices.’ They weld together the elite in the monopoly of political power. Abner Cohen and Paul Gifford have demonstrated that the American Liberians consolidated over a century’s monopoly of power by resting the political structure of Liberia on a tripod of Freemasonry, Church and Party.”

The point, however, is that primal cults have been resilient in the modern public space. It was not only President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, an elder of the Presbyterian Church, who danced with secret cults in the national stadium, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana proactively resurrected indigenous cults in an attempt to use cultural renaissance as a tool for refurbishing legitimacy. Meanwhile, President Nicophore Soglo of the Republic of Benin declared voodoo as the national religion as an election campaign gimmick. He still lost. Many African leaders espouse Christianity in the open but dance with secret societies behind the scene and commit ritual murders in secret. Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia patronized a shrine, The David Universal Temple operated by an Indian guru, M.A. Ranganathan. President Bongo of Gabon belonged to the Bwiti and Ndjobi secret societies and William Tolbert of Liberia served as the president of World Baptist Alliance and the Supreme Zo

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10 See Ogbu U Kalu, Power, Poverty and Prayer (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).
of the *Poro* society. A host of others including Houpchet Boigny, Idr Amin, Sanni Abacha used secret rituals to maintain themselves in power. Traditional religion ranked high as the dominant religion in eight West African nations. This is the ethnographical backdrop for understanding contemporary political culture and politics of violence. Leaders perpetrate violence and protect themselves from violence with traditional cults.

This factor can be explained by the persistence of indigenous worldviews. In Africa, the sacralization of the cosmos legitimizes the political space and dynamics of the political culture. The rulers and the ruled often act from a sense of the presence and ultimacy of the spiritual forces. This fact is seen in the four models of social control: the socialization process inculcates the acceptable norms of the community. Covenanting rituals, with what Victor Turner calls the ‘forest of symbols’ bond the new born child with the spirits at the gates of the community. Van Gennep has examined the physical, psychological, and sociological dimensions of socialization. Shorter adds that the process continues into adulthood, imparting the wisdom of the ancestors, religious rituals, and wisdom for living well and fully for one’s own sake and for the sake of the community. The proverbs, riddles, songs, and dances exude moral guidance. The tensile strength of the covenanting ritual is demonstrated by the fact that it may involve withdrawal from the community and periods of exclusion and communion with the spirits of the land.

The community restricts people from flouting the salient values with prohibitions, gossip, joking relationship, satire and cultic action. Punishment crashes on the heads of the obstinate; the offended deities are then appeased with sacrifice and rites of purification. Those who uphold salient values are rewarded with honour, a chieftaincy title, praise names and an eagle’s feather to the accompaniment of the flute and big drum. Political values in a traditional society were rooted in the social control models. The foundation is morally sanctioned by the gods for the wellbeing of all. Truthfulness, decency, moderation, and wisdom are acceptable leadership values. There was no secular theory of obligation. To accede to authority and leadership roles, the individual must be ‘animated’, imbued with a close relationship to the gods of the community. As a chief, the animation rites imbue the ruler with the ‘tongue of the tiger,’ sharp and capable of judging rightly without favour or swerved by the patronage of the rich. Many studies have used the ritual of

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enthronement of rulers to buttress the religious roots of legitimacy in primal society.

Our interest is not to mine the political structure of African cultures but to emphasize a certain ambivalence, namely, that the modern political culture has sought to corrode primal ethics and yet the spiritual dynamics of the primal order has invaded the modern political space. Put the irony in another way, contemporary African rulers turn to traditional cults for legitimacy but use the resources without due moderation and boundaries because they perceive the modern public space with amoral lenses.

The political elite source legitimacy from the primal space yet they fail to absorb the salient values. For instance, before the rise of the emergent urban space, a leader in a traditional community served as a ritual agent even in the situations where there are priestly guardians of communal shrines. Priestly functions were invested in the paterfamilias, first sons, kinship heads, village, clan leaders, and female priestesses. The community respected the elders as guardians of the moral code. Gerontocracy, the rule of elders, predominated because elders and ancestors were perceived as being in close proximity. In any community, the ritual power nodes were the diviner, seer, the herbalist/healer, and witchcraft expert who provides protective enhancement and destructive medicine, charms, and amulets. General practitioners may combine some of these roles! An elastic structure enables the recruitment of spiritual forces from foreign communities for witchcraft detection and protective and achievement-enhancing medicine. Guilds and secret societies also co-existing, sharing wisdom, craft, cult, and medicine. They mobilized around certain interests: for instance, healing, wealth, influence, esoteric knowledge, mutual aid, and entertainment. In some communities, leaders can only emerge from among the members of the secret societies. The argument is that political violence has escalated because the ancient political values have been eroded by modernity and yet modernity has not routed the religious pillars of the indigenous world.

The key theoretical frame here is the concept of three publics – the interlocking village, western and emergent urban publics, each purveying contesting values. The cultural flows and dynamics among the three publics inform the political culture. The urban culture is neither western nor indigenous. Its power is illustrated by the expectation of villagers that their kith and kin should go to the emergent public and bring back their own share of the ‘national cake’ by hook and preferably by crook. If a fraudulent public official were prosecuted, his village elders would go on a delegation to protest. Dist-

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honest individuals can now take chieftaincy titles without fulfilling the moral prerequisites. The immoral ethics of the emergent public have debauched the salient values of the primal culture and provided the fodder for power adventurers and predatory military rulers. The flow of urban values into the village ensures the collapse of the religious and moral force that propped up the village society.

Yet a closer look betrays the ironic ‘villagization’ of the modern political space. Political actors pose as warriors from their villages to compete for national resources on behalf of their communities. They therefore seek legitimization in the primal society. They undergo rituals of empowerment by taking chieftaincy titles and becoming members in cults and secret societies. They patronize indigenous and Islamic ritual agents who provide protective charms and amulets. Thus ‘fortified,’ they are able to detect poison, ward off witchcraft spells, and operate with immense vital force. The emergent public is imaged as a precarious context in which success can be achieved only with magico-religious power derived from any efficacious sources. The preparation for the foray into the emergent zone starts from the village. This has the benefit of building a grassroots support by showing the villagers that their political representative is one of them and shares the village’s value system and cults. One can appear as a champion of African culture, dance with the masquerade, and pose as a nationalist of no mean order!

In a context in which economic power is derived from political power, the elite utilize primal cult and spiritual force in self-aggrandizement. They assume titles which position them as the ‘the leopard which guards the village, the voice of the people, the light, the sun, the moon, the lightning that shows the way, the war leader’ of the people. There is a teasing cluster of imageries around money, power and light on the darkened path of communities. Armed with village legitimacy, they offer themselves as a good investment for the godfather. This was important in consolidating the powers of military rulers and dictators who were always in the market for clientele and ready to pay cash for some form of legitimacy. An intimacy of power can be easily crafted. The parasitic relationship vitiates traditional institutions, robbing them of their salient values and disabling the rural masses of the will to protest. It fosters impunity and enculturates the culture of violence. The inability of the political elite to withstand the dictator (military or civilian) or to protect the masses from the humiliations of poverty can be explained by the dynamics between the primal and emergent publics. The political elite meander between both and thereby vitiate the power of civil society. Thus, the greedy political elite, the dictator and the godfather deploy the religious institutions and values of indigenous world to foster violence and keep the states
in perpetual chaos and legitimacy crises. The ritual substratum of African political culture explains the impunity of the predatory elite.

Ethnographic data from some ethnic groups in Nigeria illustrate how the elite manipulated the power of indigenous cults as political tools. There are certain powerful cults which have emerged from the primal religious domain to dominate the modern political space. The Ogboni from Yorubaland and the Nyamkpe from the Cross River basin in south-eastern Nigeria are two glaring examples. Both are powerful secret societies whose votaries developed through rungs or degrees of initiation. The Ogboni cult controlled Yoruba society and could discipline a king. It became dominant because Nigerian contact with whites, traders, commissioners, or missionaries first took place in the Yoruba environment. The indigenous people used their secret society as a means of mobilizing adequate responses to the new dispensations. Gradually, other Nigerians sojourning in Lagos found that the society conferred protection, access to wealth, power, and upward mobility in professions and politics. It became a trans-ethnic religious force dominating modern sectors such as business, professions and politics. The judiciary, civil service, military, government, and even top ecclesiastical posts were lording over by Ogboni members. In 1914, an Anglican archdeacon, Venerable T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, founded the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity in an attempt to remove the ‘pagan’ rituals and enable Christians to participate without qualms. He emphasized the benefits of the bonding in the brotherhood. Each initiate swears to be ‘in duty bound to help one another in distress, to succour, in adversity to warn against danger and be charitable under all circumstances’. Thus, two Ogboni cults co-exist as a powerful secret society from the primal religion and serve as a power node in modern political space. The secrecy, class, wealth, and bonding enable them to wield enormous influence. The Nyamkpe played a similar role by webbing a host of communities around the Cross River basin and expanded into the vast territories of the Igbo of south eastern Nigeria.

Globalization, democratization, militarization and collective violence
From a different perspective, political violence has been fuelled by the negative side-effects of the democratization project. First, this terminology is applied only to the southern globe; it is an external impetus, a ‘political conditionality’ demanded by the Bretton Woods organizations as a strand of the Structural Adjustment Program that every southern nation must accept and implement so as to adjust their macro-economic structures along neo-liberal economic lines. This enables the easy collection of spurious debts. It seeks to introduce a market economy and democracy. Among its deficits, democratization disempowers the ordinary people functioning in the micro-economic
and infra-political zones. Second, democratization is linked intimately to the globalization process which has deepened the poverty level of Africa.

Suffice it to summarise that globalization is a relational concept that explains how technological, economic and cultural forces have fostered culture contacts which have reduced vast distances in space and time and brought civilizations and communities into closer degrees of interaction. Everybody may not be amused but find the process ineluctably absorbing. In the 1960s when Marshall McLuhan talked about the ‘global village,’ he pointed to the impact of communication and technology on cultures; how, from Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press, massive communication technology gradually turned the world into multi-sites webbed together by electronic languages and symbols in such a manner that whatever happens in one part of the globe is immediately known in another part. Thomas L. Friedman put it more graphically in his book, The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century. Friedman’s list of ‘flattening influences’ includes such milestones as the advent of the Netscape web browser, work-flow software, outsourcing, offshoring, and supply-chaining. He demonstrates that technology has become even more complex since McLuhan’s ring tone, ‘the media is the message,’ enthused the public! The electronic media have knotted together many cultures, societies and civilizations into unavoidable contact, depriving them of their isolation and threatening their particularity. All are caught in the complex embrace and the delicate balance between particularity which could lead to isolation and universality which could lead to homogenization.

Technology has reshaped human economies, cultures and lifestyles. Friedman uses China to illustrate the benevolent face of the process, showing how isolated societies and economies have grown through the power of globalization. When Marco Polo visited China in the 13th century, he found a rich land known for its invention of paper, printing, gunpowder, and the compass. China’s per capita income exceeded that of European nations. Its ships dominated the Indian Ocean right up to the shores of East Africa. In the 15th century, however, China retreated into a splendid isolation, its inventive spirit faded, and by the 19th century it lagged behind Europe and was forced to accept a humiliating colonial domination. Internal turmoil followed. China changed course under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership in the late 1970s and fuelled by a commitment to education, technological innovation, and global

commerce, it regained its position as a world economic superpower. Lurking underneath the success story are the ethical dimensions: the inequalities in wealth distribution, the divinity of the market, a certain spirit that commodifies human relationship, breeds inordinate consumption habits and pollutes the environment – a fate that China has been forced to confront as a prize for hosting the World Olympic Games in 2008.

The galloping process of globalization not only affected the theory of knowledge but had two other results. Beyond the fact that it has created a new landscape and human challenges for production, dissemination and utilization of knowledge, it has generated a new ‘global culture’ and the intensification of cultural and value clashes. As cultures are pressed together, the problem of identity looms large. The discomfort of enforced intimacy could be illustrated with fact that globalization has been used to explain the phenomenon of intensified religious violence in the 21st century. Religion is manipulated as a marker of identity and ultimacy, invested with the symbol of a prideful heritage, deployed as a tool for boundary maintenance and propped as the mooring for scapegoating the ‘other.’ A combination of these factors engenders the wider politics of difference and compels devotees to do difference in avoidable ways. Some scholars emphasize the psycho-social analysis of religious violence: individuals who engage in religious violence perceive themselves as engaged in a cosmic battle larger than the individual; an antidote to perceived marginality and humiliation; an attempt to establish equality with rivals, opponents and oppressors in the new global space that threatens everyone with a homogenized culture. Theories on the connection of violence and religion point to the fact that the twenty-first century has been distinguished by ‘categorical violence’ – a violence directed against people on the basis of their belonging to a certain religious group.

Categorical violence has three distinctive features: excessiveness, the discourse on purification, and a ritual element. We recognize the fact that non-religious ideologies could also produce violence. Categorical violence has been powered by a metaphysical meaning that is embodied in the notion of preserving the good and true against relativizing global forces. Destruction is thought of as divine and restorative. Thus, the restoration of orthodoxy in the face of alleged corruption or desecration of the pure could be achieved through divine destruction.


ing, the impetus to identify a contrast group onto which we can project, and
which provides an explanation of the root problem.

The concept of fundamentalism as a label for the new passionate religions
may no longer suffice because the manifestations in the political, economic
and theological realms yield contradictory conclusions. Two irreducible di-
ensions are the increased use of violence in religious matters and the spill-
ing of such violence into political, social and economic realms. Secularism—
another icon of globalization process—has failed to turn the public space into
a neutral arena. Thus, the concept of globalization may harbour internal con-
tradictions: at once multi-directional, complex and inherently paradoxical;
incorporating movement, flows, counter-movements and blockages.

Some, therefore, argue that the new global culture is not from any partic-
ular region; others believe that it is a product of and an internal requirement
of capitalism; that much of the global violence is connected to the competi-
tion for resources, a drama heightened by the character of new economic
order and aroused appetites. The allure towards and capacity for consumption
capacity explain why many fear American domination dubbed as ‘McDon-
aldization,’ propped up by a political and economic ideologies—liberal de-
ocracy and market economy. When Francis Fukuyama declared ‘the end
of history’ in 1989 because of the fall of Communist Russia, he actually sur-
mised the end of virulent ideological contests and the victory of capitalism
and liberal democracy. He intoned that the impact of 1989 was not just poli-
tical but unleashed cultural, technological and economic forces that reshaped
the globe; that big business would pacify the clash of cultures; that the world
would move together as it built the bodies through which we could trust each
other more; that trust would emanate from shared cultural values and shared
interests. He further argued that beyond theories, basic self-interest is the
basis of modern economic interdependence; that in a market-dominated
world, the primary human interaction is competition, not support and solidar-
ity. He virtually prophesied that the new world order and its asymmetrical
power relations would intensify the scourge of poverty among the weaker
communities such as Africa. Stronger economies would create an osmotic
pull engendering massive emigration or brain drain.

Some may demur alleging an incomplete social analysis. Indeed, Fried-
man’s earlier book, _The Lexus and Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization_
explored the tension between globalization on the one side, and culture, geo-
graphy, tradition, and community on the other. He noted both the benefits
and problems of globalization and explored the problems of glocalization,
arguing that certain forms of glocalization could be self-defeating. What is

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18 Rebecca T. Peters, _In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization_ (New
York: Continuum, 2004).
certain is that globalization has acquired many characteristics based on the lenses used to interpret how certain cultural forces and values (economic, cultural, social and political) have woven the oikoumene into a certain order sharing identical values and bound by economic, cultural, religious forces which are so strong that some inherited values must be surrendered and development trajectories modified or abandoned. This is an emergent ‘global culture’ utilizing technology, commerce and monetary power to weld together disparate peoples and cultures. Sometimes the cord is so strong that a sneeze at one end causes flu at the other end. Sometimes the bind is so inescapable that even losers cannot extricate themselves.

The caveat is that matters have shifted from the global village concept to a rather bewildering disintegration and flux. First, questions arise about the pace and direction of change. Global cultural flow is not uni-directional. Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* illustrates this with the fact that textile factories were once in England, then New England, then the south eastern United States, then Japan, then Hong Kong. Now subsidized cotton grown in Texas is sent to China to be made into T-shirts and then shipped back to the United States. Second, at the core, globalization is a power concept bearing the seeds of asymmetrical power relations. There is no guarantee of equality or benefit for all. Third, globalization could be perceived as a liberal ideology, with a mind of its own, imbued with postmodernity, dislocations and hybridity. It is akin to the New Testament concept of kosmos, the world order, controlled by an inexplicable, compulsive power, dazzling with allurements or kosmetikos. Some wonder whether friendship with it is not enmity with God’s design because it breeds poverty at the periphery.

From these perspectives, its pursuit of democratic order is designed to create a friendly political and socio-economic environment for the consumer market economy. But the down side of democratization process in the Third World countries includes the liberalization of the media space, the increase in the number of discordant voices in the public space, increase in violence especially ethnic, religious and political violence and a chaotic political culture that disables the consolidation that should follow the post electoral process. On the positive side, globalization of domestic politics has made it possible for intervention into local issues by the trans-national advocacy groups or the disporic communities. For instance, the whole world participated with detailed information in the debates and negotiations around the political violence in Kenya in early 2008. Similarly, some laud the embedded concepts of economic interdependence and mutual interest without attention to the vul-

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nérability of the Third World countries. The region is the Cinderella in this global dance and dreads the possibilities of homogenization, Americanization, propagated by the ubiquitous multinational companies that serve as the vanguards of the new global order penetrating into nooks and corners of the globe.

Globalization has exacerbated the centre-periphery concept in international relations. Livelihood studies theorize the new social and gender identities that transformed families, the decomposition of households and the increased diversification and increased multi-locality of livelihoods under globalization. On the whole, globalization discourse has taken three routes through the cultural, economic to the socio-political and geopolitical concerns. Attention has been paid to the cultural and geopolitical dimensions. But for Africa, the most important aspect of the globalization process is the economic import. Just as the industrial revolution in 19th century England had negative side-effects and bred enormous social problems that Charles Dickens chronicled in his novels Oliver Twist, Bleak House and David Copperfield, and whose victims were etched in Hogarth’s paintings, so have the socio-economic impacts of globalization become a disaster for the marginalized and created poverty, health problems and other unsavoury consequences. The increased level of political violence is a function of the pressure of survival and pangs of adjustment in the negotiation between globalization processes and local economies. The failure of poverty alleviation programs and rhetoric has ensured that poverty could fuel political violence because socio-economic distress yields the gangs that are recruited as fodder by politicians, godfathers and dictators. The spate of military coups that followed the bugles of independence militarized the societies and the new urban gangs merely imitate the soldiers.

The dreadful cocktail: poverty and collective violence

Paul Collier, a specialist in African economies, has recently tried to connect poverty to violence by suggesting that new attention must be given to the ‘bottom billion,’ that is the billion people in the world in some fifty-eight countries (most of which are in Africa and Central Asia) who are not benefiting in any way from globalization, and are caught in a series of traps. He argues that five-sixth of global violent contentions occur in one-sixth of the world. This minority suffers from protracted warfare, dependency on one crop or one natural resource, landlocked with bad neighbours, and corrupt government that keep them on the bottom. The looming food crisis reported by UNESCO on April 15th of 2008 and the statistics on protracted warfare (80% of the poorest 20 countries have had war in the last years) prompts a
special attention to the most disadvantaged and the negative effects of globalization that manufactures the tinderbox for violence.

Recently, South Africa demonstrated the connection when xenophobic riots broke out against immigrants from other African countries. Violence against immigrants, like some windswept fire, spread across one neighbourhood after another in one of South Africa’s main cities, and the police said the mayhem left many people dead - beaten by mobs, shot, stabbed or burned alive. Thousands of panicked foreigners - many of them Zimbabweans who have fled their own country’s economic collapse - and Mozambicans deserted their ramshackle dwellings and tin-walled squatter hovels to take refuge in churches and police stations. The outbreak of xenophobia began in May 2008 in the historic township of Alexandra and soon spread to other areas in and around Johannesburg, including Cleveland, Diepsloot, Hillbrow, Tembisa, Primrose, Ivory Park and Thokoza. At the root is poverty because the new elite have become more rapacious than the old, and strangely, the poor take it out on themselves rather than fighting the rich. Beneath is the old fact that the level of witchcraft accusation rises as a function of social stress, social suffering and a disordered cosmos. The witchcraft spirit is used to explain the diminishing vitality of life by pointing to the strange ‘other’ as the cause. Eradication measures are taken to eliminate the cause. In the rainbow nation, witchcraft eradication of the public square took the form of killing immigrants and looting their business premises while the unprepared government was entrapped by neo-liberal capitalist policies that failed. The state reeled with unbecoming caparisons and ineffective responses, ordering a royal commission to inquire into the causes of the barbaric acts in a land once ruled by Nelson Mandela. The real cause is poverty!

Collective violence is often expressed with cultural idiom. Neil Whitehead urges that we should examine how cultural conceptions of violence are used discursively to map and amplify the cultural force of violent acts, or how those acts can produce a shared idiom for violent death. Collective violence borrows and re-enacts the symbolic, ritual and performative qualities of witchcraft eradication as rioters act in the belief that the destruction of the bodies of the condemned is integral to the reproduction of society – paradoxically achieving the healing of the society through the exclusion and destruction of the victims. Thus, the Mungiki sect in Kenya like the Talibans and the Egbesu in the Niger Delta of Nigeria deploy religious rituals to express political protest and ethnic identities. The same could be said for the

Al-Shabab (the youth) fighters in Somalia who serve as the military wing of the effort to establish a Sharia-dominated Islamic state. This raises the question about the psychology of religious violence where the rioters attempt to establish social and economic equality as an antidote to perceived marginality and humiliation or sacralizes violence as a triumph over forces of evil, a posture that numbs the conscience against horrific acts. Sometimes a dose of apocalypticism (whether secular or religious) is added to the brew as the rioters perceive themselves as engaged in a cosmic battle which is larger than the individual. The religious substratum of the cultural landscape in Africa has in many ways fuelled the rising intensity of religious violence in the continent. The cost of violence may negatively impact the development of a continent that is already embattled.

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‘God Bless our Homeland Ghana’:  
Religion and Politics in a Post-Colonial African State

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu

In Africa, religion and life are inseparable entities and this has remained so both in traditional systems of governance and within modern political life. Throughout Africa, threats or violence and actual interregnum conflicts have attended political change during electioneering campaigns and voting. This chapter undertakes a historical overview of the relationship between Christianity and politics in democratic Ghana as a case study of continent-wide developments. In response to the fears of violence and outbreaks of fighting, the mainline churches or the historic mission denominations have relied on their human intellectual resources to respond to developments through communiques and statements in the media addressed to the parties involved. The Pentecostal/charismatic churches, on the other hand, have usually organized periods of prayer and fasting to deal with threats of violence occurring before and after elections. Taking off from the writings of John S. Pobee, the essay examines the ways in which the two main church traditions—historic mission denominations and Pentecostal/charismatic churches—have responded to the changing nature of the political landscape since the introduction of multi-party democracy in modern Ghana.

Introduction

Ghana is a religiously pluralistic country that has for generations been associated with three main religions: the indigenous religions with their emphasis on the Supreme Being, local gods and spirits, Christianity in its varied denominational and revivalist forms, and Islam in both its Sunni and Shi’ite categories. In addition the religious terrain since the middle of the last century has widened to accommodate innumerable new religious movements making Ghana a ‘religious zoo’ with different kinds of religious ‘wildlife’. Traditionally the country also shares with the rest of Africa a worldview that keeps religion and life inseparably linked. All over Africa, for example, religion and politics encroach upon each other. As evidence, consider that although Ghana’s first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, took a hostile socialist approach to religion, he accepted a national anthem for post-independent Ghana that had a Christian religious orientation. The first line of the anthem constitutes the title of this chapter. Kwame Nkrumah also used religion in instrumental ways as means of political survival. His chosen honorific desig-
nation *osagyefo*, meaning great ‘deliverer’ or ‘redeemer’ for example, has religious connotations in both its traditional and Christian senses as a messianic title. It is now four decades and over since Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown and in the current democratic era, religion continues to play as critical a role in Ghana’s politics as it did in the years following the independence of the nation. It is impossible to understand politics in contemporary Ghana without some knowledge of the role religions plays in it.

**John Samuel Pobee: religion and politics in Ghana**

In post-colonial Ghana, religion and politics have interacted in even more profound ways. We owe much of our understanding of this interface to a number of studies undertaken by John Samuel Pobee, in whose honor the essays in this volume are written. John Samuel Pobee is one among a number of distinguished Ghanaian professors of religious studies who blazed the trail in the academic study of religion and theology in Africa. Like his senior colleagues and friends, Christian G. Baétä, Kweisi A. Dickson, Kwame Bediako, all of blessed memory, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Elizabeth Amoah and Joshua N. Kudadjie, John Samuel Pobee has had a distinguished career as a scholar in the study of religion. He combined his scholarship with involvement in the international ecumenical movement and in the last two decades of his career as a minister of the Accra Diocese of the Anglican Church of Ghana. John S. Pobee’s publications on religion and politics in Ghana remain some of the most authoritative on the subject. They include: *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana 1946-1966.* This is a study of the relationship between the socialist government of Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister and first president of Ghana and the Protestant Christian churches in Ghana. A subsequent book, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* broadened the discussion to include the immediate post-Nkrumah era and Pobee followed this up with another dedicated work specifically on *Religion and Politics in Ghana* during the military regime of General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong. Pobee also wrote a number of popular and academic articles on the subject with one of the most important ones being: ‘Africa’s Search for Religious Human Rights through Returning to Wells of Living Water’.

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That other scholars such as Ebenezer Obiri Addo and Elom Dowlo have followed Pobee’s lead in researching and writing on religion and politics only serves to underscore the importance of the subject in the history of post-colonial Ghana. Obiri Addo identifies two basic political characteristics of the Ghanaian religious system. In his words, “religion can be used to regulate power relations, and it can also be used as means of social-political control.”

John S. Pobee and Obiri Addo have taken care of the Nkrumah era. In this chapter, I follow Dowlo to reflect on aspects of the developments in religion and politics in Ghana from the end of the I.K. Acheampong regime in 1979. The title, I have noted, is the first line of the first stanza of Ghana’s national anthem and in the sub-title I refer to a ‘post-colonial state’ because, as far as the relationship between religion and politics are concerned, the developments in the early years of the post-colonial era are interwoven with what happened thereafter.

Religion and democratic transitions in context: 1979-1992
Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings first burst onto the Ghanaian political scene in 1979 at a time of great national political confusion, economic quagmire and moral decay. His first attempt to overthrow the Supreme Military Council government on May 15 of that year failed leading to his arrest and imprisonment. Living conditions for Ghanaians had become difficult due to the collapse of the economy due to a number of factors including massive corruption. The country was very clearly at an economic and political cul-de-sac. In churches across the country and in Christian gatherings people openly asked God for a ‘Moses’ to deliver the nation from its economic and moral ‘exile’. In effect Ghanaians wanted a change of government. Flt.Lt. Rawlings was forcibly released from prison by his aides after a brief incarceration following the abortive May 15 military uprising. That same day on June Fourth 1979 he restaged a successful coup and subsequently executed a number of top military personnel in government including three former heads of state. The June Fourth coup was popular and Jerry John Rawlings, who was referred to as J.J., with his initials, becoming an acronym for ‘Junior Jesus’. This successful coup was followed by a ‘cleanup exercise’ which was aimed at getting the


economy back on track as well as punishing perpetrators and corrupt officials and politicians as well as ordinary Ghanaians who were perceived by the masses to have accumulated wealth through fraudulent means to the detriment of the nation. A house-cleaning exercise initiated by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) which Rawlings formed was ruthless in implementing this exercise, employing high handed military and para-military actions leading to the loss of lives of many Ghanaians as well as property. After this, Rawlings and his military aides in the AFRC handed over power which paved the way for the arrival of a civilian government.

After briefly handing over to a civilian administration later in 1979, Rawlings returned to power under the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) in 1981 in another coup. The December 31 coup was received with mixed feelings because the new civilian administration led by Dr. Hilla Limann had barely settled down when it occurred. Within two years, Rawlings’ acronym had been reversed from ‘Junior Jesus’ to ‘Junior Judas’ by the public in protest at the failure of his government to better the lot of the poor. Ghana became a nation of acronyms. There was the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which suggested and initiated the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). This led to massive retrenchments as the PNDC tried to downsize the public service. This plunged the country into dire economic hardships. When the hardships became unbearable, the Bretton Woods institutions introduced a Program of Adjustment to Mitigate the Structural Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD). These programs however failed to make the required impact leading to the introduction of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) which led to a massive inflow of foreign direct investment into the country as the World Bank and IMF tried hard to present Ghana as a success story of its programs in Africa. The statistics were impressive but it made no difference in the pockets and kitchens of the ordinary people and agitations started for Rawlings to hand over power again.

Response of the historic mission churches
The historic mission churches represented by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference challenged the PNDC to do something about deteriorating economic and political situations. The two ecclesiastical bodies, for example, considered it part of their spiritual mandate to call the revolutionary government of Rawlings to order because the high-handedness of his government was spiraling out of control. The churches

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revisited an earlier call for the repeal of a Preventive Custody Law and a Newspaper Licensing Law introduced by Rawlings to silence his critics:

[We] once more call for the repeal of the Preventive Custody Law (PNDCL 4), Habeas Corpus (Amendment) Law (PNDCL 91) and the Newspaper Licensing Law (PNDCL 211) so that the media, for expressing our ideas, may not be limited to the official government-controlled newspapers, radio and television whose prejudices and selectivity in news reporting have undermined their credibility and rendered them inappropriate and ineffectual instruments for free exchange of ideas. We particularly emphasize that there is the need for creating an appropriate atmosphere and environment for meaningful exchange of views on our constitutional future for the simple reason that the deliberations on the fashioning of a constitution for freedom, justice, progress and security cannot take place or be genuine otherwise.7

At the time, the Catholic Standard, a monthly newspaper of the Roman Catholic Church had been banned and journalists were being brutalized by Rawlings agents for raising dissenting voices. In addition the two bodies also called on the PNDC government to reintroduce democracy into governance by lifting the ban on party political activity. Regional forums had been previously organized throughout the country and the consensus was that the generality of Ghanaians wanted the PNDC to hand over power to a democratically elected government:

We feel obliged to repeat our call to the government to propose for the consideration of the nation an unambiguous time-table spelling out the various stages of the return to constitutional rule. We believe that determining the date should not be left entirely and exclusively to the goodwill of the PNDC, and that in the name of true participatory democracy, the public is entitled to have a say. In our statement last February, we proposed the end of 1992. We believe that this deadline is eminently reasonable, and it may even be possible to bring it forward.8

The bold initiatives in issuing such statements in the midst of political uncertainty and risks stemmed from the historical and intellectual advantages that the churches of missionary origins had. The stable structures, high intellectual resources and rich historical ecclesial traditions placed the mission denominations some way ahead of their newer Pentecostal/charismatic com-

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8 Sarpong, Ghana Bishops Speak, p. 206.
patriots in these matters. In issuing the statements on Ghana’s political situation and challenging the government’s unwillingness to undertake democratic reforms, the Ghana Catholic Bishops, for example, appealed directly to Papal Encyclicals. That was also the case with the call for the introduction of party politics and the abolishment of the Newspaper Licensing Law. In asking for the reintroduction of democratic governance, they appealed directly to Pope John Paul II’s Centesimus Annus (46):

The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests for ideological ends.  

The Pentecostal/charismatic churches however did not have such rich historical intellectual traditions to draw on. Traditionally their ‘weapons’ have not been memoranda and pastoral letters. They referred to biblical passages to interpret what was going on and responded to the developments with prayer and prophetic declarations.

Thus Pentecostal/charismatic churches chose a different solution to the problem by instituting prayer meetings to ask for God’s intervention. Among the interpretations given for the hardship of the times in such circles was that it was God’s judgment on the country for widespread immorality and corruption. Others saw it as a fulfillment of an Old Testament curse on nations that fraternized with Libya. Prophecies abounded in those days with the unanimous verdict that God was calling the nation and its leaders to repentance. The notoriety of African politicians in resorting to traditional shrines, secret societies and talismanic substances to protect their persons and office is fairly well known. The charismatic churches therefore called for periods of fasting, and initiated prayer meetings around such passages as: ‘If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land’ (II Chronicles 7:14). The understanding was that if the land needed healing then it was going to come through prayerful interventions. This is a passage that has inspired religious responses to African poli-

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6 Quoted in Sarpong, Ghana Bishops Speak, p. 204.

7 The Libyan leader became one of the strongest allies of Rawlings’ revolutionary government. This was a strategic alliance. Rawlings had failed to gain acceptance in the West, particularly the USA, so by identifying with the Libyan revolution, Ghana managed to receive some logistic support from that country.
tics in many countries including Zambia. Here, President Frederick Chiluba, himself a person of charismatic persuasion, cited the same passage to support his infamous declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. In keeping with the demands of the passage as he understood it, Chiluba went on to make the following declaration: ‘On behalf of the people of Zambia, I repent of our wicked ways of idolatry, witchcraft, the occult, immorality, injustice and corruption. I pray for the healing, restoration, revival, blessing and prosperity of Zambia’. In Ghana it goes to the credit of the Christian community in general, but to the Pentecostal/charismatic ones in particular, that they drew attention to the ‘spiritual’ implications of the troubled times that had descended upon the nation. The Ghana branch of Women Aglow, a Para-church neo-Pentecostal movement, was born out of a prayer group instituted by some Christian women in Ghana during the period.

‘God’s End-Time Militia’

The militaristic idiom of the two Rawlings revolutions even became part of the hermeneutic of the new churches. This is illustrated by the title of a book by Eastwood Anaba: God’s End-Time Militia. The militia concept was borrowed from the designation of one of the para-military organizations set up after the coup, the ‘Peoples’ Militia’. The subtitle, Winning the War Within and Without is revealing of the extent to which developments in the nation were linked to the activities of the supernatural realm. In other words the ‘war’ was not just economic or moral; it had been instigated by supernatural agents and what was needed to fight it was a new army, ‘God’s End-Time Militia’ who are alive to their spiritual responsibilities. Anaba contrasts the position of the ‘militia’, the charismatic churches, as ‘a rapid response force’, to that of the ‘regular army’, the historic mission churches, who he says had become too complacent in their ways and over ‘clericalized’ to be effective. Spiritual wars required spiritual weapons and so passages like II Corinthians 10:3-4 were readily invoked as alternative responses to the troubles of the times: ‘Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds’ (II Corinthians 10:3-4).

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12 In the book’s ‘foreword’ reference is made to the fact that there is the need to fight the forces of darkness troubling the nations. Nicholas Duncan-Williams, ‘Foreword’ to Eastwood Anaba, God’s End-Time Militia: Winning the War Within and Without (Accra: Design Solutions, 1993), p. vi.
One Nigerian charismatic author, Emeka Nwankpa, even articulated the problems of Africa in terms of the influences of ‘territorial spirits’ and spiritual bondage as a result of idolatry and sin. In this type of Christianity, the ancestors and spirits of traditional religion have survived as territorial demons needing to be exorcised in order to ‘redeem the land’ as his book suggests. In his book *Redeeming the Land*, even the IMF and World Bank that are popularly regarded as contributing to the economic problems of Africa are presented as ‘oppressive agents of the devil that need to be resisted by prayer and the force of the Spirit.’ This resistance amounted to the invocation of the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with the agents of supernatural evil that had brought certain African countries to their knees.

**Democratic transitions: 1992-2004**

After almost twenty years of military rule under Flt. Lt. Rawlings, Ghana was returned to parliamentary democracy in 1992. The extent to which Pentecostal/charismatic prayers had contributed to the transition is not empirically verifiable but the fact that they prayed reveals a certain understanding of the political developments in Ghana at the time that was more than empirical. This is what I refer to as the ‘spiritualized’ response to seemingly practical problems. As the charismatic and evangelical wings of the Christian community prayed, the historic mission denominations put together a team of experts to write Christian education booklets on democracy, good governance and the rights and responsibilities of governments and citizenry for use throughout the country. During the period, Rawlings reinvented himself as a civilian president. His ruling PNDC became a political party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

Rawlings continued to rule Ghana for another two terms of four years each as the Constitution permits until 2000 when he handed over to another elected President, John A. Kufuor. Thus except for the brief handover to Dr. Hilla Limann, between the end of 1979 and 1981, Rawlings had ruled Ghana for almost twenty years by the end of the year 2000. The historic mission denominations led by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference had helped in pressuring Rawlings to undertake the transition from military dictatorship to multi-party democracy and their Pentecostal/charismatic compatriots had supported the process with prayer and fasting.

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'Stolen verdict'
The results of the 1992 elections were called into question by the opposition parties led by the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The main opposition party, the NPP, described the results of the election as a 'stolen verdict'. They consequently refused to participate in the Parliamentary elections that followed. People were unanimous that refusing to sit in parliament was a better form of protest than the resort to guerilla warfare that had wrecked other African countries. Paul Gifford acknowledges that the threat of civil war in Ghana at this time was no fluke.14 God, many Christians believed, had spared Ghana from bloodshed. For those who believed in the power of prayer the very refusal of the NPP to take up arms in the face of such blatant rigging of an electioneering process was a sign of divine intervention. Thus except for one or two independent parliamentary candidates, Ghana lived virtually under a one-party democracy from 1992 to 1996 without violence, something that was reluctantly talked about publicly as preferable to the carnage that was ongoing in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The churches and the 1992 Thanksgiving service
After the 1992 transition, Rawlings wanted to celebrate his new status as a civilian president. His government called on the churches to organize a service for the nation in January 1993 to thank God for 'a successful transition'. The mainline churches refused led by the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG). The Pentecostal/charismatic churches, led by Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the Christian Action Faith Ministry International (CAFMI), seized the opportunity to develop an important alliance. Archbishop Duncan-Williams is the founding father of the new Pentecostal or charismatic churches in Ghana and this invitation was for him a sign of divine recognition, approval and elevation. In the 1993 case Duncan-Williams was not at the thanksgiving service as the representative of any Christian organization. He was there in his individual capacity in spite of the interpretation, mainly from the viewpoint of the older churches, that his appearance was a tacit endorsement of the government by the new churches. This is what Kwesi A. Dickson, the then Chairman of the CCG, had to say about the refusal of his organization to be part of an obviously contentious service and the role these new charismatic churches played in it:

The thanksgiving service did take place on 15 January 1993 with the evangelical-charismatic churches in charge. These churches, not being members of the Christian Council, were not involved in the attempts to bring about a political dialogue

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in the interests of peace, and as no invitation had gone from the Christian Council and the Catholic Secretariat to join in the exercise, it is not easy to speculate as to how they would have reacted to such an invitation. However, interest in political and other temporal circumstances is likely to be much less among these other churches, being concerned, as they are, with ‘spiritual’ matters, tending to dichotomize the world into the sacred-spiritual and the secular-material.  

Historic mission denominations look upon African initiated Christianity generally, including the newer evangelical-charismatic movements, as fringe religious phenomena that do not have to be taken seriously. Consequently, there is little or no attempt to engage with them. Dickson concedes in the quotation above that there was no attempt by the CCG to invite the charismatic churches to participate in the process of dialogue and to be signatories of ultimatums given to the government in the run up to the elections. To label these churches as groups that dichotomize sacred and secular realities not only recalls a condescending attitude adopted towards the independent churches generally, but also betrays a misunderstanding of their theological approach to matters of politics and social development. It is obviously insufficient for Christians to resort to prayer only when they can speak out against injustice but for Christian churches working from faith perspectives, issuing statements alone may also not be considered sufficient enough. The Pentecostal/charismatic churches take pride in their role as those who pray for the nation and often talk openly about it.  

There is a historical precedent for this attitude towards African initiated Christianity. When Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, the National Liberation Council invited the churches to ‘cleanse’ and rededicate the seat of government, the Castle, before they move in. Apostle C.K.N. Wovenu of the Apostles’ Revelation Society was asked to deliver the sermon for the occasion. The historic mission churches, led by the late distinguished Ghanaian clergyman and theologian, Christian G. Baeta, wrote to the government ‘objecting to the theological unsound nature of the proceedings as administered by Prophet Wovenu.’ According to the letter such religious bodies as represented by the prophet ‘deviate from the mainstream of universal Christianity that has flowed down the ages.’ There are two issues here, the

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16 See Mensa Otubil’s comments in Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, p. 183, footnote 64.

disregard that the older churches generally have for the independent churches, and the naïveté that the latter also display in the blind support they often provide for wayward leaders. The endorsement of totalitarian and corrupt regimes and the legitimization of their efforts by independent church pastors clearly undermine the efforts of the historic mission denominations and civil society at calling such governments to order. The governments concerned we see from examples catalogued by different authors, have exploited the gullibility of charismatic and independent church pastors to cover up their misdeeds under the cloak of the supernatural. However the charlatanism of some pastors need not also be interpreted as the acquiescence of the whole independent church sector in these practices.

'Ewurade Kasa': the 2000 transition

The Pentecostal/charismatic churches may not be publicly critical of government, but in their own way, they have often asked God to 'speak' or to intervene in injustices. This was illustrated by the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana and the way charismatic gospel music was used. There was widespread concern that Rawlings was abusing his incumbency by deploying national resources in favor of his party. At the time, the 2000 elections were looming and Rawlings was actively promoting his chosen successor John Mills. Rawlings, the former military strongman who is still the 'soul' of the NDC, had proven too strong for anybody to confront and in those circumstances the charismatic churches knew that calling on God to intervene had become a major option for Christians. Quoting Kwame Bediako:

> Given the perceived formidable obstacles to a free and fair election in the way that incumbency was being used by the ruling party, there was a widespread belief that, should the elections indeed turn out to be free and fair, that would be providential, truly a gift of God. This explains the multitude of prayer vigils that were held in the run-up to the elections and the focusing of regular occasions for prayer in church upon the forthcoming elections.\(^\text{18}\)

At the end of 2000, Rawlings and his followers were really shaken when after almost twenty years of wielding political power the need for change of government in Ghana became palpable. Some progress had been made in economic development but the country was tired of Rawlings and his legacy.

Once again Ghanaians, led by the Pentecostal/charismatic churches, turned to God. Coincidentally, Ghanaian gospel-life musician Cindy Thompson, herself a charismatic, had just released her new hit, *Ewurade Kasa*, ‘Lord Speak’. The lyrics call on the ‘God of mercy’ to ‘intervene’ in a personal crisis. This was not a political song but its theological understanding of God as the one who intervenes in crisis was adapted and appropriated for the purpose. It was a very moving song that appropriated the political mood in the country and people used it to call on God to ‘speak through the election results’. And he did. *Ewurade Kasa* was sang in churches, on political platforms of the opposition NPP and by December 2000, it was evident to even the most ardent of Rawlings supporters that he was generally perceived as the ‘stumbling block’ to the nation’s progress. It was obvious that the loss of the election by his party was going to be hailed as divine intervention. When the deed was accomplished, President Kufuor chose the International Central Gospel Church as the place to thank God for his success. Bishop Charles Agyn-Asare of the World Miracle Church International led the national thanksgiving service that followed. Through these gestures the President seemed to affirm that the calls for divine intervention dominated by charismatic voices had worked in his favor.

The Pentecostal/charismatic churches are first and foremost religious organizations and so their primary call is, as they understand it, to assess the ‘spiritual atmosphere’ and respond to it the best way they know how. They discerned that the needs of the country were much deeper than the simple changes of structures and political reforms being advocated for by the older churches, important as those may be. Besides, the new churches do not possess the sort of intellectual grounding and strong ecumenical platform needed to take on such political assignments. In those circumstances turning the invitation of Rawlings down was not an option. If the man had been placed there by God, he is not to be ‘touched’ until God himself decides to bring him down. They worked within their theological belief based on Romans 13:1-2, that once a leader is ‘anointed’ he or she must be respected because the God who put the person there is equally powerful to remove him or her. Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar capture this standpoint succinctly:

African Christians, who often interpret the Bible literally, may believe that they are required to work with any incumbent government. Many seem to believe that a president owes his position to God, and that continued incumbency is a sign that the president has continuing divine support. Western governments and former

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mission churches regard power as vested in institutions, whereas Africans are generally more likely to see it as emanating directly from the spirit world.

It is for the same reason the source of the leader's authority is divine or mystical that Pentecostal/charismatic church members do not usually criticize their pastors. The key word in relating particularly to the founders of these churches is 'loyalty'. Thus the decision to hold the thanksgiving service was for both theological and strategic reasons.

Travail to prevail: towards the 2004 elections

The calls for 'All Christians All Night Prayer Vigils' by the charismatic churches have now become part of Ghanaian religious and political life. The prayer meetings take place at critical moments in Ghana's political history, especially when elections are looming and the NPP and NDC are using the media to 'beat war drums.' In the last quarter of 2004 prayer vigils took place in three locations - the Prayer Cathedral of Action Chapel, the Legon Inter-denominational Church and the final one prior to the election at the Independence Square in Accra. Ghana was on the verge of another election as President Kufuor's first term came to an end. He was seeking re-election and his main challenger was again Prof. John Mills. The animosity between the parties of the two men was so high that the fear of an outbreak of carnage after elections returned. The charismatic churches moved into action again with a call for another series of all-night prayer vigils.

Cancelling satanic destinies

The idea as usual was to ask God to grant Ghana peaceful elections. This time, the vigils were organized under the auspices of the newly formed National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC). Each

21 The events were sponsored by two Christian-oriented media houses, Joy and Choice FM, who also carried the programs live on their airwaves. In this way people did not have to be physically present to be part of the vigils given that Joy FM in particular covers almost the whole of the country except the very north. The reference to 'Christian-oriented' media houses needs some clarification. In Ghana it is not allowed for religious organizations to own radio and television stations. However a few of these, which are owned by Christians, support the Christian community's events by carrying some of them live and heavily discount others as part of their service to the promotion of God's kingdom. This sort of service falls within the seed-sowing theology of charismatic Christianity. It serves the same purpose as the faithful payment of tithes and offerings without which reli-
program run from 9:00pm until 4:00am and the sessions were attended by a total of about 4000. The participants and the speakers were drawn from the major Pentecostal/charismatic churches. During one of the sessions, the Master of Ceremonies (MC) brought greetings from the General Manager of Multimedia Communications Network, operators of Joy FM: ‘the desire of Multimedia is that peace may be in our land; with our faith in God, this election is going to be peaceful’, he assured. Prayer vigils are generally exercises in spiritual warfare so the leader will begin by telling the congregation that ‘tonight, I am an agent in the hand of God to nullify and cancel the satanic destiny of this nation; we have a purpose to pray that the grace of God may be established so that we do not become another Liberia.’ Each of the preachers for the sessions harped on that experience noting how Ghanaians were unprepared to be refugees in another country. The preventive method for dealing with that, according to the operating theological mindset, was to pray ‘fervently’ for God’s intervention.

‘We have no excuse’

Coincidentally, balloting for positions on the presidential election ballot paper was conducted on the morning of the first vigil on October 22, 2004. The MC for the occasion quickly drew attention to it as a ‘divine coincidence’ that should give the congregation a reason to pray: ‘we are part of a history-making team to shape the divine destiny of this country’, he noted. Pastor Christiana Doe Tetteh of Solid Rock Chapel made reference to the accusation that traditional religion had become a ‘demonic doorway’ through which evil influences were securing footholds in Africa. The Exile did not stop Nehemiah from performing his patriotic duty, she continued: ‘how concerned are you about our country Ghana?’ ‘If we are concerned, there will be no excuse not to pray’. Making extensive references to Nehemiah 1:1-11, Pastor Tetteh challenged the congregation: ‘Each one of us is on assignment’. The biblical month of Chislev, she noted, fell around November and December, which are the same months in which Ghana’s fourth democratic elections were taking place. She charged that there are people in Ghana who were not concerned

Professor Odoro Afriyie of the University of Ghana was invited to share a special testimony of miraculous deliverance in Liberia during that country’s deadly civil war. He was working there as a lecturer at the University of Liberia during the outbreak of the war in 1992. The testimony, he noted reminded the deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea. The whole point was to encourage those who had assembled to pray so that the Lord would deliver Ghana from the horrible things that had happened to Liberia and turned its citizens into refugees in the country.

religious practice, it is believed, a person’s life’s endeavors may go nowhere (Malachi 3: pp. 10-11).
because they think that if there is chaos, they can take their passports and leave: 'we are not like them', she said; 'we have to pray for the peace of our Jerusalem’, and ‘Ghana is our Jerusalem.' At this point she declared: 'Father, we stop all those beating wardrums in their tracks in Jesus name!'

‘Travailing prayer’
Pastor Steve Mensah of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry spoke on ‘travailing in prayer’. The key expression for him was the word ‘labor’ in Isaiah 66. ‘We have all kinds of prayer’, he noted, and one of these is ‘travailing prayer’ which is like being in labor. ‘Travailing prayer’, he noted, is ‘prolonged, sustained and aggressive; ‘it is like travailing to give birth.’ We have a national crisis, he explained and ‘national crises call for travailing prayer’. Pastor Mensah pointed to Elijah, Hannah, Hezekiah and Moses as biblical personalities who relied on ‘travailing prayer’ with positive results: ‘we do not want to be refugees for helicopters to drop food for us to eat.’ This was a theme that was already been talked about in the media. A song had been composed drawing attention to the list of African countries virtually decimated by civil war and the charismatic references helped to draw attention to the evils of those developments. ‘Our ultimate example is Jesus himself’, Pastor Mensah said, when it came to ‘dying for humanity’, he resorted to travailing prayer: ‘we need to pray for peace within our walls and prosperity within our palaces’, he said, as he also applied the metaphor of Jerusalem to Ghana as Pastor Tetteh did earlier.

‘Push until something happens’
The other two vigils followed a similar pattern. Several themes associated with the first vigil recurred in the other two. For example the prayers which were led by Pastor Jonathan Otisoo Asiedu of Christ Castle International. In the preliminary time of mass extempore prayer during one meeting, he told the congregation: ‘we are going to travail until we prevail.’ ‘We are here to make history’, he said, recalling some of the discourses of the first meeting and then he returned to the metaphor of the woman in labor: ‘we are going to push until something happens’. Dr. Maxwell Aryeef of the Legon Interdenominational Church hosted the second meeting. He re-focused on the call to ‘earnest’ or ‘fervent’ prayer both for the nation and the people who had assembled to pray. His explanation of ‘earnest’ prayer as meaning ‘determined’, ‘serious’, ‘not joking’, immediately resonated strongly with the picture of travailing in prayer that seemed to run through the agenda for the meetings. In recalling the intercessions of Elijah, Dr Aryee and the other speakers were reiterating standard themes associated with intercessory prayer and what it can achieve for nations. Elijah is one of the ultimate examples in
that respect as Bishop Agyin Asare is quoted to have noted prior to the previous election in 2000: "as Elijah was able to change the land by his intercession, we are able to change the land by our intercession."

"The gate opened of its own accord"
Pastor Kingsley Appiah Adjei, who was visiting from London, preached from Acts 12:1-11. He noted that "it is demonic spirits that are controlling the destinies of African nations, and declared: 'the spirit that has touched Liberia, Sierra Leone, La Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria will not touch Ghana, in Jesus name!' In verse 7a, the angel of the Lord stood by Peter in prison, and so the angel assigned to stand by Ghana will do that: 'every chain will fall off as the chains of Peter fell off; chains holding our nations and individual destinies will all be broken in Jesus name.' In verse 8, the angel instructed Peter, 'fasten your belt and put on your sandals'. The application is that "when we pray we get direction" and so Pastor Appiaje believed that God was going to grant Ghana direction. Then he came to the charismatic favorite of that passage, verse 10, the Iron Gate 'opened for them of its own accord'. "As we pray", he noted, 'any natural resources that are hidden, may God open our eyes to see these treasures'; "any door of opportunity, favor, I command you to open in the name of Jesus'. "Deliverance is coming to Ghana" he declared and led a prayer time in which the congregation prayed that after the election, the losers will concede defeat. People were challenged to pray for the grace to change their mindsets and ways of life so that God will bless our country and grant us peaceful elections. In this way the economic and political destinies of the nation and individuals were linked in ways that made people feel that they had a 'spiritual' part to play in Ghana's political future. In other words, their prayers counted.

2008: peace and progress for the nation
In December 2008 the Republic of Ghana held general elections for a new President and members of parliament. The NDC and the other opposition parties have regrouped for the 2008 elections and the stakes are already high with a lot of political violence at various campaign grounds around the country. There were calls for tolerance, calm and patience from all sections of Ghanaian society. This time, it is important to note, the calls for prayer started quite early and the historic mission and Pentecostal/charismatic churches have teamed up to pray for the nation. This is how Ghana's most popular daily, the Daily Graphic, reports the call to prayer:

23 Quoted in Gifford, Ghana's New Christianity, p. 173.
As part of a great effort to ensure peaceful elections in December, the churches of Ghana have set September 29 to October 5 as a National Week of Prayer and Fasting. The move which comes in the wake of growing tension among some key political parties in some parts of the country will be climaxed with a national non-denominational church service to be attended by the President and all presidential aspirants in the 2008 general election.  

The theme of this prayer service was “Seeking Peace and Progress for the Nation”. It came off successfully and there are indications that individual churches will call for more prayer sessions. As the elections loom, Christian churches continued to call for God’s intervention that Ghana will have peaceful elections.

In the midst of the calls to prayer, politicians continued to use religion as means of achieving various ends. The NPP took full advantage of the growing Muslim presence with the appointment of a running mate who was a Muslim. The Convention People’s Party’s flag bearer, Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom, has gone for a special rosary from his parish priest to enable him win the election. All the presidential aspirants continue to respond to invitations to address religious gatherings. One such case drew public outrage from the Christian community. On October 14, *The Chronicle*, a popular private Ghanaian daily, reported that a former minister of the NDC government, Daniel O. Agyekum, had invoked the powers of Antoa Nyamaa, a popular Ghanaian deity located in the Ashanti Region, to prove the innocence of his party in an accusation involving a violent clash between NDC and NPP supporters.

These are the events that lead the Pentecostal/charismatic churches in particular to call for fasting and prayer. Although by no means limited to them, the prayer services have been dominated by Pentecostal/charismatic presence, including even ways of praying and worship. Whatever the outcome of the 2008 general election, one thing would always be clear, that the churches in Ghana and Christian religion in general, remain inseparable from political developments in the country.

**Conclusion: religion and politics in democratic Ghana**

The foregoing has shown that the new charismatic churches, virtually nonexistent just three decades ago, have become important players in the field of African politics. Bishop Charles Agyin-Asare, founder of the Word Miracle Church International in Accra, Ghana, is an acknowledged healing evangelist with an important transnational and media ministry. Part of his profile at the

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end of his book *Power in Prayer* captures the importance of the new category of pastors in contemporary African political space:

He is regarded by many as a missionary statesman. He has had audience with and prayed for the immediate past president of Ghana, J.J. Rawlings (1999). The immediate past vice president, Prof. J.E.A. Mills who he prayed with regularly visited the bishop’s local church several times whilst in political office. He led the nation to thank God at the inaugural thanksgiving service of the current president of Ghana, His Excellency J.A. Kufuor in March 2001. He preached at the inaugural thanksgiving service for the current president of La Cote D’Ivoire, His Excellency Laurent Gbagbo in November 2000... The President also visited his church in Ghana when he came on an official visit to the country in May 2001.25

This citation shows that the dependence of the charismatic churches and political leaders on each other for support in Africa is mutual. There is no doubting the fact that some of the leaders of African initiated churches, both old and new, often adopt simplistic approaches to complex economic and political problems through prophetic declarations, prayer vigils and biblical interpretations of events. During the military government of General I.K. Acheampong of Ghana, for example, every right thinking Ghanaian knew that the man was morally bankrupt and his government unashamedly corrupt. When the economic ills got out of hand, he declared a Week of National Repentance making a direct connection between national problems and national sins. The invitation to repent was largely ignored especially by the historic mission churches but one Abraham de Love, an itinerant evangelist, and some independent church prophets bought into that mindset which basically diverted attention from the role of the political leaders in the sinking of the national economy.26

Thus we could conclude that religion and politics remain very engaged in African countries like Ghana, whether under military totalitarian regimes or in modern democracies. If African governments will be held accountable for the uses of resources and governance, religious movements and churches, given the various roles they play in political life, may need to strengthen existing positive roles and rethink the selfish ways in which religion is used. In that way the church in particular would be fulfilling an important obligation, that is, the call of the scriptures for the church to serve as the prophetic voice in the nation. We celebrate John Samuel Pobee for drawing attention to this

'goldmine' of scholarship in religion and politics in Africa and the ways it helps us to understand African societies.

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‘And they Must also Call unto the Way of the Lord with Wisdom’: The Perspective of a Muslim Woman on African Women in Inter-Faith Encounters

Rahiatu Deinyo Ammah

The human condition of Women in Africa is one that challenges both culture and religion, as the roots of her subordination are steeped deep in them. Consequently, women have a duty to transform the power structures within their context to make life more meaningful and fulfilling as intended by God. Thus as women they have been called to use women’s wisdom to create a better life for humanity, both male and female. The paper proposes to show that since dialogue is the language of God, it is only through a concerted effort and working together of women of faith, as exemplified in ‘The Circle’ and ‘Talitha Qumi Centre’ that the will of God may be achieved. All women, including Muslims, therefore, have a calling which they must heed.

Introduction: personal experiences

My journey into interfaith encounters has been informed by both personal experiences and academic pursuits. As a Muslim woman born and bred in Ghana, I was completely unconscious of the need for any formal and serious engagement with the other religion as I took it for granted. My parents were devout Muslim converts who both had Christian and traditional backgrounds. Additionally, the family was a mixed one; my paternal grandfather being an ecumenical Christian and a strong believer in the indigenous Ga religion known as ‘Kpelle’. The family was mixed and inter-faith relationships were the norm and taken for granted.

However, my interest was aroused during my stay at The Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Selly-Oak Colleges, Birmingham which as the name implies promotes inter-faith relations at both academic level and existential levels. I was sent there to do graduate studies by Prof. J.S Pobee. Having come to a conclusion in my long essay in 1981 that Muslim women were ignorant of Islam and had imbibed patriarchal interpretations of women, I was encouraged by Prof. David Kerr, a stalwart in Christian-Muslim Relations at the Centre, to do a comparative study of women in the textual sources of the three monotheistic religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It was at this point that I realized commonal-
ities among the faith traditions and became convinced that women themselves could create an agenda. Without going into any details it was obvious that the agenda was ‘Women.’

As a student at the Study Centre I was introduced to other inter-religious gatherings such as the Jewish/Christian/Muslim (JCM) conferences in Bendorf, Germany. Additionally, my work as a resource person at the Multi-Faith Resource Unit (MUFPU) enriched my life as almost all the other resource persons, mainly women, had different stories to tell. These experiences at the Centre had a far reaching and humbling effect on me. The sum total of what I was taught especially by Prof. Hasan Askari was that ‘for a religion to be religion it has to be inter-religious.’

However, my observation of the numerous interfaith interactions I had in Europe was one of very little participation of women at the dialogue table, as noted by Ursula King. As an African I also found it extremely difficult to identify with the agenda and issues discussed at JCM conferences for women. It was not only Eurocentric but perhaps too academic. Therefore I began to ask myself critical questions, why should my so-called ‘liberation’ which people felt I needed as an African Muslim woman, be indirectly tied to a Eurocentric perspective? Obviously this sentiment is echoed by Miriam Nwoye who argues that ‘sometimes a onesided view is given of woman subordination in Traditional societies and by their omission to give an account of the positive aspects of womanbeing in traditional Africa they fail to bring out the role of women in nation building.’ This was simply not palatable. My issues of concern were very different and therefore my agenda had to be necessarily different and intricately linked to my African cultural identity. Yet the issues of African women had been presented through the lenses of the other and the stories of African women were being told by others. Therefore African women themselves needed to tell the stories within this cultural context.

These notwithstanding an incident that pushed me as a Muslim woman to protestation was the attitude of some Muslim leadership institutions and one which had led to the earlier formation of Federation of Muslim Women’s Association in Ghana (FOMWAG) in 1992. This happened in 2003 with the introduction of Ghana Chapter for Religion and Peace, which was virtually brought into Ghana under the instrumentality of some Muslim women. Yet the Sunni Muslim men hijacked the positions on the governing council and rebuffed the women when the constitution required their inclusion. At the

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launched on the organization the men again did not even acknowledge the role and contribution of the women in its inception.

This in itself was not surprising as Muslim leadership institutions since independence had not only had a chequered history, but had completely ignored Muslim women and their agenda. Indeed almost all Muslim organizations do not have a women’s desk and women’s issues are not mainstreamed. One could hazard a guess the marginalization of and elimination of women was the normal behaviour which suggests a discriminating attitude. It is in the same vein that Ursula King notes, ‘most dialogue practitioners are unaware of the fact that inter faith dialogue is strongly embedded in the patriarchal structures of the existing religions’. Therefore, ‘inter-religious dialogue, as currently understood and promoted in many parts of the world, particularly among Christians, is strongly marked by the absence of women’. This has implications as more than half of the critical mass, women, are not available to inform and determine the outcome of these sessions. Therefore for Ursula King, if gender perspectives were given attention and space, everybody would benefit.

For me as a Muslim this exclusion has theological implications. Who decides ‘who should call’?, especially when the call has been made imperative for all Muslims, male and female. It is against this backdrop that I agree with two authors; first Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who argues for a review of the whole of concept of ‘authority’ in Christianity, and the critique of the ‘authoritarian’ attitude in Islam by Khalid Abou el Fadl. This presupposition of a critique thus challenges the virtual exclusion of women from the arena and posits that Muslim women should be involved in dialogue, for if for nothing at all, for ‘dawah’ (explanation of the religion) purposes. The title of this paper is therefore an adaptation of the Qur’anic verse which commands or mandates all to call on God.

Indeed these sentiments are echoed by Musimbi Kanyoro and Mercy Amba Oduyoye when they wrote that ‘African women theologians have come to the realize that in as far as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead. And therefore until women’s views are listened to and

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3 King, ‘Gender and Interreligious Dialogue’, p. 3.
their participation is allowed and ensured, the truth will remain hidden, and the call to live the values of the Reign of God will go unheeded.\textsuperscript{5}

It is against this background of the muted voices of women in the area of interfaith dialogue, and the call to invite people to the way of God, that this paper is written, first to examine the rationale and or imperative for women of faith to have a forum to relate to each other; second to assess the mutual benefits that accrue from such encounters; and third to appreciate the role some organizations such as the Programme for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCUMARA); the Circle of Concerned African Women’s Theologians (THE CIRCLE); and the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture (INSTITUTE/TALITHA QUMI CENTRE) as alternatives in the pursuit of dialogue and diapraxis to establish gender justice and promote women. To appreciate this, we need to address the challenges of African women and then highlight the concept of dialogue/dawah and the theological resources that promote it and its implications.

\textit{The religious factor}

Religion plays a crucial role in any society. On the one hand, it binds people together and serves as a basis of fraternity and cohesion in religious communities. On the other, it can also create divisive tendencies in mixed or pluralistic societies due to the way people understand, interpret, and practice religion. It is a double-edged sword that can either help promote healthy development or create chaos and anarchy in any given society. For African societies, which are religiously pluralistic, different religious traditions influence our lives. Our attitude to the other faith is also shaped by our understanding either of our individual faith, or what we perceive religion to be, or both. Consequently, depending on our understanding of religion and its aims and objectives, we accept, tolerate, respect or reject the other. It is not therefore surprising that within the same religious tradition, some may reject the religion of others on the basis of their interpretation, implementation and practice of their own religion. Therefore the quest for harmonious relations in ethically and religiously pluralistic societies in Africa south of the Sahara, is of dire relevance; it is an issue with which we should constantly and continuously wrestle in order to achieve holistic development and peace.

My understanding of religion tells me that among other things, it establishes a relationship not only between human beings and their creator but also between the humans themselves. All religious traditions basically teach unity, love, brotherhood and sisterhood and command the doing of things that will

promote the general welfare of humankind. All religions have the golden rule in one form or the other and the members are expected to live by it. This rule must be inculcated in all people of faith to enable them respect human beings for what they are. In my view all religions are essentially about the welfare of human beings and teach principles that bring about holistic development of the self and the society. Against this backdrop there is no doubt that religion, if properly understood and interpreted, contributes tremendously to the development of any nation. This awareness coupled with other factors has led to the formation of inter-religious bodies on the African continent pursuing similar agendas.

**Manifestations of inter-faith relations in Africa**

Africans especially south of the Sahara lived informally and harmoniously in a religiously pluralistic setting long before the dialogue movement gained momentum. Therefore, except in a few places like Nigeria the general situation on the religious scene is cordial. This is probably a result of the fact that the different religious traditions especially Islam and Christianity have themselves been ‘domesticated’ by the indigenous African tradition.

From the African’s perspective, in Ghana, for instance, religion is normal daily routine and not necessarily a spectacular matter even though it may be so for an outsider. This may be as a result of the ‘Godwardness’ of the traditional religion, which in a sense demonstrates the reality that God is fundamental to Ghanaian culture and, as a result, Ghanaians perhaps find it easier than Europeans and Arabs to accept that God can be addressed in many different ways whilst remaining the same. Within families therefore we find Muslims, Christians and Traditional Believers living together. They are blood relations but belong to different religions. Certain celebrations like funerals, marriages and childbirth out-dooring ceremony affect all and involve all. In almost every town and city there are houses built by Muslims and hired out to Christian’s tenants and vice versa, or Christians and Muslims find themselves tenants in the same compound. In the market Muslims and Christians rub shoulders. Thus it is not difficult for these informal relations to be transformed into a formal setting. It is in view of this that Elom Dowlo asserts that

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‘clearly inter-religious accommodation has been quite commendable in Ghana in spite of the intermittent upheavals’.  

The general situation of many African countries is well known and is characterized by poverty, disease, instability and the struggle they are going through to become politically, economically and ideologically independent. Since achieving independence beginning from the nineteen-fifties, Africa south of the Sahara has been striving to maintain a decent level of peace and stability with the view to achieving holistic national development as it is a sine qua non needed to confront the many challenges of the countries among which are: good governance, democratization, leadership, and the reduction of poverty and disease. There are also insecurities in the life of many through self-imposed wars, famine, natural disasters, etc. It is to help achieve this that there has been a proliferation of Non-Governmental Organizations, including ones that are religiously based. Since everybody suffers the indignities of the harsh realities of life without discrimination, in order to find solutions to such enormous problems, people of faith have come together to do advocacy and champion the cause of the ordinary person through the use of both theological and ethical resources in their respective scriptures.

This provides an agenda to push: they must communally try and eradicate malaria, poverty, diseases, such as the dreadful HIV/AIDS and corruption in all its manifestations; together with ‘the evils and idolatries of society that cut across churches and religions’. It is imperative for the religious communities in the era of democratization to be alert in the political domain and criticize governments which are oppressive, dictatorial, and unable to serve the people. They must address issues on human rights abuses and violations and replace their society with peace and justice on the continent.

This being the case and since these inequities do not discriminate on the basis of religion, people of faith must channel their energies into creating better, healthy and strong independent nations and raising the standard of life of the people through lobbying and advocacy on these political issues most of which may not necessarily be theological or religious but about the fullness and wholeness of life. There must be collaboration and networking to promote peace and justice and develop ‘everywhere on the continent the collaboration of peace and justice, which alone can glorify God’. It is gratifying to

note that there are several instances of interfaith commissions where the cooperation has had tremendous impact. South Africa is a typical example where ‘interreligious solidarity for justice’ played an immeasurable role in the dismantling of apartheid.\[15\]

However in spite of the different efforts and programmes to foster peace and holistic development, instances of intolerance have been recorded in some parts of Africa, such as Nigeria, that have had serious implications for life and property and communal harmony. In Ghana, Dovlo gives several examples: in 1981 when a Christian debarred Muslims from worshipping on the grounds of the Presbyterian Church. This was however resolved through peaceful means by the leadership of the church. Again in 1995 there was a spate of violent reactions between Christians and Muslim in Kumasi and Takoradi over provocative methods of preaching by some Christian evangelists. Subsequently many religious bodies condemned the methodology and called for restraint and tolerance.\[14\] In Liberia in 2004 there were political and ethnic confrontations between Christians and Muslims resulting in, among other things, burning of churches and mosques.

It therefore becomes imperative that all the energies, and especially human resources, should be directed at ensuring the peace and stability to pursue the much needed development in African societies. In several ways this has been done through both government and non-governmental institutions and inter-religious organizations. Inter-religious cooperation has become necessary in view of the development agenda that has been set by state and government. People of faith especially, have come to terms with the fact that it is part of their religious mandate to talk on issues related to social justice, democracy and good governance, development, health, poverty, disease, management and resolution of conflict and do advocacy on behalf of the marginalized. To promote better inter-communal living and impact more several inter-religious organizations have been formed among which are: the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and World Conference for Religion and Peace (WCRP).

In Ghana for example, two major national groups that have been created for the purpose of interfaith relations and which have tried to do advocacy and promote peace are: the Forum of Religious Bodies, and the Ghana Chapter for Religion and Peace (GCRP). As the name suggests the former is a body consisting of religious leaders who are active in the body politic of Ghana to promote democracy and good governance. It is primarily a Christian-Muslim organization consisting of the Federation of Muslim Councils and


the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, the Christian Council of Ghana, the National Catholic Secretariat and the Council of Pentecostal Churches. One of the things they have sought to do has been to educate the populace on their democratic rights and monitored the various Fourth Republican Elections since 1992 to ensure fair polls. This body also resolved conflict at the highest level involving the then President Rawlings and his vice-President in the early nineties. Today they are not only involved in the Moral Re-Armament Programme but also are part of the Peace Council emphasizing the need for peace. More recently the forum has more or less metamorphosed into the Ghana Chapter for Religion in Peace (GCRP), the national chapter of the World Council for Religion and Peace.

The Ghana Conference for Religion and Peace (GCRP) seeks to bring the different Christian and Muslim bodies under a common umbrella with a view to fostering better relations between themselves and dealing with socio-economic and political challenges. To this end GCRP initiated the Hope for African Children Initiative in Ghana, to cater for children affected or infected with HIV/AIDS. Again, it has organized programmes to sensitize and conscientize women about violence as it relates to HIV/AIDS. As part of its response to the challenges of women everywhere, WCRP has created the women’s wing, which in Africa is known as the African Women of Faith Network (AWOFNET) to specifically address issues of concern to women.

**Challenges of African women of faith**

In Africa the challenges of women are deeply embedded in the human condition, ‘bread and butter issues’ and a fight for survival, areas that affect women most. It is important to reiterate here that the issues of ‘poverty-stricken and injustice-ridden’ Africa are concerns that also have gender implications and provide legitimate grounds for Muslim and Christian women, being the worse sufferers, to work for their best interest and welfare. For women of faith the discourse thus goes beyond the academic into other realms. It becomes ‘dialogue for holistic development’ – diapraxis. Coupled with the patriarchal interpretation of the sacred scriptures, women of faith have very little choice but to collaborate more on these issues, which affect their lives, and to take their destinies into their own hands. For African women silence cannot be an option.

Najma Moosah and several Muslim women have pointed out that Muslim women face the same status problems in the private and public spheres of life as their non-Muslim counterparts, though it is also alleged that as members of a particular community they suffer other inequalities.¹⁵ This assertion, she

argues, is debatable as discrimination against Muslim women is not religiously based but is a deviation from the original spirit of Islam as a result of patriarchal interpretations. She also argues that cultural or customary influences and ignorance are responsible for the oppressed position of Muslim women today. It is within this same context of interpretations and readings of sacred texts, that Teresa Okure critiques aspects of the Bible especially Ephesians 5:21-33 which she describes as ‘Unwise Words in A Wise Book’ for its potential not only ‘to oppress and dehumanize women, but also because the man himself suffers from the practice; all the more so in that he is made to see as benefit something which makes him both inhuman and un-Christly.’

Theoretically and in principle, in Islam and, as rightly stated by Olatundun Orebiiyi, the Bible and the African Indigenous Religion all agree that the woman is a creation of God, created for a purpose for the world. Accordingly, Mercy Amba Oduyoye has suggested that ‘Christian feminists have emphasized some of the biblical typologies that place men and women equal before God in order to balance our one-sided reading of the Scriptures’. For me women and men are depicted by scripture as being equally the objects of God’s love and experience God’s love to the extent that their personal inclinations will allow. These resonate with the Islamic teachings on khalifaship (vicegerency).

The implication of this khalifaship of human beings, including women, is that they are de facto leaders with a divine mandate to prosecute goodness and wholeness of life as intended by God for the attainment of good in this world and the hereafter. This is beautifully and aptly summed up in the Islamic prayer which says, ‘Our Lord, Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the hell fire’. This understanding is intricately linked to the meaning of Islam – which is peace and which, obviously, God intends for the whole of creation; one of Gods attributes being As Salaam (the source of peace). The understanding also falls in line with the traditional concept which understands peace as equivalent to health, wellbeing

Okure, ‘Unwise Words’, p. 28.
Oduyoye, Hearing and Knowing, pp. 135-6.
and freshness and as an enemy of poverty, insecurity, unemployment and waywardness and various types of mysterious and manmade misfortunes.\textsuperscript{21}

Clearly, the Traditional African woman desires peace in the same way as the Muslim and Christian. However the African woman’s human condition seems to be diametrically opposite to these expectations. It also makes naught of the prayer for especially goodness in this life. Yet by virtue of being natural leaders and nurturers, women affirm life. It is from their womb that life flows. Hence they have their own priorities and have developed skills to promote and sustain life. As mothers and wives and auntsies, they play critical roles in nation building and are generally known to be agents of peace building and conflict resolution. These African women do this through inculcating the culture of peace in their children and in the practice of conflict mediation among warring factions in the family and the community.\textsuperscript{22} Conversely they are averse to conflicts. For African women of faith, it is their responsibility to ensure, promote and sustain that effective leadership that would create the enabling environment for the peace and justice to prevail. Additionally, it becomes the duty of the woman to uphold and maintain this peace through striving against all forms of oppression and suppression and ungodly powers that seek to subvert and destabilize the status quo. Women therefore have a calling: one that Teresa Okure likens to the story of Jairus’ daughter in the Bible. In her reading of the text, ‘when Jesus told her “Child Arise”, and directed that she be given something to eat, he was simply not restoring her to life; he was empowering her to take up her life and live’.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Women: the agenda}

There is no doubt that the African human condition as stated earlier, negatively impacts women and children most, and they are subjected to all sorts of gender-based violence, with its consequences and implications for example in HIV/AIDS. Also the patriarchal nature of the theologies of major religious traditions, especially Islam and Christianity, obstructs women’s development. According to Mercy Amba Oduyoye ‘African culture is replete with language that enables the community to diminish the humanity of women’\textsuperscript{24} in spite of the many positives elements. Together the disastrous consequences of these for women may be the result of what is considered to be ‘hoarding of

\textsuperscript{21} Nwoye, ‘Role of Women in Peace Building’, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{22} Nwoye, ‘Role of Women in Peace Building’, p. 13.


\textsuperscript{24} Mercy Amba Oduyoye, ‘Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights’, in Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed.), \emph{African Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights}, p. 5.
power.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed these are reflected in the socio economic-conditions of many African women – Indigenous, Muslim and Christian. Consequently women must go to the religious roots of this cultural obstruction of the initiative and creativity for it cannot be the will of God that those made in the divine image should wallow in uncreativity.\textsuperscript{26} This creativity demands that women should ask themselves management questions like: Where are women now? Where do they want to be? How do they get there? In other words the challenge is: what and why are the concerns of women and for whom are they concerned? It is obvious that these questions have to been understood by women within the context of "passion and compassion"; two innate qualities of women.

Teresa Okure is right when she points out that, "African women's primary consciousness in doing theology is not method but life and life concerns their own and those of their people"\textsuperscript{27} and that the "theology starts with everyday living experiences of the people".\textsuperscript{28} The import of this statement lies in the fact that the African woman cannot insulate and isolate herself from others. It is within this context that we situate the African woman's dilemma and the need for action as encapsulated in the Qur'anic call to action: 'let there arise from the community a group who would encourage what is good and forbid evil.'\textsuperscript{29} By virtue of their consistent oppression and discrimination it has become for Abdallah Naim a human rights issue,\textsuperscript{30} on the basis of which women are 'organizing their struggles for human rights on all fronts concomitantly.'\textsuperscript{31} It is worthy of note that even though the essence of the paper is not to delve into the gender discourse, it seeks to suggest that the challenges women face in Africa present a good agenda for women of faith: for women are part of humanity, without whom humanity is not whole. By arising to this challenge, women are only obeying the divine will as they are of ontological value. Additionally women are also saying consciously that 'we do not have to accept what is, is what ought to be.'\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{25} Odudoye, ‘Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights’, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{26} Odudoye, ‘Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights’, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{28} Nadar, ‘Breaking the Covenant of Silence’, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{29} Quran, Chapter 3: p. 104.
\textsuperscript{30} Abdallah Naim, 'Islam and Women's Rights: A Case Study', in Women Living under Muslim Laws 15/16, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{31} Helie Lucas, ‘What is your Tribe? Women’s Struggles and the Construction of Muslimness’, in Women Living under Muslim Laws 23/24, p. 54.
Foundation for dialogue and diapraxis
Islam as a religion and a way of life affirms the other revealed religions, especially Judaism and Christianity because the source of the message (Allah or God) in these religious traditions is the same. The Qur'an teaches that if Allah ‘hath willed he would have created us as one community’. But in his own wisdom he created us differently since everybody cannot be the same, and for that matter, Muslim. Islam therefore teaches that human beings have been created into nations and societies so that they ‘may know one another’ and accept each other in spite of the differences. This in itself indicates a certain level of exchange and acceptance of the other, as exemplified by the Prophet’s (SAW) acceptance of ideas from foreign and alien sources some of which he later used for the development of Islam.

There is everything right with dialogue, for as Rashied Omar suggests ‘both the Qur’an and the hadith embrace and affirm ithilaf, i.e. differences in belief perspectives and viewpoints, as being natural and an essential part of human condition’. The differences, in his view, represent an Allah-willed basic factor of existence. For him therefore the denial of the rights of other to hold beliefs and views which are different and incompatible to one’s own is tantamount to a denial of Allah himself. In the same vein, women have their own perspective, and priorities which should be heard both within and outside.

It is the contention of this paper that Dialogue is the language of God. For the Qur’anic story of the creation of humanity in Surah Baqara (chapter 2) is couched in a dialogical manner. God informs the angels of his intention to create his khalifa, i.e. vicegerent on earth. God could have done otherwise simply by virtue of his sovereignty. Yet God meets with them. The response of God to the reaction of the angels to this noble intention suggests that even the creator Lord encounters his creatures in a non-dictatorial manner. The creator uses wisdom to address and convince the angels as to why the human being is to be the khalifa of Allah.

Of relevance and importance to the discussion is the idea of khalifaship which is gender-neutral and therefore applicable to both men and women. Khalifaship is imbued with knowledge and distinguishes humans from other creatures. From the Islamic understanding women’s wisdom, which is ubiquitous, is therefore innate in her by virtue of her position as khalifa. This is clearly seen in women’s nurturing qualities and the several survival strategies

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33 Cf. Qur’an, Chapter 5: p. 51.
they have adopted in the wake of the problems they face. Indeed the Qur’an sets forth as examples to humankind the stories and lives of several women whose wise counsel contributed in no small way to the development of the Muslim community. Imbued with responsibility and accountability on the Day of Judgment it also implies individuality and independence and thus, linked to call to duty: ‘enjoining what is right and forbidding evil and vying with one another in performing good deeds’.37

The implication here is that the creator expects nothing short of dialogical relations among his creatures. Several passages of the Qur’an and the exemplary life of the Prophet (SAW) attest to this which is intricately related to *dawah* (call). This is an encounter with ‘the other’. It is therefore not by accident that Allah commands all human beings, including women to call others to Him. But more importantly God gives the agenda and methodology for this call when the Qur’an states, ‘call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner...’.38 This call therefore is a call to action to do good work. It is also a call to wholeness that challenges the will and the intellect. Therefore the Muslim woman is mandated to do *Dawah* (call) by encountering the ‘other’ with the view to establishing the idle ‘Ummah’ (community) or the ‘kingdom of God on earth’.

For me as a Muslim woman trying to disentangle the interplay of these issues and factors, founded on what has been termed ‘the foundational myth’,39 the imperative to ‘call’ by the Qur’an resonates with the empowerment of Talitha (Jarius’ daughter in the Bible) and her will to arise. Symbolic as it may be, this ‘will to arise’ has led to many programmes from dialogue to *diapraxis* as exemplified in the PROCMURA-related Upendo Project in Zanzibar where Muslim and Christian women work as sisters and build capacity through education and income generation activities for improved sustainable life skills and is a ‘testimony to the fact that it has facilitated their ability to look beyond their differences and put them in the position of attending to their common problems’.40 In other instances PROCMURA has organized workshops for women of faith, especially Christians and Muslims, to work together to fight life-threatening issues like HIV/AIDS that affect women most. PROCMURA is a Christian organization dedicated to promoting good relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa. According to the General Adviser, it embarks on a five-fold approach which it believes is

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37 Cf. Qur’an, Chapter 3; p. 114.
38 Qur’an, Chapter 16; p. 125.
40 PROCMURA PRICA Nos. 75/76, p. 4.
the most credible approach when it comes to Christian-Muslim relations. This approach is in the religious, political, economic, cultural and social spheres. The essence of PROCMURA therefore is basically aimed at attending to social issues of mutual concern and it has initiated projects of cooperation in many countries. Three groups of people are covered in its programmes: leaders, women and youth.

Institute of Women in Religion and Culture
The Institute of Women in Religion and Culture is situated at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. It was established in 2000 to facilitate seminars with outreach programmes, dealing with issues of mission, humanization and development. It therefore provides the platform for women to explore the theological and ethical resources in their respective religious-cultural traditions in order to confront and challenge socio-cultural issues that impact negatively on them in Ghana context. The Institute houses the ‘Talitha Qumi Centre’, so called ‘as it is our dream that African women will arise and claim the human dignity due to them as children of God, created in God’s image.’

Like ‘The Circle’ it has no religious barriers and therefore women of the different religious traditions exchange ideas via dialogue to improve their conditions of life. Unlike the Circle, which is mainly dedicated to publications, the Institute embarks on conferences, workshops and other programmes dubbed ‘Way forward Seminars’ for grassroots participation by the laity. Through these dialogical sessions women of faith have cooperated and told their own stories from their faith perspectives. They have not only appreciated one another but supported and helped one another.

The Centre must be commended for a couple of things. Undoubtedly, the Centre is one for women but its methodology encourages male participation as without their involvement the complementarities of male/female as intended by God will come to naught and there will be no transformation in God’s household. This is intentional as the ‘work of the Centre is an expression of hope that religion would be truly a humanizing factor in human community and in the lives of individuals’. But it is also an indication that African women are not interested in competition with men. Additionally, conscious and aware of the ‘disadvantaged position’ of Muslim women in the country, the Centre employs affirmative action to enhance the level of Muslim women’s participation. The Institute reserves a quota for the participants of the Ghana Muslim Mission Women’s Fellowship and the Federation.

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41 PROCMURA PRICA Nos. 72/73, p. 1.
43 Institute of Women in Religion.
of Muslim Women Associations in Ghana (FOMWAG) in its workshops and conferences. Through this FOMWAG members have learned from their Christian counterparts skills of leadership and organization.

In the same manner, some non-Muslim women have not only learnt and benefited from meeting FOMWAG members at the Centre but have also appreciated the FOMWAG programmes as can be inferred from the following. In March 1999, the address by Hajia Katumi Mahama, the President of FOMWAG, at the opening ceremony of the ‘Way Forward Seminar’ on the theme ‘Empowering Women For the Third Millennium’, was acknowledged as highly appreciated by Mrs. Joyce Rosalind Aryee, the Executive Director of Salt and Light Ministries in a letter dated 30 March, 1999. She said:

My heart is filled with joy as I remember your short but eloquent address on Saturday March 13 1999. In his own infinite wisdom God has indeed raised many women (you and me included) to make a significant impact in our world and I give glory to him for the open windows of opportunity that He gives to us day by day. My prayer is that you will continue to rely on the faithfulness and endless power of God as you fulfill His mission to you. Never feel daunted by the strength of human beings and their power... May the God of Grace, continue to fill you with wisdom, knowledge, mercy and grace so that wherever you find yourself your light will see your good works and give glory to our heavenly Father...

It can be seen that, in their involvement in such interfaith programmes, Muslim women through FOMWAG have helped to present Islam more positively to non-Muslims. This is again evident in another letter of appreciation sent to Hajia Katumi Mahama and Dr. Rabiatu Ammah after their presentation at the Women’s Consultation Seminar organized by PROCMURA in August 1998. Dr. Janice Nessibou, the women’s coordinator wrote: ‘Your contribution touched the participants and helped them to better understand the status of women in Islam. Your initiative in the visitation to the women’s group in Nima was heroic. May Allah continue to bless you and keep you safely’.

This is one way of calling to God and sharing the Islamic teachings with others in wisdom and in a mutually beneficial manner. By so doing Muslim women are living up to the imperative to call and to accept people for what they are. Again it is helping to remove the stereotypes and images that others have of Islam and women.

Background to The Circle
Closely linked to the Institute or Talitha Qumi Centre is ‘The Circle’, a sister organization. Conceived and established in 1989 by women for women, 'The
Circle’ basically is aimed at providing a forum and platform for African women theologians to undertake research, writing and publishing on African issues from multi-religious and women’s perspectives. Among other things, it seeks to build capacity of African women to contribute their critical thinking to advance current knowledge. It provides space for women from Africa to do communal theology based on their religious, cultural and social experiences and draws its membership from women of diverse backgrounds, nationalities, cultures and religions, rooted in religions. These concerned women are engaged in theological dialogue with cultures, religions’ sacred writings and oral stories that shape the African context and define the women of the continent. This is intended to ultimately empower African women to actively work for social and gender-justice.

The name ‘Circle’ is symbolic of inclusiveness as a circle may be widened or narrowed depending on the dynamics of the situation. There is a place for everybody and no alienation. Inherent in the methodology is the ‘Two Winged’ approach; one that allows a balance providing space for the laity to ‘theologize’ and speak about life-issues as they perceive and understand them. Therefore regardless of religious affiliation women have cooperated and told their own stories from their faith perspectives. They have not only sensitized and conscientized others, but have done advocacy at different levels through publications and told the other side of the story.

It is worthy of note the lack of active engagement of Muslim women in the circle, notwithstanding the openness and the inclusiveness of circle. This may be attributed to the general apprehension of Muslims towards dialogue and interfaith relations which they rarely initiate. But the mandate to publish critical essays may be beyond the ordinary Muslim woman who belongs to a universal Muslim community that in my view is illiterate and ignorant – a state which impacts more on women. But for me as a Muslim woman, my interaction with The Circle has empowered me even more, as I have learnt from my Christian counterparts methodologies and other critical tools of scholarship. Indeed the publications of The Circle have provided resources for this paper.

Conclusion

Women of faith in Africa have interrogated the past and realized that the condition of women is deeply ‘grounded in the challenges of scripture which results from a new wave of change and after reading the scripture have begun to see that God’s call to them is not passive but compelling and compulsory’.

good and fulfilling life; being equally responsible for their actions on the Day of Judgment as individual and independent human beings. Women have realized that their disadvantaged human condition is not the intention of God, God being a God of love, compassion and justice. As people of faith women are challenged to transform humanity through the wisdom with which God has gifted them. Women's re-reading of their sacred texts suggests that they are responsible for their destinies and need a concerted effort to challenge the status quo and move forward. However, to move forward and change their future, women are instructed to seek all forms of knowledge to help in the development of themselves and the community as a whole.

One way that African women are approaching the issue is through dialogue and diapraxis as adopted by 'The Circle' and the 'Talitha Qumi Centre'. By their methodologies of inclusiveness these two bodies provide the tools needed for the much-needed transformation to change the future of African women in the African context. Muslim women cannot separate themselves from this action, as it is part of their calling. As *khalifas* of God women have begun to wrestle with and challenge all forms of oppression through whatever means available in order to achieve the kingdom of God on earth. This way they can proudly and confidently say the oft repeated prayer of: ‘God give me good in this world and good in the hereafter... and know it will be’.

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The Church and Development: A Ghanaian Experience

Rebecca Ganusah

The contribution of the Church (Christianity) to development, since the Church’s inception in Ghana, needs no elaborate demonstration. The claim can be affirmed in spite of the views of some that religion, and for that matter Christianity, retards human progress. One would admit that the phenomenon of religion, and for that matter Christianity, has in its practice, sometimes been a factor in conflict, wars, and therefore, retrogression. This, however, is an aberration. For, the Christian religion in particular is for life and its being lived abundantly. This entails peace and love. The overwhelming historical evidence of the contribution of Christianity to progress is also more positive than negative. In this paper, we shall discuss some contributions made by the Church in the development of the country Ghana.

Introduction

Before we proceed with the discussions, it is important to indicate the conceptual framework in which we discuss the contribution of the Church to development in Ghana. The term ‘development’ connotes a wide spectrum of ideas, and means a variety of things, depending on the context in which it is used. It is multidimensional; but it can also be specific.

In particular disciplines, the term is given stipulated definitions, and means specific things. Thus, for example, in a business context, the word ‘development’ can be used to refer to ‘improving a product or producing new types of products’.¹ In Real Estate, that which constitutes development would include the ‘process of placing improvements on or to a parcel of land; projects where such improvements are being made. Such improvements may include drainage, utilities, subdividing, access, buildings, and any combination of these elements’.²

The Oxford Dictionary of Sports Science & Medicine’ defines ‘development’ as ‘The process of continuous change that occurs in the body, starting at conception and continuing through adulthood’; while The American Her-

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¹ Barron’s Educational Series; Answers.com.
² Barron’s Educational Series; Answers.com.
itage Dictionary of English Language, has also observed that depending on the particular contexts, the term development connotes (among other things) ‘Determination of the best techniques for applying a new device or process to production of goods or services’.

Running through the specific definitions, we can discern some common element, that is, ‘a progression from a simpler or lower to a more advanced, mature, or complex form or stage’. For the purposes of this paper, we adopt the extended definition and concept taken from the Political Dictionary that has ‘development being defined as the fulfilment of the necessary conditions for the realization of the potential of human personality... improvements in certain social indicators and indicators of the (physical) quality of life, such as life expectancy’.

Development has somehow often been conceived of in rather narrow terms, particularly among some leaders who see development mostly in terms of economic and technological development. Thus, as Kudadjie observes, indices such as ‘the types of buildings and highways, forms of transportation and communication systems, the number of high-technology industries, kinds of energy in use... the extent to which the people of a nation are computer literate or linked to the Internet’ are considered as development.

While not denying that these are legitimate indices, one will agree with him that they constitute a narrow view of development, as development is seen in quantitative and external terms only, leaving out the more qualitative, internal, humanistic and spiritual components. If development is conceived to embrace both the physical and non-physical, then the contribution of Churches to development will be even more appreciated.

The inception of the Church in Ghana
Missionary activities to propagate the Christian Faith (the Church) in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) were started as far back as the 15th century by the Roman Catholic Church ‘when Augustinian, Capuchin, and Dominican friars attempted to make converts in the vicinity of Portuguese castles in the Gold

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5 Barron’s Educational Series; Answers.com.
6 Barron’s Educational Series; Answers.com.
8 Kudadjie, ‘Religion, Morality and National Development’, p. 34.
Coast". These earliest attempts were, however, not successful. There was, however, a 're-entry of the Roman Catholic Missionaries in the Gold Coast at Elmina on 18 May 1880 through two priests of the Society of African Missions (SMA), Fathers Euguste Moreau and Augustus Murat. The contemporary Roman Catholic Church in Ghana is the fruit of this second attempt at evangelization'. Efforts by later missionary groups that had impact on the lives of the people took place in the late 18th and 19th centuries. These include, among others, the Society for the Propagation of the Christian Knowledge (SPCK) whose missionary activities started in the Gold Coast in 1751; the Basel Evangelical Mission Society (Basel Mission) in 1828; the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1835; the North German Missionary Society (Bremen Mission) in 1847; and the United Free Church of Scotland in 1914.

Many of the missionaries were from a pietistic background, in the sense that they held the conviction that they had a personal call to live lives of purity according to biblical standards, believing in divine intervention to correct them, and to witness about Christ to others. They also believed that Christianity, in any case, has 'the power to make customs more gentle and to create a worthy civilization among the people who embrace it'.

Teachings of the Church
The Judeo-Christian scriptures and other credal formulations that form the basis of Christian faith and practice are full of principles, articles of faith and concrete examples that demonstrate the link between faith and development, including human development. For example, Genesis 1: 27-28 contains the most pregnant statements:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over everything that moves on the earth.'

10 Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 46.
Also Genesis 2: 15: ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it’.

Other teachings of the Christian religion, with its various ethical and moral values, indicate that human development lies at the heart of Christianity. The Lord Jesus Christ himself identified himself with the one through whom the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled that:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour. 12

Through his life (deeds and teachings), culminating in his sacrificial death on the Cross, Christ freed and restored humans. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, helped people to overcome their sinful nature. After his resurrection, he commissioned the Apostles and the Church to continue his work of redemption. The Church, under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, has sought to foster development in a variety of ways. These include physical, spiritual, moral and intellectual development. Indeed, by development, we are referring to not only physical infrastructure as some would narrowly define it, but also to holistically enabling people to have better standards of living as well as living in peace with one another.

The Church and human development
Development of whatever kind, if it cannot be sustained, would deteriorate. In order to ensure that development is sustained and carried to higher levels, the Churches in Ghana established educational institutions. It is acknowledged that the schools that they set up (as well as the ‘Castle Schools’ set up by colonial enterprises) trained the human resource that was needed to carry on the colonial administration and the work of trading and other commercial enterprises. As society became more complex and development required higher levels of competence, the Churches provided varied forms and higher levels of education – both formal and informal.

a) Formal education in Ghana
From the classical missionary days of the 19th century to the present day, the Church has been closely involved in formal education in Ghana. Some of the best schools, at all levels, were established by the Churches. These include Wesley Girls High School at Cape Coast; Presbyterian Secondary School at Legon in Accra; and St. Augustine College at Cape Coast. Indeed, it was the missionaries who introduced the idea of formal education into the country. Mrs. Gladys Asmah, the then Minister for Women and Children Affairs, aptly acknowledged the fact that 'no country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources. Ghana will forever be grateful to religious institutions for their contribution towards education'.  

Records of at least three of the Churches show that, by 2005/2006, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, The Methodist Church Ghana and the Roman Catholic Church had established, in partnership with the Government, the following educational institutions in Ghana:

**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA**

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<td>983</td>
<td>450</td>
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**THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA**

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<td>655</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>464</td>
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**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GHANA**

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<td>1082</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>906</td>
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<td>8</td>
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In the days before Independence from colonial rule, the schools were 'owned' by the Churches, in the sense that the Churches provided the buildings and staff of the schools. There was, however, good co-operation between the colonial administration and the Churches as 'The education work of the Missions was sufficiently encouraged and supported through grants in an environment of mutual co-operation and the absence of any inhibitions.'

With the introduction of The Accelerated Development Plan For Education in 1951 and later the Education Act of 1961, however, the Government decided

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'to assume more and direct responsibility for education' as it sought to make it compulsory for every child of school going age to go to school. Nevertheless, till today, the Church has been in good partnership with other stakeholders in the provision of education at all levels in the country. Indeed, since the last decade, the Churches have also entered the tertiary level, some in response to the Government's call to help provide University level education for the thousands who qualify but do not get places in the State Universities. We have so far six of such University Colleges that have been built through the initiatives of the Churches. They are:

- Valley View University at Oyibi, Accra, built by the Seventh Day Adventist Church
- The Central University College at Dansoman-Accra, built by the International Central Gospel Church
- The Methodist University College Ghana, at Dansoman-Accra and Tema, built by The Methodist Church Ghana
- The Catholic University College at Fiapre/Sunyani, built by the Roman Catholic Church
- The Pentecost University College at Sowutuom in Accra, built by the Church of Pentecost
- The Presbyterian University College at Abetifi and Akropong, built by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana

The high quality total education provided in Church Schools has been widely acknowledged. Education was holistic as academic and vocational skills were taught, while character training was a major preoccupation. In Ghana, the older generations have often recalled with nostalgia, how their outlook and conduct was shaped by what they were taught in the then Mission schools that they attended. The take-over of the schools by Government, with their de-emphasizing of religious worship and character training, has been blamed for the prevalent immorality and general indiscipline in contemporary Ghanaian society. As far back as the colonial days, Sir F.G. Guggisberg, the then Governor of the Gold Coast was quoted as saying that: 'My review of the first years of the present century would not be complete without reference to the great educational work done in the past by the various Missions in the country. First and foremost among them, as regards quality of education and character training was the Basel Mission'.

The early missionaries also paid attention to the study of and writing in the vernacular languages of the country. Such attention given to the local languages by missionaries like J. Zimmermann, J.G. Christaller and J.B.

16 Acquah, 'Presbyterian Church of Ghana: Pace-Setter of Education in Ghana', p. 5.
17 Acquah, 'Presbyterian Church of Ghana Pace-Setter of Education in Ghana', p. 4.
Schlegel contributed to the production of dictionaries in Twi, Ewe and Ga-Adangme (now Ga and Dangme) languages. Many people have come out of the schools to live meaningful and productive lives that are useful not only to themselves, but to the nation as a whole.

b) The Churches and informal education in Ghana

Apart from formal education, some Churches have instituted regular short-term workshops where they train all categories of people, especially the youth and women, in simple industries like carving, making of beads, pomade, soap, batik and tie-and-dye, clothing, food products, literacy in local languages and others.

One of the earliest and well-known para-Church organizations whose contribution one would want to elaborate on is the ‘Ghana Congress on Evangelization’, popularly called GHACOE Women’s Ministry. Since 1983, GHACOE has been involved in the development of leadership and talents of women in Ghana and other African countries, which include Togo, Nigeria, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Cote D’Ivoire, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania. This is done through short and long term training of individuals and training-of-trainers in biblical doctrines, as well as basic business management in the production of the above items. The training is to enable participants to set up income-generating ventures that will help them become socio-economically self-reliant. Thus, it is a ministry that aims at ‘developing the capacity of women to enable them develop spiritual and moral strength to establish and manage businesses to increase their income’. Such efforts of the Churches and Church-based organizations have empowered many to find gainful employment, and to support themselves, their families and indeed, the society at large.

The Church and other social services

a) Provision of health facilities

The Church does not only get involved in providing quality education – formal or informal. It has made contributions to development in other areas. Recognizing the importance of good health for human wellbeing and development, the Churches in Ghana have carved a very high reputation for provision of health services. Some of them have come together to form what is known as The Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG). The Christian Health Association of Ghana was founded in September 1967 and its main

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18 CHACOE Women’s Ministry: Programme for the Graduation Ceremony of Women Participants, 6th December 2002.
aim is to extend ‘Christ’s mission of healing to the Ghanaian people, particularly the deprived and rural poor, irrespective of creed, race or colour’. The Churches that form the Association are: 1. the Roman Catholic Church; 2. the Presbyterian Church of Ghana; 3. the Evangelical Presbyterian Church; 4. the Anglican Church; 5. the Methodist Church of Ghana; 6. the Salvation Army; 7. the Baptist Church; 8. the Assemblies of God Church; 9. the World Evangelical Crusade; 10. the Seventh-Day Adventist Church; 11. the Church of Pentecost; 12. the Church of God; 13. the Church of Christ; 14. the Siloam Gospel Mission; 15. the E.P. Church of Ghana (now Global Evangelical Church); and 16. the AME Zion Church.

These Churches, and perhaps some others that are not in the Association, have built hospitals, clinics and other health centres throughout the country which care for about 35% of the population. Taking again three of the Churches – the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Methodist Church Ghana, and the Roman Catholic Church – the 2005/2006 records show that these Churches have the following health centres in the country:

**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA**

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<tr>
<th>No. of Hospitals</th>
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<th>Others</th>
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<td>4</td>
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**THE METHODIST CHURCH OF GHANA**

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<tr>
<th>No. of Hospitals</th>
<th>No. of Clinics</th>
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**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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<tr>
<th>No. of Hospitals</th>
<th>No. of Clinics</th>
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<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
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The vision of CHAG is to be ‘a dynamic partner in the health sector development of Ghana recognized for creativity and excellence in delivering holistic quality services that meet members and other partners’ expectations’. It has been trying to meet many of its objectives which are as follows:

* To encourage and promote the highest standard of Christian medical care for the benefit and welfare of the people.
* To facilitate and coordinate the relationship of its membership with the Ministry of Health as well as

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19 CHACOE Women’s Ministry.
20 CHACOE Women’s Ministry.
21 CHACOE Women’s Ministry.
* To assist its members in employment of staff, both locally and from overseas, procurement of supplies, planning and coordinating training programmes and any other medical work or services requested.22

All these measures are to keep people healthy enough to form a healthy workforce that can work in the industries, mines, educational institutions, and so on. Thus, they will be able to provide for themselves, their dependants and indeed, the society at large.

b) The Church and provision of water
Another major need of the country in which the Church and para-Church institutions are involved is the provision of water. Water is probably the second most important necessity of life, after air. Indeed, the inability of the Governments to make safe water available to everybody has been of so much concern over the years.

One Christian organization that is deeply involved in the provision of water, among many other projects, is World Vision International. In Ghana, as in some other African countries, its name has become almost synonymous with the provision of water. World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is: To follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the kingdom of God.23

Throughout the length and breadth of the country, World Vision has sunk thousands of wells and boreholes, some of them fitted with simple technology hand-pumps. 'In May 2005, the World Vision Ghana Rural Water Project (GRWP) drilled its 2000th well at Kpekuni in the Gushiegu Karaga District. Through dedicated service, the drilling team uses funds from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and WV United States to provide clean water for needy children and their families in deprived areas'.24

Various other Christian NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) like 'Bread for Life' and 'Christian Aid' of overseas Churches, more commonly with partner local churches, sink wells and boreholes and provide poly-tanks for safe, clean water.

In recent times, one important issue that has arisen in Ghana, in connection with the provision of water is that of private participation in the provision of water. There have been periodic debates on the issue with as many people for it as there are against it. Some argue that private participation would mean commercialization which would put costs beyond the reach of

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22 CHACOE Women’s Ministry.
the poor. Such people advocate that water supply must remain a utility service to be provided by Government. Others have supported private participation that will ensure wider supply coverage. Moreover, they point out, the poor, particularly those living in the rural areas, who are not reached under the public supply system have either been fetching water from disease-infested ponds or buying safe water at higher cost than the urban dwellers who benefit from public supplies.

The Churches as such, have however, not been vociferous on the issue. One would think that the Churches should be involved in the debate, as a natural and logical follow-up of their own rationale for the sinking of wells and so on. Perhaps the Churches should agitate for the extension of safe water to all areas of the country while advocating for public subsidy.

c) The Church and HIV/AIDS

The single hazard to development that has attracted the widest attention in this generation is HIV/AIDS. Even though much is left to be done in order to find a cure for the disease, and even though the Church is seen by some as not being proactive in the search for a cure, one would say that in Ghana, the Roman Catholic Church in particular can be singled out, among the efforts of some other Churches, for its activities to combat the pandemic and bring solace to those suffering from the disease. The activities include:

✦ Issuing of Communiqués and Pastoral letters on the disease
✦ Organizing HIV/AIDS Educational Programs
✦ Clinical Management
✦ Pastoral Care
✦ Home-Based Care
✦ Research into herbal medicine for the cure of AIDS
✦ Training of HIV/AIDS counsellors

Each of the Roman Catholic dioceses in the country is to carry out its own HIV/AIDS plan of activities by adopting all or some of the above programmes, in collaboration with the various hospitals that have been selected in the dioceses. The hospitals include Bator Catholic Hospital; St Martin’s Hospital at Agomenya; Catholic Hospital at Nkawkaw; Catholic Hospital at Agroyensum; and St. Dominic’s Hospital at Akwatia.

The founding of a Club in 1999, known as ‘Matthew Chapter 25’ by Rev. Father Alex Bobby Benson, to cater for the needs of people living with HIV/

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26 Quaye, ‘Religion and Ethics’.
AIDS is worth mentioning. The Club is called Matthew Chapter 25 because of what Jesus Christ said in verses 35-36 that:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

In this Club, the problems of individuals are listened to and taken care of as they are also given proper counselling.

The Roman Catholic Church also organizes Home-Based Care. This is the situation whereby people living with AIDS, on discharge from the hospital, continue to be cared for in their homes by staff of the hospital and by some individuals from the community trained for such purposes. Home-Based care is a very important provision for those whose AIDS status has been accepted by their families who would want to give the necessary care while they also perform their other duties at home and in the community.27 This is bringing a lot of solace to those living with HIV/AIDS. We need to add that some other Churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Methodist Church are also providing such services as Home-Based Care, Education at the Work Place, Market Ministry and Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centres.28

Other development services

Many other development services provided by the Churches and other para-Church organizations that, for lack of space, will only be mentioned here include:

- The construction of roads and tracks to facilitate transportation, done particularly during the early missionary days
- Introduction of new architecture and building materials
- Introduction of new skills and tools like the emergence of sawyers, carpenters, joiners/furniture makers
- Introduction of new lifestyles, for example, a new faith with emphasis on values like high morals (some of which may not have been entirely new), and personal hygiene

27 Quaye, ‘Religion and Ethics’.
28 Interview with Mr. Sam Sarpong Appiah, Officer-in-charge of Presbyterian Church of Ghana Health Services, January 2007.
The Church and good governance
From its inception, as we said earlier, the Church in Ghana had good relations with the colonial administration and in the areas of administration, missionaries and colonialists influenced each other. This co-operation continued at independence. There had, however, been times when the Churches felt that the Government was becoming undemocratic, and therefore they spoke out against Government policies that would undermine good governance. This was done through seminars and the publication of booklets on democratic government, good governance, free elections, human rights, reconciliation, and other issues of concern. Some of the classic booklets that came out of the issues handled are: Ecumenism and Democratic Culture Series: Democratic Culture Constitution and Free and Fair Elections, Book 1, published in Accra in 1995 by the Christian Council of Ghana; Ecumenism and Democratic Culture Series: Human Rights, Book 2, published in Accra by the same publishers in 1995. Other works of the Church on topical issues include publications from the yearly Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conferences, titled: Ghana Catholic Bishops Speak. These touch on series of topical events that deal with human and other forms of development in the country. Thus, the Church is involved in issues of social concern and from time to time, statements are issued to address them.

The Church and morality in Ghana
As already stated, the Church introduced a new faith and emphasis on high moral values, even though some of the values were not entirely new. Indeed, embedded in every religion is the requirement for living a good moral life. God declares, for example, through the prophet Amos that: ‘I hate, I despise your religious feasts, I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them... Away with the noise of your songs!... But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-ending stream’ (Amos 5:21-24). Love of God and love of neighbour are cardinal teachings of the Faith and these are expounded in sermons and other fora of the Churches. Kudadjie’s quotation will be more apt here when he states: ‘moral development is necessary for economic and technological development’. There is no way in which a nation can develop unless the people exercise moral discipline at home, the work place and wherever they find themselves. The emphasis of the Church on morality is therefore important.

Negative concerns about the Church in Ghana

a) 'Noise' From Some Churches
In spite of positive aspects to the Church's contribution to development in Ghana, concerns have sometimes been expressed about the negative impact of some of the Churches in some communities. It is believed that some people are oppressed with or are possessed by evil or demonic forces and need to be delivered from such forces. Faith healing is another aspect of the church's ministry. Some of these churches or praying centres have been built in residential areas and for several days of the week, they are seen organizing 'delivery', healing and other sessions. The practice of deliverance/healing is characterized by loud music, spontaneous prayers and in some cases, shouting to cast out the demonic spirits. Such activities annoy and disturb those who may have nothing to do with the centres but live in the neighbourhood.

Apart from the noise making, some people are also concerned about the amount of time that people spend at the healing/delivery/praying centres, contending that productive hours that should be spent at work places or on doing 'profitable' work are wasted. Thus, religion is accused of becoming to some the opium that calms down the frustrated, making them run away the realities of productive life. Others argue on the other hand, that the hours spent at the centres are not wasted since people gain spiritual and psychological health from such religious services which help them to cope with life. Just as people go to medical hospitals when they are sick physically, so they go to 'spiritual hospitals' for cures for their spiritual sicknesses. The debate, however, rages on.

Furthermore, some of the Churches sometimes come into conflict with others, particularly with the Afiican traditional religious believers. This happens particularly during certain periods of the year. A typical example has to do with the celebration of the Homowo festival. Homowo is a festival of the Ga of Ghana, celebrated to commemorate a bumper harvest which followed a long period during which there was hunger, as they tried to settle on their new-found land. It is usually celebrated at the beginning of harvest seasons, to literally 'hoot at hunger'. The traditional religious believers would want some quiet in the month that precedes the one in which the Homowo festival is celebrated. There is usually, therefore, a ban on drumming and dancing and general noise making in the localities in which the festival is to be celebrated. Some Christians who feel they are not part of the celebration and have the constitutional right of freedom of worship, prefer to continue the drumming and dancing during their Church services. In some instances in the recent past, the traditional religious believers have sent people to the Churches to seize the drums and other instruments making the 'noise'. Some of the Christian worshippers have been injured in the scuffle. The state machinery (of
peace-makers, the police) could not do much about the problem which became a perennial one. The leadership of the religious bodies – of the Christian churches and the African traditional religious believers – had to agree to try to sort out their differences. The Christians agreed to lessen the loud music that was coming out of their Churches at the time of the ban on drumming and noise-making. After all, God, it is said, is not worshipped only through loud music; and the non-Christian, in any case, also has the Constitutional right not to be disturbed by loud noise that is beyond acceptable levels that sometimes come out of some of the Christian Churches in Ghana. Such incidents have now abated (even though the tension is not completely gone). Indeed, even some Christians sometimes complain about the noise level in some of the Ghanaian Churches of today. It was one of the issues that was raised at the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) Conference that was held at GIMPA in February 2004. The Conference was attended by religious leaders and faculty members of institutions that belong to the Association. Some, however, think that such conflicts would not have even arisen if the State’s law-enforcing agencies which are to check noise-levels in the country had been performing their duty effectively.

b) Interpretations of the revealed word
Another source of conflict between the Church and some other religious people is the interpretation of certain portions of the Christian Scriptures. In John 14: 6, for instance, is the statement made by Jesus Christ that ‘I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’. And in verse 9 of the same Chapter, he continues: ‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’. To Christians, the meaning of the above statement is simple. One biblical commentary puts the meaning of the above statements thus:

Jesus says he is the only way to God the Father. Some people may argue that this way is too narrow. In reality, it is wide enough for the whole world, if the world chooses to accept it. As the way, he is the reality of all God’s promises. As the life, he joins his divine life to ours, both now and eternally.30

Thus, to Christian believers, walking the path prescribed by the Christian religion is the only way to know God. Indeed, the ‘Great Commission’ in the Christian religion also seems to support the above claims when it states that: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of

30 Life Application Study Bible, p. 1911.
the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you.' Mission, in the Christian religion, is also therefore seen, among other things, as teaching and converting others into the religion — in order for them to get to know and to be in the Kingdom of the Father of humankind. The above explanations then appear to mean that it is only those who are Christians who would know the Father of all creation and, thus, have salvation. Furthermore, some Christians tend to look down upon adherents of all other religions as those who are simply on their way to hell since they have not been saved through Christ.

For some non-Christians, it is simply arrogance for one particular religion to lay such exclusive claims on itself. Such attitudes do create conflicts among religious believers. It should be noted, however, that attitudes of exclusivism are not limited to the Christian religion. Indeed, most religions regard their claims as the best way of attaining salvation. Muslims, for example, believe that ‘revelation ceased with the Qur'an and apostleship with Muhammad, upon whom be peace’, and that Islam is ‘the final confirmation and fulfillment of all previous revelations’. The implication of this is that it is better for all religions that lay claim to the ultimate Father, including the Christian religion, to follow the Islamic religion as the final way to God. Thus, religious claims, not only of Christianity, can be a source of conflict.

Conclusion
We have tried to make the case that development is a broad concept embracing the physical as well as non-physical, namely, spiritual, moral and social development. It has been pointed that both in the tenets of Christianity and in its practice, Christianity has a deep interest in the holistic development of humankind. Evidence has been cited from the history of the Church in Ghana. On the other hand, we have also pointed to human failures in the practice that have led to retrogression. There are suggestions that could lead the way to resolving religious conflict in a bid to bring peace and development.

On balance, it can be concluded that the Church in Ghana has not only preached about development but has actually brought development to the country and continues to do so in the contemporary situation, responding to felt needs to bring abundant life to the people.

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Religion in Africa: Power for Life

Jan van Butselaar

Religion is central in the lives of Africans. The growth of the Christian Church in Africa is unprecedented. This paper centres on questions like: what does religion mean for Africa? Why do people in Africa have faith? Why is religion so important? This paper explores these questions in the context of Mozambique.

It really takes a lot of courage, even bordering on audacity, to write an article on the topic ‘Religion in Africa’ in a Festschrift for John Pobee. It, of course, creates the suspicion that someone is still full of the attitude that accompanied the old missionary spirit, where the foreigner pretends to know better what Africa is about than the very people of that continent... This paternalism, today translated into neo-paternalism (‘we know what you as Africans should do, to be faithful to your culture’) is one of the inborn sins of Europeans. My only excuse to continue after this is that I learned so much from Africans, amongst whom John Pobee takes a first place, that I dare to write down what I discovered during a short research in Southern Africa, especially in Mozambique. I dare to do that with even more freedom, since I know that John will be the first to correct him whom he once called ‘his white slave’!

The image of Africa

In Europe, the word ‘Africa’ brings different images to mind – images often of war and misery, of hunger and disease. For economists, ‘Africa’ is the continent where development aid does not produce the results expected. At the same time, ‘Africa’ is the region where religion plays an important role, where the Christian church is growing at an almost unbelievable speed. Religion, church – they are relevant to Africa, to Africans. Scholars find it difficult sometimes to understand and ask: What does religion mean for Africa? Why do people in Africa have faith? Why is religion so important in Africa?

These questions have found many different answers in the past.1 Parrinder, in his classic study Religion in Africa, accentuates the life-affirming...

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1 See M.R. Spindler, ‘Conversion in Focus: Anthropological Views and Missiological Projections,’ in Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft 81 (1997), pp. 275–88. I was personally involved in some research on this point in Rwanda, see L’Esprit et le sel: Recherches dans l’histoire de l’Eglise au Rwanda
character of religion on the continent. Muzorewa cites the old explanation for
the interest in Christian religion in Africa, i.e. the longing for 'wisdom,' but indicates at the same time the role of Christian re-
ligion in political and cultural liberation. So there seem to be many angles
for tackling the question at stake. But it seems clear at the same time that this
question is crucial to the understanding of African culture. How should we
deal with it today, in relation to the present state of African culture and soci-
ety? During a short stay in Mozambique I tried to do some research and to
find new information concerning the role of religion in Africa today. That is,
the role of religion, of the Christian faith as understood within the parameters
of modern science. The deepest, existential value of faith in Jesus Christ
largely exceeds these cadres – but the following is not denying that funda-
mental maxim, but is rather presupposing it.

The Africans I interviewed confirmed this; they were mostly Christian
and almost all came from the southern part of the continent. My question as
to why religion was important to them often caused some astonishment: Was
it not crystal clear to all living beings how important religion is? But then, on
second thought, they took up the challenge to formulate not so much the
content of their faith, but the reason or reasons why they believed in God, in
Jesus. The answers showed different motives, but there were, though, some
common aspects. A basic one was that all persons interviewed shared the
firm conviction: Jesus is relevant for Africa. There was no doubt for them
about it. And second, it became clear that it was impossible to explain fully
why the Christian faith is so attractive to African people. The full answer to
that question seems to be a hidden secret that the people of Africa share with
the Spirit of God.

Mozambique
As indicated above, the research on which this article is based was done
mostly in Mozambique. The name of the country has a special sound for

par un groupe de travail de l'Ecole de Théologie de Butare (Butare: ETB, 1978);
J. van Busselear, 'Christian Conversion in Rwanda,' in International Bulletin of

G. Parrinder, Religion in Africa (= Penguin African Library AP 26) (Harmond-

From February to April 1997 I was a guest lecturer at the United Theological
Seminary in Rikatla, Mozambique. In the same period I visited South Africa and
Swaziland where I also interviewed some persons.

That is well documented also in D.B. Stinton, Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contem-
porary African Christology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004).
many. After a hard struggle against the cruel Portuguese coloniser, freedom became a reality for the country in 1975. The liberation movement Frelimo, founded by the charismatic Eduardo Mondlane, a member of the Presbyterian Church in Mozambique and morally supported by the World Council of Churches, adapted a classic Marxist model for society when freedom had finally come. With that, the country isolated itself not only from large parts of the Western world but also from large areas of Africa. That isolation, already potentially strong because of the use of Portuguese as the official language, became almost total. Marxist structures were introduced in a revolutionary way. The old colonisers were driven out, industry was nationalised, schools and hospitals had to be handed over to the government, agriculture was organised in collective farms, etc. These drastic changes had a number of negative results for the development of the country in spite of economic and other support from Eastern Europe and from leftist movements in other parts of the world. It turned Mozambique into one of the poorest countries on the continent.

Traditionally, the south of the country has been strongly oriented towards South Africa. During the Portuguese regime, the understanding between colonial Mozambique and the apartheid government in South Africa was quite cordial. After independence that situation changed radically. South Africa, together with the Rhodesia of Ian Smith, started to destabilise the young state. Mostly due to their influence a cruel civil war developed in Mozambique between the governing Frelimo party and a newly created opposition movement called Renamo. It caused such suffering as can hardly be described and destroyed even further the social and political fabric of society. The agreements of Inkomati that were made in the 1980s between Mozambique and South Africa did not change much in that situation.

The 1990s brought new developments. Between the warring parties in Mozambique a peace agreement was realised in which churches played an important role. The country became a parliamentary democracy. In South Africa the end of apartheid also meant the end of the cold, and the sometimes not so cold, war with neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, it did not bring

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back the former co-operation in economic areas: on that point the situation remained very much as it had been since independence. Traditionally, many young Mozambicans went to work for some years in the mines of South Africa to earn enough money to get married and to start their adult life. After independence the apartheid government in South Africa had severely limited the number of Mozambicans that could come to work in the country. Those who crossed the border illegally had to cope with electric fences and with the animals in Kruger Park. The end of apartheid did not alter this situation significantly. The recent popular opposition in South Africa towards foreign workers and refugees from other parts of Africa has added a new and horrifying feature to this.

In spite of the encouraging speed of development in the country, life in Mozambique is difficult for many of its inhabitants. Unemployment is high and salaries are low. A feeling of insecurity reigns in many quarters; the civil war seems to have raised many moral barriers. In the popular areas of a town like Maputo, theft and murder are no exception. Corruption has invaded the structures of society. Where to find power for life, power to live?

A local pastor characterised the situation in the country with these three words: inertia, corruption and violence. Inertia for him was the feeling of being worn out by years of war where all ideals got lost. Corruption indicated the way to gain (extra) income in an extremely poor context. Violence became the answer where there was no other way out: you take what you can get. And for many, there seems to be no other way out. Soldiers, unemployed after the war, still retain their weapons, in spite of development programs that offer bicycles in exchange for weapons. Many young people do not see much of a future before them. Hardworking people are not even able to pay the school fees for their children from their meagre salaries.

Religion in Mozambique
Religion, as in other countries of Africa, is an important factor in Mozambican society. In spite of the fact that the country is officially a secular state and does not observe Christian holidays, a visitor quickly discovers how important religion is. Wherever one goes, churches can be seen: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and others. In the dunes near the sea and in popular quarters

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5 For the history of the (Protestant) churches in Mozambique see, for instance, A. Helgesson, Church, State and People in Mozambique: An Historical Study with Special Emphasis on Methodist Developments in the Inhambane Region (= Studia Missionaria Upsaliensia LIV) (Uppsala: International Tryck, 1994); and P. Harries, 'Christianity in Black and White: The Establishment of Protestant Churches in Southern Mozambique,' in Des protestantismes en 'lusophone catholique' (= Lusotopie 1998) (Paris: Karthala, 1998), 317-33; for the origins of the Presbyte-
of Maputo and elsewhere, independent churches are active, especially Zionists.10

Islam is growing. Traditionally, that religion was strong in the north of the country, where Arab influence is much older than Western presence. But now Islam is moving south. Mosques are being built, even in regions and villages where there are few Moslems. Some people in Mozambique are worried about the way in which Islam tries to impose itself on society. There is the fear that the action of fundamentalist groups from outside the country will have a negative influence on the peaceful coexistence of people of different religions in the country.

The role of traditional religion should also be acknowledged.11 Approximately half of the population adheres to this kind of religion. As in many other African countries, in Mozambique the boundary between traditional religion and Christian or Moslem faith is not very clearcut. It is clear that the influence of traditional religion is far stronger than official statistics indicate, as Bolayi Idowu already explained.12 Many people practice traditional religion (occasionally) alongside or in spite of their church membership. In that way, traditional religion provides a challenge for the church. The challenge is not so much how to organise cheap competition with that type of religion. But the conviction is that in the end it will be difficult for people to live in two different religious atmospheres, two different religious systems at the same time. Further, it is felt that traditional religion imposes practices that are not compatible with Christian ethics. An important question is what the future of traditional religion in Africa will be. According to some, traditional religion will in the long run not be able to cope with modern society and modern culture in Africa. It will not be able to provide the protection for which people are looking. That could create a religious vacuum with all the potential dangers inherent to it.

The activities of several “new” religious movements in Mozambique, as in other parts of Africa, is another important feature of religious life in the coun-

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11 A. Langa, Questões cristãs à Religião Tradicional Africana: Moçambique (Braga: Editorial Franciscana, 1992).
try. These new groups often apply Christian missionary methods and use the Bible. For example, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, from Brazil, has for some years been introduced into Mozambique. Also the Unified Family from Korea has arrived, as have the Mormons. After the Marxist period in which the country was accused of violations of the human right to freedom of religion and even of persecution of Christians, the government now seems to hesitate to provide any ruling in religious affairs, also concerning these new groups. This picture shows how active and manifold religion is in Mozambique, as in most other African countries.

Motives
But why is religion, especially the Christian religion, so relevant for Mozambique? The answers that were given to this question can be placed in four different categories: developing African philosophy; building a new community; longing for education; and safeguarding space for African culture.

Several people indicated philosophical reasons\(^{15}\) why church and faith are so important for them.

In the newspaper Noticias, edited in Maputo, a long article was published on African philosophy. It repeated the description given in the past decades: African philosophy and culture is community-oriented, humanity-oriented, solidarity-oriented. But between the lines it was as if the philosopher who was interviewed also felt that with these words the reality of Africa today was difficult to explain. Therefore in the small print at the end it could be sensed that African philosophy is experiencing a crisis today.\(^{14}\)

In a country like Mozambique, as elsewhere in Africa, the romantic image of African life and African culture has fallen apart into many pieces after seventeen years of civil war. The Marxist/Leninist philosophy that was imposed on the country has taught a complete generation to hate those who were labelled as imperialists, colonialists or capitalists; it did not teach, with the same intensity, how to build a human society. Many of those interviewed declared that as a result a culture of suspicion had become powerful in the country that made co-operation between persons and groups of people extremely difficult. There seemed to be much uncertainty about African identity: Who are we? Who am I? What will we be? How do I stay human, when I am confronted with so many inhuman cruel experiences of the recent past? There were feel-

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\(^{13}\) The expression ‘philosophical reasons’ does not relate to the understanding of philosophy as an academic discipline, but stands for the desire to understand the meaning of life.

ings of fear for what a human person can inflict upon the other. This crisis of identity has given the word ‘reconstruction’ a special meaning in Africa: Can we reconstruct our lives and our society, our country? Can we reconstruct theology to help and orient us for that task? Especially in circles of the All Africa Conference of Churches, the theme has gained momentum. In Mozambique, this search for a new ‘reconstructed’ identity provided a powerful reason for going to church, so it was reported. In the Christian community people are helped to discover a new and reliable way of life. There they hear the story about what being human is all about. Through faith African humanity is reconfirmed. Power!

A second cluster of answers to the question of why religion was experienced as important was related to the word community. John Mbiti already said that in Europe ‘cogito ergo sum’ is fundamental for the human person; in Africa ‘I am since I belong’ fulfills that role. People cannot live alone; in Africa living outside a social structure is even dangerous. One has to belong somewhere, to find protection somewhere. Therefore, one has to know one’s people, one’s group. But old social structures have been destroyed in Africa and in Mozambique during a period of almost two centuries of colonisation and local conflicts. So where does one belong? Where is one safe? Churches seem to function as ‘new communities.’ This has historical reasons. The former ‘mission fields’ in Africa were often identical with linguistic regions. The reason for this was that in that case missionaries only had to study only one African language. The result of this policy was that often one missionary organisation (which would later become a local, self-governing church) dealt with just one ethnic group. When old social and ethnic patterns fell apart, the need for new community was strongly felt. Churches provided that space and have become the new centres of community in Africa where people can get to know one another and where new relationships can be built. There life can be celebrated and the dead can be mourned. In such religious communities there is a sense of safety and a promise of life.

On top of that, people in Africa are looking to religion for another important function in life. Many of those interviewed expected that religion and the

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17 Which they did! See L. Samneh, Translating the Message (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989); also African Christians such as bishop Crowther concentrated on the use of local language, see J.J. Hareilles, In the Shadow of the Elephant: Bishop Crowther and the African Missionary Movement (Oxford: Crowther Centre, 2008).
church could help develop a new moral code for society. The cruel experiences of the last decades in Mozambique led people to feel uncertain about the ethical norms for human life. In the church they expect to hear what is good and what is bad. They want to see examples of what human life is truly about. They long for true human community. People seem to have difficulty in identifying the meaning of life, what is good and what is bad or what to pass on to younger generations. The difficult economic situation and painful poverty often have a negative effect on relationships in society: there is a need for new rules, new normative discussions.¹⁸ People are looking to the church to guide them in these endeavours.

About 100 elders of a parish in Maputo had reserved a full Saturday to reflect together on these questions. An ‘old’ and a ‘young’ pastor gave their ideas as an input to the discussion. The meeting stated that the Marxist abolition of religious and moral education in schools had not been very wise; in ethical questions, scientific socialism did not provide much help for young people. Another problem that came to the fore was that parents did not seem to be so much available for their children. Fathers are working long hours (public transport from and to the working place is extremely time consuming), and mothers have their own small businesses at the market. And when grandparents are available, they do not always give the right example. The (Brazilian) television programs now have to provide a model for human life to the children.

The church is asked to define new ‘taboos’ for social life that indicate the contours of humanity and society. In the answers of those interviewed, it became clear that for them, religion was able to play that role better than any other institution.

The third argument that was heard concerning the role of Christian religion in Africa had to do with education. There has, of course, always been a strong and direct relationship between Christian religion, church and mission, and education.¹⁹ But that relationship with formal education was not what the respondents meant in this case. The understanding of the word education was different; many of those interviewed mentioned that religion was important for them since ‘in the church you can improve yourself.’ In saying that, they did not mean that through the church a person can improve him/herself more.

¹⁸ Pobee has helped to reflect theologically on the role of the poor in Christian faith, see his Who are the Poor: The Beatitudes as a Call to Community (Geneva: WCC, 1987).
¹⁹ A. Hastings, The Church in Africa 1450-1950 (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 540ff. Today, churches in Mozambique are involved again in formal education since the government is gradually handing back the nationalised schools (and hospitals) to their former owners.
easily in an economic sense. The opposite is more apparent: in the church there are frequent requests for money.\textsuperscript{20} The improvement for which people are looking had actually to do with informal education. In the church the Bible and other documents are read and interpreted: there is singing and handing out of all kinds of information. In a situation where illiteracy is still strong and journals are expensive and difficult to obtain, the possibility of getting information in an easy way is of great importance.

During an earlier visit to Mozambique, the local pastor in Maputo asked me to give some report to a ‘Bible study group’ about my historical research in the country. When on the evening of the meeting I entered the church building at Kovo, it proved I saw that more than 1000 people were waiting for me... They stayed for long hours, always asking new questions; as a result they had to walk home in the middle of the night – sometimes as long as two, three hours.

In the religious community people can subscribe to courses or join study groups. People from the same community can visit one another and news items are then communicated. A churchgoer can improve his or her knowledge of what is going on in the life of the local, national and sometimes even international society. The religious group has become the centre of informal education. In a country where formal education is scarce, the Christian community serves as an informal ‘school of life.’ In doing so, it continues the African tradition of the informal education provided by family life and traditional social environment.

Finally, culture was mentioned as an argument by those who were asked why Christian religion is so important today in Africa. That may cause some astonishment to those who have been involved in the past decades in the debate on the role of church and mission in Africa. There mission has often been accused of having destroyed the cultures of people in the Third World, in Africa as well. That accusation has become less prominent recently. It has lost much of its impact following new research and new interpretation of existing material by scholars like Gray and Sannch.\textsuperscript{21} Today, new criticisms of an opposite character have arisen concerning the role of mission vis-à-vis local African cultures. They claim that in the past mission has so efficiently protected, even isolated African cultures form being influenced by others, that it can be held co-responsible for today’s ethnicism in Africa.\textsuperscript{22} There is

\textsuperscript{20} No longer is financial profit a motive for becoming a member of the church. There are few ‘nice Christians’ today in Africa.


no need to analyse here this criticism any further, but it is interesting to note how the critique has made an U-turn in this question!

Today, such isolation is no longer an option. African society everywhere on the continent is influenced by foreign cultures, and that mostly through other means than via religious movements. Disturbing new cultural patterns are shown by the media coming from outside the continent. That influences African patterns of life, African cultures which, like any other culture, are in a process of continuous change. The result is that cultural choices have to be made all the time, concerning one’s own lifestyle as well as that of one’s family and one’s group. How can one evaluate and appreciate developments in culture? Where can you study and discuss them?

Traditionally there is a close link between culture and religion. African traditional religion presents a clear example of that. Also, in the so-called independent churches, people experience an intimate link between traditional culture and Christian faith. From the outside it may seem that in the mainline churches another choice is made, in favour of new, Western cultural patterns. But even there a new cultural blend is produced, fundamentally African by character. Those new African cultural expressions in their manifold forms are powerfully present in ritual and social expressions of religion. That creates at the same time a place, the Christian community, to develop this new African lifestyle in a responsible way. The church provides Africa with space to exercise and develop culture – space where people can sing and dance and believe in their own way, be it new or old. Or, to say it in a theological manner, ‘... de l’intérieur de la foi chrétienne comme à l’extérieur de son champ, le Christ a une pertinence comme bâtisseur de l’humain, témoin d’un esprit sans lequel nos politiques comme nos économies, nos structures sociales comme nos institutions culturelles seront toujours sous la menace de l’inhumain’.

Conclusion
What has been and what is the role of religion in Africa? It is clear that this extremely limited research cannot and does not provide definite answers; it is only a rather personal observation by an interested student of Africa. A few conclusions seem though to be justified.

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24 In Mozambique Brazilian soap series on local television present a totally new pattern of ‘family’ life.

Religion has not only played a powerful role in Africa and for Africans in the past, but will also be of crucial importance for shaping the future of human life on that continent, 'life in all its fullness'. Christian faith is called to offer power for life and a vision for the future, as well in Africa as on all other continents of the world. Jesus saves! That is the word that can be encountered everywhere in Africa, on the taxis in West Africa as well as on the wall of the shops in other parts of the continent. Of course religion, Christian religion, has its shortcomings, as history has shown. The compliance of church and mission in the past with oppressive rulers is well documented, although that complex is more often quoted (and used to 'unmask the dubious role of religion') in the West than in Africa itself. But obviously, that fact has not diminished the trust of many Africans in the salvific power of Christian faith for their personal life and for society as a whole. Christian leaders such as John Pobee have played and will play a crucial role in making this power of faith available in and beyond Africa to the many who are longing for it. For that, many are grateful, in Africa as well as in other parts of the world.

References

26 That was the theme of the General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, 1996.
27 Much discussion has been going on concerning the assumed involvement of the churches in Rwanda with the former regime that is held responsible for the genocide in 1994. In spite of these allegations, the local population is still looking to the churches for new orientation in a situation that is even more ambiguous now than it was then; see A. Sibomana, Gardons espoir pour le Rwanda: Entretiens avec Laure Guibert et Hervé Deguine (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1997); also my 'Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Rwanda', in J.D. Gort, H. Jansen & H.M. Vroom eds., Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multi-faith Ideals and Realities (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 327-339.


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Abamfo Atiemo

Focusing on Ghana as a case study, this paper discusses aspects of conflicts that beset modern African nation-states in their attempts to build democratic and human rights regimes. However, these nation-states encompass ‘traditional states’ in which traditional practices and indigenous customary laws survive and are applied in many cases. Yet some Christian and other groups of such societies neglect to participate in certain traditional communal practices because they believe such practices are incompatible with the norms of their faith. This often provokes a conflict of claims. While the custodians of the traditional states invoke their right to cultural identity and expression, the other parties who belong to religious traditions of exclusive tendencies invoke their right to freedom of religion. As the study finds out, resolving such conflicts comes with challenges. Authorities of the nation-state have been quick to set up bodies of arbitration; and though the statutory body responsible for human rights, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), sometimes expresses opinions, these conflicts have not been considered in the law courts. The conflicts are therefore settled on the basis of traditional values and aspirations rather than through adversarial legal processes. Dialogue and arbitration, facilitated by the executive arm of the government, appears more in keeping with the culture of the people than litigation.

Conflicts, religious, ethnic and other, in Africa
The establishment of the nation-state in post-colonial Africa has been called a ‘curse’. It has been called a ‘curse’ because of the many difficult problems that have dogged most of those nations since independence. Conflicts sparked off and sustained by ethnic, cultural, and religious factors have been on the top of all such problems. Underlying the civil wars in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, have been ethnic rivalries. Nigeria has gone through a civil war in the 1960s that had a serious ethnic dimension. At the moment it is not a country that is ‘at ease’. Adamant Muslim interests in the north of the

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country insist on introducing the Sharia in their states. This is in blatant contradiction to the country’s constitution, which prescribes a secular state. For very practical reasons, the federal government has shown great caution in responding to the problem. In the Ivory Coast, what initially was reported as a mutiny by a small discontented band of soldiers became a full-scale civil war. The news media have attempted to present the war as a war between the ‘Muslim north’ and the ‘Christian south’. In Ghana, all is not well. There have not been conflicts that have engulfed the whole country. However, there have been several skirmishes and a few wars that have left many people maimed and dead. These have been, mostly, interethnic conflicts without religious motives. This does not mean that Ghana is free from religious conflicts. Reports of conflicts of a religious nature from many parts of the country have been carried in the news media. For example, The Daily Graphic of 2nd December 1995 reported a clash between Muslims and Christians in Kumasi, which led to the injury of several people. Another report carried in the Ghanaian Times of 24th May 1996, said a clash between two Muslim factions had disrupted normal activities at Atebubu, in the Brong Ahafo Region. However, conflicts that have been perennial, and which have increased since the middle of the 1980's have been between the various traditional authorities and the Christian community. Especially, in Accra, the capital city, such conflicts have, sometimes, turned violent and threatened to spread.

**Nature of the conflicts**

These conflicts have normally resulted from the refusal by Christians to comply with certain customs of the traditional state. For example, in February, 1994, a Chapel and a school complex belonging to the Baptist Church at Azizoke, an island near the Volta estuary at Ada Foah, in the Eastern Region, were destroyed by members of a traditional cult.\(^3\) The Churches had refused to contribute money towards a pacification ritual for the ‘angry gods’ of the island who were believed to have manifested their anger through a diarrhoea suffered by the chief priest.\(^4\) A more common and recurrent conflict has to

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\(^3\) The Daily Graphic of 26th April 1997 reported that some Churches in Accra were training their members in martial arts and arming them to resist militant groups of the Ga Youth, usually led by traditional priests, who go round Churches to enforce a ban on drumming which usually precedes the annual Homowo festival.


In the traditional religion of the people, the gods, the ancestors, and the spirits are believed usually to show their anger by visiting plagues on the community or causing a misfortune, sickness, or even the death of an elder of the community. Such occurrences would, normally, prompt the leaders of the community to consult a diviner who would prescribe the appropriate ritual for pacification. See
do with the ban on drumming and noise making, which precedes the annual festivals of many traditional communities in Ghana. There have been reports of clashes between traditional authorities and Christians who refuse to comply with the ban. For example, on Sunday December 12, 1993, a building belonging to the Church of Pentecost was burnt down at Half-Assini in the Western Region by agents of the traditional authorities for refusing to comply with the ban which preceded the annual Kandum festival. In the year 2000, a fine of eight hundred thousand (800,000.00) cedis was imposed on the Churches at Abakonse in the Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area for violating the ban. The conflict over the non-compliance with the ban is most intense in Accra, the capital city where until the middle of the 1990s such conflicts, were virtually unknown. In a memorandum on the subject, addressed to the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana and others, Professor H.N.A. Wellington, who described himself as a 'thoroughbred Ga' and a 'convinced Christian' observed, ‘... I do not have any memory of any confrontation between the Churches in Accra and the traditional religious leaders over the observance of this ritual custom. I have not also come across any information alluding to such a confrontation in the history of the Church in Accra.’

However, since the 1990s such conflicts have been a regular feature between the Ga Traditional Council and the Churches. In 1998, for example, about twenty members of the Lighthouse Chapel, a charismatic Church sustained various degrees of injuries when a mob of the Ga Youth attacked them. The situation became more threatening for the peace and stability of the nation when in May 2001 the then General Secretary of the Christ Apostolic Church International reportedly pulled a pistol and fired two warning shots when a group of Osu youth and traditional priests went to the church to enforce the ban. Rev. Dr. Annor Yeboah, the general secretary, had earlier


6 A letter of petition dated 14/7/2000 addressed to the Okyehene. Representatives of the various churches, including the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches, signed the letter.

7 The memorandum is entitled, ‘The Church in Ghana (Accra) and the Ga Traditional Observance of Ritual Silence in the month of May’. Prof. Dr. H.N.A. Wellington lectures at the Department of Architecture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.


held a press conference at which he called on Christians to regard the traditional ban as a ‘coup d’état’ to the 1992 republican constitution, the rule of law, and above all the freedoms and liberties of Christians and their faith. He concluded his address with a call, inviting Christians to arm themselves ‘to the teeth by putting on the armour of God to defend the Church, the constitution and ourselves’.

A human rights issue

Like Rev. Dr. Annor-Yeboah, many Christians consider the insistence by the traditional authorities that they observe or participate in certain customary practices as an abuse of their right to freedom of worship. In a press release, dated, December 10, 1997, issued by representatives of the major Christian groups in the country, the following declaration was made: ‘... while we respect the indigenous religious beliefs in this pluri-religious nation called Ghana, we cannot put aside or compromise on the fundamental human rights, the freedoms of expression and of religion as well as the constitutional rights of all Ghanaians as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana’. In another statement by the Christian bodies in May 1999, they again reiterated their conviction that compelling the Churches to observe the ban on drumming and noise making which preceded the annual Homowo festival of the indigenous people of Accra – the Gas, was an infringement on their right to the freedom of worship.

Interestingly, the traditional authorities of Accra also regarded the refusal by Christians to observe the ban as disrespect for their ancient customs and violation of their right to hold and express their cultural identity. The Ga youth threatened to banish Rev Annor-Yeboah whose Christ Apostolic Church had refused to observe the ban and who had pulled a gun in an earlier confrontation. They said since they were the original owners of the land, they had the right to ‘eject any tenant’ who refused to respect their customs.

also alleged that Rev. Dr. Annor Yeboah had distributed cutlasses and other weapons to some Church members.

Press Conference held by ‘Members and Leaders of Christ Apostolic Church International in reaction to the ban against religious freedom by traditional believers’ at Osu, Accra, on May 12, 2001.

The statement was signed by the following: Archbishop Peter A. Turkson, President of the Catholic Bishops, Conference, Msgr. Jonathan Ankrah, Secretary-General of the National Catholic Secretariat, Rev. Dr. Justice O. Akrofi, Accra Bishop of the Anglican Church and Chairman of the Christian Council of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah, General Secretary, Christian Council of Ghana, Rev. Emmanuel Ansah, General Secretary, National Association of Charismatic Churches and the General Secretary of the Ghana Pentecostal Council.

Significantly, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) also views the problem as a human rights issue. In a rejoinder to a newspaper article on the ‘Ban on Drumming,’ the Commission condemned the use of force by the traditional authorities to ensure compliance with the ban as a ‘wanton act of lawlessness which has the potential, if unchecked, to result in anarchy’. The Commission also stated categorically that, ‘No group of Ghanaians, whether Moslems, Christians, traditionalist, or of other religious or ethnic groups have the right to impose religious cultural practices on others’.

The 1992 Constitution, Customary Law and international conventions

The 1992 Constitution guarantees the freedom of worship in Article 21 (1), which states, ‘All persons shall have the right to freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice’. Article 26 (1) provides that ‘Every person is entitled to enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the provisions of this constitution’. Ghana, as a member of the United Nations Organization, and the African Union, is also a signatory to the UN Declaration on Human Rights and many other conventions and covenants by which it is obliged to ensure that various rights and freedoms are incorporated into her legal system and social policy.

Interestingly, the traditional authorities also base their argument partly on the Constitution. They cite Article 11(3), which recognizes ‘Customary Law’ as part of the Common Law. ‘Customary Law’ is explained by the Constitution as ‘the rules of law that by custom are applicable to particular communities in Ghana’. Another basis of their position is that they are the ‘owners of the land’. It is also argued that traditions are time-honoured and must be retained.

Re-asserting the ‘Rights of the Gods’

These conflicts are symptoms of the uneasiness associated with the establishment of the nation-state. The imposition of modern political structures on the traditional institutions without allowing them to evolve gradually into appropriate forms caused a serious disorientation and loss of power to those institutions. Commenting on the effect of the British colonial policy of Indirect Rule, for example, David E. Apter said that the system supplanted the range of traditional goals and objects of utility with those of Western style: ‘The use of external non-traditional means to support traditional legitimacy was

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13 Following the conflict with Rev. Dr. Annor Yeboah, the Ga-Dangme Youth threatened to deport him from Accra since the lands belong to them.
dysfunctional to the maintenance of traditional authority". With the introduction of Christianity the religious authority of the Chief and his ability to invoke supernatural sanctions also diminished.

Ghana, like many nation-states of postcolonial Africa, is a conglomeration of many traditional states. Daryll Forde identified three categories of such states in West Africa. The first one was what he called, 'small-scale, politically autonomous local communities, whose social world was to be numbered in the hundreds'. Then there were the dispersed ethnic societies who had no central political organization. Such societies were normally large and had their own 'traditions of kinship and related dogmas and social exchanges supporting the moral values of Kinship'. The last type was the politically centralized state over which a Chief ruled.

All of such societies had their own system of rights and obligations. What the 1992 Constitution refers to as 'Customary Law' is made up of the surviving legacies of the legal systems of such societies. They were societies in which everybody – the whole social unit – practised a single religion. Everybody in the community shared in the same values and social outlook. The political and religious matters were not separated. The rulers were also the chief custodians of the state religion. Among the Akan, for example, the Chief was the 'supreme priest of all the gods in his Kingdom; with the duty of seeing that all the rituals connected with them were carried out'. Religion was too important to be left in the hands of individuals. Social solidarity and harmony depended on religion. Religion also guided and sustained the rhythm of the society. From birth to life a person's life and wellbeing coincided with that of the whole community. And this depended on the diligent observance of religious customs by the community.

This traditional system has not completely died out. The modern system coexists with the traditional. Chieftaincy, traditional festivals (which are ever popular with the people), and various customary rites of passage combine to perpetuate the traditional culture as a living reality, even in modern times.

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The deliberate and persistent onslaught on the traditional religion by the colonial powers and agents could not destroy the traditional religion.

However, it seems the general religious ferment that the country has experienced since the 1970's has also affected the traditional religion. Then also, there have been several attempts by succeeding governments since the First Republic to revive the traditional culture. In these attempts, the religious dimension of the culture was stressed, which resulted in a boost of the confidence of traditional believers. The teaching of the traditional religion at the various levels of the educational system also gave some respectability to the surviving institutions of the traditional culture and religion. It is now seeking to regain its lost influence and prestige. It is significant that the traditionalists and their agents are using the language of human rights. The boldest of these attempts was the formation of the Afrikania Mission by Rev. Fr. (Dr.) Kwabena Damuah, a former Roman Catholic priest and a member of the then Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government. The Mission used the state radio to propagate the virtues of the traditional culture and religion. The Mission, at the moment, has become the mouthpiece of traditional religion, defending even customary practices that human rights advocates seek to abolish or reform.

Human rights accord more with the individualistic outlook of modernity than the collective outlook of the traditional society. The orientation of the modern nation-state is to separate the state from religion. The state does not recognize any single religious tradition above the others. In that sense, the traditional religion is just one of the many different traditions that exist in the country. As far as religion is concerned, the state is expected to be neutral. Abdullahi Ahmed Na'im in reference to religious pluralism and the modern state has written:

Prevailing conceptions of democracy stipulate that the state should foster religious pluralism without undue preference for a particular religion over others. These conceptions of democracy require religions to sustain themselves and thrive on

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20 E.K. Quashigah observes that several laws were promulgated by the British colonialists which effectively derogated the religious liberties of the native population who practiced the indigenous religions. He reports, for example, that as early as 1892 a law was passed which empowered the "colonial Governor in Council to suppress the celebration or practice of any native 'custom, rite, ceremony or worship which appear to him to tend towards the breach of peace'. See Quashigah, 'Legislating Religious Liberty: The Ghanaian Experience', in Brigham Young University Law Review 1999, No. 2.

21 The Mission has been in the forefront of resistance to the attempts by governments and NGOs to abolish the Trokosi system.
the cogency and validity of their message to believers without coercion or undue advantage over unbelievers and their beliefs or lifestyles.\textsuperscript{22}

It seems the strongest legal argument for the claim of the traditionalist is the one that invokes ‘customary law’. However, it has not been easy to sustain the argument. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice has questioned the validity of the argument.\textsuperscript{23} The explanation of ‘Customary Law’ by the constitution as ‘the rules of law, which by custom are applicable to particular communities in Ghana’ makes it difficult to justify the application of traditional customary practices, such as the ban on drumming and noise-making, to everybody in a society of plural values.

The underlying beliefs of the ban on drumming and other similar customary practices are no longer collectively held. A paper with the title, ‘The Ban on Drumming and Noise-making in Accra Needs Review’ was distributed in May 2001. One Kwabena Ofori-Panin of Nokwa Foundation in Accra signed the paper. It argued for a review of the ban in the light of the modern democratic system of governance. It said the practice of the custom in Accra had lost its relevance:

In this present age of information proliferation, it is common knowledge that the ban on drumming and noise-making, even if strictly adhered to by all, will not add an extra cob of maize or tuber of yam to the agricultural output in Accra or elsewhere. It is also a fact that the bulk of food consumed in Accra for a long time now is not even produced in Accra.\textsuperscript{24}

Modernity, Christianity and other factors have combined to undermine the plausibility of the main beliefs underlying the ban. In an address at a meeting between the National House of Chiefs and representatives of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the celebrated intellectual and Metropolitan Archbishop of Kumasi, the Rt. Rev. Peter Sarpong, reported how in 1996 some young men of Anloga in the Volta Region beat up members of a Roman Catholic Church and took away their drums which they were using in worship. With characteristic sense of humour, he added: ‘The interesting thing is that the belief was (and still is) that if drumming took place, there would be a severe drought. That year, there


\textsuperscript{23} ‘The Ban on Drumming – Rejoinder’, issued by the CHRAJ.

was so much rain that the resulting floods destroyed property. The argument that it is the gods that are responsible for bumper food and fish harvest and which has been the basis of the annual ban is most untenable for many Ghanaians of today.

Nevertheless, as is characteristic of religious traditions, other grounds have been cited in order to maintain the plausibility of such beliefs. The ‘thanksgiving’ and the commemorative aspects of the custom are projected on other aspects. In that case, the observance of the ban and related customary practices are said to be in commemoration of the heroic deeds of the ancestors and to express thanksgiving to the gods for their help in times past. Greater emphasis is now being placed on grounds such as the Chief being the ‘owner of the land’ and the need to preserve the cultural identity and unity of the people. This means that traditional cultural and customary practices survive modernity because they have become expressions of cultural and ethnic identity and solidarity.

Being a Christian and a citizen of the traditional state

However, Churches contend that, though they are members of the community, and are prepared to take part in all purely civil activities, it is not right for the traditional state to impose the traditional religion on everybody. Many submissions have called for the de-linking of the traditional religion from the traditional state institutions. For example, Rev. Enoch Agbozo of the Ghana Evangelical Society (GES) has described the ban as having ‘spiritual and religious underpinnings in the worship of idols and cultural arrangements ordered by Satan and his demonic hosts’. The Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana have all called for a ‘clean line of demarcation’ between what is civic and what is religious. In the address of Archbishop Sarpong at the meeting with the National House of Chiefs, which has already been alluded to, he stated:

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27 Rev. Enoch Agbozo, more than anyone else, inspired the emergence of the modern Charismatic Churches in Ghana. The Ghana Evangelical Society, which he led, was a veritable Bible School, which in the 1970s trained and inspired many Ghanaian young people into the ministry of the Church.
29 Programme of the Joint Committee on Youth, Sports and Culture Subsidiary Legislation and Legal, Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs on the Consideration of the Issue of the Ban on Drumming and Noisemaking in the Country, Particular-
As Ghanaians, we love our culture and we love our people. We encourage our followers to perform their civic duties towards their traditional rulers. We insist that they follow your instructions; we insist that they fulfill their obligations towards you in whatever function they may find themselves in, be it as drummers, carrying you in the palanquin or you on to the horse back or going on errands, covering you with umbrella, cooking for you, dancing in praise of you and so forth. These are purely civic obligations that every self-respecting citizen who respects his culture should be proud to perform. It is part of our cultural heritage.\(^{30}\)

He however pointed out that forcing Christians in matters that are religious in character, amounts to harassment. On the specific issue of the ban on drumming, the Archbishop said as a religious exercise, Christians cannot feel themselves bound to observe it, 'for the simple reason that they consider it their right not to be forced into practices that are against their faith; and so have thought it their right even during those periods to drum in their own religious setting'.

In times past, the fear of the anger of the gods and the ancestors would have instigated the whole community to throw their weight behind the chief, his elders and the priests to impose sanctions against any individuals who refused to pay a levy towards pacification, or refused to comply with customary practice. For the community's interest was placed above that of the individual and the individual was obliged to conform: 'The criterion for any action was not individual profit nor even potential social betterment, but whether it had been proved by the ancestors and sanctioned by custom.\(^{31}\)

This is not to say traditional Ghanaian societies did not recognize individual rights. The right to fair trial, to own property, to move about, to freedom of speech and many others were enjoyed under the traditional system.\(^{32}\) However, religious freedom was allowed only in as far as a commitment to any faith did not lead to the shirking of social responsibilities, including religious ones, which were communal in nature. The state religion was the soul of the traditional community. It was the power behind the political and other institutions. It seems freedom of religion in the traditional community included the choice to accept and express new beliefs but not the freedom to renounce the state religion. That would have amounted to the renunciation of one's citizenship. Any religion that threatened the general good of the society was not

\(^{30}\) Sarpeng, 'Introductory Remarks'.

\(^{31}\) Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, p. 128.

tolerated, hence the Fanti proverb, ‘Pusuban’ bo too kurow’ (that is, before the shrine was the town). For example, it is reported that in 1887, the traditional elders of Eastern Akim complained in a letter to the Governor about the behaviour of the Christians as follows, ‘Now we want to tell you plainly that we were here before Mohr (an European missionary) came, we do not want him or any of the Christians in this Eastern Akim’. This complaint was prompted by the refusal of the Christians to act in accordance with the native law. The welfare of the traditional community was believed to be bound up with the collective observance of customs and practices that express respect to the gods and the ancestors. Therefore, any kind of conversion that requires abandoning the observance of certain traditional customs and practices would be regarded as antisocial or subversive.

In traditional societies religious human rights would have been difficult to achieve once they had become an explicit issue by the polemical attitudes of Christians. Both Bishop Sarpong’s address and the statement issued by the Ghana Pentecostal Council mentioned an agreement reached in 1912 in Ashanti between the Chief Commissioner and the Chiefs in Kumasi. Among the terms of the agreement was that a distinction should be drawn between religious and purely ceremonial services, so that it would be easier for Christians to perform the latter and not be compelled to do the former. This may suggest that the traditional society easily allowed its citizens to renounce the traditional faith. However, Kimble reveals that the committee did not have representatives of the Ashanti chiefs. It was made up of only Europeans. In 1951, Busia reported that there were still unresolved conflicts between Christianity and the Chiefs.

35 The Pusuban is the central shrine of Fante towns and villages; and it houses the major deity of the town or village. It is the focus of rituals of pacification and purification in times of crisis such as plagues; but also, the centre of rituals of fortification for the asafo (military) companies in times of war and other crisis that calls for action by asafo companies. Its use in this proverb in generic in that it is used generally, for all shrines that come to the town or village to assert the supremacy of the oman (state) over religion.
35 In Kumase, from at least 1780 till now, the Muslim community has enjoyed perfect freedom of religious observance precisely because the Mande-Dyula traders and their imans and scholars opted for the lucrative trade and the influence they gained from service to the Asante court, and not for dawah – their religious duty to proclaim and spread Islam. (I am grateful to Jan Platvoet who drew my attention to this important historical fact in a comment he made on this paper).
Response of the civil authorities

Obviously, both the Christians and the Traditionalists expect the government to act, or at least, to make a definite pronouncement on the issue. For example, in an interview with Network Herald (ISSN 0855-4854), a representative of the Ga-Dangme Youth was reported to have stated: ‘The police are supposed to ensure that the ban is enforced...’ The same representative also expressed disappointment about the ‘silence of the government’. A statement issued by the ‘Amazing Word of Christ Church’, dated 31st May, 2001, said, ‘the President must be firm’ and not ‘sit on the fence about a situation as grave as this’. Some have accused the central government and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly of tacitly approving and supporting the traditional leaders. A letter addressed to the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, and signed by Rev.N.A. Tackie-Yarboi of the Victory Bible Church, reads in part, ‘We believe, the NPP government which had pledged to uphold the rule of law would act decisively to protect law abiding citizens from the actions of lawless and anti-social persons who seek to hide behind culture, religion or politics to disturb national unity and development’.

Obviously, the government finds itself in a difficult situation. Each of the parties is convinced that their own human rights are being abused, yet none of them seems ready to go to court to seek protection or enforcement. They rather expect the government to intervene. This attitude is in keeping with the traditional attitude of the responsible elder intervening in conflict situations and settling matters through arbitration. The government has assumed the position of the ‘elder’ and has been facilitating a process of dialogue between the Christians and the traditional leaders. The dialogue option has wide support among the various Christian groups. Significantly, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, some of whose members have been militant, supports the approach on the basis of the age-long traditional preference for arbitration and consensus building. A statement by the Council said:

We appreciate the current approach. A legislative ruling could result in having winners and losers and thereby polarizing our nation and aggravating the situation even more. We should endeavor to arrive at a consensus that unites us as one nation and preserve the peace we have inherited from our predecessors.\[31\]

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31 An Emergency Statement by the Amazing Word of Christ Church on the Current Disturbing State of Affairs Arising from a Total Ban on Drumming and Excessive Noise-making by the Ga Traditional Council, signed by Rev. Major Alex O.K. Duah, founder/President, Amazing Word of Christ Church.


33 ‘The Response of Ghana Pentecostal Council’, at the meeting of the Joint Committee on Youth, Sports and Culture Subsidiary Legislation and Legal, Constitu-
The Universal principles of Human Rights have been the main perspective from which both the traditional leaders and the Churches have sought to approach the conflict. Yet neither of the parties has actively sought a judicial interpretation. Rather, they have decided to resort to the more traditional way of resolving differences. Perhaps, this may provide a pattern to deal with other issues related to human rights and involving interests with similar orientation to that of traditional societies. This refers, especially, to religious groups.

It was the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) that made some attempts to put the issues into human rights perspectives. Invoking its mandate under Article 218(f) of the 1992 Constitution to educate the public on human rights, the CHRAJ, issued statements on the controversies between the Churches and the Ga traditional authorities. The position of the Commission was that the traditional authorities had no legitimate justification under the Constitution of the country to compel Christians to observe customary or cultural practices. It stated that the situation did not typify a clash of rights and that those who believe in the customary ban on noise-making could observe their ban without any hindrance; however, they also did not have the right to hinder Christians from worshipping the way they want to at anytime, if they do not infringe on any body’s right. Many people reacted angrily to this stance of the Commission accusing it of taking sides in the conflict.

Noisy worship – a Ghanaian worship style?
Part of the academic discussions that have ensued subsequent to the emergence of these conflicts have centred on the issue of noisy worship. As part of the argument for the right to worship with drums and other instruments, the point has been made again and again that the religious African is noisy at worship. For example, the Rev. Enoch Agbozo of the Ghana Evangelical Society fame wrote, ‘We are noisy by nature as a people’. Others have charged that the traditional authorities were only out to persecute Christians. They argue that the gods of Accra seem to be indifferent to other forms of noise and react only to the noise of Christian worship. At a press conference organized by the Ghana Bishops’ Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana, on 11th May, 2001, the speaker noted that the letter of the Ga traditional Council was addressed to religious bodies only and queried:

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Does that mean only religious bodies make noise of drumming and clapping that is a cause for concern to the Ga traditional Council for homowo preparation? How about vehicles and the hooting and tooting, airplanes, soccer games and cheering teams at the stadium or football parks... Night Clubs?

However, attitudes of Christians have not been uniform. Some have been sober and admitted that worship has become unduly noisy but explain the phenomenon as a sign of immaturity. For example, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, in a letter, dated 26th April, 2002, expressed the hope that in future all their member Churches will be abreast with the noise abatement laws of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) so that annual ban on drumming will no longer be an issue of great concern. Moreover, our sound output would be as self-regulated as not [to become] a nuisance to the general public. It may be true that, as a people, Africans love music and dancing. They are jubilant worshippers. However, that does not mean that traditionally, they had no practice of observing silence. The widespread nature of the ban on drumming is incontestable evidence that traditionally the observance of silence has been part of the people’s religion and culture. At the shrines and the stool house, the highest point of the ritual is often marked by collective observance of silence.

In conclusion
Claiming religious human rights in the context of traditional states, which themselves are regarded as ‘sacred’, is bound to provoke a conflict of claims. While the custodians of the traditional states invoke their right to cultural identity and expression, individuals who have converted to religious traditions with exclusivist, polemical tendencies would invoke their right to freedom of religion in what they see as a secular state run on modern institutions of governance. Often the still-evolving constitutional arrangements of transitional societies, such as Ghana, attempt to hold a balance between modern institutions and values and the traditional cultural ones and, therefore, lack clarity with respect to customary laws and practices of the various ethnic communities. In the process, most issues are settled on the basis of traditional values and aspirations. The resort to dialogue and arbitration, facilitated by the executive arm of the government is more in keeping with the culture of the people. Compromises are achieved, as is evident in the admission by some Christian groups that worship could be less noisy in future so ‘that the annual ban on drumming will no longer be a case of concern...’ They make

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Rev. Ekow Badu Woode, the General Secretary, signed the letter.
dialogue and arbitration viable in the Ghanaian context and others similar to it, even in human rights cases.

References
CHRAJ, The Ban on Drumming – Rejoinder
Part Three
Religion and Culture
Critiquing African Traditional Philosophy of Chastity

Rose Mary Ameaga-Etego

The theoretical and methodological underpinning of chastity in many African communities raises serious questions in the contemporary context. As they are generally oriented towards the subordination and suppression of female sexuality, African women are re-examining tradition as they seek a new meaning and understanding of their lives in a rapidly transforming world. Within the context of feminist discourses, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), modern African women possess the necessary opportunity and the tools to investigate, compare and challenge that which they perceive as injustice to their womanhood and humanity. Unfortunately, the prevalence of STDs and the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African continent has led to the resurgence of some traditional notions of chastity as well as added new perspectives to the discourse. This paper explores the traditional concept of chastity within the complex dynamics of tradition and change from an insider's perspective, using the Nankani of Northern Ghana for illustrative purposes.

Introduction

Anthropologists and scholars of religion have shown that African communities do not only differ in structure but also in their beliefs and practices. Some of these underlying differences have led to the production of diverse knowledge systems. In Ghana for instance, the presence of the two dominant descent systems, patrilineal and matrilineal, clearly illustrates that such differences can exist even within the same nation state. In the case of Ghana, some of the differences emanating from these descent systems posed considerable difficulties for the formulation and application of laws, especially

family laws. The predominantly matrilineal Akan of the southern sector, about whom an overwhelming amount of scholarly literature has been produced, tend to overshadow the majority patrilineal groups. Although statistically, this preceding statement is subject to constant verification because of changing demographic data, it is important to note that in the current documentation on Ghana’s religio-cultural and socio-political systems, the matrilineal Akan lead.

In a 1983 article, Dorothy Dee Vellenga noted that ‘[t]he indigenous culture in the South has been dominated by one group, the Akan, who form less than 50 per cent of the whole population.’ The patrilineal descent groups comprise the different ethnic groups in Northern Ghana, and in Southern Ghana the Ewe, Gas, and Adangbe, the Guans of Latteh, Mampong and Adakrom as well as the Akans from Akuapim. In other words, this polarized descent structure of the nation presents considerable challenges for the effective implementation of non-discriminatory gender-based laws. For instance, the intestate succession law has been given various interpretations throughout the country. Even though the law is not in alignment with the matrilineal inheritance structure, some Nankanis have interpreted it as a projection of the matrilineal system. Being a patrilineal society where women have no explicit (or substantial) inheritance rights, this law, which seeks to mediate on heritance, is observed with suspicion.

Generally, however, the rise of feminism led to the recognition of women’s views, needs and rights globally. This contributed to the formulation of international policies including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which sought to streamline and protect the rights of women. In the African context, the tenets of CEDAW are not only in alignment with the African Charter on Human and People’s

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Rights, "the rights of Women in Africa," but also with the various national constitutions. Sometimes specific policies are formulated to aid the implementation of these laws.  

Besides these, African women have themselves initiated various actions to seek solutions for their own wellbeing. One of these initiatives that has taken the religio-cultural dimension seriously is the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (Circle). In its inaugural address in 1989, Mercy Amba Oduyoye reiterated the important role of religion and culture in the life of the African woman. She however noted that these two have been used to suppress women in African societies. Oduyoye therefore called on her fellow African women to carefully examine 'our' cultural heritage for the necessary enabling resources, those that seek to present alternative or liberative solutions to the current gender-based injustices, for 'our' common good and wellbeing. Drawing from the global movement, while at the same showing knowledge of the African woman's self awareness of her contextual situation, Oduyoye carefully but firmly situates the African woman's experience in her statement:

We have learnt from our Western sisters how suffocating one can feel in the 'fond embrace' of patriarchy. We have learnt from our black American Womanist sisters that people have the power over you that you give them. We know how hard it is to extricate ourselves from the power African men think they have or must have over African women.  

Although the above statement presents a sense of continuity and sisterhood in the global struggle for women's rights and liberation, it underscores the local experience, illustrating both the differences and the need for contextual studies. Thus, the choice of chastity in this study indicates my desire to address  

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issues of contextual relevance. It is quite clear that despite the reality of contemporary Western influence on human sexuality, religio-cultural differences and geographical locations have rendered this influence as well as the above international gender-based rights, relative. The need to examine such relative situations is paramount in understanding and seeking solutions to some of the injustices in the system.

Although theoretically, the traditional concept of chastity can be described as a manipulative tool for the suppression and subordination of female sexuality, its current application has exacerbated the already precarious gender-based injustices in some African societies. This is because, whereas many of the traditional principles of chastity are continuously applied to the female, the same cannot be said of the male. Methodologically, the concept is currently understood, applied and enforce according to the socialization processes of each society.

Theoretical and methodological underpinnings
It would be presumptuous to gloss over the current discourses surrounding the use of the terms ‘Africa’ or ‘African’, ‘Tradition’ or ‘Traditional’, and ‘Philosophy’ without clarifying the context in which they are used. This is because there is a growing concern over the way the terms are used. With regard to the term ‘African’, questions are being raised as to whether such a liberal use refers to the general or a particular geographical location on the continent. Although these questions are relevant, they do not really resolve the problem in such a way as to adequately avoid the inherent ambiguities in its use. That is to say, whilst the term may deal with a specific contextual issue or experience, it can concurrently deal with such an issue at the level of the continent. Such an undertaking is possible because of the ability to apply or decipher specific issues from more than one geographical location or community. That is the case in this study. Whereas the Nankani of Northern Ghana are identified as having specific nuances on this subject, the view that chastity is a key social value in several other communities on the continent creates room for such a liberal use of the term ‘African’.

Similarly, the term ‘traditional’ is met with contention. Recent scholars are of the view that the term is not, and should not be seen as an indicator of stagnation. Rather, it should carry with it the dynamism with which the continent and its individual communities are currently imbued with. Even in this context, there are variations as to the interpretations of this historical

dynamism. For David Chidester, tradition should not be seen as something handed down, but as something taken up. Perhaps, this is because tradition is partly dependent on experiences which are added or adapted as they occur. Although some of these conceptualizations arise from the use of language, the crux of the matter among the Nankani is to follow tradition. Tradition here is perceived as something handed down. Nevertheless, its application must be relevant to the current situation. In this case, relevance becomes an issue of concern. As in the case of chastity, that which is relevant to males may be different from the females in the community. Even so, tradition is not perceived as a verbatim process of handing down. We may liken it to the legal system as it relates to case law. Although the main clause of the law is essential, its subsequent interpretations and applications are important to each new case. Similarly, tradition is seen as a 'liberal resource' for learning and appropriation. All these varied interpretations are nevertheless essential. Therefore, even though the continent tries to preserve its distinct identity in the term 'tradition', it currently carries with it evidences of a cumulative historical past. This is clearly illustrated when discourses on Africa's heritage take cognisance of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.

Philosophy from the African setting is often perceived in the West as ethno-philosophy. Proponents of this perspective usually base their arguments on the view that there are contextual differences between the Western and traditional African frames of thought. One important illustration of this argument can be seen in Placide Tempels' analysis of Bantu Philosophy. At one point he seems to be arguing for a Bantu philosophy and in the next he degrades the very conceptual reasoning of the Bantu as a philosophy. This lack of clarity is further exhibited in John Mbiti's work on African Religions and Philosophy, which has been the ground for scholarly criticisms. There are therefore some contextual misunderstandings as to what it means to reflect philosophically on issues of this nature (chastity in the African context) or to speak of an African philosophy of chastity. Yet, African philosophy is a 'philosophy of life', that which Kwame Anthony Appiah calls 'folk-

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16 Chidester, Religions of South Africa, p. 1.
19 See for instance, Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, pp. 76-77.
Contextualizing chastity in a traditional African society

Chastity is a major preoccupation in many African discourses on morality. Traditionally, chastity lies within the domain of sex and sexuality. Sex in this case takes on board both the biological distinctions of the male-female genitalia as well as the assumed subsequent sexual intercourse that emanates from such biological distinctions and relationships. Sexuality follows suit from that. It takes into account the perceived and prescribed sexual behaviours and mannerisms that must emanate from such a given context. This includes those culturally accepted sexual/gender-based norms on marriage, childbearing and social relations. In these instances, both assumptions and emphasis are on heterosexual relationships. Chastity in this sense is primarily a heterosexual construct and though details may vary from one culture or context to another, it takes into consideration that which is ‘normal and right’. This is a general ascription, one that recent scholars have critiqued as a construction that has served to privilege heterosexuality over other sexual orientations. The aim of this paper is not to engage the underlying trend of discourse on the latter. It is to examine how the heterosexual construction of sexuality is played in different social contexts, and how this produces socio-cultural injustices for the different parties in relationships. The emphasis is thus on

23 Over the years proverbs, stories and myths are encapsulated in their belief system.
28 This is irrespective of the prevailing single sex marriages in some African communities. See Uchendu, ‘Concubinage among Ngwa Ibo’, p. 188.
what it means to talk of chastity within the framework of heterosexuality in the African context, with reference to the Nankani.

As a matter of concern, even though chastity is an embracing term, its application to males and females is different. Chastity in Africa is a feminine issue, "woman palaver" as Uchendu puts it. Among the Nankani, chastity is invariably about female sexuality. Outside this context, chastity is nebulous; hence, the only form of identification is still within its feminization. In principle, it is about the virtuous woman; the woman who exudes the traditional concepts of decorum, modesty, self-service and dignity in all spheres of life. It is primarily framed for the marriage setting where young females are ushered into adult, independent lifestyles. Notwithstanding this centrality, its conceptualization precedes marriage. It emanates from the premarital stage and continues into the post-marital context. This takes into consideration the formative years of adolescence, but extends to stages of widowhood and old age. The premarital stage is a forecasting stage. It is viewed as a determining stage for the presumed status of a future chaste wife.

Adolescence sets the parameters for changes in the lifestyles of males and females. Whereas boys at this stage are encouraged to relate to and pursue the opposite sex in courtship, girls are not. Boys are watched to see if they exhibit masculine heterosexual characteristics in such relationships. Girls are however watched to see if they exhibit self-control and comportment. This places different emphasis on the two genders with respect to their sexuality, setting the stage for how they each perceive themselves and address the issue of chastity in their respective domains and to one another. For the girl it relates to modesty, self-control, which may involve self-denial and submissiveness; for the boy it is pursuance and conquest — an exhibition of mastering the signs of masculinity. In some societies, a link between female genital mutilation (FGM) and female sexuality or sexual pleasure was quickly established as FGM swept through large areas of the continent. As Falola puts it, "[the] belief was that women had an excessive sexual drive which could be curtailed by removing the clitoris". Consequently, the masculine desire to control or curtail female sexuality soon occupied a centre stage as many communities adopted FGM as a cultural practice. According to Falola, the justification for it has mainly been based on tradition and the male perception of

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31 Among the Krobo, for instance, pregnant unmarried girls or girls who had not passed through the rites of puberty were banished from the community. See Kudadjie, "How Morality was Enforced", p. 173.
female behaviour even though 'those who continue to defend the practice ignore the aspect of male domination and emphasize culture.' Whatever the case, the fact that FGM was instituted to take place before marriage, and also that virginity was tested upon marriage, shows that the desire for female chastity preceded marriage.

Premarital chastity is thus a prelude to marital chastity. It is a key character determinant for courtship and marriage. Marriage, however, is the actual setting for chastity. Although determined by various socio-political and religio-cultural factors, the marriage context continues to serve as the nucleus of African chastity. Writing on the impact of 'Chastity and Rituals on Women' in the Naga traditional area, a Nankani community, Rose Mary Akurigu observed that 'traditionally, every female from the locality is expected to remain chaste until marriage. At marriage, she is again expected to be chaste and faithful to her husband until her death or after the death and final funeral rites of her husband have been performed'. The posthumous tag of control is framed within the traditional concept of death. That is, death is not complete until the entire funeral processes (rites) have been performed to carefully usher the deceased to the ancestral abode. Thus, the physical death of a husband is not the end of a marriage. A woman is still expected to remain chaste throughout the period of widowhood. In this particular context, the period of waiting is dependent on the status of the deceased male and the ability of his next of kin to carry out the rites. Since this can take several years, it means that the widow's sexual desires are unduly controlled during this period of time. This can place an emotional burden on younger widows who might want to continue with their sexual lives after a period of mourning.

Writing on the matrilineal Akan culture, Vellenga observed another dimension to the concept of chastity. She discovered that adultery fees were very much attached to 'who is a wife?'. For such an identity to be established, two viewpoints were considered. This was between the unmarried and married women. To the unmarried, there is a cry about her being 'loose', immoral, promiscuous, or a prostitute. To the married, it was an issue of adultery. Thus Vellenga noted:

34 Falola, The Power of African Cultures, p. 257.
This has created a preoccupation with the adultery of women which has continued to the present. Such adultery might not even be restricted to sexual intercourse, but could include gifts of money by a man other than the husband. In a culture in which polygyny was the norm, these very different definitions of adultery for men and for women created another major source of conflict.\footnote{Vellenga, Dorothy Dee, 1985, ‘Who is a Wife? Legal Expressions of Heterosexual Conflicts in Ghana’, in Christine Oppong, Female and Male in West Africa (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 146.}

This system of control has its roots in the religio-cultural structure of the female identity. Studies in African societies, especially, among patrilocal societies have shown that the control of women’s sexuality is intrinsically linked to the traditional concept of identity. Catherine Bell, for instance, refers to patrilocal cultures, where social and personal identity is defined in terms of the father’s family line. In these systems, women may have little social identity outside their roles as wives and mothers.\footnote{Catherine Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 97.} Ifi Amadiume affirms this in her statement: ‘the principles of control and protection are applied to them [females] throughout their productive period, whether as daughters, wives or mothers. It is said that when a woman outgrows the question, ‘whose daughter is she?’, people then ask, ‘whose wife is she?’\footnote{Ifi Amadiume, Male Daughters and Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society (London: Zed Press, 1987), p. 69.} Thus, even though these stages project a sense of physical growth, the socio-cultural tag of control subsumes the female’s identity and maturity. She is viewed as a dependent and her identity ‘must depend’ on the male. Among the Nankani for instance, females were traditionally perceived as children. The saying, ‘every woman is a child’ (pëka woo de bïya) illustrates this view. As a child, she must be controlled and guided. It is my contention that it is through/because of the inability to maintain constant supervision over adult women that taboos and rituals relating to chastity became an important part of the religio-cultural system. Within this traditional scheme, female sexuality is traditionally kept under control with or without the physical presence of males.

Situating chastity within taboo and ritual moves the issue from the physical to the spiritual realm.\footnote{See Uchendu, ‘Concebinage among Ngwa Ibo’, p. 189.} Ritual, as James L. Cox implies, transforms the ordinary to the non-ordinary, imposing a sense of the sacred and showing or re-establishing how things ought to be.\footnote{James L. Cox, Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), pp. 59-60, 63.} My concern here is not about rituals
in the African setting *per se*; it is about rituals of chastity and the fact that these are generally directed at women. Beside, they impose on women undue psychological burdens. For example, whereas both men and women can be guilty of incest, it is only women who are guilty of adultery in some traditional African societies.\(^{42}\) Hence, it is she who must perform the ritual of chastity because she is regarded as unchaste. What a drama! It takes two to commit such a crime -- if it is a crime --, yet one is exonerated while the other is held accountable. We find a similar allegation in the Bible with the woman accused of adultery. I use the word allegation because, in reality, if she was caught, then two people were ‘caught in the very act of committing adultery’ (John 8: 3-4). The irony of the case is that only one person was deemed to have been caught, which should technically make it an impossible case of adultery.

**Religio-cultural dimensions of chastity**

There are several dimensions to the concept of chastity in the African context. However, its direct linkage with that which is religio-culturally forbidden (taboo), and the fear of the ancestral spirits have given it an added impetus.\(^{43}\) Not only do these religious connotations impose undue psychological pressure on women and their wellbeing but there is also the psychological baggage of a constant self-assessment of the individual’s state of religio-cultural purity,\(^{44}\) with the attendant state of guilt and emotional turbulence. Besides that, it has led to the formulation of elaborate ritual enactments, an aspect that has not only given it its distinct characteristics,\(^{45}\) but also further exacerbated the injustices of the system. That apart, the inability to perform these rituals privately and secretly in most communities compounds the emotional distress of African women.

As indicated above, religion plays an important role in the socio-cultural and political stratifications of African communities. In a discourse on religion and ideology, M.F.C. Bourdillon observes how such interplay functions:

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\(^{45}\) See Obeta, ‘Igbo Traditional Morality’, p. 137.
religion plays the stratification role in society by imposing its tremendous power on the prevailing perceptions and practices.⁴⁶ The differences in the concept of chastity among the Nankani is not only manifested between the genders, but also among the different statuses such as the married and unmarried. This indicates that the religio-cultural emphases on these two stages of women’s lives vary. Although in both instances the rights and reproductive roles of women are exploited, the tenacity and seriousness with which it is done within marriage is overwhelming. This can be analyzed from the perspective of the relative outsider status of a wife in her (traditionally exogamous) marital home and ancestry vis-à-vis her natal home.

To understand the above reference of relativity, a brief examination of the place and relative statuses of the different genders as well as those of the married and unmarried women in Nankani society may provide the necessary insight. In the first place, masculinility (maleness) among the Nankani is not only imbued with socio-political leadership rights, but also religio-cultural rights and control. A male Nankani child or baby is culturally imbued with a future power and authority to sustain, control and manage his lineage. He acquires the title of a landlord right from birth. This is different with the female child. Because of the exogamous system of marriage practised by the Nankani, the female child acquires a title that implies a person belonging to a different male child’s home. The analogy is clearly illustrated by one of the symbolic names given to some female children; Ayingabunu, signifying that in future she will be an outsider.⁴⁷ The name conspicuously places the female child within the context of marriage and its inherent notion of divided allegiance. Although this will only be manifested at marriage when she relocates to her husband’s home, the name defines the female child as someone who does not fully belong to her natal family. In other words, placing the female child within such a socio-culturally constructed gendered role, the future woman finds herself in a dichotomous position. That is, the female child is consciously aware that even though she completely belongs to her natal family, this is only temporary. In other words, although an immediate insider of her natal family, she is fundamentally an outsider, i.e. an insider/outside. This is in contrast to the male child who is identified at birth as a full member of his lineage, hence a landlord, even if he does not assume the role.

Afe Adogame’s re-articulation of the ‘insider/outside’ discourse is useful in this explanation. Even though Adogame’s illustration is set within a different context, his view that the relative positions in which people find themselves in given situations determine their ‘insider-outsider’ status is significant to this analysis. Re-organizing the existing ‘insider/outside’ debate into four distinct sub-categories of: ‘insider-insider’, ‘insider-outsider’, ‘outsider-insider’ and ‘outsider-outsider’, Adogame shows that one’s position or status at a given time or context determines one’s ability to acquire existing knowledge systems and to redefine and/or articulate them appropriately in emerging situations. It is possible to clearly locate the statuses of the two genders and the structural impact of the religio-cultural construction of chastity on them within Adogame’s categorization. That is to say, in a patrilineal society, the male child is an ‘insider-insider’ irrespective of his age, place or marital status. On the other hand, the female child adapts to the different categories depending on her status as a daughter, wife, or mother/grandmother. Although a child’s position (in ‘its’ natal home) ought to be that of the ‘insider-insider’, this is not the case with the Nankani female child as indicated by the name Ayingabunu. Thus, even before marriage, she is an ‘insider-outsider’. So whereas the ‘insider-insider’ (male) will be given full knowledge of the law or information systems and taught the principles of application or manipulation, the ‘insider-outsider’ (female) will not, for fear that such internal knowledge systems might be exposed to their future in-laws. It is for this reason that the dynamics (rules and manipulation) surrounding chastity are not clearly known and understood by young ladies before marriage.

At marriage, the female’s status in her natal family changes to the ‘outsider-insider’ because she is partially transferred through the exogamous marriage system to her husband’s family and clan. She is first and foremost an ‘outsider’ to her natal home because she is expected to move on to establish a new home in her marital family, where she now has to cultivate a sense of belonging. Yet, at the same time, she is an ‘insider’ because she is still a ‘daughter’ of the family with specific religio-cultural roles, for which reason her natal family continues to offer oversight responsibility for her welfare.

As a ‘young’ (in terms of productive and reproductive capacity) married woman, she is on the other hand, considered an ‘insider-outsider’ by her marital family. This is because, as a ‘young’ woman there are possibilities of divorce. This notwithstanding, she is an ‘insider’, because she is married into

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her husband’s family. Nonetheless, as a precautionary measure, she is also viewed as an ‘outsider’. Thus, for fear that a full disclosure of their knowledge systems might endanger their privacy and security in case of a divorce, the female once again finds herself within the ‘insider-outsider’ category as a ‘young’ married woman. In other words, the ‘outsider’ categorization is based on two principles. Firstly, it has to do with personal security; secondly it is based on the fact that she is still a part of her natal family as they continue to have oversight rights over their daughter’s life and welfare until her death and final funeral rites. The marriage having stabilized, possibly with children or old age, a married woman is then absorbed into her marital family as an ‘insider-insider’ even though there are still disparities in the knowledge and privilege base because of her gender.

Now in relation to the philosophy of chastity, the norms of chastity weigh heavily upon the female during her productive/reproductive period, until old age when her sexuality is no longer a subject of concern. It is in these relative contexts of the female as a daughter and a ‘young’ married woman that her sexuality and the desire to control it is manifest through the concept of chastity. Here, it is the male child who possesses a stable status within his natal family as the ‘insider-insider’, who has the power and authority to regulate and control the female’s sexuality. Therefore, the philosophical norms surrounding chastity relate to the concept of identity and the roles ascribed to it. By this, the complexities of identity can be posited clearly within the different clusters without obscurities. Unlike the married woman, a daughter or spinster, whose birthright in her natal home posits her also within the ‘insider-outsider’ status, can seize any available opportunity as liberty for exploration. In contrast, the ‘insider-outsider’ status of the ‘young’ married woman opens her up to be scrutinized physically by her husband and his relations, and ‘hunted spiritually’ by her husband’s ancestors for any sexual misconduct. In other words, chastity is circumscribed by the dispossessed status of the female.

Ambiguities in the traditional concept of chastity
Irrespective of the above, there are some structural ambiguities in the system. Among the Nankani and neighbouring Gurunne speaking communities of the Upper East Region, one encounters, in addition to the comparatively unrestrained masculine sexuality, a religio-cultural practice that technically challenges the general norm surrounding the concept of (female) chastity. Among these practices are cases where a daughter may be detained to stay home in order to beget a son (or sons) for the family. This is usually because its male
members are ageing or are getting extinct.\textsuperscript{49} In other words, there are no more young males in the family to prolong the lineage. In such a context, a daughter may be excluded from marriage. Such a daughter remains a spinster with an ‘active sexual choice’ of men through which she can beget children, especially, sons to restore the patrilineal family. The man of her choice must not be from a marriageable clan, perhaps distantly related in such a way that marriage is impossible.\textsuperscript{50} At the same time, it should be difficult to establish a case of incest.\textsuperscript{51} In this instance, the woman involved is not restricted in her choice of sexual partners, neither is she restricted by premarital chastity. The choice of a sexual partner is hers to make at any given time, even though this is done discreetly. Thus, the women risk their lives in order to serve the interests of the family with only daughters within this patrilineal society to beget sons (by these daughters) for the continuation of the lineage. They deny themselves the choice of a ‘normal’ lifestyle in a society in which marriage is the traditional norm. I have already noted in a different context that this practice promotes and perpetuates the patriarchal system where women serve as the tools for its maintenance.\textsuperscript{52}

In addition to the above practice, Nkiru Nzegwu has identified thirteen other socio-culturally engineered practices in Igbo society of Nigeria that provide valuable grounds for challenging the concept of chastity.\textsuperscript{53} However, in this context my attention is drawn to the fact that it sets the stage for questioning the concept of chastity as stated above. That is, is this a manipulative instrument for the subordination and control of women for the perpetuation of patriarchy, or is it a practice that is life affirming for all members of the traditional community?

\textit{New dimensions}

According to Bette Ekeya, despite the ambiguities within the African religiocultural system, a woman in the traditional Iteso society lived ‘quite a happy and contented life because there was nothing to challenge the cultural norms

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\item[50] Parrinder, \textit{Sexual Morality}, p. 145.
\end{footnotes}
under which she operated. For Ekeya, however, the situation was destabilized when conservative Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism entered the community with their traditional and conservative attitudes on morality. Thus, African women were subjected to two systems. Lloyd A. Fanusie sees this as the ‘double burden on the African woman’, a situation where African Christian women are emotionally burdened by the challenges of these two spiritualities. Fortunately, secularization and feminism have had a tremendous impact on how sexuality and the rights of the individual, gender or groups of people are viewed as part of the fundamental human rights of every individual. Additionally, the modern educational system, together with modernization, urbanization and the promotion of religious pluralism as well as inter-religious dialogue, have provided alternative avenues for African women to open up to new views, enabling them to reconceptualise the demands of religion and culture on their lives. This has contributed, to a large extent, to the new wave of re-examining and questioning traditional systems, both within specific contexts like the Nankan in and generally, with the hope of opening new frontiers for an equitable society.

However, the efforts of African women to liberate themselves from the undue shackles of their religio-cultural boundaries of chastity suffered dramatically with the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Unable to break the strongholds of patriarchy in African societies, the burden has been shifted to the ‘so-called’ contemporary female sexual freedom. The view is broadcast that the emerging female sexual freedom is the cause of the current high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. It is interesting to note that the common Nankan (and their neighbouring communities) name for STDs is pogum ba-asit (women’s sickness or disease) and that this name was swiftly extended to HIV/AIDS. Even though, these diseases were initially associated with urban and educated women, who were believed to have adopted liberal sexual practices, the prevalence of the disease outside this circle has led to the undermining of all women as being sexually corrupt. Unfortunately, these arguments continue to exonerate the male gender despite their continual multiple sexual practices. It well established that African men do not only enter into polygamous marriages in a bid to acquire wealth and status through production and reproduction, they also have uncontrolled access to sex in extra marital relationships. According to


55 Fanusie, ‘Sexuality and Women, p. 141.
Falola, ‘in many countries today, the number of men in polygynous relationships is as high as one-third of the married population.’ As Falola puts it:

A married man without children will be pressured by relatives and friends to have a mistress who can bear children for him. Even a man with children still can be influenced by peers to have mistresses. The general perception is that having mistresses does not suggest that men do not love their wives. Bigamy laws are rarely applied, even when a man has children by his mistresses. Thus, we have to understand the meanings attached to love and relationships. In general, love is defined as a responsibility and duty, a situation whereby the man fulfills his obligations to his nuclear and extended families. The worldview about infidelity tends to be forgiving of men and, certainly, critical of women, who are expected to be monogamous and faithful.

This is where the injustice lies. The inability to associate such multiple sexual practices of males with STDs/AIDS lies at the crux of the matter. What is more, religio-cultural views are now read into the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The most recurring theme is the belief that these diseases are a punishment from the ancestors and gods for the moral decadence of females. For many Africans this view is logical because; traditionally, female infidelity is believed to cause untold suffering and sometimes death to the female in question, her husband or children. This has led to the re-affirmation of past chastity norms. The pervasiveness of such religio-cultural misconceptions regarding the pandemic as well as people’s desire to maintain their traditional heritage have therefore presented crucial challenges to the fight of not just against STDs and HIV/AIDS; but also, the fight to end discriminatory sexual practices against African women.

The problem at this point is that these resurgent religio-cultural views do not take into account the specific nature of the pandemic, in terms of its modes of transmission and the biological susceptibility of the female genital membrane to the HIV/AIDS virus. This area needs serious attention by all stakeholders in order to create the necessary awareness and the right attitudinal frame of thought as well as action. This is especially important in areas where such notions as ‘woman sicknesses’ are held. This presents a challenge to African women who have to engage these views with specific and relevant religio-cultural resources alongside the scientific ones.

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Critiquing tradition

The core issue arising from this discussion is the one-sidedness of the traditional construction of chastity. Carol Smart and Barry Smart present similar scenarios in their introductory work in *Women, Sexuality and Social Control*. From Mexico, Marit Melhuus informs us that the universal moral code of equality is not applicable in the local Mexican context. This shows that the double standard applied to perspectives of chastity is a prevalent phenomenon in many societies. The question remains as to why this is a female affair? Why is the male expected to be the aggressive seducer whilst the female the domiciled self-controlled, repository of the moral code? Again, why should the male be exempt from blame, sin and the associated rituals of purification, restitution and restoration? To understand these, there is a need to critically examine the traditional concepts of power, domination and control, especially within the context of patriarchy. Although the latter cannot be undertaken in the current work, the need to deconstruct these underpinning factors would be essential to any future study on the subject.

Conclusion

Chastity, a key factor in the traditional African moral code, is undoubtedly an important moral virtue in all societies and cultures. Even though religion is a part of the stratification processes, the subject is not left in the domain of religion. As Bourdillon observes, as oral tradition, Africa's belief systems not only project a sense of fluidity, but their lack of codification and systematization has created some vagueness in some of the practices, thus instilling contradictions in the process. Oduyoye's quest for the examination of the African religio-cultural systems by African women is thus essential for the exposure of some of these vaguenesses and contradictions. More importantly, the fluidity of the system enables new formulations to be made to suit both genders. At present, it may be argued that ‘[t]he majority of rural women might not see the demand for [these] equal opportunities as an immediate priority, but it must be argued that they have daughters whose choices they hope will be wider and better than their own', hence the need to creatively work towards a life enhancing and more equitable society.

60 Bourdillon, Religion and Society, p. 6.
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Biblical Faith and Culture

Hans-Ruedi Weber

This paper makes a case that the Bible is a literary piece that contains documents that are historically, ethically, geographically and linguistically limited in terms of its source and the kind of faith that emanate from it. This paper explores the possibilities of a continuous translation and interpretation of the Biblical materials for new times and new cultures. It relates this discussion to the growth and decline of a Christendom model.

Introduction
This is a subject dear to the heart of John S. Pobee whom this Festschrift honours. In his writings my former colleague at the staff of the World Council of Churches has addressed the theme time and again. As a response to his contributions and as a sign of thankfulness to him I will in this paper retrace how the relationship between biblical faith and culture has accompanied me during my long journey. John and I come from different backgrounds but we share a common love for biblical exegesis. I appreciated and learned much from his New Testament study on persecution and martyrdom.¹ We are also both involved in the ecumenical movement. For us oikoumene means in the first place the whole inhabited world with its multiple histories and cultures within which and for which the churches are called to serve. Culture² thus becomes the context of the biblical text.

A discovery of the oikoumene
Summer 1948: At a study conference of the World Student Christian Federation in the Netherlands the oikoumene became real for me. My basic theological training at the University of Bern had been strongly marked by the struggle of the Confessing Church in Hitler Germany, thus by a radical culture-critical stance. As secretary of the Swiss Student Christian movement I knew theoretically about ecumenism but now I actually experienced it. At that conference I shared the same room with two young Africans: John

¹ John S. Pobee, Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).
² The term ‘culture’ is used here for the interplay which characterizes a given group or region where people live and work, share a common language as well as similar customs, socio-economic structures and religious traditions.
Karifa-Smart from Sierra Leone, later general secretary of the World Health Organization, and Christian K. Dovlo from Ghana who later played a significant role in his country’s church and politics. Africa suddenly acquired a face for me. Coming out of western academia I met politically conscious biblical faith. These two Africans and two leaders from Asia, K.H. Ting from China and D.T. Niles from Sri Lanka, deeply challenged me. Many of us conference participants also went to a youth rally at Amsterdam which was organized in connection with the Inaugural Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

During the 1950s I was teaching in a small theological school in Central Celebes, Indonesia. That country had just attained freedom from Dutch colonial rule. With much turmoil Indonesians struggled to find their national identity and unity with one flag and one language. The modern Indonesian language, based on the ancient Malay, was only then being developed. Both the students and we teachers had to learn it and become fluent in it. With the exception of an old Indonesian translation of the Bible no teaching materials were available. We were forced to think and do theology in a new language and to do it in the context of ancient indigenous religion, militant nationalism and advancing Islam. This became an excellent introduction to the subject of biblical faith and culture. Needless to say, my predominantly German training, marked by Latin and western philosophy, proved to be quite inadequate for the task. I was also involved in a catechetical programme within a region where most inhabitants could neither read nor write. This taught me to use non-literary ways of communicating the Gospel: story telling, drama and visual art. In the process, a new Bible disclosed itself to me.²

The Indonesian learning experience was followed up by over 30 years’ itinerant work on the staff of the WCC. This involved teaching assignments at the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies at Château de Bossey and at numerous seminars in all continents. A great variety of church-culture situations was thus met: tiny groups of first-generation Christians in areas which as yet had no contact with the outside world, as well as Orthodox believers who trace back the history of their churches to the first Christian century; minority churches in Japan as well as still almost integral Christendom models in Greece, Samoa and other Pacific islands; churches in militant Communist, Muslim and Buddhist countries but also affluent state churches in already strongly secularized western societies.

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I observed that a spiral development seems to be at work in the history of the church: (a) Proclaiming biblical faith can lead to the conversion of individuals and groups. These first generation Christians have passed through a crisis and tend to feel alienated from their families and communities. A cultural indifference characterizes them. Compared with the expected new heaven and new earth all that pertains to human culture belongs for them to the adiaphora, to things only penultimate. In their life and worship nascent churches can therefore uncritically either take over or reject elements from foreign missionaries and from their own culture. Biblical language becomes for them like a second mother tongue. - (b) Such a rooting in the biblical message leads to culture-critical positions. Certain old traditional customs as well as foreign cultural elements brought together with the Gospel are consciously being rejected. Biblical criteria and impulses begin to penetrate into penultimate realities. Believers thus become culturally creative, gain political and economic influence and introduce new customs, new social structures and institutions. - (c) This leads to the establishment of corpus Christianum, a Christendom situation where it is difficult to differentiate between church and state, religion and society. Christians have then earthly power. They can build cathedrals, found universities, develop an impressive Christian culture and build empires. The church is almost identified with God’s Kingdom and the cosmic hope of biblical faith is lost. - (d) In a Christendom situation it becomes difficult for the church to act as a prophetic watchman. The faith of believers tends to degenerate into mere Culture-Christianity and often biblical illiteracy grows. Either the church gradually dies or, by the power of the Spirit, a new prophetic and confessing minority arises, becoming the leaven in the lump.

Church history does of course not follow a once for all set pattern. There are many variations and intermediate positions and each phase of the spiral presents believers with its own specific possibilities and dangers. In all these different situations it is possible to live, worship and witness according to biblical faith. A European example of such a faith-culture development will be sketched later in this paper. Here I simply want to emphasize a still little recognized aspect of the ecumenical movement: when Christians meet in ecumenical encounters, they come not only from different confessions and countries but also from communities living at present in different phases of church history! Ignoring this church history aspect of the ecumenical movement can lead to awkward misunderstandings.

Culturally conditioned biblical interpretation
While in the Bible we hear the testimony of a multiplicity of witnesses, they all belong only to Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures and to a period
from roughly 1000 BC to 100 AD. The witnesses thought, spoke and wrote in just three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and kome Greek. In the Old Testament we meet oral storytellers and poets of wandering Israelite tribes, scribes living at the court of small Israelite kingdoms, refugee priests in Babylon and small Jewish communities in Palestine and the Diaspora. Behind the New Testament stands the worshipping and witnessing early church, the converted Jewish intellectual Paul, the four evangelists writing when the eyewitnesses of Jesus where already disappearing and, at the end of the New Testament period, persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire. The Bible is thus a very diverse library, yet at the same time a historically, ethnically, geographically and linguistically limited source of faith. It must always be translated and interpreted for new times and cultures. Such translations and interpretations are themselves strongly influenced by the cultures of those by whom and for whom they are being made.

Such a limited diversity of the sources and interpreters of biblical faith poses a host of questions: Where does the authority lie? In which way is the Bible inspired by God’s Spirit to become the compass and guide for the church in all times and continents? Is there a canon, a guiding measure, which unites the diverse faith traditions, theologies and spiritualities found in the Scriptures? Is there a centre of the Bible or a central biblical theology from which to interpret? Should the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation, which was made in and influenced by a Hellenistic environment, be used as authoritative for the Old Testament? So the early church usually did. Or is only the Hebrew text, which comes out of a strongly Jewish environment, authoritative? What weight is to be given to the patristic interpretations of the first Christian centuries, to the interpretations of the Reformers and to that of modern critical exegetes? For many centuries these questions have been discussed among churches and biblical scholars. They remain on the agenda of the modern ecumenical moment.

During the 1970th I was deeply involved in a world-wide research project on biblical faith and culture. It was conducted jointly under the auspices of the Institute of Biblical Studies at Lausanne University and of the WCC Secretariat for Biblical Studies. The subject focused on just one central biblical affirmation of faith: what happens when the biblical message about Jesus’ crucifixion is transmitted across cultural frontiers? How far are the biblical

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texts about the cross already culturally conditioned? How and to what degree do cultural factors influence our present understanding of the meaning of the crucifixion?

The exegetical part of the study started with the historic fact of Jesus’ crucifixion and the earliest traditions and creeds about this event. Two different interpretations by the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians and Galatians) and the different accentuations in the crucifixion story by the four evangelists were examined. Though written in the same language and addressed to people in the same large cultural context, the teaching about the crucifixion has led already in the New Testament to a remarkable diversity of interpretations. Did New Testament authors consciously re-accentuate their message for the special situation and questions of those for whom they wrote?

The hermeneutical part of the study started with an enquiry among Bible translators working in different cultural contexts, asking them to comment on which difficulties they faced and what new insights they gained as they translated the crucifixion story and such terms as the cross, atonement, blood and sacrifice. The main work of exploration was done in local study groups formed in different racial, socio-economic and religious contexts and church situations (3 in South Africa, 1 in Egypt, 1 in Czechoslovakia, 2 in the USA, 1 in Indonesia and 1 in South Korea; some other groups were formed but did not report back). Only believers representing the Reformed-Presbyterian tradition were asked to participate so that no other confessional traditions may influence the results of the enquiry. Groups received basic exegetical information and a summary of the 16th century reformed teaching about the meaning of the cross, which had been mainly influenced by Paul’s interpretation in Galatians. They examined such questions as: Which biblical passion texts are today often used in passion sermons and the catechetical training of your church? Which other passion texts create difficulties to preachers and believers? What meaning of the crucifixion is being communicated through the liturgies, the hymns, symbolic acts and visual arts used in your church during Passion Week? Are there striking new liturgies, hymns, artwork and theological interpretations of the cross which issue from your church? In how far does your present teaching about the cross differ from that the 16th century reformers? What do ordinary church members generally think about the crucifixion and how does it influence their daily life and work?

The report of this 3-years study5 did not lead to clear answers concerning the questions asked. The following trends nevertheless emerged and are im-

5 Only a multi-copied German full report is available. Weber, Kreuz und Kultur: Deutungen der Kreuzigung Jesu im neuestamentlichen Kulturraum und in Kulturen der Gegenwart (Geneva/Lausanne: Bibl. Université de Lausanne, 1975); for
important to notice. With regard to exegesis: Paul and the authors of the gospels were in the first place transmitters of the faith traditions which they had received. They of course were sensitive to the specific context and the questions of the addressees. This influenced their terminology and the emphasis which they put in their testimony. However, their primary concern was not to write a new specific Pauline, Lucan or Johannine theology or to be contextual theologians for ‘acculturating’ their message.

With regard to hermeneutics: The reports from the local study groups showed that only a few conscious attempts had been made to reinterpret the meaning of Christ’s death for a new cultural context. The traditional Reformed-Presbyterian teaching had either been uncritically transmitted or been largely forgotten. Special sensitivity for new cultural contexts was noted among artists and a few contextual theologians, but their work was to a great extent ignored in local parishes. Nevertheless, it happened that the message about the cross reached the heart of the hearers, although it was preached in 16th century concepts and with little awareness of altered cultural contexts. Hearers spontaneously reinterpreted what they heard and applied it to their own situation. There remains a great mystery in confessing biblical faith across cultural boundaries. Unless the Spirit opens ears and eyes and hearts there is little chance that the foolish and scandalous message about Jesus’ crucifixion can be understood.

_Growth and decline of a Christendom model_  
Over a number of years I have been involved in a study of the political, socio-economic and religious history of a small Swiss town, which John S. Pobee knows well. It is beautiful Nyon near Geneva at the shore of Lake Leman in the country of Vaud. How did the faith-culture relationship function in the long history of this ancient city? Here only a bare outline can be given.

Long before Christian faith reached the country of Vaud the inhabitants of the area had their own religion. Remnants of small villages on piles on the shore near Nyon have been found. Here settlers came occasionally during the Bronze Age (1800-800 BC) to fish and seek protection from the dangers of the large forest which covered the whole country. Little is known about their faith, but it probably was a nature religion. From the 2nd century BC onwards, Celtic tribes, an Indo-European people, began to penetrate in the area. They brought with them their warriors’ faith. Taught and guided by druids, their priests and sages, they worshipped various gods deemed to manifest

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6 Weber, _NYON du temps des révolutions au XXIe siècle_ (Yens: Cahèdita, 2008).
themselves in natural phenomena. Death in battle was highly honoured and Celts believed in a life after death.

In 58 BC the great Roman military and political leader Julius Caesar defeated the Celtic tribe of the Helvetians. A decade later Caesar founded the city of Nyon for the veterans of his cavalry, the Colonia Iulia Equestris. It became the civic, cultural and cultic centre of a large area. Remnants of the official buildings from Roman times have been excavated: the forum, the civic basilica, the baths and market, the area sacra for the temple, the amphitheatre. They witness to an intense religious life. The gods of the Roman Pantheon were invoked and Celtic deities reappeared with Latin names. The official ceremonies of Emperor Worship marked the civic life. Eastern mystery religions responded more to emotional religious longings. Present in Nyon were the Attis cult and the Mithras brotherhood. With their processions, their secret initiation rites and their holy meals they must have acted as a praeparatio evangelica.

It remains uncertain as to when Christian faith reached Nyon. In 380 AD Christianity had become the official state religion of the Empire. At about that time a Christian worship place existed already in nearby Geneva where from 400 AD onwards a Catholic bishop resided. This does not mean that the whole population had already embraced Christian faith. Monastic communities became crucial for mission in the area. In Egypt, Christian hermits had gone into the desert to worship and their communities became growth centres for the Coptic Church. Like these ‘desert fathers’ Christian ascetics went into the great forests of the Jura Mountains north of Nyon and their testimony and worship began to radiate. An old source about the ‘Jura fathers’ reports that around 440 AD two clerks from the Nyon region joined these holy hermits.

Christianity was spreading quickly while the Roman Empire disintegrated. Northern and eastern Germanic people migrated and settled in Western Europe. In 443 AD the warring people of the Burgondians coming from Scandinavia reached the shores of Lake Leman. At first they fought as allies of the Romans but soon they established their own kingdom with Geneva as its capital. One of their cemeteries has been found just outside Nyon. The Burgondians had become Christians before they reached this area, but like other Germanic migrants they followed the teaching of Arius, considered by Catholic bishops as a heretic. Then the Burgondian king Sigismund converted to Catholicism and became instrumental for the growth of the church. He collected and distributed many relics of martyrs and saints, built a new cathedral in Geneva and founded in 515 AD the famous monastery of Saint-Maurice in the Rhone valley. It became the holy centre of the kingdom and throughout the centuries has maintained an important spiritual influence. For
the period of the early Middle Ages practically nothing is known about Nyon. The large buildings of the Roman city were destroyed and used as a quarry. Yet the foundations of an 8th century church building have been found. This shows that a Christian community must have persisted in the city throughout the dark centuries.

Just after the turn of the first Christian millennium the history becomes better known. A slow growth of a Christendom situation can be observed. In 1032 King Rudolph III of the Burgundies donated Nyon to the archbishop of Besançon. Two and a half centuries later the city was conquered by the strongly Catholic rulers of Savoy. Practically all inhabitants were now baptized. Their daily life was ordered by the church with its daily prayers and masses, its sacraments and festivals. Bishops and archbishops had become powerful leaders not only in ecclesiastical affairs but also in civic government and in military campaigns. Monastic communities played an important role. Augustinian fathers and Franciscan brothers settled in Nyon and nearby in the Jura monasteries of the Cistercians and the Chartreuses had been founded. In the city old church buildings were restored and new ones built. One of these churches, 'Saint John Outside the Walls', became a treasured place of pilgrimage. A legend tells that relics of famous martyrs were exposed there, of soldiers of the legion of Saint Maurice who had refused to participate in the last Roman persecution of Christians. During the late Middle Ages the spiritual life of priests and monks must have reached a very low level. Available sources for Nyon tell more about their quarrels and financial affairs than about their ministry. Through its Crusades the Christendom model had become oppressive and aggressive. In the 15th and 16th centuries reform movements gained influence. The Bible was translated into vernacular languages and writings of Martin Luther began to circulate. Now crusades turned also against those who wanted to renew the life of the church. Clergy and lay people who read the Bible and pamphlets of Reformers were warned: your Scriptures will be burned and you with them!

In 1536 a Protestant Christendom replaced the medieval Catholic corpus Christi in Nyon. This happened not because inhabitants had suddenly become Protestants but because the political overlords changed allegiance. The city of Geneva was in the process of joining the Reformation movement. Therefore the Duke of Savoy prepared for war. The aristocrats of Bern had already become Reformed Protestants and they sent an army to help threatened Geneva. During this Protestant crusade the Republic of Bern incorporated and subjected Nyon and the country of Vaud. The Catholic faith was forbidden and monasteries were closed. Priest and monks could either leave the country or be trained as Protestant pastors. When pilgrims continued to come and pray before the martyrs' relics in the church of 'St. John Outside
the Walls", the new overlords pulled the church down and razed it. Schools were created so that people could read the Scriptures and there developed an intimate interrelationship between civil government, jurisdiction, schools and Protestant parishes. Pastors became remunerated civil servants and played an important role. The whole of daily life, work and leisure, was ordered by the ringing of the church bells. A strict moral surveillance marked this Reformed Protestant Christendom.

In the 18th century the intimate interrelationship between creed, cult and culture began to weaken. Philosophers of the enlightenment such as Rousseau and Voltaire not only questioned traditional social and feudal structures but also the truth and authority of Christian faith. A revolutionary movement swept over the Atlantic world which in the 1790s reached Nyon and the country of Vaud. With the help of France, freedom from the rule of Bernese aristocrats was achieved. Weakening Protestant Christendom persisted for another one and a half centuries. The official Reformed church remained an influential state church although its critical and prophetic function was weak because of its dependence on the government. During the 19th century a revival movement brought more biblical nurture and a more lively worship and community life than was possible in the very formal and strictly dogmatic atmosphere of the state church. This, however, led to a schism. Meanwhile Roman Catholics were again allowed to worship in Nyon. Many migrant workers had come from predominantly Catholic southern Europe and the Catholic parish grew in number and influence.

In the course of the 20th century individualism and secularization made an ever stronger impact, especially in urban life. The Christendom model was declining. After World War II the population of Nyon grew rapidly from mere 2,000 inhabitants in 1800 to over 17,000 at the second millennium. The city is becoming a multi-cultural and mobile society where trans-national companies and international organizations have their offices. Today, inhabitants originating from the country of Vaud form a minority among those coming from other countries and other religions. A recent survey of residents in the Nyon region shows that only one third are still Protestants, a little less than one third are Roman-Catholics, and an increasing number indicates that they have no religious adherence at all. There are now also in Nyon small communities of Muslims and other religions. Protestants and Catholics still officially work together with the government. They receive subsidies for their pastoral and social service, but they are free to organize their own life and worship. When great ethical issues arise in public life the churches attempt to discern what biblical faith demands. This sometimes leads them to civil disobedience and prophetic action. Protestants and Catholics must learn to worship and serve together as a minority in the new multi-cultural society.
‘Biblical faith and culture’: Perhaps this is no longer a theme for today and tomorrow. Where are there still relatively clearly definable cultures in the present world? The ‘Occident’ is now present also in the ‘Orient’ and vice-versa. In the North and the South, in the East and the West, what were formerly unique cultures tend to dissolve with one another into a multi-cultured civilization. For the future the crucial theme is: ‘Biblical faith and multi-cultured civilization’. This includes the difficult subject of ‘Biblical faith and other living faiths’.

References
Conflict and Cooperation: The Interplay between Christianity and African Traditional Religions in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

James Amanze

This chapter examines the interplay between Christianity on the one hand and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) on the other. It is argued in this chapter that the interaction between Christianity and ATRs over the centuries has been characterised by conflict and cooperation. In the first instance, Christian missionaries adopted a negative attitude towards African culture generally and African peoples' religious beliefs and practices in particular. They called for their eradication because, they believed, they were demonic, therefore, contrary to the ideals of Christian teaching and spirituality. And yet, paradoxically, missionaries both in the past and present have been quick to realise that Christianity cannot exist in a vacuum; that African Christians are cultural beings and that they are Africans first and Christians second. As a result of this awareness, right from the beginning of Christian missions to the present day, attempts have been made to Africanise Christianity in matters of theology, worship, church practice, religious symbols and spirituality. The primary objective for doing this has been to produce a church which is authentically African and genuinely Christian. This, it is argued, is the only way in which Christianity will remain entrenched in the bosom of mother Africa for ever.

Introduction
This chapter examines the interplay between Christianity on the one hand and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) on the other. It is argued in this chapter that the interaction between Christianity and ATRs over the centuries has been characterised by conflict and cooperation. In the first instance, Christian missionaries adopted a negative attitude towards African culture generally and African peoples' religious beliefs and practices in particular. They called for their eradication because, they believed, they were demonic, therefore, contrary to the ideals of Christian teaching and spirituality. And yet, paradoxically, missionaries both in the past and present have been quick to realise that Christianity cannot exist in a vacuum; that African Christians are cultural beings and that they are Africans first and Christians second. As a result of this awareness, right from the beginning of Christian missions to the present day, attempts have been made to
Africanise Christianity in matters of theology, worship, church practice, religious symbols and spirituality. The primary objective for doing this has been to produce a church which is authentically African and genuinely Christian. This, it is argued, is the only way in which Christianity will remain entrenched in the bosom of mother Africa for ever.

Christianity in Africa
Christianity is one of the three most dominant Religions in Africa, the two others being Islam and African Traditional Religions. From the time of its inception to the present day, Christianity has brought tremendous changes in the social, economic, political and religious life of the African peoples. The beginning of Christianity in Africa goes back to the apostolic times long before it was established in Europe and America. The first churches were established in Egypt. There is a general agreement among scholars that Christianity came to Egypt during the first century of our era. By AD 400 Christianity had spread across North Africa and became the religion of most of the population. This was to change following the rise and spread of Islam from the seventh century. During its heyday, Christian North Africa produced great thinkers such as Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, who influenced the development of Christian theology. In the fourth century Christianity spread to Ethiopia but failed to spread across the African continent.¹

The missionary era in Africa is traced back to the 19th century when Christianity began to grow more rapidly as European encroachment spread. In large measure, missionary expansion can be considered a result of imperial and commercial expansion, for in some instances governments overseas supported the missionaries, especially in the field of education, which became a means of disseminating European and American cultures in Africa. There was also a theological factor, namely, a spiritual revival characterised by an evangelical awakening. Alec R. Vidler in his book *The Church in an Age of Revolution* has postulated that for the churches of the West the nineteenth century was a period of unprecedented expansion.² During this period both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries planted churches in many countries in Africa. The expansion was of such proportion that the 19th century has been considered the greatest century since the first.³

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¹ See J. Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1996) where a comprehensive account of the beginning and expansion of Christianity in many African countries has been given.
The driving force in missionary work during this period was the dominance of evangelical piety in a number of countries in Europe and America whose primary concern was the spiritual welfare of humankind and especially of those without the Gospel. This impulse led to the formation of a number of missionary societies in most parts of Europe and America, which were eventually responsible for the spread of Christianity in Africa. The countries that were most involved in the expansion of the Church in Africa were Great Britain, the United States of America, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy. Today Africa is home to different Christian denominations comprising Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Churches, Pentecostal Churches and African Independent Churches. As a result of the missionaries’ zeal, the Church in Africa has grown by leaps and bounds. Elizabeth Isichei has noted that ‘according to much quoted, if somewhat unreliable statistics there were 10 million African Christians in 1900, 143 million in 1970 and there will be 393 million in the year 2,000 which would mean that 1 in 5 of all Christians would be an African’. Christianity in Africa is no longer a small tributary of the vast seas of the churches in Europe but a fully-fledged church come of age. While the membership of individual churches may be limited to a few hundreds or thousands or millions of Christians, the cumulative impact of the membership of all the Christian churches put together is tremendous, making Africa, perhaps, the most Christianised continent in the world. Recent statistics, though possibly not completely reliable, show that in many Sub-Saharan African countries, Christians are in the majority. This is the case in Uganda (83.4%), Kenya (82.1%), Central African Republic (83%), Cameroon (62.2%), Equatorial Guinea (93%), Rwanda (80%), Democratic Republic of Congo (95.9%), Republic of Congo (85.4%), Gabon (87.1%), Ghana (64%), South Africa (72%), Lesotho (93%), Swaziland (80%), Zambia (75%), Zimbabwe (61.7%), Malawi (81.1%), Angola (84%), Namibia (91%) and Botswana (62%). These figures are not only very impressive but also show the tremendous commitment that Africans have to the Gospel of Christ. They also show that the future of Christianity is in Africa judging by the way in which people young and old flock to their respective churches day after day and Sunday after Sunday.

The impact of Christianity in Africa

Though modern African historiographers tend to be critical of the missionary enterprise, especially during the colonial period, they also acknowledge that throughout its long history in Africa, Christianity has, by and large, been a catalyst for change and socio-economic development. Its task has been not

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4 Vidler, The Church, p. 247.
6 Hildebrandt, History of the Church, pp. 253-281.
only to prepare people for a future life in the Kingdom of God but also to make this world a better place to live in and where the Kingdom of God can be established here and now. In order to improve the social life of the African people and strengthen their economic base, missionary societies included in their teams farmers, artisans, graduate teachers, nurses and doctors, who were considered to be just as much missionaries as the ordained preachers. I recall that in the Anglican station where I grew up as a child, the missionary team at work there was a hybrid of all kinds of skilled people — priests, nurses, doctors, engineers, electricians, farmers, plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers, printers, teachers, accountants, typists and a host of other trades. This was replicated at a number of other mission stations. Their work was to uplift the spiritual and material wellbeing of the African people.

At the social level, Christianity in Africa has been concerned with the overall development of humankind. To this end, wherever Christianity has been planted in Africa, missionaries have built churches, schools, teacher training colleges, clinics, hospitals and other social amenities that have contributed tremendously to the total development of the African. With the advantage of hindsight, it can be argued that Christianity was responsible for the creation of new elite in Africa, which spearheaded socio-economic developments in all walks of life. A number of African political leaders at independence were a product of missionary schools. Many such schools continue to exist to the present day. Apart from providing formal education in secular institutions, missionaries have also provided theological training for the advancement of Christian missions in Africa.

At the economic level, Christian churches have been active in improving the economic base of the African people. From the time of their arrival in Africa, Christian missionaries strongly opposed the slave trade and worked hard to have it eradicated from the African soil. With the abolition of the slave trade missionaries felt that there was a need to introduce legitimate and normal trade and commerce which could replace trafficking in slaves. It is generally agreed among scholars that the spread of legitimate trade and the development of agriculture were essential conditions for the success of evangelisation in Africa. In this regard, there has been a strong link between Christianity and trade. This is evidenced by the fact that in some instances directors and other well-known home based personalities of missionary societies were also directors of trading companies operating in the same area in Africa.3

At the political level, Christianity in Africa was considered to be both a colonising factor and as an agent of liberation from colonial and imperial powers. Christianity was seen to be a tool in the hands of colonial administrators to pacify Africans and take control of their land. As the saying goes: 'Before Christianity came we had the land and the whites had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and the whites have the land.' The history of Christianity in Africa has examples of many missionaries who acted as colonial agents. Such missionaries actively promoted and supported colonial rule. Though, from time to time, missionaries challenged colonial administrators on certain matters, they quite often sought benefits from colonial governments and in turn worked to make converts docile and submissive to foreign rule. In some cases missionaries such as David Livingston and John MacKenzie called upon their home governments to establish colonial rule in their areas of missionary work. But at other times missionaries identified themselves with African interests and aspirations. This was the case with Joseph Booth as seen in his slogan 'Africa for Africans'.

The positive results of the missionary enterprise in Africa could be seen when nationalistic movements began and some churches were also involved in the struggle for the emancipation of the African people. As a general rule, churches were divided into two opposing camps. There were those that adopted the view that Christianity and politics should not mix. This position was based on the belief that the Christian faith is otherworldly and that the methods used in politics are often contrary to the teaching of Christianity. However, the question of political independence for the African people was such that the churches could not remain silent. In this regard, there was a strong section of the Christian churches which openly supported the movement for political emancipation. Those holding this position held the view that the Church should take an active part in the political and social emancipation of the people if she were to be relevant among the new generation of Africans. This was more evident in South Africa where, because of the apartheid policies, the Church took sides in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

The annals of the Christian Church in South Africa is replete with examples of brave churchmen such as Trevor Huddleston, Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and others, who worked tirelessly for the emancipation of their people. The 1985 Kairos document, which stands in the tradition of Liberation Theology, emphasised the preferential option for the poor.

* A good example of a missionary who advocated the freedom of the African people was Joseph Booth in the then Nyasaland Protectorate (Malawi). For a comprehensive account of the life and work of this missionary see Harry Langworthy, *The Life of Joseph Booth* (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1996).
and the powerless. It condemned the ‘state theology’ of apartheid as ‘tyranny’ and ‘idolatry’. The South African Council of Churches guided by Liberation Theology in the form of Black Theology, and working closely with the Catholic Bishop’s Conference, was deeply involved in the liberation struggle which eventually brought independence to South Africa in 1994.9

There were, of course, other churches, which acted as reactionary forces whose aim was to perpetuate the colonial situation. Some churches even produced a ‘State Theology’, which claimed that God created the white people to be masters of the human race and to lord over the African people whose task was to be ‘drawers of water and hewers of wood’ for their colonial masters. This was the case with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, which allied itself closely with the policies of the apartheid government, something they lived to regret later.10

Conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religions

It is important to note that the introduction of Christianity in Africa south of the Sahara was not an easy affair. It had to contend with African Traditional Religion (ATR), which is constituted by the indigenous religions of the African peoples. The early missionaries’ lack of understanding of African culture and African personality became a major obstacle in the missionary field. African Traditional Religion is the matrix in which the African people are born, brought up and die. It is the oldest form of religious manifestation on the continent of Africa. It is as old as the African people themselves are. In this paper we use the terms African Traditional Religions and African Traditional Religion to acknowledge their local diversity and their universality at one and same time. African Traditional Religions have no specific founders, no sacred scriptures, no written theologies, and no missionaries. They are embodied in the blood-stream of the African people. Though African Traditional Religions differ from one African society to another in accordance with the prevailing circumstances of a particular geographical area, there are certain religious elements that are common to almost all of them. Research findings of a great number of African scholars, including the author, have identified certain religious features that are shared by Africans in the length and breadth of the African continent. These include, among others, the concept of the High God, veneration of ancestors, the religious role of diviners, herbalists, medicine men and rainmakers, the primacy of the community over the individual, ritual offerings and sacrifices, initiation

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9 The church in South Africa is a good example of how both missionaries and Africans fought side by side for the emancipation of the South African people.
10 The Dutch Reformed Church is a typical example of a church which benefited from the apartheid policies until the time the country received independence in 1994.
ceremonies, agricultural rites, and purification ceremonies. We contend that though there is much that is bad in the ATR there is a lot that is good and beneficial to the people of Africa. ATR is to the African people an emblem, a flag that gives them a special identity different to that of Europeans, Americans, Semites, Asians and others of a difference race or culture.

It should be noted that the interplay between Christianity and African Traditional Religions has been one of both conflict and cooperation. In this section we shall focus on the conflict that has existed between Christianity on the one hand and African Traditional Religions on the other in many parts of the African continent. It appears that right from the start of the missionary enterprise in Africa the missionaries engaged in an endless struggle against African Traditional Religions. Foremost in the minds of the missionaries was a strong conviction that African culture was thoroughly evil and that Africans were in a dire need of salvation from their culture, which kept them in bondage to Satan. To this end, there has been a tendency for people in the missionary field to stress the darker side of African societies. Sometimes missionaries misrepresented what they saw. For example, it is reported that the Igbo people of Nigeria left the corpses of those who died “bad death” in a grove called ọjọ ọfia (evil forest) and some central Nigerian peoples exhumed the skulls of their loved ones and preserved them in ossuaries. European observers seeing these skulls in the forest tended to assume that these various visible remains were human sacrifices. Generally speaking both Catholics and Protestants in the missionary field described African societies as demonic. It is reported, for instance, that the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary to the Igbo, a Sierra Leonian son of Igbo parents, wrote as follows: “May many come willingly to labour in putting down the strongholds of Satan’s kingdom, for the whole of the Igbo district is his citadel.”

Another missionary writing to his nephew about the spirituality of the Igbo documented as follows: “All those who go to Africa as missionaries must be thoroughly penetrated with the thought that the Dark Continent is accursed land, almost entirely in the power of the devil.” Karl Kunim the founder of the Sudan United Mission in 1904 described the Africans in paternalistic terms. He said: The Aryan race is today in full strength of its manhood, while in Africa and the South Sea Islands we have the infants of our humanity.” And of the Sudanese he wrote: “There is a land in this wonderful world, called “The Land of Dark-

Isichei, A History, p. 82.
Isichei, A History, p. 82.
Isichei, A History, p. 82.
Isichei, A History, p. 89.
ness"; dark are the bodies of the people who live here, darker are their minds, and darker still their souls.\textsuperscript{15}

It is important to point out that it is not surprising that the early missionaries adopted such a negative attitude towards Africans and their culture. The evangelical revival imbued into the minds of the missionaries an unprecedented missionary zeal that moulded them into Christian soldiers, whose primary objective was to proclaim the saving acts of Christ. Africaness, therefore, was the devil on the cross, which was to be defeated and destroyed once and for all. P.C. Groves has intimated that in order to achieve this goal the missionaries made a passionate appeal to the Africans to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. They emphasised human accountability before God and the redemption that was available to all by faith in Christ the saviour of the world. The moral ideals of the Christian faith were persistently and insistently presented to the Africans and African values that were in conflict with the Christian demands were denounced openly.\textsuperscript{16}

It appears from the existing literature that during the missionary era, the missionaries consciously or unconsciously represented the European colonial traders and the administrators. Although this might not have been in their minds, the peoples of Africa perceived this to be the case. It could not be otherwise for the missionaries came as agents of the same culture as that of the colonial administrators. The missionaries came as exporters of European religions as the administrators were of European methods of administration. Alec Vidler has pointed out that in the whole missionary work "a foreign, an imperial or colonial aroma hung about most mission stations".\textsuperscript{17} It is now very clear that the missionaries seem to have known very little, if anything, of the basic African religious ideas, which would have enabled them to present the gospel in terms understood by the Africans. This lack of understanding of the intrinsic values of African culture was based on the missionaries' attitude towards other cultures, which were considered as inferior to their own.

The missionaries considered all African Traditional Religions as archaic. The primary task of the missionary societies was to replace African belief systems with the good news of salvation. For example, when the London Missionary Society was formed the objective of the founders was to preach the glorious gospel to the 'heathens'. The dominant themes of the missionaries were: human sin, divine grace, and the judgement to come.\textsuperscript{18} When missionaries arrived in Angola in 1870s and 1880s they dismissed the Afri-

\textsuperscript{15} Isichei, \textit{A History}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{17} Vidler, \textit{The Church}, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{18} Groves, \textit{The Planting}, p. 271.
can Traditional Religion as superstition since it lacked the main features of Western religions such as doctrinal statements, ecclesiastical structures and scriptures. The first missionaries criticised ancestor worship among the Angolas telling them that God is not the God of the dead but of the living (Mt. 12:32). Both Catholics and Protestants tended to think that all non-Christians were destined for hell because of their practices of venerating the ancestors. This was reflected in their writings. One can see some irony in all this for the great cathedrals of Europe and America are replete with relics of saints and graves of bishops, kings, princes, men of letters, generals, soldiers, explorers and colonial administrators who served their country and king well and are today venerated as bastions of their culture. In the catacombs of Rome, which I visited in July 2007, the ‘heathen’ and the Christian saints share the same sacred space albeit at different layers in accordance with the period they lived and died. St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City at Rome stands majestically on the foundations of the burial place of the ancient kings, forming the substructure of one of the most magnificent buildings in the world. The foundations of this most sacred building lie deep in the bosom of the mother earth where ancient Romans lie buried thereby linking the living and the living-dead as they share spiritually and physically the same sacred space. It is this inextricable connection between the ancient world below and the worshipping community in the basilica above that provides the link between the living-dead, the living and those yet to be born and has become the unshakable foundation of Christianity in time and space and has earned Rome the envious title of the ‘Eternal City’.  

It is, therefore, puzzling that from the beginning of missionary work in Africa, missionaries of all denominations were so critical of the African heritage especially when it came to the veneration of the ancestors which, was mistakenly understood as ‘ancestor worship’. In the context of Southern Africa, missionaries of all denominations held the view that African Traditional Religions were thoroughly evil. This was David Livingstone’s position, as it was Robert Moffat’s. Both missionaries saw themselves primarily as messengers from God. They were strongly convinced that the Christian God rejected African Traditional Religions and African values. In their estimate, ATR were not salvific but only led people to death and eternal damnation. Indeed, Robert Moffat believed that Batswana had no word for God, something

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20 Personal observation and experience during several visits to cathedrals in UK, USA, and Rome between 1980 and as recently as 2008.
21 Both were missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS). They worked tirelessly in the task of spreading the Word of God in Southern Africa.
that was later proved to be a mistake.\textsuperscript{22} It has been argued in certain quarters that modern scholars tend to condemn expatriate missionaries unfairly accusing them of Eurocentricity and of condemning indigenous cultures. It is being pointed out that it was almost inevitable to adopt this position because the newly arrived missionaries could not be instant experts on African languages and cultures and that the incarnation of Christianity in different African cultures involved a great multiplicity of choices that, ultimately, could be made only by Africans themselves.\textsuperscript{23}

The problem, however, resides in the fact that missionaries and their co-workers in the field tended to identify Christianity with Western culture in such a manner that the two seemed inseparable. In the past, as it is often the case today, missionaries and fellow workers in the field tended to oppose African practices that were sometimes morally neutral. It has been recorded, for instance, that the long list of missionaries' prohibitions among the Kaguru people of Tanzania in 1911 included, among other things, the wearing of discs in the ears or numerous chains on the neck, removing the incisor and braiding men's hair with fibre.\textsuperscript{24} In certain quarters missionaries criticised domestic architecture of circular homes as was the case among the Ganda and insisted that they should be square houses.\textsuperscript{25} And not only that but European women missionaries tried to impose on African women Victorian stereotypes of the ideal female who eats, sleeps and drinks little so that she does not grow fat.\textsuperscript{26} The negative effects of this missionary strategy on the part of the Africans were deplored by the historian P.C. Groves. In a stinging attack on the missionary strategies of the period under discussion Groves pointed out that this would likely retard the advances of Christianity instead of accelerating it. Groves has intimated that the inadequacy surrounding the preparation of the missionaries that undertook missionary work in Africa led to the unfortunate situation in which they found themselves.\textsuperscript{27}

In this regard, one major area of confrontation between Christian missionaries and the Africans was the thorny issue of plural marriages. Of course, not every African man married more than one wife but the practice was and still is socially acceptable that a man of means wishing to take a second wife can do so without let or hindrance by his social group where such marriages are permitted. Groves has pointed out that polygamy was considered as the greatest obstacle,

\textsuperscript{22} Isichel, \textit{A History}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{23} Isichel, \textit{A History}, pp. 82-83.
\textsuperscript{24} Isichel, \textit{A History}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{25} Isichel, \textit{A History}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{26} Groves, \textit{The Planting}, vol. 3, p. 287.
on the social side, to the acceptance of Christianity on the African continent. \(^{28}\) Therefore, it was one of the issues that the Christian churches in Africa considered as a real obstacle to the advancement of Christianity since by and large in every society in Africa there was a form of polygamy in one way or another such as levirate, sororate and ghost marriages. The issue was discussed at a number of ecumenical conferences. Although the approach is said to have been sympathetic, practically all the Christian churches in Africa adopted the view that they should not cease to uphold the ideal of Christian monogamy. \(^{29}\)

During the missionary era the missionaries were also very critical of traditional medicine. To this end, missionaries denounced diviners, mediums, traditional healers and traditional medicine as thoroughly evil. They were considered as manifestations of Satan. Christianity was in conflict not only with popular traditional religious practices but also with well-organised religious institutions such as territorial cults. For example, when the Moravian and Lutheran missionaries moved into the Southern Highlands in Tanzania to work among the Nyakusa they went head-to-head with the Mbaso cult, which was prominent among this group of people in which an oracular unseen voice spoke as the voice of the divinity. It is also reported that the followers of this cult tried to befoul the missionaries when they arrived but the latter remained aloof and rejected the unseen voice as a fake. A long spiritual struggle ensued between the cult and the missionaries. This conflict lasted for three years and eventually led to the eventual decline of the cult. Though the missionaries seem to have achieved great victories in the short term, in the long term the indigenous people continued to observe in one way or another the centuries old beliefs of their forefathers in their struggles against witchcraft, rinderpest and smallpox. \(^{30}\)

Groves has reported that when Christianity began to spread along the west coast of Africa, priests of the African Traditional Religion became frightened that they would lose their followers and eventually their income. Quite often there was a conflict between the Church on the one hand and the priests of African Traditional Religions on the other. A good example of this conflict took place in 1849. According to Groves, a small Christian community at Asafo near Cape Coast lived close by the sacred grove of Brafo, a national god and oracle with priests in attendance. The conversion of one of the priests to Christianity created insecurity among the traditional priests. They eventually sought support from their chiefs to defend their shrine. The conflict reached fever pitch when some Christians cut building poles in the sacred grove. It is reported that the

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\(^{28}\) Groves, *The Planting*, p. 23.


local chief who had been appointed to act for his colleagues arrested ten of the Christians and burned their village. The case was brought before the Judicial Assessor who imposed fines on each side.31

Lamin Sanneh has reported that when the Church Missionary Society began to establish its mission in Sierra Leone in the 19th century, it came into conflict with a number of local traditional religions. One aspect of these was the belief in Egun, an invisible religious personage who was believed to inhabit an invisible world of spirits. It was believed that Egun used to return to earth at periodic intervals to punish or reward people according to their deeds. Traditions maintain that there was great opposition from the CMS missionaries, who challenged physically the power of the functionaries of this deity. Although in the short term Christianity was achieving great advances in this spiritual battle, in the long run local spiritual symbols continued to be the undercurrent of the religion of the people in the region.32

Another example of the attitude of the early missionaries can be seen in the missionary activities of Francois Coillard of the Paris Missionary Society. It was reported that when Coillard and his missionary party approached Lealui, the capital of the Lozi Kingdom in Zambia, his party informed him that they were about to pass a place, which, according to Lozi people, had great religious significance. It was a tomb belonging to a certain Moana Mbinyi, an ancient king of the Lozi. Tombs of this nature occupied an important position in the religious schema of the Lozi whose Supreme Being was Nyambe or Mulimi. Nyambe could be addressed directly in prayer by the Lozi but below him were the bali ma, consisting of the spirits of the ancestors. Francois Coillard was informed by his men that as they passed by the tomb they were required to make an offering of white calico or beads in honour of the ancestors. Coillard, however, having been brought up in strict Calvinistic tradition, refused to comply with the request on the understanding that the Sovereign God alone deserved such an honour of worship. Coillard's stand on these matters was uncompromising throughout, something that has been regarded as one of the factors that may have contributed to the failure of the Church to establish deep roots among the Lozi.33

A similar attitude was registered among the Roman Catholic missionaries when they began to found mission stations in strongly Chewa areas in Central Malawi. They adopted a confrontational attitude towards the Nyau (mask) cult, which was widely practised among the Chewa. The missionaries condemned the cult and called for its total eradication on the understanding that the dancers

31 Hildebrandt, History, pp. 107-108.
involved in unmitigated sexual immorality during the Nyau ritual dance. Despite this, the Nyau dancers on their part retaliated by recruiting many young men into the movement and fording them from attending schools. This resulted in many schools being closed down. The Catholic attempt to enlist support from the colonial government to ban the masked dancing fell on deaf ears. The colonial government refused to act against Nyau since, it was thought it would infringe human rights and would destroy an ancient custom. As a result of the government’s failure to take action, Nyau and missions were obliged to co-exist in the area but to the disgust of the missionaries.

Another area of conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religions was evident in the Lower Shire Valley in Southern Malawi. When Roman Catholic missionaries began to establish mission stations there they were confronted with the Mbona, the Guardian Spirit of the Mang’anja. The devotees of Mbona cult came as far afield as the coast to ask for rain in times of drought. The Catholic priests preached about the saving power of Jesus whom they had come to replace. Mbona’s priests replied to the Christian message of Christ’s saving power by presenting Mbona as a Black Messiah who, like Jesus, died as a savior for his people.

Another interesting incidence of the conflict between Christianity on the one hand and African Traditional Religions on the other, took place in the central highlands of Kenya. According to Jonathan Hildebrandt, from the very beginning of the 20th century, missionaries of the Church of Scotland Mission taught both in Africa and church against female circumcision. This position was adopted by other missionaries in the area. Missionaries spoke against female circumcision on medical grounds arising from the nature and after-effects of the operation which caused much pain to the girls and looked rather inhumane. The teaching against female circumcision began to have an impact on girls some of whom requested their wish to abandon the operation.

In March 1929, the members of several churches agreed that female circumcision was evil and that it should no longer be practised by Christians. Traditionalists responded by kidnapping a Christian schoolgirl whom they circumcised by force. The matter was taken to court where the magistrate ruled against the Christians. This crisis divided the community into two camps: die-hard traditionalists who favoured the continuation of female circumcision as a traditional rite, and die-hard Christians who advocated the eradication of female circumcision. Hildebrandt has pointed out that the ‘circumcision crisis’ upset the whole countryside. The immediate effect of the conflict was a sharp decline in church attendance. The long-term effects, however, were deep and

Waller & Linden, Mainstream, p. 104.
Waller & Linden, Mainstream, p. 29.
far-reaching. One of these was the formation of many separatist movements among the Kikuyu, which eventually led to the formation of African Independent Churches country-wide.\textsuperscript{35}

One of the countries in Southern Africa, which witnessed the most radical attack on African religious culture, was Botswana. Here the conflict between Christian missionaries and Batswana traditionalists covered a wide range of issues. One of these was initiation ceremonies namely \textit{bogwera} (male circumcision) and \textit{bojale} (initiation for girls). In this conflict, the missionaries, backed by the British officials, exerted tremendous political force among the chiefs and the people in general to have these two practices eradicated. Colonial records in the National Archives indicate that those who resisted this call were severely punished. As a result of the colonial administrators' and missionaries' political pressure, \textit{bogwera} and \textit{bojale} were officially abolished among the Bangwato in 1876, among the Bangwaketse in 1896 and among the Bakgatla in 1902.\textsuperscript{37} Unfortunately, the missionaries put nothing in place as a substitute to these very important cultural practices, intended to help Batswana instil good moral values among the youth and mould their character to be responsible citizens. Consequently, many social ills in Tswana society today including the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic are attributed to this short-sightedness on the side of the missionaries.

In Botswana one of the beliefs that created conflict in the missionary field was Batswana's belief in God locally known as \textit{Modimo}, \textit{Nyambi}, \textit{Ndizimu}, \textit{Ureza} and \textit{Mwali}. From the missionaries' perspective, compared with the Christian God, \textit{Modimo} was an inferior God and the worship of the Tswana deity amounted to nothing but idolatry. Attempts to discard the concept of \textit{Modimo}, however, were abandoned after the early missionaries failed to find a substitute in the Tswana religious heritage a name that could approximately translate the word God as found in the Bible. Consequently, the word \textit{Modimo} was used in worship and translation of the Bible as the proper name for God.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to the above, the practice of bride price (\textit{bogadi}) became a source of conflict in the missionary field. Missionaries opposed the payment of \textit{bogadi} because they considered it inhumane, regarding it as buying a wife like a chattel or piece of furniture. Attacks on \textit{bogadi} by the missionaries were received with mixed feelings. Churches passed laws that forbade their members from paying or receiving \textit{bogadi}, but the outcry from the people

\textsuperscript{35} Hildebrandt, \textit{History}, pp. 231-232.
\textsuperscript{37} J.N. Amanze, \textit{African Traditional Religions and Culture in Botswana} (Gaborone: Pula Press, 2002), pp. 36-37.
was such that in most instances, *bogadi* was accepted as part of Christian practice even to the present day. Among the Bangwato, however, *bogadi* was abolished in its entirety by Chief Khama, though Bangwato marrying outside of their tribe were required to pay *bogadi*.39

Christian missionaries were also critical of the Tswana observance of *molomo* (tasting of first fruits before harvest), which was a form of thanksgiving to *Modimo* through *badimo* (ancestors). The missionaries discouraged this practice because they thought that Batswana were bestowing upon the ancestors the power to give them rain, which is the prerogative of God alone. In 1872 Chief Khama resolved this conflict by turning the festivals associated with sowing and harvesting into Christian ceremonies to conform to the Christian notion of thanksgiving. Associated with the above issue was the question of rainmaking ceremonies, which according to Tswana religious culture, helped people to secure rain from God through the ancestors in their agricultural pursuits. This practice became a source of conflict between missionaries and British officials on the one hand and Batswana on the other. Missionaries called for the abolition of this practice on the understanding that only the Christian God has the power to bestow rain upon his people and that other efforts outside the Church amounted to idolatry.40

Conflict also arose in the missionary field as a result of Batswana’s belief in ancestors whom they consider to be intermediaries between God and the Tswana nation. Missionaries were critical of this belief because they thought it negated the intermediary role of Jesus, who is the final revelation of God the Father.41 Mention should also be made here of the conflict that emerged as a result of Batswana’s practice of beer drinking, much of which was part of their religious heritage. Quite often, traditional beer was offered to God through the ancestors, mainly in times of trouble such as during prayers for rain and prayers for traditional healing. But in most cases traditional beer was considered to be an important item of diet drunk during social occasions such as weddings and social ceremonies involving the ancestors.42

**Cooperation between Christianity and African Traditional Religions**

It would be fallacious to assume that the interplay between Christianity and African Traditional Religions has always been confrontational. At other times there has been a peaceful co-existence between the two religions despite the fact that the missionaries came to Africa particularly to fight against ‘heathenism’ and win the African people to Christ. Right from the beginning of Christian

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missions, many missionaries throughout Africa realised that the only way in which Christianity would succeed in its new home was by entering into dialogue with African culture. Almost at once missionaries translated English hymns into local African languages, worship was conducted through the African media, church doctrines were taught using African words and concepts and the Holy Scriptures were rendered into the vernacular. In this, way as W.B. Anderson has put it, Christianity began to become African despite the fact that the roots of Africanisation did not go deep enough.

One of the first missionaries, who took a daring step to enter into dialogue with African Traditional Religions, was John William Colenso, once Anglican Bishop of Natal, South Africa. Colenso rejected the belief espoused by his fellow missionaries that non-Christians are doomed to hell. He also defended polyamists, and respected the positive qualities of Nguni life. Willem Saayman in his book Christian Mission in South Africa has indicated that Bishop Colenso was extraordinarily sensitive to African Traditional Religions. He was of the view that African Traditional Religions should not be coarsely and violently rooted out since they contained the seeds of true religion. Colenso insisted that the South African Church should be African and not partly westernised.

It is worth noting that Colenso was not alone in this way of thinking. Some other missionaries in East Africa among whom were Moravian, Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic missionaries also adopted a similar approach. The most notable of these was Vincent Lukas the Anglican Bishop of Masasi in the then Tanganyika. According to A.G. Blood, Vincent Lukas was strongly convinced that the initiation ceremony of circumcision as practised by the Africans in the Masasi region had much that was good mixed with a great deal that was evil and necessarily unlawful for Christians. He therefore decided to provide a Christian rite of circumcision which, while retaining what was good in the African traditional rite of circumcision locally known as jando, should eliminate what was evil and yet be accepted as fulfilling the essential conditions of jando as an initiatory rite by which boys passed from childhood to manhood in African society.

The Christian circumcision as envisaged by Vincent Lukas lasted for five weeks during which the boys remained in seclusion. In this inter-faith dialogue, the traditional grass shelter used to house the novices was preserved but the spot where it was erected was consecrated with Christian prayers. The beginning of the ritual of circumcision was preceded by the Lord’s Supper after which the boys were traditionally circumcised. The circumcision was followed by Chris-

43 Anderson, The Church, p. 96.
44 Isichei, A History, p. 94.
turn teaching by the parish priest who, with the assistance of reliable African teachers, instructed the boys daily on good manners and morals according to the expectations of the society. At the end of the five weeks, the boys were given new clothing to mark their new identity. This was followed by the Lord’s Supper in the church, which was followed by traditional dances to mark their transition from the old to the new person. It is considered that this dialogue was so successful that it contributed greatly to the growth of the Church in the area. A Christian version of circumcision of girls was also introduced. It came to be known as *malango*. This experiment was so successful that the White Fathers also introduced a similar initiation ceremony in their area of influence.46

In recent years a similar move was undertaken by Rev. Canon R.C. Wynne under the employment of the Botswana Christian Council. Rev. Wynne undertook missionary work among the Hambukushu people at Etsha, Ngamiland in northern Botswana. Once he was appointed to work among the Hambukushu as a missionary, Wynne was determined never to repeat the mistakes of the past when in Botswana many of the first generation of Christians were taught to despise their traditional background and heritage to the extent that they cut themselves off from the roots of their ancestral religion. Wynne lost admiration of the type of Christianity that he calls ‘a pious religion of individual salvation’. He was disillusioned that wherever he went he frequently met with a ‘surface religion that had no depth of earth’. In order to achieve what he thought would be ‘a deep and long lasting Christianity’, Wynne based his missionary strategy on Hambukushu’s world view particularly their religious beliefs and rituals such as belief in God (*Nyambi*), ancestors, initiation ceremonies, rainmaking ceremonies, traditional healing, the concept of the community, the extended family and the like. Wynne’s missionary strategy produced a church, which was at one and same time authentically African and genuinely Christian, which as stood the test of time.47

Recent scholarship is of the view that there is a need for Christianity to enter into dialogue with African cultures. There is a need to indigenize Christianity. Cardinal Joseph-Albert Malula of Zaire, at the 1974 Roman synod, is reported to have said: ‘in the past foreign missionaries Christianised Africa. Today the Christians of Africa are invited to Africanise Christianity’.48 Carl F. Hallencreutz in his book *Dialogue and community* has indicated that there is a general tendency to regard inter-religious dialogue as an issue between Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. African Traditional Religions have not

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been given serious attention in this connection and have thus been sidelined.\textsuperscript{49} What is interesting to note, however, is that, gradually, theologians began to realize that African Traditional Religions cannot be ignored in the theological discourse. In this regard, in the 1970s a major step was taken by the World Council of Churches Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths to break the general impression that inter-religious dialogue is primarily a concern of ‘the big three’, that is, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. To this end, plans were worked out in Athens in 1973 for an official dialogue with representatives of African Traditional Religions to be held in Ibadan, Nigeria in September 1973. The participants at this meeting included representatives of established and independent churches, critical African intellectuals and representatives of African Traditional Religions.\textsuperscript{50} The objective was to explore ways and means whereby Christianity could meaningfully enter into dialogue with African Traditional Religions. Later, a symposium was held at Yaounde, Cameroon, in September 1978 on humanity’s relation with nature. Those who gathered at these meetings ‘issued statements stressing the common respect which Christians and Traditionalists hold for natural harmony’.\textsuperscript{51}

A call for dialogue between Christianity and African Traditional Religions was also made at the All Africa Conference of Churches Assembly in Lusaka, Zambia in 1974. The All Africa Conference of Churches’ document entitled Christian ministry in dialogue with African Traditional Religion stipulates that ‘no one individual, group, or way of life can lay a justifiable claim to a monopoly of the truth. In the sphere of religion, this position is clearly demonstrated in the contemporary concept of the various modalities of expression of man’s religiousness and how they relate to one another.’ The document further notes that every religion such as Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religions is in the present situation regarded as constituting a particular mode of expressing man’s religiousity, thereby providing a specific historic context in which it is manifested in response and commitment to ultimate reality. Besides, it is argued, every religion is preoccupied with universal human themes though it is recognised that the expression of these universal human themes in various religious traditions is so autonomous as to call for the viewing of each religious tradition in and through its own principles and standards.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{50} Hallencreutz, Dialogue, p. 88.


As a follow up of this call for a dialogue between Christians and traditionalists, the World Council of Churches sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths invited a group of twenty active African Christians from fourteen countries to the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia in 1986, to discuss this issue and come up with recommendations to the churches. The participants at the conference comprising theologians (including the author), church ministers and administrators, urged their brothers and sisters in the churches of Africa and the world to heed their call for full involvement in sincere and open dialogue with people in the African Traditional Religions and for a constructive mediation of the charisms given to various churches in all parts of the continent. A call was made by the participants for a serious study and understanding of African Traditional Religions so that there should be a meaningful discussion between Christianity and the indigenous religions of Africa.53

The call to enter into an ecumenical dialogue with African culture in general and African Traditional Religions in particular has also been made by National Christian Councils. For example, during the 1992 Annual Assembly of the Botswana Christian Council, it was specifically stated that the Botswana churches should be encouraged to encounter the school of Christianity that views the gospel as dealing only with the spiritual and not with the social, physical, political and sociological aspects of life. It urged Church ministers and Church Radio Council to uphold the understanding of their Setswana heritage that sees religion as part of all life. It was also recommended that the BCC should encourage Church ministers and radio preachers to preach and teach a holistic gospel, in line with Setswana cultural heritage, in which all aspects of life are seen as interconnected and related rather than allowing spiritual life to be set on one side as a separate area of life.54

In a bid to produce a relevant theology for Botswana, the BCC, at the Annual Assembly that was held in 1992, declared: ‘that theology in Botswana must be made meaningful for the Christian people of this country, in other words, it must take into account the socio-political, economic, cultural and ecological aspects of the Botswana society. It must pervade and transform all important aspects, events and experiences of peoples’ lives.’55 The BCC also laid down the conditions in which a contextual theology could be undertaken. The pre-requisites for constructing such a theology should be awareness among Botswana in all walks of life that culture is a gift from God and to treasure the most important values contained in it.

The BCC emphasised that there was a need among Botswana to reinstate confidence in suppressed cultural values and Botswana history. Botswana

54 Amanze, Ecumenism, p. 239.
55 Amanze, Ecumenism, p. 239.
must come to terms with the suffering that they have endured and the inferiority complex that has been brought upon them by discrimination against Botswana culture. It is also imperative that Batswana must build on the good and positive aspects of Botswana culture and reconcile these with the Christian faith. However, Batswana must recognise and abandon the negative aspects of Botswana culture that hinder a full Christian life. But over and above that, the churches must be encouraged to Africanise the liturgy. It must be made not only attractive but meaningful and prayerful. Church music must be modified in order to give expression to the inner selves of Batswana. Workshops should be conducted to develop the talents of people to compose African religious music. In order to underline the importance and significance of cultural values, the BCC recommended that the churches should encourage their members to retain positive traditional values, e.g. sharing and caring in the midst of urbanisation and Industrialisation. It was recommended that the BCC through its Social Concerns Department should evaluate from time to time the extent to which Botswana society is either retaining these values or abandoning them for materialistic and individualistic gain.56

The call to contextualise the Gospel in Tswana society was made even more forcefully during the 29th Annual Assembly in 1994 during which the Council urged the churches to incorporate God in Tswana society. A call was made that African concepts should be part of Christian life. Culture should not be divorced from Christianity or set aside. It was observed that the Bible was written by people from different cultural backgrounds or conceptions. Tswana culture and concepts, therefore, should be able to help people in their understanding of the Bible. It was noted that Batswana continue to believe deeply in their traditional ancestral spirits (badimo). Reference was made to African theology according to which Africans do not want to abandon their culture. Therefore, there is a need to take African norms and beliefs to the Church. This is not contrary to the nature and spirit of the Bible when we hear that the Jews, when praying, called upon Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac to serve as intermediaries between them and Yahweh. When Africans pray, they do not leave their ancestors behind. Africans always believe that their dead hear them in prayers and, therefore, can be used as mediums of communication between the invisible God and the worshipping community. It was further noted that although culture changes with time, there is a need to understand people, young and old, in the context of their cultural norms. It was argued that there is nowhere in the Bible where people were told to abandon their culture.57

56 Amanze, Ecumenism, pp. 239-240.
57 Amanze, Ecumenism, p. 240.
The importance of inculturating the Bible in African culture is seen in the fact that the quest for inculturation became the main theme at the 1997 Annual Assembly during which the General Secretary reminded the Assembly that ‘in the light of the miracle of Pentecost, we see inculturation as a dialectic process involving an interpretation of the Gospel message and a culture that leads to the appropriation of the gospel message. The gospel message must come in categories and images that are understandable to its audience. The Christ event, his life, death and resurrection must come to life to a living community’. It was emphasised that in order to be effective in her mission in Botswana, the Church must respect, preserve and dedicate to the glory of God, anything that is of value in the culture and institutions of the country. The purpose of the Church should be to fulfil and not to destroy, to make free and not to enslave. As a Church in Botswana she should bear the distinctive stamp of the country and preserve full allegiance to the Eternal, Cosmic, and Unchanging Christ, who is her only Lord.\textsuperscript{38}

The need to contextualise the gospel in Africa has been voiced not only by the Botswana Christian Council but also other ecumenical organisations in Africa. For example, at the meeting of the Gospel and Cultures group, which met in Pretoria in October 1999 comprising the NORDIC-FOCCISA Cooperation under the chairmanship of Bishop Jo Seoka, Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, it was observed that culture and gospel must of necessity relate to each other. The participants, including the author, noted that in many ways, culture comes first, it is already there, and the gospel has to be inculturated. Contextualisation should not only be an intellectual exercise. Clergy and teachers should be equipped to deal with issues of contextualisation. Two areas that pre-occupy the African mind are (a) the continued presence of the ancestors in an organic and holistic vision of reality and (b) the concern for healing, which includes traditional healing. In most cases, traditional healing as well as belief in ancestors is regarded as opposed to the gospel. It was felt at the consultation that Christians should engage themselves in dialogue with traditional cultural elements instead of rejecting them. At the same time the gospel must challenge the traditional ways of African life. As regards traditional healing, the criteria should be life-affirming, inclusive, liberating and have a community building attitude.\textsuperscript{39}

In recent years the same call has been made forcefully at the World Council of Churches Assemblies. For example, at the 8th assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998, Augustine Musopole, a well known African theologian, pointed out that while Christianity in Africa is growing in numbers and in its geographical spread, its depth is questionable. This might be the reason it is

\textsuperscript{38} Amanze, Ecumenism, p. 241.

\textsuperscript{39} Amanze, Ecumenism, pp. 241-242.
easily overcome by forces of ethnicity, patriarchy, corruption, hatred, political manipulation, racism, classism, regionalism and traditionalism. According to Musopole, the Church in Africa, especially the mainline churches, is being called to embark on a second stage of evangelism and theological indigenisation. Evangelism has so far focused on the soul, making Christianity become like a spiritual insurance, good when one is dead. Musopole has intimated that this kind of Christianity does not give security for the present. It leaves one to struggle alone with daily challenges of life. Such Christianity causes African Christians to suffer from spiritual schizophrenia. To ameliorate this situation, Musopole argued, Western Christianity must realise its own ambiguities and contradictions as problematic for the development of an authentic African Christian spirituality. A Western Christianity should also appreciate African spirituality as usable by God.59

The urgent need to make Christianity truly indigenous to the African people so that it can remain in the bowels of mother Africa forever, has been echoed by K.W. Makhulu. In his paper ‘Turn to God, rejoice in hope’ Makhulu has argued very convincingly that lack of inculturation may lead to the disintegration of the Church in Africa. He has further reminded us that one of the reasons that led to the disappearance of the Church in North Africa, as a result of Muslim invasion in the 7th century, was lack of indigenisation in the rank and file of the Church. The indigenous people – the Berbers – did not feel at home in the Romanised Christianity of the time. According to Makhulu, the present vibrancy of the Church in Africa will come to nothing if the Church continues in its North Atlantic captivity. It is, therefore, important and indeed necessary that no one region or church or country should have monopoly on the Christian faith and that Christ would like to be the Christ of each nation, communicating with them in their mother tongue. It is essential that everyone should turn to God directly and not through other people.60

This point has been made more forcibly by Andre Karamaga, another well known African theologian. Karamaga has pointed out that there is no justification for African Christians to still entertain and maintain a colonial Christianity that is extremely divided. According to Karamaga, African Christians need to confess that they have turned against God since they have not taken seriously the challenge of inculturating the gospel in Africa and Christianity continues to be regarded as a foreign religion in Africa. In the words of Karamaga, ‘We need to turn to God diversely named by our ancestors: Nzamba, Leza, Mungu, Nkulu, Ngai, Andriamanuitra, Imana, Molimo, Xikwemo, etc... the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ... From our African religious back-

60 Amanze, A History, p. 197.
ground, which is similar to the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, it is not possible for believers in one God to compete or to fight in the name of that God. That is tantamount to reducing that God to an idol which needs to be protected by its creatures. It will thus be seen from what has been discussed above that a great number of African scholars and some heads of churches today are not content with the fact that Christianity is gaining a firm foothold in Africa. They are calling for a much deeper form of Christianity, which is sensitive to African spiritual needs and aspirations, which in turn will enhance and ensure the depth, width and permanence of Christianity in Africa.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined in detail the interaction between Christianity and African Traditional Religions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the sake of analysis, the chapter began by discussing the introduction of Christianity and its impact on the African continent. It has been argued in this chapter that the relationship between Christianity and ATRs over the centuries has been both confrontational as well as peaceful. The missionary zeal of the first generation of missionaries motivated them to call for the total eradication of Africa’s religious heritage. And yet at the same time missionaries have been aware that African culture has much that is positive that can be used in the service of disseminating the good news of salvation. In this regard, attempts have been made to integrate positive African cultural values into the mainstream of Christian teaching, worship and spirituality. The paper concludes by noting that in the final analysis the Africanisation of the Church will ensure its permanence in the bosom of mother Africa for ever.

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Spiritism: A Legitimate Model of Inculturation?

Theo Sundermeier

Since spiritism is most widespread and consequently constitutes the greatest challenge at the present time not only in Latin America, but also in Europe and East Asia, it is necessary the churches take up the challenge. The question has to be raised, if that kind of piety represented in spiritism follows a legitimate pattern of Christian spirituality and offers a spiritual depth which the established churches do not reach, is it, after all, a legitimate model of inculturation?

I

By spiritism we understand the religious perception of the world according to which this visible world is not separated from the invisible world but imbued and thus ‘inhabited’ by the latter. The invisible world is dominated by those who have died and by other spirits with whom communication is believed to be possible. The historical origin and the context into which this worldview fits are the indigenous religions of preliterate, small scale societies. I call them ‘primary religions’. We find them throughout the world, in Africa, as well in India, Indonesia and Taiwan. What matters in these religions is life here and now. This is what the primary religions serve. During rites, particularly during the rites of passage (birth, puberty, marriage and death) ancestors and spirits are invoked, people expect protection and good things. Ancestors and spirits are often understood as a kind of door leading to the other world. Frequently they are regarded as mediators to God. Life is understood as a chain. Its beginning lies with God or with the ancestors. The present generation constitutes the middle and is only a link to the next generation in an unending chain.

While the primary religions have no established doctrine and relations with the ancestors and spirits can take different forms depending on the circumstances, the instituted world religions – I call them ‘secondary religions’ – have a clear doctrine. They are missionary and try to ‘conquer’ new territories and new areas of life. Here the relationship to the world beyond changes dramatically. Ancestors and spirits no longer have a ritual or liturgical role. Depending on the dynamics of inculturation, elements of primary religions

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1 This definition goes for most religions.
may be picked up again and incorporated in a filtered form. That applies to Buddhism just as much as to Christianity and Islam.

Whereas the primary religions have only very vague conceptions of the world beyond, the secondary religions, especially the monotheistic religions, provide much more precise belief system. For them the dead are radically separated from the living. Death is an irreversible leave-taking. Here again, conscious or unconscious efforts at inculturation have often led to a synthesis, very often called syncretism, against which reformers have always protested. In that way, on the one hand, they have created an area of life in this world, which is not ‘threatened’ by ancestors and spirits, but at the same time, they have produced a void which is difficult to fill psychologically and theologically. Protestantism in particular has a theological gap at this point. It is here that spiritism has found and still finds entry into Christianity and offers a special religiosité which meets the needs of people.

Though we speak of spiritism in the singular we must distinguish between Western spiritism and the spiritism which has emerged in the context of primary religions. In the latter case, it is not a foreign body but rather a kind of continuation or new establishment of traditional religion in (semi) Christian garb. In this setting, it is felt to be less of a challenge to the Catholic form of Christianity than for Protestantism. Catholic ritual traditions in relation to the dead have a bridging function here. One need only to recall the masses for the dead, the perpetual light on graves, church festivals in memory of the deceased and not least, the veneration of saints and saints’ days.

A short glance at Brazil makes clear what this means. In the Candomblé cults, African religion was revived by people coming originally from West Africa. The spirits or gods venerated in Africa merge here with Catholic saints. The central focus, as in the traditional religions, is the healing of illnesses which are associated with influences from the world beyond or with the envy and ill will of fellow human beings. Individuals receive spiritual and physical help. At the same time they are received into a small congregation which provides a kind of substitute for the traditional small community with its family structure.

While there are differences from the Western type of spiritism — where belief in science and progress is important — for both types the contact with the spirits and the dead is central. In both cases there is an attempt to fill the gap caused by death. Overcoming the barrier of death and the frontier to the world beyond and showing the soul where its real home lies is a concern of both.

To summarize we can note the following essential elements of spiritism:

1. The world beyond is experienced as real and is part of the world in which we live.
The frontier between this world and the world beyond becomes permeable. The relation between the two must be good and harmonious.

Death is not considered to be a border or completion but a transition. Various forms of belief in reincarnation can be found but certain groups reject such conceptions.

Revelations still take place today as unquestionably miraculous events which we experience.

Illness has something to do with the relationship with the world beyond. For this reason healing must take a holistic form. Faith healing is an essential element of Spiritism.

Even though in principle anyone can be a medium to the other world, extremely sensitive people are specially suited to this and can be initiated into it.

II

How should we judge this worldview which profoundly affects people's religious experience? Can we accept it as a legitimate way of spiritual inculturation or at least as an acceptable means to a better and more effective way of inculturation?

If we look into the New Testament we find surprising parallels to this worldview. One of the fundamental convictions of the Bible is that the world beyond is part of the world created by God. The Pauline letters contain complete hierarchies of heavenly powers. Even our Eucharistic liturgy still mentions them, "... with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we praise Thee." Jesus himself takes account of them and proceeds to counteract the evil ones. He invokes the power of angels even in court. He states expressly that each person's angel sees God's face daily (Mt 18: 10). Preaching, healing and driving out demons are all part of the disciples' mission (Mt 10). In the ancient world, just as in the Jewish context, people knew that day by day they were surrounded by invisible powers. The only question was who controlled them? The question of power is asked and answered: Christus Victor!

As in Spiritism we also find the conviction in the NT that the borders between this world and the other are permeable, but unlike the Spiritists, the harmonization of the two sides is not a desirable aim. The other world is left to God and subject to his lordship. In the Lord's Prayer we pray that they may become increasingly obedient to God and do his will.

It is strange how little the NT appears to be interested in death. The apostles were so inspired by the power of the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the reign of God that for the believers, death is now the door to being
with Christ forever. In the NT, death and the devil belong to the vanquished powers which cannot separate believers from the love of God.

There can be no doubt that the early church could not maintain such an extremely challenging theological position for long. They had to show the bereaved how to deal with dying and mourning. They had to tread new ritual ground and could do so only by referring back to existing local traditions which were restructured and reinterpreted so that they did not contradict the faith. The consequence was the unbridled adoption of pre-Christian traditions and rites in such a way that one could speak of ritual syncretism which is an important aspect of inculturation.

We must admit that Protestantism was always sceptical about private new revelations and has remained so to this day. This phenomenon, current in the NT and expressly attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit, is given hardly any room in much of Protestantism. But this cut off a particular dynamic of experiences which strengthen faith, instead of developing criteria for discerning between spirits.

At this point, one difference must be stated clearly. In spiritism, a relationship to various spirits or dead persons is established and nurtured without there being any evidence of how their activity may be related to the working of the Holy Spirit. In the NT, however, such activity is interpreted as only the working of the Holy Spirit. The link with the work of Christ must be recognizable in one way or another. Here spiritism has an obvious need for clarification.

A profound point of difference is found in connection with the understanding of sickness and healing. The churches have lost the important aspect of the holistic nature of biblical anthropology and have left the healing task to secular hospitals and ward off attempts to revive charismatic healing. But, in the process, the biblical pluralism which tolerates various possibilities of healing is lost. Yet it was characteristic of Jesus’ own behaviour. Mark, e.g., records twelve (!) occasions where Jesus healed in different ways. The miraculous is only one aspect and certainly does not predominate in all the accounts. The conclusion we draw from this is that room should be given again today for such pluralism. Therefore, holistic spiritual healing should not take place as a negative reaction to scientific medicine but should be seen merely as one of many possibilities. Healing is a spiritual matter in nearly all traditional cultures and spiritism as well as Pentecostalism take this inherent belief of humans more seriously. On the other hand, it must be noted that spiritism for its part emphasizes only one side of healing activity and thus equally reduces the diversity of biblical healing to one method. In the various expressions of Spiritism it is also not always clear to whom healings are
finally attributed, to the Spirit of Christ, or to what spirit? Who brings about healing? How did the contact with the other world come about?

III
What attitude should be adopted towards Spiritists? Can we accept them as a legitimate example of inculturation? I want to describe two ways of reacting to spiritists. Both are extreme positions but they enable us to identify the possibilities and difficulties of the encounter.

The first example comes from the Latin American context which is influenced by primary religions. François de l’Espinay (born in France) is a Roman Catholic priest in Bahia in Brazil. He joined the Candomblé congregation. There he had himself consecrated as priest of the spirit or god Xangó, without abandoning his RC ministry. He was then responsible for taking care of the place of worship, had to assist in the ceremonies and contribute to the cost of necessary sacrifices, as well as making sacrifices himself to his personal Oríxà. He lived with the people and shared their ceremonies. But he also baptized their children and celebrated mass in the terreiro because most of the members of this terreiro were at the same time members of the Roman Catholic Church. He saw no contradiction in serving devotedly both congregations, the Roman Catholic and that of the Candomblé as a Catholic priest. He says: ‘It occurred to me that we speak in just the same way about the saints and Jesus Christ... They also spoke about God: God who loves them, who supports them, who shows an interest in their lives... One could feel that they maintained a familiar relationship with God, Xangó, Oxum (= traditional west African deities), etc.’ Father l’Espinay is well aware how far removed his experiences are from the experiences and life contexts of these people. For this reason, for him, the question of the inculturation of the gospel and the churches arises in quite new way: Can it be that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, has also spoken to them but in another form? ‘What if the logos were somehow using the Oríxás to speak to the world of these blacks’ who were discriminated against so strongly not only by the colonialists but also by the white padres and by many Catholic churches? In my opinion, Father l’Espinay’s convictions have led him astray. However, the Catholic doctrine of the logos spermatikos has made it easier for him as a priest to adapt to and live in this alien context.

We find a quite different form of encounter in the Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal churches are the fiercest opponents of spiritism. For them, spiritism means association with dark, uncontrollable powers, with evil and with things which the Bible prohibits. Anyone who gets involved with spirits is getting involved with Satan and his armies, leading into bondage and loss of discernment.
The counterpart to this total rejection is a strikingly similar phenomenon on the other side. Studies of the Pentecostal churches and of the independent church movements both for South Africa and Korea and East Asia, show how they have incorporated the spirit traditions of the primary religions, in the former case from the Bantu religions and in the latter those of shamanism and traditional Chinese folk religion. How the working of the spirits is experienced, how spirit possession is manifest, how ecstasy and trance form part of the healing ritual, how a community can be strengthened and even established by movement, clothing and the same language – including glossolalia – and how, finally, revelations are experienced, shared and accepted, all of this can be found in a surprisingly similar form in the primary religions. The difference lies in the interpretation of the phenomena and rites. The Pentecostal churches interpret healing as being brought about not by many spirits but by the Holy Spirit alone.

It is my conviction that the Pentecostal churches and their ‘off-shoots’, the independent church movements in Africa, Latin America and Asia are growing so strongly because, unconsciously and despite all their intentions, they constitute a successful inculturation in this spirit setting. The form, the rite and the world of experience remain unchanged to a large extent; only the Christian content is new, modern, offers a future, happiness and gives life in a comprehensive sense, both spiritually and physically.

In my view, the Spiritists raise three elementary issues which have to be kept in mind when pondering about the problem of inculturation and the dialogue with spiritism.

- The problem of the invisible world with which we cannot communicate although it still speaks. But through whom and to whom?
- The problem of death and the world beyond must be discussed. What happens to the departed and what relationship with them do we have and may we have?
- The problem of the unity and indivisibility of body and soul in times of sickness. Here, the question of the ‘why’ is raised anew, whereas we suppress it because scientific medicine can only answer the question of the immediate cause. But sick people are rarely satisfied with such an answer.

I want to suggest the following responses to these issues. We have lost the contact and interchange with the heavenly world which the Bible took for granted. It was not only the Enlightenment that had this corrosive effect. The ground was already prepared by Reformation theology. It linked God’s voice exclusively with the word of the Bible and proclamation. This attitude does not do justice to the experience of faith and the biblical message. It is no coincidence that the belief in angels has settled today precisely in this gap of
experience. Angels somehow represent the nearness of God and reflect the face of God which is turned towards us in a way that we can bear, and they represent his nearness.\(^2\) In all its statements about angels, the Bible makes clear that, although they are messengers and bring messages, they cannot themselves be asked for something or called upon by human beings to serve as intermediaries to God. Direct access to God is open to every person through the Holy Spirit.

God has various ways of speaking to us. Angels are one of them. We may be open for that. Spirits are not part of this unless we understand them as the spirits who serve God. We cannot address them or call them for help.

Does this also apply with reference to the departed? For centuries missionaries by-passed the door to the hearts of people in Africa and East Asia because they ignored or circumvented the part of the creed where we confess that Christ descended into the realm of the dead. We have to give new thought to this article of the creed. In so doing, we must overcome the theological contradiction in the interpretation about whether this statement relates to the deepest humiliation of Jesus or already concerns his exaltation.

The realm of the dead is an area beyond all the dimensions of time. Our time, past – present – future, does not apply there. Hence, Jesus’ descent to the realm of the dead should not be understood in a historical sense of his communicating something only to those who had died before the year 30 C.E, namely up until Jesus’ crucifixion. On the contrary, what it means is that even the dead are not outside of his dominion. And this is true irrespective of whether they had previously heard and accepted his message or not. ‘Descended to the realm of the dead’ means that there is no area of which he is not Lord.

But it also means: a) The dead belong to God. b) They are beyond our influence; c) Because they are ‘resting in his hands’, they are simultaneously connected with us in faith. Death certainly does not mean ‘total unrelatedness’ (E. Jüngel) but on the contrary, the establishment of a new relationship. Emotionally, we can experience that in pastoral care everywhere when we are accompanying those who are mourning. Death does not only interrupt a connection but at the same time constitutes one on another level and often – at least for some time – intensifies it. However this relationship is not without God. Only through God does it acquire the necessary quality which transforms suffering and guarantees permanence. It is a permanence which precisely does not depend on our feelings, whether negative or positive. But at the same time it must be made clear that the dead are not mediators with God, nor can they take the place of the angels as God’s messengers to us. There is

absolutely no biblical evidence of the latter. That must be the basis for a dialogue with the spiritists. But on the other hand we have to widen our horizon in respect to the realm of the dead, theologically and ritually, and take it as serious as the spiritists. Only in that way will inculturation be successful.

'Descended into the realm of the dead': Christus Victor! That God is also Lord of the dead and they all 'are alive in him' (Luke 20: 38) shows how strong our hope is and how indestructible the communication we have with them through Christ.

We have tied ourselves for too long to a medical system based exclusively on natural science. We are still very slow in spelling out anew what it means for sickness and healing that body and soul belong together and that sickness and systems of healing are related to society and influenced by culture. Culture 'produces' illnesses but also gives rise to systems of healing which correspond to people's thinking and to their cultural and religious awareness. That is reflected in Jesus' healing as well. There we see 'natural' illnesses; there are reports about illnesses which can only be explained on the basis of 'clean' and 'unclean' and finally, illnesses with a spiritual background. Jesus tackles them in different ways as one can see particularly in the gospel of Mark with its twelve accounts of healing. This kind of pluralism in forms of healing should again be given a place in our contexts. That includes praying for the sick and healing services, which have long since been the worship practice in Pentecostal churches. The International Mission Conference at Melbourne made that clear in 1980 for all churches: 'The Holy Spirit makes use of the ministry of love and the openness of the congregation which welcomes people for healing. When we listen to one another and carry one another's burdens, the despairing receive hope and the alienated are restored... Worship and sacramental life are a strong force for healing the sick. That applies particularly to prayers of intercession, the proclamation for forgiveness, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil (James 5: 14) and to participating in Holy Communion'.

Now to summarize. The encounter with spiritism can be seen to help the established churches in various respects. They learn to change their approach in the way needed, to perceive the world from the perspective and context of others and at the same time see themselves from the outside. This includes the ability to realize that societies and their cultures provide a chance to inculturate into the traditions, the emotions and the worldview of people. In this process, however, major deficits become evident. These gaps must be filled.

Going back to reflect on the message concerning death and eternal life, a new way of thinking can be a help here. Death and illness are part of life. It

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no longer can be said ‘we are in the midst of life surrounded by death’, but
‘in the midst of death we are surrounded by life’! God’s dwelling among us,
sheshkinah, which overcomes death and which we receive through Christ’s
love (John 14: 23), banishes the fear of death because nothing can separate us
from the love of God. The concept of communion with God, and through him
with those who have preceded us into God’s reign needs to be given greater
prominence.

Even though we cannot go as far as Father l’Espinay, I think it is more
important to learn something from the Pentecostalists (and spiritists). In one
respect they are more deeply inculturated into the different cultures than they
realize or even would acknowledge. To learn to trust the power of the Spirit
right into the physical sphere is, however, an urgent requirement for the con-
fessional churches. But this field of learning must not be conquered by draw-
ing fearful limits, but through trusting coexistence, which can open our eyes
to a new understanding of how spirit and body, sickness and healing condi-
tioned by religion and society, belong together. This could lead us to be open
to the charismata present in the congregation. In this process, learning and
acting go hand in hand.

Reference
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Part Four
The Bible in Africa
‘God Never Opened the Bible to Me’:
Women Church Leaders in Botswana

Musa W. Dube

This paper is primarily based on fieldwork research, carried out by different researchers over the ten years 1993-2003. It will explore the position of women in the church of Botswana, by examining:

a. Women from different church backgrounds, that is, mainline churches, African Independent Churches, and evangelical churches.
b. How and why they became leaders and their experiences in church and society.
c. Models of gender empowerment that emerge from the studies.

The word of God is for everyone. When the word comes to you, it does not matter whether you are male or female. That is why God chose me. God chose me a woman, to establish a church and help people. Why didn’t God choose a man? It is because in the eyes of God it does not matter... This shows that in God there is neither male nor female.¹

Introduction: excavating women’s oral Church history

In 1994, when I was carrying out fieldwork research on women in African Independent Churches, I sought to document the strategies that they use to assume active leadership in the church and society. My aim was to assess how they subversively read biblical scriptures that are apparently patriarchal (see 1 Tim 2: 8-12), to assume positions of leadership. I interviewed two hundred women most of whom were either founding members of their churches, bishops, prophets or faith healers. The research, therefore, assumed that women in African Independent Churches are already in positions of leadership, but sought to ask the questions of How? and Why? Bishop Virginia Lucas, the founding member of Gloria Healing Church, provided one of the most stunning answers. We asked her:

Why are you a female church leader when the Bible seems to suggest otherwise? She responded: I have been asked this question several times before. I always tell people that when God spoke to me through the Spirit, God never opened the Bible to me. Instead God’s Spirit told me to begin a church and heal God’s people, which is what I am doing (emphasis mine).²

Bishop Lucas’ answer highlights three issues for us concerning women’s history in church. First, it highlights that women’s history has existed outside the boundaries of written history in church and in general. It is an oral history. Hence, while we thought that she should justify her position through the written word, she says, ‘God never opened the Bible to me’. Rather, God spoke to her through the Spirit. Thus Mercy Oduyowe writes that:

As children, girls and boys, our mothers shaped our faith. Our spirituality was nourished by their faith and life. Often they were the first teachers of religion at home and in faith communities but the words of the chronicles hide them. They appear unannounced as footnotes and appendices to men’s stories (emphasis mine).³

Second, Bishop Lucas’ answer highlights that in history women have always found ways that subvert the structural exclusion that marginalizes them from power in the society. They have found ways to create and operate in another space, outside the boundaries and by the margins of both written history and culture. On this point, Oduyowe underlines:

That they have only a token presence in committees and councils has not prevented women from finding ways of shaping the ethos of their faith communities. Women have founded religious associations, and initiated church communities; they have created ministries to make churches effective. All this has been achieved in the midst of cultural constraints and societal and religious prejudice against women. Thus these women, sung and unsung, visible or veiled, have worked at the task of transforming church and society so that all may enjoy more caring communities and contribute in making them so.⁴

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⁴ Oduyowe, ‘Preface’, p. xii.
How women have done this, necessitates a feminist investigation to assess how their strategies can further the empowerment of women in today’s world.

Third, our question to Bishop Lucas and her answer highlight a crucial issue and irony in the history of humankind: namely, that while written history may seemingly exclude women, who have nonetheless always been active in real time and all the time, the orality of their history should not be romanticized. This exclusion from written history cannot and should not be dismissed, for it is, more often than not, used to further authorize, police and maintain the marginalization of women from power of leadership, decision making and property ownership. The orality of women’s history, in societies that increasingly give reference and power to the written word, therefore, needs to be seen as a phenomenon that is often used to exclude and oppress women. The title of Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Margret Strobel’s, *Expanding the Boundaries of Women’s History*, best captures the task at hand: that is, while orality remains a useful subversive space for creating alternative ways of women’s empowerment, at the same time, it is important that the boundaries of women’s history must be expanded. They should include, but not be limited to, orality. Women’s oral history must also be written history – possibly it will be better off written by gender sensitive authors.

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has recently undertaken the task of expanding women’s history. Their project culminated in a volume entitled, *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. In the introduction, the editors write that, ‘although much has been written about the church in Africa and the roles that males played in building the church, very few histories contain the roles that women played’. Their project, therefore, sets out to answer the question of ‘Are there women in African Church history? Where are they?’ (4). The project tells stories of African women to:

✦ Complement the male history that is present in Africa
✦ Revise and retell our stories from women’s perspectives
✦ Shift women from being observers and victims into participants and actors in history
✦ Embark on a process of narrative therapy, so that healing and wholeness can come to African women who have experienced and continue to experience, the effects of sexism and other forms of discrimination in the church

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Transform the way we theologize and the way we think about women as well as to transform our societies so that they value both women and men.6

It is on these grounds that this paper, which is primarily based on assessing documented fieldwork research, carried out by different researchers over ten years, seeks to highlight the history of women church leaders in Botswana. It will explore the position of women in the church of Botswana, by examining:

a. Women from different church backgrounds, that is, African Independent Churches, mainline and evangelical churches
b. How and why they became leaders and their experiences in church and society
c. Models of gender empowerment that emerge from their stories of leadership

Sources of research on women Church leaders in Botswana
This paper will primarily draw its information from the field work carried out by different researchers; namely, my 1994 research, partly published in a paper entitled: ‘Readings of Semoya: Botswana Women’s Interpretation of Matthew 15: 21-28’; James Amanze’s book, African Christianity in Botswana; two University of Botswana dissertations: Goememang Tsinamo’s on Documentation of Women Church Leaders in Botswana; and Same Saudi’s on Women’s Ordination and Galatians 3: 28: A Case Study of the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Maun; Fidelis Nkomazana’s article on ‘The Profile of Reverend Mrs Rebecca Motissi of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Botswana’. Another relevant work is S. Parratt’s article, ‘The Status of Women and Issues in Development in Botswana’. And additional information will also be sought from fieldwork.

Women leaders in mainline Churches
Mainline churches, particularly the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), are historically the oldest in Botswana. At present, there are about six mainline churches, Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Lutheran Evangelical Church of Southern Africa (ELSA), Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDAC) and the Lutheran Church of Botswana (LCB). In Tsinamo’s documentation only five of the twenty-three respondents were from mainline churches. They have the lowest recorded number of ordained women. Thus, even if they have the longest history in the country as the oldest

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churches, this is not consistent with the number of women in leadership positions.

Let us start with the UCCSA, which is the oldest and one that enjoyed the position of being a state church during colonial times for a long time before other churches were allowed to start work in Botswana. In her 1994 fieldwork-based paper, ‘The Status of Women Issues in Development in Botswana’, Saroj Parratt writes: ‘The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (henceforth UCCSA) is unusual in that it has had eight ordained women ministers. But these (two are now deceased) are small relative to the total number of women members in the churches’ congregations’. Five years later, Tshinamo writes: ‘according to Pastor Rupert Hambira, UCCSA has about ten women who are leaders’. Of these ten, six were already ordained while, ‘the rest were either still under training, part-time ministers or not yet ordained’. The number had remained at six. Tshinamo’s documentation featured three UCCSA women leaders: Muriel Mothibi ordained in 1998, Tumelo Dipholo ordained in 1997 and Marope Modukanene ordained in 1975 and retired. Save for Modukanene, whose qualifications were those of education/teaching, the other two held Diplomas in Pastoral Theology from the University of Botswana.

When asked about why and how they came to assume the position of leadership, the UCCSA women ministers gave different reasons. Tumelo Dipholo’s response was closer to the evangelical women’s experience of hearing a call. Dipholo grew up as an orphan and experienced many difficulties and sought solace in church and God. In her own words, ‘I started to believe that God was calling me’. Although Dipholo does not give details, she is nonetheless very emphatic about her experience, as she says, ‘The call was clear’. For Muriel Mothibi, who was a minister’s daughter, she was more inspired by her father and the Bible, to go into full time ministry. She thus underlines that ‘I got inspired. I had no dreams or visions’. Modukanene, who was married to a minister, was a community leader in the Red Cross. She came to believe that she had good leadership qualities. As she says, ‘I
realized I could bring people to God. I had no dreams or visions. I became a pastor out of interest'.

Commenting on their experiences within and outside the church, UCCSA women ministers indicate that the struggle between patriarchy and the empowerment of women still continues. Modukanele, says, "I believe men used to hate me... I was in power and I did things my way. I had a feeling men despised me but they did not want to show it. Generally, they respected me". Dipholo points out that:

The belief that a woman is nothing is evident in the society... In meetings when a committee is chosen, they make sure they choose men. I find that my ideas are usually rejected although they are good. Men claim to be comfortable with the idea of me being a woman leader, but they are not. It is very difficult for them. They feel threatened.

Dipholo is quite explicit on her experiences as a woman leader in a patriarchal world and church. She continues to say:

I feel robbed of my identity in that I am in a patriarchal structure... I sense that I am not viewed as a leader in my own right. For me to make a good impression, it has to be in a masculine standard. Sometimes I feel dehumanized, nothing I do is worth looking at, unless it matches the masculine standards.

Rev Muriel Mothibi echoes her colleagues, holding that, 'My church accepts women in ministry but members are very skeptical about women leaders. My view is that maybe it is because of the patriarchal society we are living in. Well, members of my church accept me although they are not satisfied. I can preach and sweat but to them I am a woman'.

Rev Cheryl Dibeela, who was ordained in the 1990s, is probably the most educated amongst UCCSA women ministers, holding a Masters and currently doing her PhD with the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. However, Dibeela is now running Mabogo Dinku, a community project rather than working as a full time minister of the church. Her departure is linked to the above negative experiences of discrimination. In short, the history of UCCSA in Botswana is the longest, spanning more than a century, and its history of ordaining women is also long, however, the actual women who are ordained

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12 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 98.
16 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 93.
17 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 95.
are very few, part-time, the least educated and hence invisible, because patriarchal mentality remains evident in and outside the church, silently excluding women by making it difficult for them to operate within the patriarchal church and system.

Turning to other mainline churches, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Anglican Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) do not ordain women. Thus Tshinamo held that ‘From the findings, we do not have any woman leader from the Seventh Adventist church. Pastor Kgasa said they do not ordain women because it is unscriptural’. Kgasa’s scriptural base for excluding women confirms Amanze’s argument that:

The majority of mission churches in Botswana, on the basis of Pauline theology which advocates that women must not speak in church but rather be submissive to their husbands as the church is submissive to Christ the head of the church, have excluded women from priesthood for a very long time... the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church have not yet opened their doors to women to serve as Bishops and priests or pastors on the understanding that the priesthood of Christ is a male priesthood and on that account women are automatically excluded.\(^{18}\)

For a detailed understanding on the views of women’s ordination and the situation of women in the RCC and SDA churches, Same Saudi’s dissertation, Women’s Ordination and Galatians 5:28: A Case Study of the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Church in Maim is instructive.

According to Parratt, ‘The Roman Catholics, of course, are hampered by a central authority which forbids the ordination of women to priesthood,’ but in Botswana, ‘the Roman Catholic Church has, in line with Vatican II, encouraged women in lay ministry, participation in the service of the Eucharist, leading Bible study groups and so on’.\(^{19}\) Parratt also found that ‘The Anglican Church in Botswana in theory permits women’s ordination, but in practice limits them to lay ministerial status without license to preach’.\(^{20}\) Tshinamo, like Amanze, says, ‘The Anglican church... has no ordained women yet. The issue is still under debate’.\(^{21}\) This tension between no ordination and ordination to lay ministry in fact means that women are most of the time actually involved in church leadership without official status or payment. For exam-

\(^{18}\) Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 110.


\(^{22}\) Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 110.
ple, concerning the Roman Catholic Church, Parratt points out: ‘in the rural areas where there are no priests, a lay woman or a sister conducts church services. In Kapong and Hebron (near Lobatse) a woman catechist conducts funerals in the absence of a priest. In Ramotswa women often preach, and assist in distributing the Eucharist’.23 In short, women offer leadership in these churches, but the only difference is that their leadership is not officially recognized and they remain under the leadership of some male leaders. Accordingly, there is always that understanding that, ‘it is because we do not have a male priest’, or they can only become lay preachers. In fact, this practice in mainline churches borders not only on oppressing women, but also on exploiting them.

Turning to the Lutheran Evangelical Church, Tshinamo’s documentation found one ordained woman, who is in fact a deacon. Anna Nhauvva, who is thirty-six years old and became a deacon in 1994, says, ‘I am the first woman in my church to be ordained. The second woman is late’.24 Telling the story of how she assumed this position, Nhauvva says:

I started working in the church. I dedicated my time to do the work of God in the house of God. I loved working with people. I believed that I was called to be a leader in the church. I specifically wanted to work with women. I got inspired when we were asked to go for certain courses in our church. There was a post for one deacon. So I took the course because it involved working with women. I was filled with compassion for women... I believed that it was what God calling me to do... So I became a deacon.25

Asked about her experiences in the church and society, Nhauvva says, ‘I am well respected. I am the first woman to be ordained in the Lutheran church, and it is amazing how people have accepted me’.26 Within the church, Nhauvva has experienced patriarchy embodied by women. As she says, ‘Women seem to be their own oppressors. They are always fighting amongst themselves. When we are having a meeting, women will be jealous of one another and they will choose a man. So I usually sit down with them, trying to motivate them that they can do it without men, but time and again they go back to their habits’.27

In the outer society, Nhauvva, like the other mainline women leaders, has a confrontation with patriarchal culture. She says, ‘At first I was based in

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Maun. The society could not comprehend the idea of a woman leader. Most people were against me. But with time they accepted me. I presented myself to them as a woman. I did not try to imitate any men to impress them.28 One realizes that the society felt threatened by a woman who seemed to cross the societal norms and take a role that is usually male. Her approach to this response was to assure the society that she is not trying to break the gender expectations, but that in fact she is still acting within these: ‘I presented myself to them as a woman’.

Coming to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Tshinamo wrote that it ‘has just started ordaining women. There is only one woman who is almost there, but she is still learning the doctrines of the church. She is not yet in ministry’. This woman, Ms Moni Kgosiemang, started serving as a deacon from 1980-1995, then became an elder from 1996-1998 and she is currently a licensed minister. Kgosiemang’s training involved doing a diploma at Botswana Training Institute in 1980-1983. Then in 1989-1994, she earned a Diploma in Pastoral Theology with Kgolagano Theological College. According to Kgosiemang, she was always on the religious side from the beginning. However, she says there came a time when the scripture of Jeremiah 1: 4-9 was ringing in her heart, leading her to pursue church leadership. This verse reads, ‘Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb and before you were born, I consecrated you; appointed you; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations’.

Asked if she has felt discriminated against on the basis of gender, Kgosiemang cites funerals, as places where male ministers visibly try to marginalize the participation of women ministers. She says male ministers want women to confine their preaching to Thursday (women’s prayer day). At the congregational level she rates the acceptance and rejection at 50/50; that is, those who accept her and those who reject her are almost of the same number. Indeed, in the year 2003, there have been so many controversies surrounding her ordination in the Dutch Reformed Church of Mochudi, with some doing all they can to hinder her ordination and some supporting it. Those who argue against her ordination cite the constitution, while others point to her marital status of being single as a hindering factor. Despite her long service and training, Kgosiemang is still awaiting ordination, which she hopes will finally take place in 2004.

Women leaders in African Independent Churches
Information on women leaders in AICs is by far the most documented. In my 1994 research, I interviewed 200 AICs women. James Amanze’s book has a

section on women, where he gives brief profiles of sixteen AICs women church leaders, whose history of leadership covers at least forty years. Not only does Amanze give women’s profiles, he has endeavoured to provide a picture of each woman! It seems that while Amanze recognizes that these women are heard, he nonetheless insists that women must also be seen. It could well be that he is convinced that ‘seeing is believing’ given the exceptional history of AICs women leaders in comparison with other church traditions. The third major coverage of AICs women leaders is in Tshinamob’s documentation. She documented a total of twenty-three women leaders from the three church traditions. Thirteen of these were drawn from AICs background, testifying to their exceptional history of leadership.

Amanze links this prevalence of women church leaders in the AICs with the history of AICs in other regions in Africa, pointing to many other examples in east, west and southern Africa. He also links their prevalence to the African cultures, holding that ‘in many African societies women function as priestesses, prophetesses, diviners, herbalists and mediums. They are involved in rain-making ceremonies and offerings to the ancestors for healing’. Parratt also holds that, ‘as is common in Africa, it is primarily in the Independent Churches where the position of women as preachers, healers, prophets and leaders is most fully recognized’. In my paper, I trace the history of their leadership role to the very beginning of AICs in Africa, pointing out that:

Women have always played a central role in these churches as founders, bishops, archbishops, prophets, faith healers, preachers and ministers. The rise of AICs and their spirit of protest is traced to a woman from the eighteenth century, Kimpa Vita, a Congolese Catholic Christian who was renamed Donna Beatrice at baptism. Kimpa Vita proclaimed that the Spirit of St Anthony had taken possession of her. Kimpa Vita... held that Christ came into the world as an African... and he had black apostles... A line of other women have ever since responded to the word of the Spirit of God to serve as church founders, leaders, prophets, and faith healers.

Given the magnitude of women church leaders in AICs and the fact that their stories are much more documented, this paper will only focus on six AICs

leaders who are also founders of their churches. For purposes of better organization and analysis, the six women leaders will be divided into two groups, northern and southern regions. These women are:

1. Archbishop Ntsatsi Nleya, founder of St Annah’s Church (Francistown)
2. Archbishop Mpinini Mpatane founder of Lefika Jelisa Khutleng (Francistown)
3. Archbishop Polokelo M. Masego Resheng of Siloam Church (Mahalapye)
4. Bishop Neo Ntoga, New Jacob Apostolic Church (Gaborone)
5. Bishop Ogomoditse Mautenyane of Christina Apostolic Healing Church (Gaborone)
6. Bishop Mma Ngwedi Kebapetse of Utlwang Lefoko Apostolic Church (Molepolole)

What is their history of leadership? This question will be assessed through examining two aspects; namely:

+ How these women assumed their positions of leadership
+ How men in the society and church respond to their leadership

AIC’s women ministers in the Northern Region

This subsection will cover the first three of the above listed women leaders. Archbishop Mpinini Mpatane is about sixty-seven years old and her highest educational qualification is Sub B. According to Amanze and Tshinamo, she became a leader in 1972. The history of Bishop Mpatane’s assumption of leadership began with a long illness, linked with a voice advising her to pray and to go to Mfasemenyengwa River. She obeyed. The voice told her to build a stone wall and to bring water and leave it at the centre of this wall. The voice then told her to use this water to heal people. Since then she takes the water to this place and then uses it for healing services. Patients drink some of the water and bathe with some of it. This heals them. Bishop Mpatane believes this is a God-chosen place, for whenever she visits it, she finds it full of bright light and sometimes she even sees angels. The healings led many people to come to her for help. This finally led to the formation of a church. As she says:

In 1980, because of many followers, I decided to establish a church and God said I should call my church ‘Rock of Ages’. I am not learned so I did not understand, but God provided an interpretation. God said the name should be ‘Lefika ja


Bosakhatleng'. Since then 1980 the church grew. I have got congregations in Zimbabwe, Tsumane, Malaka and Seleka. 36

Archbishop Ntsansi Nleya is seventy-three years old and her highest educational qualification is standard two in primary education. According to Amanze 37 and Tshinamo 38 she became a leader in 1976. The story of how she came to assume leadership is linked to illness. Bishop Nleya was ill and was even confined to a wheel chair when Mme Irene Modise, who was a prophet, prayed for her, successfully delivering healing to her body. In addition, Modise said Nleya was called to become a prophet and gave her the gift of healing, which she started using to heal many people. Her healing gifts gave her a good following and in 14 January 1981 she registered her church. She called it St Annah Church, because, as she says, ‘I am a woman. The church is led by a woman so it deserves the name’. 39 She is currently operating from Francistown in Area W.

Archbishop Polokelo Masego Resheng is about sixty-three years old and her highest educational qualification is standard six in primary education. According to Tshinamo’s documentation Archbishop Resheng became a leader in 1985. 40 The history of leadership began with a long illness, which could not be healed by many medical and traditional doctors. Finally, a spiritual healer healed her and later on she had a dream and also heard a voice speaking to her in this dream. Narrating this dream Archbishop Resheng says:

I saw myself on top of many people and these people were holding onto the tip of my toes. I was wearing white garments. I then saw a great river with trees full of ripe apples. There were birds on top of those trees, at the bottom laid a big Bible. As I was looking, the Bible opened to the book of Matt. 13 and I was told to read verses 31-32... ‘so the birds of the air come to lodge in the branches thereof...’ Then I heard a voice saying I should move from the land I was in to the land of my own... when I got to Mshalapye I established a church. I named the church ‘Siloam’ which is by interpretation ‘romitwe’ or sent. 41

How have the men in church and society responded to their leadership? The majority of them say they are well respected within their churches and in the

36 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 45.
38 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, pp. 56-59.
39 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 57.
40 See Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, pp. 47-50.
41 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 48.
outer society. They perform many public duties such as weddings, burials, and prayers at Independence Days. Archbishop Nleya says, 'Men are generally good. I have appointed most of them to the chair of Bishop. They cooperate with me. They respect me and obey when I give orders'. While Mputane says 'the society really recognizes me as a woman pastor', and holds that the men in her congregations 'are very humble. I just command them and they do as I wish', she nonetheless also says, 'I once had a problem with one man by the name Nicholas Sepako. He wanted to usurp leadership from me. He was by then a Bishop, a position I appointed him to. So after I realized his intentions I expelled him from my church. And since then men are just good'. Resheg does not have many men in her congregation because they want to be paid for doing church activities. But she says, 'My husband is an overseer of Siloam Church. I appointed him to that position. He respects me and has confidence in me. He works under me and he knows his place'.

All's women leaders from the Southern Region

This will cover three Bishops: Ogoomotsewe Mautenyane, Mmangwedi Kepapetse and Neo Ntswa in their given order. The focus will be how and why they came to assume leadership positions and their experiences in the society and churches as women leaders.

To start with Bishop Mautenyane, she is about seventy-three years old and has been a leader since 1981. Her highest educational qualification is standard six in primary education. According to Tshinamo’s documentation, Bishop Mautenyane's road to church leadership was marked by dreams, visions and spirit power that enabled her to identify people who were sick and their problems. She started off in St John’s Apostolic Church of Mmanku, where she rose to the position of a bishop. Later she became the founding member of Christina Apostolic Healing Church. Narrating the history of the latter, Mautenyane says:

As I was in this church I saw a vision and in this vision I was told I will one day lead my own church. I was shown a land in which I was to build my new church. Immediately after seeing the land, I went to the land board and I was given the very land that God had shown me. So I went again and registered the church. God also spoke to me through a vision. God said the church should be called Christina

42 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 57.
43 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 45.
44 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 49.
45 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, pp. 64-66.
Apostolic Healing Church. I therefore, became the Bishop and prophet of my church. People came to me and I helped them and they in turn became members. 45

Since then, Bishop Mautlenyane’s church has established branches in Palapye, Serowe, Maun, Kanye, Molapowabo, and Motsemotlhabe.

Bishop Mmangwedi Kebapetse, who has been a leader since 1982, is about fifty-seven years old, and has no formal education and no reading skills at all. 47 She is a founder member of Utlwag Lefoke Apostolic Church. The history of her leadership was characterized by hearing a voice with a particular message. Narrating this event, Bishop Kebapetse says, ‘I heard a voice calling, telling me to inform the people of the coming drought. I was told the cows would die’. 48 In obedience, she went out in the roads of Molepolole calling out, telling people to listen to the word, that is, utlwag lefoke. Although people dismissed her as a lunatic and some labeled her as a witch, the drought indeed came. Thereafter, some people began to listen and to join her prayers. In 1985, when her husband also joined the worshippers that gathered around her, they registered a church called Utlwag Lefoke Apostolic Church, named after the original message that she first heard and preached.

For Bishop Neo Ntogwa, who is about sixty-three old and with standard four in primary education for her highest educational qualifications, church leadership began in 1992. 49 The history behind her leadership role is also marked by illness, dreams, visions and healing experiences that finally led her to begin her own church, which she named New Jacob Apostolic Church in 1992. Like Bishop Mautlenyane, Mrs Ntogwa began her worship in Mme MmamNkua’s St John’s Apostolic Church. She was very sick and used to experience multiple dreams and was told that evil spirits possessed her. After the evil spirits were cast out, she began to see visions that revealed the diseases of sick people and was able to heal them. With her gift she was sent by St John Apostolic Church to start a branch in Marobela. While there, her husband was elected to the position of Bishop and this brought so many quarrels and divisions in the church that Mrs Ntogwa was convinced that this division was not God’s will. After fasting and praying, she saw a vision that advised her to start her own church. So, together with her husband they registered their new church named New Jacob Apostolic Church in 1992. A few years later her husband wanted to form his own church and wanted her to come with him! Mrs Ntogwa refused. As she says, ‘It was impossible because this church was given to me by God. How can I leave it now? No, I

45 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 65.
47 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, pp. 51-54.
48 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 52.
49 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, pp. 67-70.
couldn’t and my husband left. I continued with my new church alone until today’.  

But how have the men in the church and society in general accepted these women church leaders? Like their northern counterparts, overall these women leaders hold that they are well respected both in the society and in the church. They participate in public events such as funerals, weddings, President and Independence Day worship services. Thus Mautenyane says, ‘They respect me and see me as their mother... I really don’t have problems with men. They are cooperative and hardworking. They respect me and they are always eager to obey’. Ntogwa echoes the same when she says, ‘Men treat me very well. They are humble; they listen to me and obey my orders’. The major problem confronting Bishop Ntogwa is her husband. Narrating their relationship, Ntogwa says, ‘He looks down upon me... When people come to me, seeking help he sends them away. He is a bitter man. I think he is jealous because I am successful’. Mmagwedi, on the other hand, says, ‘I do not behave like a leader. I am a very humble person. So I am not recognized by the society’. As for the men in her congregation, she says, ‘they treat me very well. I have assigned them positions. They also hold positions of power. So I really work hand in hand with them’. However, Mmagwedi says, ‘I was hurt the other day in Mochudi. We visited this other church and I thought I could just go and preach the word, but when I was about to preach, I was stopped and told that in that church women only sing and men do preaching. This is not fair. Women deserve to speak the word as much as everybody’.

Notably, the analysis of the history of these six AICs women leaders indicates that they are generally of low education and advanced age. Most of them have been in church leadership for at least three decades – the time range is between 11-31 years. This is, indeed, in line with the history of AICs’ women, which goes back to 1706 and is well attested by many outstanding women leaders in Africa such as MmaNku, Mai Chaza, Alice Len-

53 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 68.
54 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 65.
55 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 68.
56 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 69.
57 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 52.
58 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 52.
59 For those unfamiliar with AICs preaching habits, preaching in the church is more often than not, open to all members in the service once the text of the day has been read. It would be under such circumstance that Bishop Ngwedi would have attempted to stand up and preach, but alas women were not allowed to preach in this particular one.
60 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 53.
shina. As compared to both women in mainline churches and evangelicals, they seem slightly more accepted both within and outside the church. This, perhaps, highlights that the society and their kind of churches are more used to women leaders – given the three centuries of history behind them. Accordingly Amanze asserts that:

By assuming the role of church founders, prophetesses, bishops and pastors in a society where women are quite often second class citizens bound by tradition to obey their husbands and men in general, women in African Independent Churches have in a sense staged a socio-religious revolution against a male dominated society and have asserted their freedom as people created in the image of God.

Women leaders in Evangelical Churches
Of the three church traditions, these are the least documented. My research and that of Amanze do not cover evangelical/charismatic women. The sources of information used here therefore are primarily drawn from G. Tshinamo’s documentation and F. Nkomazana’s profile on Reverend Rebecca Motsisi and fieldwork research.

Of the twenty-three documented women leaders in Tshinamo’s work, only six of them were from an evangelical background. These women were: Boingotlo M. Nakedi of Apostolic Faith Mission ordained in 1996, Maureen Mbaiva ordained in 1998, More Manka ordained in 1988 and Queen Mohamed Massie, ordained in 1996 were of Family of God Church; Neo Molosiwa, ordained in 1988 and Gakesupegepe Bagwasi ordained in 1992, belonged to Pentecostal Holiness Church. Five of these women are ordained pastors while one of them is a deacon. At the time of the documentation their ages were recorded as 25, 24, 26, 35 and 40 respectively making them quite young. Reverend Rebecca Motsisi, interviewed by Nkomazana, is the oldest of the ordained evangelical women, at the age of forty-nine. Their youthful ages and the range of their years of leadership reflect that the evangelical tradition does not have a long history of ordaining women to church leadership. Indeed, Pastor Boingotlo Nakedi’s narration of her call and the struggle for acceptance strongly attests to a young history in women’s ordination. As she says, "I convinced myself that I was very young and again a woman, that God could not call me. I looked at Apostolic Faith Mission Church in general, there was no woman pastor." Given that Apostolic Faith Mission and

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60 Amanze, *African Christianity*, p. 204.
63 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 74.
Assemblies of God are among the earliest evangelical churches in Botswana, it is notable that by the early 1990’s there were no women pastors to become role models for other women. In fact the AFM constitution hindered women’s ordination until recently – the mid-1990s. Since then, AFM has ordained two other women; Pastor Sinah Bachopi, Pastor Maitumakako Selelego, and Sinah Teemane is still training.

Educationally, Evangelical women ministers range between COSC (Cambridge Ordinary School Certificate) to a diploma in theological education, which is a higher level of education when compared with women church leaders of the AICs tradition. Motsisi gives us a glimpse into the history of women’s ordination in PHC. Since 1960, women could be ordained to full-time ministry. Yet Motsisi continues to say, ‘at the moment there are four full time ministers. In Lobatse there is Mina Manuel, who also served in Molepolole for some time. In Mahalapye, there is Gape Bagwasi, who has also served in Jwaneng and Tonota. There is also another female pastor in Francistown’.64

What is their history of leadership? This question will be examined through assessing two aspects, as before, namely:
- How these women assumed their positions of leadership
- How men in their society and church respond to their leadership

How then did evangelical women become leaders? The language employed by evangelical women is best described by the sentence, ‘I heard God’s call’ or ‘God called me’.65 Save for Deacon Neo Molosiwa, who was elected to her position as a deacon, they all attributed their leadership positions in the church to God’s call. It is often unclear how this call is heard or experienced. Rev Bagwasi and Motsisi, who are from Pentecostal Holiness Church, give us some brief elaboration. Bagwasi says, ‘On the 1st of January 1982 I heard God’s call. I heard the voice of God, speaking to my spirit. God was commanding me to do his work... In 1987, I couldn’t help it anymore, I went to a Bible College in South Africa... I came back in 1992 and therefore joined the ministry’66. Motsisi also says, ‘She heard a voice of God calling her to become a minister. She accepted the call and then applied to the National Church Council telling them she had a call of God’s work. In 1991, she was appointed to pastor the Moshupa Branch’.67 The fact that a call to a position

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65 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders. pp. 74 & 78.
66 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders. p. 86.
67 Nkomazana, ‘The Profile of Reverend Mrs Rebecca Motsisi’, p. 82
of leadership is linked to ‘hearing God’s call,’ which is seemingly independent of the written word, is notable. This means that both men and women can enter the ministry, regardless of what the written word stipulates.

Nonetheless, it would seem that while women can become ministers through hearing and accepting God’s call, their ordination to full ministry is still dependent on whether the constitution of the church allows the ordination of women. A good example is AFM, which only began ordaining women in the mid-nineties. AFM, however, had been accepting and sending women who said they had God’s call to Bible school for training. Upon completion, however, they were relegated to Sunday (children’s) school ministry. We cannot, therefore, overlook that even those churches that have had a long history of ordaining women still have very few of them in the full-time ministry. Of note here is the PHC, whose history of women’s ordination dates back to 1960, yet there are only four women in the ordained structure. More research is needed to probe into the hurdles that have kept women from hearing and accepting God’s call to full-time ministry in evangelical churches. The question needs to be asked: what is holding women from joining full-time ministry of the church?

Turning to how society and men in their churches respond to their leadership role, the history of women leaders in evangelical churches has not been smooth sailing. Although they generally say they enjoy respect, indications are that patriarchal structures still resist their positions. Thus Pastor Nakedi says, ‘One day after preaching during a funeral ceremony, one man stood up and rebuked me. He said it is not cultural for women to speak during funeral services’. Minister Queen Masse says the problem is that ‘people still have a mentality of a pastor as a male being... They still can’t believe anything good can come out of a woman’. Similarly, Maureen Mbaiva says: ‘I think I am not accepted. People here can’t comprehend a woman pastor. They really do not think a woman can be a pastor. They are not used to the situation. So I am not involved in activities of the society. They can’t allow me to preach in funeral services’. Pastor Bagwasi says:

The problem is between my fellow male ministers and me. They look down upon me. Some are really uncomfortable with my position... I am a threat to them. Some do not really appreciate my position and they do not hide their feelings. They always want to challenge me... Men have this tendency of really stepping on us. This really kills.”

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62 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 76.
63 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 81.
73 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 78.
71 Tshinamo, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 86.
Perhaps evangelical women’s long walk to freedom is captured by Rev Motsissi, who, according to Nkomazana:

... Regretted that for obvious cultural reasons, not necessarily biblical, men are likely to continue to retain many key leadership positions in the church. She observed that church hierarchy does not necessarily depend on the level of training of a person, but societal expectations. She lamented that it has become a tradition that women cannot lead the church in the presence of men.  

These experiences, both from the outer society and within the church, explain the rather slow or scanty history of women responding to God’s call among the evangelicals. Resistance to women’s leadership also manifests itself in subtle structural ways. This is particularly evident amongst the Family of God leaders. The women who accept the call are subjected to gendered training. For example, at the Bible College, Massie was trained in a secretarial course, then she was attached to the prophet’s wife for mentoring. Upon her return, she was assigned to ‘a ministry that deals with women only’.  

Similarly, in the narration of her call and her response, More Manka of Family of God training, reported undergoing a secretarial course. She also says, ‘I do not interact much with the society. I am only involved in church activities... we have different fields of work, so there is a minister of funerals, weddings and many others’. It would be vital to further investigate if this division of labor is not along gender lines. But as the above quote from Pastor Mbaiwa’s experience indicates, she is confined to private/internal church services rather than public community activities, because people do not accept a woman pastor due to gender bias.

Conclusion: emerging models of gender empowerment
The above research documentation indicates that women of Botswana have a history of leadership in the church. Undoubtedly, they face many constraints in a patriarchal world and they still have many hurdles to overcome, but they have also utilized many alternative spaces, opportunities and strategies to take up leadership in the church. What are the emerging models of gender empowerment provided by the history of these women leaders?

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72 Nkomazana, ‘The Profile of Reverend Mrs Rebecca Motsissi’, p. 58.
73 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 80.
74 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 89.
75 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 89.
76 Tshinamo, Women Church Leaders, p. 81.
Standing upon biblical and local women models

In paper, ‘Women, What Have I to Do with You? A Post-Colonial Feminist Theological Reflection on the Role of Christianity in Development, Peace and Reconstruction’, I highlighted that AICs women refer to biblical women and to their historic women church founders to legitimize their positions:

I was listening to their sermons [St John Apostolic Faith Mission women], when I realized that when each one of them stood up to preach they said, ‘I greet Mother Mary Magdelene, Mother Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mother Martha, the holy seats of Mother Mmanku and MmaAnderson, women who wear the belt of faith...

By greeting these biblical figures prior to their preaching four things are accomplished: First, these biblical women were given divine ancestral status and venerated in church. Second, by calling on this group of women prior to their teaching, they were grounding their authority to preach in these women. Third, the creative self-identification of African women with biblical women means that they do not suffer from identifying themselves with male authority in order to preach... What is even more significant is that by including these women, biblical and local, they have employed an African worldview to create an inclusive Christology for themselves.”

Semoya framework

In the paper, ‘Readings of Semoya: Batswana Women’s Interpretations of Matt. 15: 21-28’, I also sought to examine the models of gender empowerment provided AICs women leaders in their reading methods. My assessment of their sermons and interpretation found some common uses of the framework of semoya and their reading for healing. Hence, I note that:

The Semoya strategy of reading does not only resist imperial forces of imposition and domination, it also offers a feminist model of liberation. The AICs women insist the written word is a tradition of wisdom, which has goodness for all, but they are by no means limited to it. They maintain that God’s agency is contained, but not limited to the written word. They experience divine communication directly through God’s Spirit, and have experienced God’s Spirit empowering them for human service. As Bishop Virginia Lucas said, when God spoke to me, ‘God never opened the Bible.’ Through listening to the word of the Spirit, the AICS women offer a feminist strategy that breaks free from patriarchal and canonical constraints of biblical traditions. It allows them to claim divine empowerment and leadership despite their gender.”

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Three years later, Tshinamo’s documentation on women leaders and the assessment of women in AICs confirms these strategies by citing empowerment by the Spirit. The women of AICs operate and read from the realm of Oral-Spirit to make history for themselves as community leaders.

*Embodied texts, visions & dreams*

Amanze and Tshinamo’s documentation also highlight the use of illnesses, visions, dreams and hearing God’s call as another strategy that helps women to bypass scriptural patriarchal constraints to assume leadership. As the above stories of AICs’ women clearly demonstrate, there is another text that God uses to speak to women and call them to full time ministry. There is another text that African women read or hear. The strategy may well be named as an embodied canon. The call to leadership begins with long bodily illness that cannot be healed, but when it is finally healed, it is revealed either through dreams, visions or prophecy that one is in fact being called to assume leadership in healing God’s hurting people through church leadership. Again, God speaks to women without necessarily opening the Bible to them. This experience is so precise that women have been given names of their churches and shown places for building their church structures.

*Sharing power between genders*

One of the strategies that emerge from women church leaders, especially among the AICs, is that of sharing power between genders. A number of the women church founders appoint men and husbands to the positions of bishops. Although this has sometimes resulted in men who want to take over from the women founders, this strategy represents the ideal. That is, the search for gender empowerment is, at the end of the day, really about the capacity to distribute and share power between women and men in our communities and all institutions. It is not, as some threatened men have argued, an attempt to take all power from men and give it to women, or the allegation that it is an attempt to oppress men by subordinating them to women. Gender empowerment seeks to empower both genders. These women AIC leaders, therefore, offer an excellent model of sharing power.

*Hearing and answering God’s call*

Apart from visions and dreams, some are called. They hear God calling them to church leadership. Hearing here underlines these women’s oral history in leadership. This strategy seemed to cut across all the three traditions, but it is

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particularly common among evangelical women. If God calls men and women and if they both hear this call and respond positively, as the above examples demonstrate, then gender discriminations that are in the society, churches, texts and theology can be carefully sidelined – although, as we have seen above, some gendered training programmes continue to frustrate the voice of God that speaks to all.

*When God opens the Bible for women!*

But as some of the above narratives of women church leaders demonstrate, God does open the Bible for women through visions, dreams and the spirit. Women are referred to biblical texts that support their humanity call, such as Matt 13: 31-34. The *written* word, however, comes to confirm the *heard* word. The Written Word affirms women’s empowerment in leadership, rather than sanctioning their marginalization.

*Expressing interest, experience and academic achievement*

The above histories of women church leaders also provide models of the right to express personal interest and acting upon it. That is, a woman need not be confined to bodily illness, seeing visions and having dreams to legitimate taking up church leadership. One can feel inspired; see the need and act on that to assume church leadership. The latter can be accompanied by undertaking the appropriate theological training. One can even be inspired by male leaders, be they fathers, husbands, or any male pastor, to break the seemingly patriarchal role and assume leadership in the church. One can also rise from one’s position of leadership to another by being active in the church life and demonstrating that one has passion for church and serving God’s people. These strategies are prevalent among mainline churches, although they are not limited to them. This approach underlines that women’s call to leadership in the church should also be dependent upon one’s decision, needs of her community and church – that is, context. God also speaks to women and men through their contexts.

In sum, the histories of these Botswana churchwomen in leadership, point to another text, another space beyond the discriminative histories, societies, institutions and texts. We are made to understand that God may speak to and amongst us without necessarily opening the Bible to us, as Bishop Virginia Lucas points out.92 Their stories, therefore, point to another canon – a canon of a God who works for and through all; a God who does not get limited by discriminative gender boundaries. Their histories are a challenge to many who often say, ‘the Bible says,’ or ‘the church constitution and tradition

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says,’ using written texts to debar women from church leadership. Their histories call us to practice our faith within a wider framework theology: a theology of gender justice. This is attested to by the lives of women church leaders of Botswana in many wonderful ways. But perhaps this is best captured by the words of Archbishop Mpinini Mpatane, who says:

The word of God is for everyone. When the word comes to you, it does not matter whether you are male or female. That is why God chose me. God chose me a woman, to establish a church and help people. Why didn’t God choose a man? It is because in the eyes of God it does not matter... This shows that in God there is neither male nor female.83

References

83 Tshinano, *Women Church Leaders*, p. 46.


We have recently celebrated ten years of liberation, ten years of democracy, and in the last month (May 2006) we have celebrated ten years of our new Constitution. Much has been accomplished in these ten years. The courts play a crucial role in upholding our law in general and our Constitution and our Bill of Rights in particular. Writing on the eve of our liberation, James Cochrane and I argued that because public discourse about the nature and conditions of society has been denied the bulk of the population for so long. We envisaged this task as one that should be taken up in the construction of a new constitution and system of law in South Africa. Our Constitution is a mirror reflecting the national soul. The product of national consensus, a joint project of the South African people, our Constitution gives us, for the first time in our history, a foundational document that legitimately constituted the basis upon which all governmental authority must be exercised.

We are a society in transition, hopefully moving towards the full realisation of these ideals. This qualification is based on two factors. First, there is the question of the pace at which we are moving and the distance that still remains before we reach the desired destination, when the reality of our everyday lives will fully match the reflection in the mirror. Second, and related, is our current reality, in which we still suffer from massive problems. Poverty and unemployment, crime and corruption, HIV/AIDS and lack of basic resources are but a few of the evils that continue to delay fulfilment of our constitutional dream.

The principle of an independent judiciary goes to the very heart of sustainable constitutional democracy based on the rule of law. We have undergone a fundamental transformation in South Africa, one that can appropriately be designated as liberation. Is there any further role, then, for liberation theologies and hermeneutics in South Africa? Or, more colloquially, as one of my colleagues asked me with a mischievous smile on the day of our liberation, 'What will you now do, Gerald?' My response to my colleague, also with a smile, was a biblical one: Jesus said, You always have the poor with you (Matthew 26: 11, Mark 14: 7, John 12: 8). Jesus, I hope, was not being fatalistic about the abiding presence of the poor for all time, and neither was I. I am something of an idealist and have not given up on utopian visions (though such visions have not been as prevalent in South African liberation theologies as they have in Latin American liberation the-
ologies). My snappy reply to my colleague was, however, more than tea-time banter. My understanding of liberation theology is fundamentally formed by the late Per Frostin’s analysis, in which he argues that liberation theology (and neither he nor I am wedded to this term) should be defined with methodology and not content as the distinguishing characteristic. In this chapter I will address the question of the place of liberation hermeneutics after liberation.

Introduction
We have recently celebrated ten years of liberation, ten years of democracy, and in the last month (May 2006) we have celebrated ten years of our new Constitution. Much has been accomplished in these ten years. As our Chief Justice, Pius Langa said, reflecting on the tenth anniversary of the Constitution:

A number of factors indicate that our democracy is alive and well. The multiparty parliamentary system has fared reasonably well and structures have been set up to hold MPs and other public representatives and officials to account; regular elections, which have been free and fair, have been held; institutions to facilitate the advancement and protection of fundamental rights and equality have been set up; the media and other organs of civil society go about their work freely and, to a large extent, effectively.¹

Langa continues by placing emphasis on one particular institution, that of the courts, and their role in upholding our law in general and our Constitution and our Bill of Rights in particular. As an institution the courts, he continues:

whose function is to resolve legal disputes and to ensure that the extensive powers of government are not abused, are carrying out their tasks effectively. This has been possible because of the guarantees of a legal system that provides for an independent judiciary, which commands the respect both of government and the general population.²

In my view Langa is right to place emphasis on our legal accomplishments over the past ten years. Writing on the eve of our liberation, James Cochrane and I argued that because public discourse about the nature and conditions of society has been denied the bulk of the population for so long:

To resolve the problem of violence requires the construction of adequate patterns of discourse which will take the root conditions of past violence into account. To

² Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
demand reconciliation when adequate patterns of discourse are not yet in place merely demonstrates a hidden agenda... In other words, the task is not just a matter of defining an adequate framework for the future, but also of incorporating the effects of the past into the constitution of a renewed society.³

We envisaged this task as one that should be taken up in the construction of a new constitution and system of law in South Africa.⁴

Langa is right then when he says, citing the late Ismail Mahomed, a former Chief Justice, that our Constitution is a mirror reflecting the national soul. The product of national consensus, a joint project of the South African people, our Constitution gives us, for the first time in our history, a foundational document that legitimately constituted the basis upon which all governmental authority must be exercised.⁵ ‘The national soul that we see reflected in this mirror is one that espouses non-racism and non-sexism, that upholds the rule of law, democratic ideals and the foundational values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms’.⁶

While stating that these are the ideals we have committed ourselves to, Langa immediately notes that we are, however, a society in transition, hopefully moving towards the full realisation of these ideals. His qualification is based on two factors. First, there is the question of the pace at which we are moving and the distance that still remains before we reach the desired destination, when the reality of our everyday lives will fully match the reflection in the mirror.⁷

Second, and related, is our current reality, in which we still suffer from massive problems. Poverty and unemployment, crime and corruption, HIV/AIDS and lack of basic resources are but a few of the evils that continue to delay fulfilment of our constitutional dream.⁸

In the rest of his article Langa goes on to argue that in this context the principle of an independent judiciary goes to the very heart of sustainable constitutional democracy based on the rule of law.⁹ However, in his conclud-

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⁵ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
⁶ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
⁷ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
⁸ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
⁹ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
ing call to action, without diminishing the rule of law, Langa identifies both the limits and the potential of our legal transformation, embodied in our Constitution:

Despite its centrality to our young country, the wisdom of its provisions and its power as an instrument for change, the Constitution is not a magic wand that can sweep away the evils that history has burdened us with without any effort on our part. The Constitution is a call and a guide to a better place. But we must follow it with the same energy and commitment with which we fought apartheid.¹⁰

We have undergone a fundamental transformation in South Africa, one that can appropriately be designated as liberation. Is there any further role, then, for liberation theologies and hermeneutics in South Africa? Or, more colloquially, as one of my colleagues asked me with a mischievous smile on the day of our liberation, ‘What will you now do, Gerald?’

My response to my colleague, also with a smile, was a biblical one: Jesus said, You always have the poor with you (Matthew 26: 11, Mark 14: 7, John 12: 8). Jesus, I hope, was not being fatalistic about the abiding presence of the poor for all time, and neither was I. Like Pius Langa I am something of an idealist and have not given up on utopian visions (though such visions have not been as prevalent in South African liberation theologies as they have in Latin American liberation theologies). My snappy reply to my colleague was, however, more than tea-time banter. My understanding of liberation theology is fundamentally formed by the late Per Frostin’s analysis, in which he argues that liberation theology (and neither he nor I are wedded to this term) should be defined with methodology and not content as the distinguishing characteristic.¹¹

In the next section I will revisit Frostin’s formulation before going on to use this formulation to interrogate our current context in South Africa. In so doing I will address the question of the place of liberation hermeneutics after liberation.

‘Liberation theology’

Writing in the late 1980s and drawing on a range of liberation theologies (including African theologies, South African Black Theology, Tanzanian Ujamaa Theology, Asian theologies, feminist theologies, and even First World liberal-political theologies) Frostin’s analysis of liberation theologies finds five interrelated emphases: the choice of ‘interlocutors’, the perception of

¹⁰ Langa, ‘Our Call to a Better Place’.
God, social analysis, the choice of theological tools, and the relationship between theory and practice.\(^{12}\)

With respect to the first, the choice of interlocutors, Frostin argues that the emphasis in liberation theologies (I prefer the plural, though Frostin uses the singular) has been on social relations, not ideas, as has been the tendency in post-Enlightenment Western theology. This emphasis, Frostin goes on to argue, leads to a new question, namely, Who are the interlocutors of theology? Or, Who are asking the questions that theologians try to answer?\(^{13}\) And this new question is given a decisive answer by liberation theologies (and by me to my colleague during tea-time): a preferential option for the poor.\(^{14}\) This choice of interlocutors is more than an ethical commitment; it is also an epistemological commitment, requiring a theological starting point within the social analysis of the poor themselves.

The other four emphases of liberation theologies each flow from this first, which is why it has been so formative in my own work and why I evoked Jesus’s words in reply to my colleague. As long as the poor are with us (which hopefully will not be always), there is work for liberation theologies. This is what I was trying to say.

As Frostin goes on to say, turning to his second emphasis, the choice of interlocutors has important consequences not only for the interpretation of social reality but also for the understanding of God.\(^{15}\) As the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) so aptly expressed it, The question about God in the world of the oppressed is not knowing whether God exists or not, but knowing on which side God is.\(^{16}\) Put differently, in liberation theologies the search for the true God and the struggle against the idols become central tasks of theology.\(^{17}\)

The third emphasis, that of social analysis, also derives from the first, for the option for the poor as the chief interlocutors of theology is based on a conflictual perception of the social reality, affirming that there is a difference between the perspectives of the privileged ‘from above’ and of the poor ‘from below’.\(^{18}\) EATWOT reports characterise the world as a divided world, where doing theology can only be done within the framework of an analysis of these conflicts.\(^{19}\) The poles of conflict or struggle (to use the term common


\(^{19}\) Cited in Frostin, *Liberation theology in Tanzania*. 
in South African liberation theologies included, according to Frostin’s summary of EATWOT’s analysis, rich-poor (economic), capitalists-proletariat (classist), North-South (geographic), male-female (sexist), white-black (ethnic/racist), dominant-dominated cultures (cultural). While EATWOT, one of the major sources of Frostin’s analysis, consistently stressed the interrelatedness of these struggles, many of the debates within EATWOT centred around the priority given to and the relationship between different levels of oppression. Generally speaking, says Frostin, the discussion has followed continental lines of divisions, where Latin Americans have emphasized the value of socioeconomic analysis while Africans and Asians have tended to stress religio-cultural analysis, and where women from each of these continents have emphasized, increasingly, gender analysis.

The fourth emphasis in Frostin’s analysis of the methodology of liberation theologies has to do with the relationship between the social sciences and theology. With a different interlocutor and a different perception of God, liberation theologians need different tools for their theological reflection. There is a shift in liberation theologies from philosophy as the primary cognitive discipline alongside theology to the social sciences. Among the first tasks of a theological deployment of the social sciences is the identification of ‘the poor’. As Frostin notes, this involves more than economic statistics; rather, the term denotes the underprivileged in the different power structures and must be clarified [with the poor as interlocutors] by means of social analysis. As Frostin goes on to argue, economic analysis is a necessary dimension of the theological discernment between God and idol. Significantly, Frostin states in passing that the kind of alliance liberation theologies forge between theology and the social sciences differentiates it from a Western sociology of knowledge (Marxist or non-Marxist) precisely in the insistence on the poor as the interlocutors of theology. Again, the primacy of the first condition, namely, the poor as interlocutors, is evident.

Given that power relations are central to the analysis of all liberation theologies, Marxist modes of analysis are a generally accepted dimension, though the actual use of Marxist analysis differs from group to group, de-

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23 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 9.
26 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 9.
pending on the form of oppression which is the focus of a particular liberation theology. However, even those African forms of liberation theology which emphasise socioeconomic oppression do so in ways which are more nuanced than classical Marxism. First, African liberation theologies define the main contradiction in society as more complex than does classical Marxism. In classical Marxism the main contradiction is analyzed in terms of classes, which are defined by their roles in production. Hence, capital and labour are the two opposite poles in the analysis of the contemporary ‘class struggle’. Even though capital-labour is clearly one dimension of their analysis of the African struggle, African liberation theologies adopt a multi-dimensional analysis of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed, which includes race, gender and culture.

Second, the cultural dimension of oppression is emphasized in [African] liberation theology far more than in classical Marxism, which is what unites African forms of liberation theology. Third, while classical Marxism maintains that material production conditions human thought, African theologies of liberation emphasize the creativity of the oppressed in a way that differs fundamentally from classical Marxism. The difference is especially striking when compared with the Marxist-Leninist theory of party where the cadres, the ‘conscious’ élite, are seen as necessary tools to inculcate the masses with a revolutionary consciousness. In the words of the African-American public intellectual and theologian Cornel West:

Though Marxists have sometimes viewed oppressed people as political or economic agents, they have rarely viewed them as cultural agents. Yet, without such a view there can be no adequate conception of the capacity of oppressed people, the capacity to change the world and sustain the change in an emancipatory manner. And without a conception of such capacity, it is impossible to envision, let alone create, a socialist society of freedom and democracy. It is, in part, the European Enlightenment legacy: the inability to believe in the capacities of oppressed people to create cultural products of value and oppositional groups of value which stands between contemporary Marxism and oppressed people.

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27 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 9.
28 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 182.
29 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 182.
30 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 182.
31 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, pp. 182-183.
Frostin’s fifth and final emphasis is the dialectics between praxis and theology. In liberation theologies, theology is a second act. The first act is the praxis of action and reflection. The action is actual action in a particular struggle; integrally related to this action is reflection on the action; and integrally related to this action-induced reflection is further action, refined or reconstituted by the reflection on and reconsideration of theory (and so on goes the cyclical process). Out of this first act of praxis second order liberation theologies are constructed. How they are constructed and by whom is the subject of ongoing debate. Frostin favours a strong role for theologians and organic intellectuals in assisting the poor to break their silence and create their own language, though his sustained emphasis on the poor as primary interlocutors poses serious questions to this position.

I will return to these constituent elements of liberation theologies in the discussion that follows, though in a more focussed form as I discuss South African liberation theologies. I have used Frostin’s analysis of liberation theologies in general because it draws on a wide range of related liberation theologies in dialogue. The data Frostin uses is drawn substantially from the self constituted dialogue of Third World theologians working together in forums such as EATWOT. What I have summarised above are the family resemblances (to use Ludwig Wittgenstein’s phrase) among liberation theologies, and they provide a useful preface to the analysis which follows. In the next section I will discuss four or five strands of liberation theology in South Africa, before, in the final section of this essay, offering some reflection on ‘matters arising’.

Liberation theologies in South Africa
There are five or six main strands of liberation theology in South Africa. These include Black Theology, African Theology, Contextual Theology, Confessing Theology, African Women’s Theology, and HIV-Positive Theology. Though some historical perspective will be necessary, my concern is to examine each of these liberation theologies in the period after liberation.

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33 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 10.
34 Frostin, Liberation theology in Tanzania, p. 10.
Though I will try to discuss them holistically, my analysis will concentrate on their biblical hermeneutics.

Black Theology

Though the roots of Black Theology could be traced back to the very first encounters between southern African indigenous peoples and Bible bearing missionary/colonial forces, Black Theology as such emerged in the context of the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Tinikho Maluleke, the most productive Black theologian at present, identifies three phases of South African Black Theology. Though Maluleke’s phases follow a chronological periodisation, he stresses the continuity between the phases:

The first phase starts with the formation of the Black Theology Project by the University Christian Movement in 1970, while the second starts in 1981 with the establishment of the Institute for Contextual Theology. In phase one, Black Theology, though acknowledging Blackness to be a state of mind, nevertheless took objective Blackness as its starting point in such a way that all Black people were the focus of liberation and the whole Bible (Christianity) could be used for liberation. In phase two, objective Blackness, in and of itself, is no longer sufficient. Not all Black people are the focus of Black Theology. Not all theology done by Black people is Black Theology and not all the Bible (Christianity) is liberating. Furthermore, while phase one Black Theology was closely linked to the Black Consciousness philosophy, phase two Black Theology recognized a wider ideological ferment within the Black Theology movement. Most distinctive of the se-

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cond phase has been the increasing introduction of Marxist historical materialism in the hermeneutic of Black Theology.  

In terms of biblical hermeneutics, phase one is characterised by a hermeneutic of trust. The overall interpretative orientation towards the Bible is one of trust. A hermeneutic of trust is evident in a number of respects. First, as in much of African Theology (and African American Black Theology and Latin American Liberation Theology), the Bible is considered to be a primary source of Black Theology. The Bible belongs to Black Theology in the sense that doing theology without it is unthinkable. Second, the Bible is perceived to be primarily on the side of the black struggle for liberation and life in South Africa. The Bible belongs to Black Theology in the sense that the struggle for liberation and life is central to them both. While there is definitely an awareness that there are different, sometimes complementing and sometimes contradicting, theologies in the Bible, this is understood as evidence of the thoroughly contextual nature of the Bible and, because the pervasive theological trajectory is one of liberation, the plurality of theologies in the Bible is unproblematic for Black Theology. Those who use the Bible against black South Africans are therefore misinterpreting the Bible, because the Bible is basically on the side of Black Theology.

The biblical hermeneutics of phase two Black Theology inaugurates one of the most significant contributions to liberation theologies. While the external problem of the misuse of the Bible by oppressive and reactionary white South African Christians remains, phase two Black Theology identifies a more fundamental problem - the internal problem of the Bible itself. Tshangela Mofokeng is critical of those who concentrate only on the external problem, those who accuse oppressor-preachers of misusing the Bible for their oppressive purposes and objectives and preachers and racist whites of not practising what they preach. It is clear, Mofokeng maintains, that these responses are based on the assumption that the Bible is essentially a book of liberation. While Mofokeng concedes that these responses, so characteristic of phase

42 Tutu, Hope and Suffering, p. 106.
one-type biblical hermeneutics, have a certain amount of validity to them, the
crucial point he wants to make is that there are numerous texts, stories and
traditions in the Bible which lend themselves to only oppressive interpreta-
tions and oppressive uses because of their inherent oppressive nature. What is
more, he insists, any attempt to ‘save’ or ‘co-opt’ these oppressive texts for
the oppressed only serve the interests of the oppressors. Itumeleng Mosala
is the clearest of phase two Black theologians on this matter. In an early
essay on The Use of the Bible in Black Theology he is the first Black theologie-
gian to question in print the ambiguous ideological nature of Bible itself. Mosala’s basic critique is directed at Black Theology’s exegetical starting
point which expresses itself in the notion that the Bible is the revealed ‘Word
of God’. He traces this view of the Bible as an absolute, non-ideological
‘Word of God’ back to the work of James Cone.

Mosala’s contention is that most of the Bible offers no certain starting
point for a theology of liberation within itself. For example, he argues that
the biblical book of Micah is eloquent in its silence about the ideological
struggle waged by the oppressed and exploited class of monarchic Israel. In
other words, it is a ruling class document and represents the ideological and
political interests of the ruling class. As such there is simply too much de-ideologization to be made before it can be hermeneutically straightfor-
ward in terms of the struggle for liberation. The Bible, therefore, cannot be
the hermeneutical starting point of Black theology. Rather, those committed
to the struggles of the black oppressed and exploited people cannot ignore the
history, culture, and ideologies of the dominated black people as their pri-
mary hermeneutical starting point.

However, this does not mean that Mosala totally rejects the Bible. While
the Bible cannot be the primary starting point for Black theology there are
enough contradictions within the book [of Micah, for example] to enable eyes
that are hermeneutically trained in the struggle for liberation today to observe
the kin struggles of the oppressed and exploited of the biblical communities

45 T. Molokeng, ‘Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation’, in Journal of Black
46 I.J. Mosala, ‘The Use of the Bible in Black Theology’, in I.J. Mosala & B. Tha-
gale (eds.), The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black Theology (Jo-
hannesburg: Skotaville, 1986); I.J. Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black The-
47 I.J. Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa. Grand
45 Mosala, ‘The Use of the Bible’, p. 196; Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black
Theology, pp. 120-121.
47 Mosala, The Unquestionable Right to be Free, p. 197.
in the very absences of those struggles in the text. Because the Bible is a product and a record of class struggles, Black theologians are able to detect glimpses of liberation and of a determinate social movement galvanized by a powerful religious ideology in the biblical text. But, he continues, the existence of this phenomenon is not in question; rather, the problem here is one of developing an adequate hermeneutical framework that can rescue those liberating themes from the biblical text. Mosala goes on in his work to offer an adequate hermeneutical framework for Black Theology (phase two), proposing a dialectic between an appropriation of black culture and experience and an appropriation of the Bible. Central to Mosala’s hermeneutics of liberation is the search for a theoretical perspective that can locate both the Bible and the black experience within appropriate socio-historical contexts. Historical-critical tools (to delimit and historically locate texts), supplemented by sociological resources (including a historical-materialist understanding of struggle) provide the theoretical perspective for Mosala’s treatment of texts; historical-materialism, particularly its appropriation of ‘struggle’ as a key concept, provides the sociological categories and concepts necessary to read and critically appropriate both black history and culture and the Bible. The category of struggle becomes an important hermeneutical factor not only in one’s reading of his or her history and culture but also in one’s understanding of the history, nature, ideology, and agenda of the biblical texts.

In order to undertake this kind of analysis, Mosala argues, black interpreters must be engaged in the threefold task of Terry Eagleton’s revolutionary cultural worker: a task that is projective, polemical, and appropriative. While Mosala does not doubt that (phase one) Black Theology is projective and appropriative in its use of the Bible, it is certainly not polemical – in the sense of being critical – in its biblical hermeneutics. Black Theology has not interrogated the text ideologically in class, cultural, gender, and age terms. Black Theology has not gauged the grain or asked in what code the biblical

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48 Mosala, The Unquestionable Right to be Free, p. 196.
49 Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology, p. 40.
52 Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology, p. 32.
text is cast and so has read the biblical text as an innocent and transparent container of a message or messages.\textsuperscript{53}

Returning to Maluleke’s analysis, the contours of the third (post-liberation) phase of Black Theology are more difficult to discern, says Maluleke, because we are living in and through it.\textsuperscript{54} Nevertheless, he does offer a tentative sketch of the third phase. Repudiating allegations of Black Theology’s ‘death’ after liberation, Maluleke argues that the third phase of Black Theology draws deeply on resources within earlier phases of Black Theology, and elaborates these formative impulses into the future.

First, while the plurality of ideological positions and political strategies in the construction of Black Theology has been acknowledged since the early 1980s, the ideological and political plurality within Black Theology in the 1990s is more marked and brings with it a new 90s-type temptation that must be refused. Ideological and political plurality in post-apartheid (and post-colonial) South Africa must avoid both the temptation of an uncommitted play with pluralism and the temptation of a despairing paralysis (perhaps even an abandonment) of commitment. Despite the pressures of ideological and political plurality, commitment remains the first act in Black Theology, whatever the particular brand.\textsuperscript{55}

Second, if race was the central category in the first phase of Black Theology, and if the category of class was placed alongside it in the second phase of Black Theology, then gender as a significant category has joined them in the third phase of Black Theology. But, once again, the tendency to minimise the foundational feature of Black Theology, namely, race, must be resisted, argues Maluleke. Gender, like class, in South Africa always has a racial component. Furthermore, warns Maluleke, in a context where race is no longer supposed to matter,\textsuperscript{56} racism often takes on different guises and becomes more ‘sophisticated’.\textsuperscript{57}

The third and final feature of phase three Black Theology has three related prongs, each of which might be considered as a separate element. Here, however, I want to stress their connectedness, as does Maluleke, and so will treat them as sub-elements of a formative feature of the third phase of South African Black Theology. The formative feature of phase three Black Theology is the identification of African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and African

\textsuperscript{53} Mosain, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{54} Maluleke, ‘Black Theology as Public Discourse’, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{55} Maluleke, ‘Black Theology as Public Discourse’, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{56} Maluleke, ‘Black Theology as Public Discourse’, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{57} Maluleke, ‘Black Theology as Public Discourse’, p. 62.
Independent/Instituted/Initiated Churches (AICs) as significant (perhaps even primary?) dialogue partners.  

Subsumed under this general feature, the first of the three prongs has to do with culture. Whereas phase one Black theology ventured somewhat into cultural issues, phase two became more and more concerned with the struggle of black people against racist, political and economic oppression. However, at crucial moments connections with African culture would be made – provided that culture was understood as a site of struggle rather than a fixed set of rules and behaviours. Culture remains problematised in phase three, but the envisaged rapprochement with ATRs and AICs that characterises phase three foregrounds culture in a form not found in phase two.

The second prong has to do with solidarity with the poor. In each of its phases, Black Theology has sought to place a high premium on solidarity with the poor and not with the state or its organs, however democratic and benevolent such a state might be. While such a position must not be mistaken with a sheer anti-state stance, Black Theology is first and foremost not about the powerful but about the powerless and the silenced. And, and I stress this conjunction, serious interest in ATRs and AICs affords Black Theology in phase three another chance of demonstrating solidarity with the poor, for ATRs is [sic] the religion of the poor in this country.

Closely related to the first and second prong, but particularly to the first, is a third. By making culture a site of struggle, Black Theology managed to relativise the Christian religion sufficiently enough to encourage dialogue not only with ATRs but with past and present struggles in which religions helped people to take part, either in acquiescence or in resistance. If, as Mosala has argued, African culture can be a primary site of a hermeneutics of struggle for African Theology, supplemented only with a political class-based hermeneutics, then Christianity is not a necessary component in a Black Theology of liberation. A key question, therefore, for the third phase of South African Black Theology is, Have black and African theologies made the necessary

epistemological break from orthodox or classical Christian theology required to effect ‘a creative reappropriation of traditional African religions’.

Speaking to his own question, Maluleke argues that South African Black Theology has tended to use classical Christian tools, doctrines and instruments – for example the Bible and Christology for its purposes. Black Theology has used Christianity to get the land back and get the land back without losing the Bible.

Realising that Christianity and the Bible continue to be a haven of the Black masses, black theologians reckoned that it would not be advisable simply to disavow the Christian faith and consequently be rid of the obnoxious Bible. Instead the Bible and the Christian faith should be shaped into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of just leaving it to confuse, frustrate or even destroy our people. Preoccupation with Christian doctrines and ideas was, for black theology therefore, not primarily on account of faith or orthodoxy considerations, but on account of Christianity’s apparent appeal to the black masses.

Given this analysis, Maluleke goes on to argue:

What needs to be re-examined now [in phase three] however, is the extent to which the alleged popularity of Christianity assumed in South African black theology is indeed an accurate assessment of the religious state of black people. If it were to be shown that ATRs are as popular as Christianity among black South Africans then in not having given much concerted attention to them, black theology might have overlooked an important resource. There is now space for this to be corrected by making use of alternative approaches.

As I have shown, via Maluleke’s analysis, one of the important features of phase three Black Theology is the recognition, recovery, and revival of its links with ATRs and AICs, and in so doing renewing its dialogue with African Theology in its many and various forms. In other words, Maluleke could be said to be revisiting and questioning Mofokeng’s assertion that African traditional religions are too far behind most blacks. Is this actually the case,

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66 Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black theology, p. 194.
asks Maluleke? Gabriel Setiloane asks the question even more starkly: why do we continue to seek to convert to Christianity the devotees of African traditional religion?\textsuperscript{72} This, says Maluleke, is a crucial question for all African theologies [including South African Black Theology] as we move into the twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{73}

Alongside this question, of course, looms the related question, prompted by Maluleke’s analysis, of whether Black Theology can be done without the Bible. If it is true, as is claimed by both Mofokeng and Mosala, that the Bible is primarily of strategic, not substantive,\textsuperscript{74} importance to Black Theology – a claim that is vigorously rejected by Desmond Tutu,\textsuperscript{75} Boesak,\textsuperscript{76} Simon Maimela,\textsuperscript{77} and many other Black theologians – then there are good grounds for a Black Theology without ‘the Book.’

However, Maluleke, like Mofokeng, doubts whether pragmatic and moral arguments can be constructed in a manner that will speak to masses without having to deal with the Bible in the process of such constructions.\textsuperscript{78} The Bible remains in the 1990s, and probably into the millennium, a ‘haven of the Black masses’:\textsuperscript{79} And as long as it is a resource, it must be confronted, precisely at a hermeneutical level.\textsuperscript{80} Quite what Maluleke means by this is not yet clear, but he does offer some clues, which emerge in his dialogue with the biblical hermeneutics of African Women’s Theology.\textsuperscript{81}


\textsuperscript{75} See D.M. Tutu, \textit{Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches} (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1983).

\textsuperscript{76} See A. Boesak, \textit{Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition} (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1984).


He agrees with Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who speaks with many African women (see below), when she says that the problem with the Bible in Africa is that throughout Africa, the Bible has been and continues to be absolutized; it is one of the oracles that we consult for instant solutions and responses.\(^{82}\) However, continues Maluleke, while many African biblical scholars and theologians are locked into a biblical hermeneutics that makes exaggerated connections between the Bible and African heritage, on the whole, and in practice, [ordinary] African Christians are far more innovative and subversive in their appropriation of the Bible than they appear.\(^{83}\)

They may mouth the Bible-is-equal-to-the-Word-of-God formula, they are actually creatively pragmatic and selective in their use of the Bible so that the Bible may enhance rather than frustrate their life struggles. The task before Black Theology, then, is not only to develop creative Biblical hermeneutic methods, but also to observe and analyse the manner in which African Christians ‘read’ and view the Bible.\(^{84}\)

This task lies before us, and there are signs that it is being taken up.\(^{85}\) As the work of Mofokeng and Mosala has hinted, ordinary black South Africans have adopted a variety of strategies in dealing with an ambiguous Bible, including rejecting it\(^{86}\) and strategically appropriating it as a site of struggle.\(^{87}\) But, as I have argued,\(^{88}\) in order to do justice to Maluleke’s project in our post-liberation context much more detailed case studies need to be done. This descriptive task is as important as reappropriating Mosala’s socio-historical materialist biblical hermeneutics in our post-liberation context. Much has changed, but much remains the same. As Alistair Kee recognises, one of the most significant contributions of South African Black Theology has been in tracing the origins of oppression back to interest and relations of power (a contribution he attributes to Mokgethi Motlhobi\(^{89}\) and in so doing rooting oppression in the economic base of society, a contribution exemplified by

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88 West, ‘The Open and Closed Bible’.
Mosala and given fresh analytical rigour by Sampie Terreblanche's work on South Africa's history and present as one characterised by economic inequality. In summary, the biblical hermeneutic task after liberation is both polemical and descriptive of what actually happens with the Bible among African Christians.

From the perspective of Black Theology, then, there is still plenty on the agenda to do. Though our post-liberation context has drawn many of our most productive Black theologians into governmental and educational leadership, the trajectories established by Black Theology remain intact, though the capacity to develop them has been somewhat diminished.

African theology
Black Theology has always considered itself an African theology, though this has sometimes been contested by African theologians in the rest of the African continent. When South African Black Theology emerged during the early 1970s, some African theologians squarely declared that this new brand of theology [with its strong socio-political emphasis and biblical hermeneutic of suspicion] could not be regarded as a branch of African theology. Some Black theologians were equally sharp in their criticism of the narrowness of the first endeavours of African theology, finding it too pre-occupied with a static, pre-colonial culture. Desmond Tutu, among others, said that he feared that African Theology had failed to produce a sufficiently sharp cutting edge, arguing that African Theology had to recover its prophetic calling and be more concerned for the poor and the oppressed.

Since South African Black Theology has been the predominant form of African Theology in South Africa, I will not say too much more about African Theology, except to point to a resurgence in the domain that is usually associated with African Theology, namely the socio-cultural domain. As Maluleke's analysis of phase three Black Theology clearly shows, African re-

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92 For various typologies of African theologies, see Frostin, Liberation Theology in Tanzania; Maluleke, 'Black and African Theologies'; Maluleke, 'Half a Century of African Christian Theologies'.
93 Frostin, Liberation Theology in Tanzania, p. 176.
94 Frostin, Liberation Theology in Tanzania, p. 176.
ligion and culture have moved from the periphery to the centre within Black Theology after liberation. While liberation in 1994 ushered in substantial socio-political liberation, the ravages of centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid on African religious and cultural life had hardly been addressed. Prioritising the socio-political was a deliberate strategy of Black Theology, and though its responses to religio-cultural concerns may at times have seemed ambiguous at best to AIC practitioners and their associated theologians, both Black Theology and Contextual Theology proponents have returned to religio-cultural concerns after liberation.

From the perspective of biblical hermeneutics, the liberation of South Africa has ushered in sustained dialogue and hermeneutical exchange between the socio-political emphasis of South African biblical hermeneutics and the religio-cultural emphasis of African biblical hermeneutics to the north of us. Certainly the Limpopo River is no longer a barrier between these different emphases. Indeed, much that is innovative in African biblical scholarship

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derives its energy from the deliberate dialogue that is taking place in African biblical hermeneutics. 100

Contextual theology
The South African apartheid state, with its overt theological foundation, demonised liberation theology and relentlessly detained anyone associated with such forms of theology. The term ‘contextual theology’ was coined to subvert the apartheid state’s efforts, and became an umbrella term embracing a variety of particular or situational theologies in South Africa. 101 Unfortunately, however, because of a lack of sustained collaboration between Latin American-derived contextual theologies and Black Theology-derived liberation theologies, 102 ‘contextual theology’ also came to be considered as another, separate, form of liberation theology.

In its particular form, Contextual Theology (and the upper case is appropriate here) clusters around at least four poles. The first is the work of Albert Nolan, who drew on elements of Latin American Liberation Theology and re-contextualised and popularized them in South Africa. 103 The second coordinating point for Contextual Theology has been the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), an institution with whom Nolan worked for many years, but which included the contributions of a host of church leaders and Christian activists of all kinds. 104 At its inaugural conference in 1982, Albert Nolan characterised the vision of the Institute for Contextual Theology as follows,

104 Cochrane, ‘Questioning Contextual Theology’. 
and in doing so provided a foundational understanding of Contextual Theology itself. The ICT, Nolan said:

[...] wants to do theology quite explicitly and consciously from within the context of real life in South Africa. It wants to start from the fundamentally political character of life in South Africa. It wants to take fully into account the various forms of oppression that exist in South Africa: racial oppression, the oppression of the working class and the oppression of women. And finally it wants to start from the actual experience of the oppressed themselves.\(^{105}\)

The third pole around which Contextual Theology in its particular form has located itself is The Kairos Document.\(^{106}\) The Kairos Document was important both as a process and a product. As a product, The Kairos Document articulated 'Theology' as contested. The Kairos Document identified and analysed three contending theologies in South Africa: State Theology, Church Theology, and Prophetic Theology. Briefly, State Theology is the theology of the South African apartheid State which is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.\(^{107}\) Church Theology is in a limited, guarded and cautious way critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation.\(^{108}\) The Kairos Document moves towards a Prophetic Theology, a theology which speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.\(^{109}\)

While The Kairos Document had a number of shortcomings, especially its failure to engage overtly with South African Black Theology, it did make a massive impact on how we thought about religion, particularly Christianity, during the struggle for liberation. Roundly and publically condemned by the apartheid state, The Kairos Document was also rejected by many of the institutional churches, including the so-called English-speaking churches. The initial wave of responses from the churches questioned the process of the

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107 Kairos, The Kairos Document, p. 3.
theological analysis contained in The Kairos Document.\textsuperscript{110} Theology that was made in the streets rather than in ecclesiastically controlled sites could not be proper theology, they claimed. Subsequent responses were more considered, but their spokesmen (mainly) still found it difficult to acknowledge that the theology of the church had failed to read the signs of the times, a key concept in The Kairos Document. That the public theology of the churches, ‘Theology’ with a capital ‘T’, was merely a form of either State Theology or Church Theology struck a theological nerve, and the value of the analysis remains relevant for our post-liberation context.

The fourth pole around which Contextual Theology could be said to cluster is its most important contribution. As a liberation theology, theological process was of particular importance to Contextual Theology. Describing the process that produced The Kairos Document, Nolan emphasised that it was not planned or foreseen by the staff of ICT. It simply happened as a result of ICT’s method of doing theology. Nolan then goes on to briefly characterise this method, saying that ICT simply enables people to do their own theological reflection upon their own praxis and experience, by bringing Christians together, facilitating discussion and action, recording what people say, and doing whatever research may be required to support the reflections, arguments and actions of the people.\textsuperscript{111} Using this method, two ICT staff members facilitated a process, beginning in Soweto one Saturday morning in July 1985, to reflect upon South Africa’s latest crisis, the recently declared State of Emergency.\textsuperscript{112} This led to The Kairos Document, a theological document that:

\[\ldots\] was vividly and dramatically contextual: it came straight out of the flames of the townships in 1985. Those who had no experience of the oppression, the repression, the suffering and the struggles of the peoples in the townships at the time were not able to understand the faith questions that were being tackled there, let alone the answers.\textsuperscript{113}


\textsuperscript{112} Nolan, ‘Kairos Theology’, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{113} Nolan, ‘Kairos Theology’, p. 213.
Elaborating on the process or method of Contextual Theology, James Cochrane, one of the founders of the Institute for Contextual Theology and both a proponent of and commentator on Contextual Theology, argues that one of the basic genres of contextual theology propagated in South Africa, pre-eminently by Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students and Albert Nolan, comes in the guise of the tripartite command to ‘See-Judge-Act’. In practice, McGlory Speckman and Larry Kaufmann tell us, this method meant starting with a social analysis, then proceeding to the reading of the biblical text and then to action. ‘Seeing’ involves careful social analysis of a particular context at a particular time, what was referred to as reading the signs of the times. ‘Judging’, which precedes acting, but which is based on having acted already, requires that we analyse the conditions of oppression in our context. The ‘acting’ that follows is enriched twice over by the first two discursive moves of seeing and judging. We assume that our action is both better informed as a result, and more effective.

Developed by Fr. Joseph Cardijn in the 1930s in Belgium, where he was working as a chaplain among factory workers (de Gruchy, Undated), ‘See-Judge-Act’ has been adopted and adapted in a range of Third World contexts, including South Africa. For example, among the Young Christian Workers (YCW), young workers begin by analysing the conditions experienced by themselves and their friends at work, at home and at school (‘See’). They assess the situation in the light of the Gospel (‘Judge’), and then try to improve the situation by taking appropriate action to change conditions (‘Act’). While Contextual Theology after liberation has produced nothing as prophetically seminal as The Kairos Document, and while the Institute for Contextual Theology is more or less defunct, its ‘See-Judge-Act’ methodology remains relevant in addressing the post-liberation context. Contextual Theology has lent its name and its methodology to a form of collaborative and emancipatory Bible study known as Contextual Bible Study.

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114 Cochrane, ‘Questioning Contextual Theology’, p. 76.
118 G.O. West, Contextual Bible Study (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993); G.O. West, The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003); G.O. West, ‘Contextual Bible Reading: A South African Case Study’, in Analecta Bruxellensia 10 (forth-
Operating within the methodological framework of ‘See-Judge-Act’, Contextual Bible Study (using the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research in the University of KwaZulu-Natal as its institutional base) utilises a four phase interpretive process. It begins with a particular oppressed community’s social concern (eg. unemployment) and the analysis which informs this concern, which are then brought into dialogue with a particular biblical text (usually an unfamiliar text or an unfamiliar textual unit). The interpretations which are generated in this initial encounter between context and text are recorded. The second phase of the process then moves into a close and careful literary engagement with the text, using a range of literary-type questions (eg. Who are the characters in this text and what do we know about them). A related third phase then shifts into a socio-historical engagement with the text, using resources the community already has and/or input from biblical scholarship. Importantly, this third phase flows organically from phase two and is therefore shaped by the questions the text and context generate for the community. The fourth and final phase returns the focus of the process to the community’s own knowledge and resources, re-engaging with the initial community concern. The process begins, then, with what we call ‘community consciousness’, moves through literary and socio-historical forms of ‘critical consciousness’, and concludes with ‘community consciousness’. Throughout this process there is a collaborative reading relationship between the socially engaged biblical scholar and the community.

In this form, then, Contextual Theology, though many of its founding practitioners and institutions are no longer operative, still offers important methodological resources for working with the Bible in oppressed communities after liberation.

Confessing theology
Again, I will not only deal with this strand briefly, for there has been considerable overlap with Black Theology and/or Contextual Theology. What makes this form of liberation theology worth mentioning in its own right is its location within particular church traditions.

In 1982 the South African Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC), a predominantly black church, declared that the situation confronting the churches in South Africa constituted a status confessionis – a state of confession – in which the very truth of the gospel was at stake. Specifically, the DRMC drafted a confession of faith, which was fully endorsed in 1986,

which set the DRMC apart from its ‘mother’ church, the mainly white Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The grounds for this separation were that the DRC had given theological, moral, and biblical sanction to the apartheid government.\textsuperscript{119}

What became known as The Belhar Confession\textsuperscript{120} remains a significant document, as Steve de Gruchy has pointed out to me, forming the guiding vision of the Accra confession of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. While those who worked within this theological strand may not have seen themselves doing liberation theology in this particular confessional struggle, many of them were also active in both Black and Contextual,\textsuperscript{121} and certainly used liberation theology methodology in their work.

Following the publication of The Kairos Document, two more confessional documents responded to its challenge from within the black Evangelical and black Pentecostal churches respectively, namely Evangelical Witness in South Africa and Relevant Pentecostal Witness.\textsuperscript{122} Again, many of those who made these confessions were active in Black Theology and/or Contextual Theology.\textsuperscript{123}

Integral to each of these confessional forms of liberation theology (as well as The Kairos Document) was a detailed engagement with the Bible, for each saw itself as contesting for the truth of the Bible over against its appropriation by the apartheid state and its alliance churches. What marked this strand of liberation theology was its refusal to abandon the institutional church to forces of racial discrimination and death, and its refusal to allow forces of discrimination and death, even within the church, to control biblical interpretation. The latter remains a significant feature of South African biblical scholarship.


\textsuperscript{120} Cloete & Smit, A Moment of Truth, pp. 1-6.


African Women's Theology

African Women’s Theology in South Africa both partakes of and contests ‘feminist’ theology. It partakes of ‘feminist’ theology in that it shares family resemblances with other forms of ‘feminist’ theology, but it contests the dominant white feminist version. In particular, African Women’s Theology includes and integrates the categories of race, class, and culture with that of gender. As Beverley Haddad argues, quoting Obioma Nnaemeka, a major flaw of feminist attempts to tame and name the feminist spirit in Africa is their failure to define African feminism on its own terms rather than in the context of Western feminism. This is why the work of African women, such as that produced by the Association of African Woman Scholars and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (which emerged as a gender a caucus from within EATWOT) have marked an important step in the process of African women defining feminist issues in their own terms.

Within South Africa more specifically the debate about ‘feminism’ has been strongly shaped by our apartheid history, so that race and class divides prescribe the parameters. This has resulted in a schism between academic feminists who have tended to be white, middle class women who have to a large extent been inactive in the political liberation struggle, and activists deeply committed to this struggle who have tended to be black and working class. Human rights and political liberation issues, strong on the activist agenda, hardly featured on the academic agenda which instead focused on equality as understood by first world feminists.

Throughout the 1980-90s and into the present, the apartheid legacy haunts South African women in their dialogue and in their activist and academic practice.

As in all Third World contexts, whether supported by published work or not, so in South African women’s resistance to oppression has been an en-

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128 Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 156.
129 Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 156.
during part of the previous century, though usually in racially divided forms.\textsuperscript{131} In the 1950s there were serious organisational attempts to constitute a non-racial women's movement, which had some success, particularly those associated with the non-racialism political agenda of the African National Congress (ANC). However, with the banning of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960 much of this non-racial momentum was lost, only to be reconstituted within the Mass Democratic Movement in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{132} This non-racial strand within the women's project in South Africa laid the foundation for the launching of the Women's National Coalition in 1992, which was itself given impetus by the unbanning of the ANC and PAC in 1990.\textsuperscript{133} However, though the Women's National Coalition was an attempt to draw women together from different backgrounds of race, class, religion, and political persuasion, racial tensions persisted.\textsuperscript{134}

In the post-apartheid context, South African women were deeply aware that debates between women over perceived interests and very real differences, the lack of unity and apparent failure to identify and struggle together against a single patriarchy have led to a perception that South African women's struggles lack a feminist consciousness.\textsuperscript{135} Writing from the perspective of black women, Amanda Kemp, Nozizwe Madlala, Asha Moodley, and Elaine Salo, identified three central assumptions that had shaped and should constitute the women's project:

First, our identities as women are shaped by race, class, and gender, and these identities have moulded our particular experiences of gender oppression. Second, our struggles as feminists encompass the struggles for national liberation from a brutal white state. Third, we have to challenge and transform Black patriarchies even though Black men have been our allies in the fight for national liberation. These three concerns are of equal importance and are often inextricably linked so


\textsuperscript{132} Haddad, African Women's Theologies of Survival, pp. 157-161.

\textsuperscript{133} Haddad, African Women's Theologies of Survival, pp. 159-160.

\textsuperscript{134} Haddad, African Women's Theologies of Survival, p. 162.

\textsuperscript{135} Haddad, African Women's Theologies of Survival, p. 162; see also Fester, 1997.

that a theoretical perspective that insists on isolating certain issues as feminist and others as not is alienating.\textsuperscript{137}

The situation was not that different in the women’s theological project in South Africa, as Haddad shows.

In the early stages of the women’s theological project in the 1980s, white women drew their impetus from feminist theological thinking from the first world. Black women increasingly aligned themselves with women theologians from the third world and African American women who had begun theologising their experiences as womanist theologians.\textsuperscript{138}

Indeed, what can be considered the first feminist theology conference in South Africa, hosted by the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) in 1984 under the title Women’s struggle in South Africa: feminist theology, was attended almost entirely by black women activists from church-based and community-based organisations.\textsuperscript{139} Within days of this conference another conference was hosted, in the same region, by the University of South Africa, then a bastion of white (somewhat progressive) Afrikaner scholarship, under the title Sexism and feminism in theological perspective, which was attended largely by white middle-class academic women.\textsuperscript{140} These two racial trajectories continued well into the 1980s and 1990s.

An emerging strand with the work of black South African women in the 1980s, Haddad argues\textsuperscript{141} was a theological gender critique of black patriarchy in general and Black Theology in particular\textsuperscript{142}, a critique which has been at

\textsuperscript{137} Cited in Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 167; Kemp e.a., ‘The Dawn of a New Day’, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{138} Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{139} Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{140} Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{141} Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival, pp. 202-204.

least partially heard by black male theologians. Though consistently subsumed by the larger black struggle for political liberation, and though hesitant to foreground gender concerns immediately after liberation when African culture was being recovered, African Women's Theology has worked with a steady beat (to borrow a phrase from African American biblical scholarship).

Located differently, one white strand situated predominantly in white academic institutions and shaped by white feminist discourse and one black strand situated predominantly in para-church and other activist organisations and shaped by Black Consciousness, the two main strands of South African 'feminist' discourse have found a further dialogue partner in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth, the Circle). The Circle has not only provided an institutional forum for individuals from these two strands to collaborate, it has also reconfigured the discourse of African Women’s Theology.

The Circle arose out of a demand by women within the Ecumenical Association of Third World Women to be heard and their presence taken seriously. Meeting as a group for the first time in 1989 in Ghana, African women theologians, including two South African representatives, established the Circle. Constituted to include African women from the whole continent and of all faiths and with a specific agenda to publish African Women’s The-
ology, the Circle has been instrumental in linking women’s theology in South Africa with the rest of Africa. While the Circle has not obliterated the differences that have constituted South African Women’s Theology, it has provided an opportunity for these differences and their implications for future ‘feminist’ work together to be confronted and dealt with more openly, albeit in an institutional environment which privileges academic discourse.

Within these broader frameworks of ‘feminist’ discourse in South Africa, South African women’s biblical hermeneutics has made a substantial contribution. Among the most significant are the work of Madipoane (ngwana’ Mphantsale) Masenya (who has advocated a particularly African women’s form of biblical hermeneutics known as Bosadi hermeneutics), Musa Dube (who though from Botswana has had a major impact on South African biblical hermeneutics and who has pioneered an African women’s postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutics), Gloria Kehilwe Plaatjie (who has posed the question of how black women in South Africa read the Bible in light of the post-apartheid Constitution that gives her equality), Sarojini Nadar (who has used womanist and literary hermeneutical categories to develop ways of working with the Bible among oppressed women, particular those in the South African Indian community), and Makhosazana K. Nzimande (who

149 Haddad, African Women’s Theologies of Survival 2000, p. 201.
has advocated for a postcolonial Imbokodo biblical hermeneutics in post-
apartheid South Africa). Indeed, I agree entirely with Tinyiko Maluleke
when he says, African women’s theologies [and their accompanying biblical
hermeneutics] represent the most creative dimension of African theology
during our times. There is no doubt that, in the past twenty years, no dimen-
sion of Christian theology in Africa has grown in enthusiasm, creativity, and
quality like women’s theology.

Maluleke then goes on to contrast the energy and creativity of African
Women’s Theology with the other forms of (traditionally male dominated)
theology we have been discussing, saying:

At the start of the new millennium, there is a palpable sense of fatigue in male
theology. At one level there is a frivolous search for new metaphors and new la-

tels with very little in-depth engagement with substantial issues of methodology.
At another level, African male theology appears to have lost its passion, its com-

passion, and its prophetic urge. African theology is bewildered and confused by
the dismantling of apartheid, increased globalization, the forceful emergence of
issues of gender, ecology, and human rights, and the irruption of a new world or-
der. Admittedly, some male theologians have been trying to respond theologically
to the new situation. But many of these responses lack the freshness, enthusiasm,
creativity, and sharpness that one senses in the writing of African women.

Indeed, says Maluleke, It is a cruel piece of irony that the foundation of cre-

ativity – African women’s theology – is the place into which tired and frivo-

lous African male theology will not look! It is not surprising, therefore, that
there is little real innovation and change in mainstream African male the-

ology.

Maluleke not only neatly summarises the state of liberation theologies in
South Africa after liberation, he also introduces some of the contextual fea-
tures our liberation theologies are now facing.

Book of Esther as Resources for Gender-Social Transformation (University of

M.K. Ntimbe, Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation in Post-Apartheid South
Africa: The Gebrabah in the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Queen Jezebel and the
Queen Mother of Lemuel, unpublished PhD thesis (Texas Christian University,
2005).

“Mordecai”’, in M.W. Dube (ed.), Other Ways of Reading: African Women and
the Bible (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Geneva: WCC Publications,


HIV-Positive Theology

I hesitate to designate HIV-Positive Theology as a liberation theology in its own right. HIV and AIDS are an issue that we confront in South Africa, and so should perhaps take their place among the other issues we face, such as unemployment, violence against women, ecological degradation, racism, and globalisation. However, just as each of these ‘issues’ has a theology that locates it as its theological locus (respectively, Liberation/Contextual/Black Theology, Feminist/Womanist/African Women’s Theology, Eco-/Oiko-Theology, Black/Contextual Theology, and African/Postcolonial Theology), so we might envisage an HIV/AIDS Theology. However, this is premature, for no such theological movement with a theological agenda set by those who are HIV-Positive has yet emerged in South Africa. Instead, HIV and AIDS has addressed us all, generating some of the most creative and innovative work from each of the three main strands of liberation theology discussed in this essay. Even the lethargy Maluleke finds in the historically male-dominated forms of liberation theology, namely Black Theology, African Theology, Contextual Theology, and Confessing Theology, has been partially dispelled by the urgent need to engage with HIV and AIDS theologically.

Indeed, HIV and AIDS is demanding that we bring every resource forged in all of our liberation theologies to bear on this devastating feature of our post-liberation reality,128 and we are discovering both the capacity and the

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constraints of our existing resources. Clearly the Bible is and will continue to be central to the task of working with those who are HIV-positive to construct relevant and redeeming liberating theology, for it is both a problem and a solution.

Other issues in conclusion
There is not the space here to go into any depth about the other issues that confront South African liberation theologies, except to say that unemployment, globalisation, gender violence, as well as concerns about land, crime, corruption, the environment, and sexual orientation, ensure that the poor, marginalised, and oppressed remain with us. As long as they do there remains the need for theologies of liberation after liberation, whatever names we give them. There is also not the space here to examine the biblical hermeneutical challenges that our engagement with these contextual realities generates, except to say that they remain centred around the relationship between and the respective resources of socially engaged biblical scholars and those poor, marginalised, and oppressed communities they work with.

Our new Constitution and the other related structures that constitute our post-liberation South Africa are indeed signs of hope, but only if we continue to fight for them and against the macro-economic and macho-patriarchal systems that constantly threaten to co-opt and/or subsume them. There will be no abundant life (John 10:10) as long as these systems are in place. Finally, while the struggles of the past have been incorporated in our Constitution, they have not been adequately incorporated into the public theology of our churches. This task too remains before us. The various liberation theologies that have emerged from our South African context provide us with a foundational trajectory for our present and future biblical and theological work.


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Hagar Sarah Allegory: An Intertexture Study of Gal 4: 21-31 and its Application to the Ghanaian Context

Alice Matilda Nsiah & Eric Nii Bortey Anum

This article explores the presentation of the Hagar-Sarah story in Galatians, using intertexture and its application to the Ghanaian context. Galatians is addressed to Christians, whose preoccupation with keeping the Law was splitting their churches along racial lines, separating Jews from Gentiles. Paul reacted to such a situation using Scriptures as his basis by reinterpreting it to suit his purpose. This is what is called intertexture. The work is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the reconfiguration of the other texts in the text while part two treats application to the Ghanaian situation.

Introduction
Intertexture of text is when a writer interprets or uses existing materials such as words, symbols, images, personalities, events and ideas in his writings. He may or may not indicate that the material he has used exists somewhere. It may range from quoting entire information in a new text with the use of few words or ideas of an existing material. Vernon Robbins calls this oral-scribal intertexture.¹ This is because the material used may be in oral or written form. Oral-scribal intertexture consists of Recitation, recontextualization, Reconfiguration, narrative amplification and thematic elaboration.²

According to Robbins, Reconfiguration has to do with recounting a previous situation in a new way in such a way that the new event may replace the old one and make the old situation a preparation for the new one.³ Recitation and re-contextualization may be part of reconfiguration of a past tradition.⁴ The writer may rearrange the existing event to suit a purpose. Re-

² Robbins (1996b: 50): Recitation involves the transmission of existing material written or spoken in the exact words or somewhat similar words from the ones received from tradition. Recontextualization presents words from another text indirectly, giving no hint that those words actually exist somewhere else in a written text.
configuration will therefore be employed by the writers in our application to Gal 4:21-31.

In dealing with biblical texts, Paul usually interpreted and re-interpreted the scriptures and they provided a frame for his letters. According to Richard Hays, sometimes Paul interprets scriptures in such a way that his readings extend the meaning of scripture in new directions making it relevant to the situation of his day. He notes further that Paul situates his discourse with symbols and images from the scripture especially from the Septuagint and interprets them in the light of Christian revelation.¹ This situation obtains in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. For this paper, Paul’s letter to the Galatians is chosen because of its attempt to deal with freedom and unity in Christ. This has some resemblance to the Ghanaian perception of freedom and justice and the need for unity in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-party country. Paul’s letter to the Galatians is addressed to Christians, whose preoccupation with keeping the Law was splitting their churches along religious and ethnic lines, separating Jews from Gentiles. Paul reacted to such a situation using the scriptures as his basis by reinterpreting it to suit his purpose.

The work will be divided into two parts. Part one deal with the reconfiguration of existing texts in the present text and part two will treat the application of the reconfiguration to the Ghanaian situation. For the sake of clarity and to enhance the furtherance of the analysis, the passage for the study, Galatians 4:21-31, will be divided into four rhetorical parts, namely Introduction – v. 21, the thesis of the unit – vv. 22-23, the arguments to support the thesis – vv. 24-30, and the conclusion – v. 31.

Part one: analysis of the text: gal 4:21-31

Opening verses
Paul begins his Hagar-Sarah allegory with a phrase ἄγετέ μοι ‘tell me,’ in the first part of v. 21. This serves to signal the start of a new subsection. Here Paul uses first person and third person pronouns to demonstrate a direct communicative contact with his audience (i.e. all Christians in Galatia 3:1). Such an address is intended to secure the good will and attention of his audience and prepare them for the message he is going to give, usually a critical message. When he seemed to have secured their attention, Paul speaks to his addressees as οἱ ὅποιο νόμον θέλοτες εἰναι, ‘those who want to be under the law’). In this, Paul implies that his converts had not yet fully adopted all the Jewish laws. Even though they may be observing certain rules and regula-

tions on the Jewish calendar (4: 10) and may have expressed the desire to go further (1: 10) they had not yet embraced the totality of the law. By law, Paul may be referring to both the written and oral Torah (3: 23, 4: 4). Paul’s expression is implying that he is not encouraging the gentile Christians to be lawless, but is reminding them that to live a legalistic life is a kind of retrogression for them.

The second part of the verse begins with the question τον ο νόμον ο άκούσετε; ‘Do you not hear the law?’ This introduces the verse and serves as the introduction to the unit where Paul seeks the attention of his audience and gives them some ideas about what he is going to discuss. After Paul had prepared his audience, he now moves on to give his message. Some MSS read αναγινώσκατε; (‘Do you not read the law?’) but many scholars believe that the right word may be ‘hearing’ since hearing played a very important role in the Jewish community. It is part of their practice that the Torah is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath (cf. Acts 15: 21). According to Longenecker, ‘to hear’ in Jewish thought is not just a physical activity. For to hear God’s word is to internalize that word, to understand it, and to obey it. So Paul’s challenge is that if the Galatians would really ‘hear’ the law – that is, understand it fully and respond to it properly – they would not regress to Jewish nomism since the law was to guide our way until the coming of Christ (3: 23-25).

The thesis – Paul’s reconfiguration vs 22-23

Verse 22 begins with the expression, γεραπαταί γάρ, (for it is written) which flows from the previous verse. γεραπαταί is a third person singular passive verb from γράφω (write). It is a standard formula that usually introduces biblical quotations (see 4: 27, Rm. 15: 9, Mt 4: 4). But here, Paul did not quote directly from any Old Testament (henceforth OT) passage but instead, he made statements that summarize the stories about Abraham and his family in several chapters of Genesis. This is a mixture of recitation which summarizes a span of text that includes various episodes, and reconfiguration, using an old text in such a way that it becomes new and offers fresh perspectives on an old matter. This is a rhetorical device that manipulates existing text to one’s advantage. It gives a hint that the audience is very familiar with the OT passage and thus gives an Old Testament foundation to his argument. In using this technique, Paul does not mention any of the characters by specific names. Rather, he only describes them according to their status without altering so much that it seems that his audience could easily identify them. The statements as presented in the Galatians 4 makes use of this technique by

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weaving into the letter many areas into one quotation. The result is that Paul achieves something new out of several existing old texts. Even though he may not have changed the substantial meaning of the old texts, through this letter, he repackages the information from these old texts together in a way that serves his purpose and thereby extends the meaning to suit a present situation. This technique gives newer fresher perspective to old known text.

The feminine noun παιδίσκης was originally used to refer to a young woman but now it is used in the LXX and in other New Testament (henceforth NT) passages to mean ‘a female slave’ or ‘maid servant’ (Gen 16: 1, Mt 26: 69, Lk 12: 45, Acts 16: 16). Paul uses the figure of speech of a freeborn versus a slave son, a striking but familiar identity motif to highlight the exact contrast between two children denoting their social status. It is obvious that his audience knew from the Genesis story that the slave woman refers to Hagar and her son Ishmael while the free woman refers to Sarah and her son Isaac.

v. 23 serve as the second part of the thesis. It begins with the adversative ἄλλο (but or indeed) which sets up a further antithesis – the contrast is not just on the differences in their social status but on the manner of each son’s birth. The antithesis is to highlight the fact that Ishmael’s birth can be understood simply in terms of κατὰ φύσιν ‘according to the flesh,’ or the natural processes of procreation, life here on earth, while Isaac’s birth is to be seen as δι’ ἐπαγγελίας ‘as a result of’ or ‘through’ a ‘promise’ with reference to God’s promise to Abraham in Gen 15: 4–6 and 17: 15–21. The repetitive use of the words ‘slave’ and ‘free’ is a rhetorical strategy aimed at emphasizing important words in the passage. Here it serves a further distinction to give the free born son a theological backing. It is also important to note that just as in the Genesis stories; the emphasis is put on the women and not the patriarch. Paul does the same in Galatians 4 by highlighting the social differences between the two women, thus giving the difference a theological backing.

Arguments to support the thesis
Paul’s argument is divided into two parts. The first part is vv. 24–27 and second part is vv. 29–30 with 28 acting as the transition between the two and v. 31 serving as the conclusion.

Arguments I in support of the thesis-24–27
The first part begins with the neuter plural relative pronoun ὅτιΝα ὅτιΝ (‘which things are these things are’) which refers to the events narrated in the previous verses (regarding Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and their two sons in vv. 22–23) and flows from there. What does Paul mean by his use of the par-
ticiple ἀλληγορία. Scholars have given various interpretations to the use of
the word to either mean ‘to speak or write allegorically,’ or ‘to explain or
interpret a text allegorically’, by analogy, it may be argued that what Paul is
saying is that with regard to the biblical accounts of Hagar and Sarah, the
story was originally given as an allegory and meant by its original author to
be treated as such. Perhaps that is the reason why interpreters are also treating
the text in that way.

The conjunction γέρ may be used either in an explanatory or a continuative
fashion denoting what he is going to say further about the women. The
feminine plural demonstrative pronoun οὗτοις ‘these’) refers to the women
(Sarah and Hagar) who represent two covenants. Paul uses διότι καὶ (‘cove-
nant’) which has both secular and a theological meanings (3: 15-18). Here,
however, he uses the term in its theological sense. What he means by ‘two
covenants,’ of course, are the Old Covenant that is Torah-centered, and the
New Covenant which is Christ-centered, and serves as the theological basis
for Paul’s proclamation. By way of advancing his argument Paul has no
problem in saying quite directly that the one covenant represents Hagar and
left it unsaid who the other is. The feminine participle γεννά/γεννά (‘bearing’)
applied in the interpretation of the covenant serves to identify those under
this covenant as slaves or it may be applied to Hagar to signify that her
children share her status of slavery.

Paul picks up his argument on Hagar further in verse 25. He begins with a
saying that τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὁ λόγος τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ: translate loosely as
‘now Hagar stands for Mt. Sinai in Arabia.’ In some MSS the name ‘Hagar’
is omitted. Omitting ‘Hagar,’ in such cases the text would be translated this
way: ‘Now Sinai is a mountain in Arabia’ or ‘Mt. Sinai is in Arabia’. Prob-
ably the idea is that Mt. Sinai is in pagan territory, outside the land of promise
and the stage of sacred history. Accepting such a reading, the question then
is: How can the reader identify ‘Hagar’ with Mt. Sinai? Nevertheless, in
Paul’s exposition of the same Sarah-Hagar story, Paul is relating Hagar to the
law which was given on Mt Sinai.

Hagar and her children who are under the law are in bondage. Thus by an-
alogy, they represent the present city of Jerusalem and her children, from
whence the Judaizers come. For, says Paul, Jerusalem, like Hagar, ‘is in slav-
ery with her children’. It also means that the law is something that is tempo-
ral; it is in the here and now, and therefore keeps its observers under bond-
age. So those who are under the law are those who live under temporal con-
ditions of the law. In effect those who put too much emphasis on the law are
in bondage just like Hagar and her children and they represent the present
day Jerusalem that is the geographical Jerusalem in space and time. In this
way Paul makes nothing out of his opponents claim to the importance of the
law that it will only lead them to slavery and their perpetual existence under this temporal condition.

Verse 26 then serves as a completion to the comparison Paul begun in v.24. The adversative δέ ‘but’ is to bring in contrast and show the difference between the present Jerusalem, the one that is above which is free, and is our mother.

In the same verse, the possessive pronoun ἡμῶν [this needs correction] ‘our’ is used and it refers to all believers in Christ, all Christians. Here Paul is making an analogy between the free woman Sarah and an eschatological Jerusalem that is above. He is saying that Sarah like the heavenly Jerusalem is a mother to all Christians and all who live in faith.

The conjunction γάρ is used in a confirmatory manner in support of the identification of Sarah with ‘the Jerusalem that is above’ and the claim that all Christians (including Gentile believers) have as their mother both Sarah and the heavenly Jerusalem. γεγραμμένον (‘it is written’) here, as is usually the case in Paul’s letters to various churches, introduces a specific biblical quotation, viz., Isa 54:1, which was a prominent oracle in Jewish eschatological expectation that had to do with the future glory of Zion. Here Paul uses recitation in the sense that he indicated that he was quoting but he did quote directly, word for word from scripture. This is in reference to Isaiah 54:1:

Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the LORD.

Here the fact that Sarah was σκότα ‘barren’ (Gen 11:30 LXX) allows Paul to connect Sarah with Isa 54:1, which also contains the word σκότα ‘barren’. Thus the ‘barren one’ is also the city of Jerusalem, who, though barren, would have many children and the city which will be rebuilt. Thus Sarah is associated with the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Isa 54:1. In Paul’s allegorical treatment of the Hagar-Sarah story, Sarah is a spiritual mother to Gentile Christians in Galatia as well as Jewish Christians (‘our mother’), for she as the freeborn wife of Abraham bears children who are born free because of God’s promise to Abraham.

δέ πολλὰ εἰς πάνα τῆς ἡμῶν μαζί λέγεται ‘her children will be more’ — i.e., include not only the believing Jews but also the believing Gentiles — than the one who has a husband, i.e. Hagar. Moreover, Sarah is ‘our mother’ because as ‘the Jerusalem that is above’, she stands in direct contrast to ‘the present city of Jerusalem,’ whose children (like those of Hagar) are children of slavery. Since, ‘the Jerusalem that is above’ is an eschatological term expressing a reality that will exist in the future. Paul’s use of it in Galatians 4 to repre-
sent the experience of Galatian believers implies that, as Paul understood matters, the Galatian believers had come into the eschatological situation of already participating in that future reality, in that promise made to Abraham which was fulfilled in Christ (cf. 3: 16; 5: 1).

Transitional verse-28

Having given biblical support, Paul now spells out the consequences of his argument as set out in vv. 22–27 and in verse 28. The particle δὲ functions here as a consequential connective (‘so’). ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀδελφοί translate loosely as ‘you brothers’ which refers to the Galatians who are Gentiles but have become like Isaac, true sons and daughters of Abraham’s freeborn wife Sarah and true children of the heavenly Jerusalem through God’s promise made to Abraham because they are ‘in Christ’. These gentiles are represented by Isaac, not by Ishmael. Therefore they, both Jews and Gentiles, are ‘brothers’ with all who come to God by faith through Christ.

Argument II in support of thesis-vv. 29-30

The truth of the conclusion of v. 28 is now confirmed by the experience of the Galatians themselves, which Paul sees as an antitype of Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac. It seems that, ἀλλὰ introduces a contrast statement to v. 28. Logically, however, it provides a transition to the sentence of v. 29 (so ‘and’) rather than a contrast with v. 28.

The contrast between the one born κατὰ σάρκα ‘according to the flesh’ and the one born κατὰ πνεῦμα ‘according to the Spirit’ picks up the contrast between Abraham’s two sons in v. 23. Two features, however, need to be noted: The first is that here the emphasis is on the two types of people the two sons represent; those who live out their lives in terms of legal ordinances and those who live their lives by the Spirit’s direction. The second is that those ‘like Isaac’ are referred to as born ‘according to the Spirit.’ Here, however, Paul uses κατὰ πνεῦμα (‘according to the Spirit’) in roughly synonymous fashion with ὑπ’ ἐπαγγελίας (‘as a result of promise’) in v. 23 and ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα (‘children of promise’) in v. 28. Paul, of course, presumes a more developed account of the story of Ishmael and Isaac than the one presented in Scripture, for the OT does not record anything about Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac.

The climax of Paul’s Hagar-Sarah allegory comes in the exhortation of v. 30. Here Sarah’s words in Gen 21: 10 are applied to the situation in Galatia. Gen 21: 10 is the reaction of Sarah to 21: 9 where Ishmael is said to be playing with or mocking Isaac. The Hebrew word used there is ‘piel’ to jest or laugh. The word is translated in Greek as παίζωντα μετὰ which translates ‘to amuse oneself with’ or ‘play with’. So the action of Ishmael denotes both the
idea of playing with in a positive sense or actually mocking another person. Sarah's reaction borders on the issue of inheritance. The boy and his mother should be sent out of the house of Abraham so that the slave woman's son does not κληρονομήσῃ from the word κληρονομος which means 'to inherit'. The idea is that this son will not claim part of Abraham's inheritance in the future. Here, Paul attributes the statement not to Sarah but to 'the Scripture' and he uses the exact words with only slight change. This is another aspect of recitation which uses the exact words of a quotation with slight variations in terms of wording. Thus, by changing τοῦ ἴον ὑπὸ Ἰακὼβ 'my son Isaac' (τοῦ ἴον τῆς ἠλαθέρους) 'the son of the free woman', Paul was attempting to adapt a Hebrew family situation to the Galatian context.

But this directive is not against all Jews or Judaism in general. Rather what Paul is referring to here is much more specific. Contrary to how some scholars have opposed the ramifications that underlie this alteration, oftentimes referring to Gen 21: 10 as evidence against him, in an allegorical treatment of the passage its message is really to be seen directed against the people who trouble Galatian believers. He further encourages Galatian believers to cast out the Judaizers and their influence from the Christian congregations of Galatia.

Closing Verse-31
Paul brings his argument to an end by way of recapitulation in v. 31. Αἰών therefore is a way of concluding and argument. Paul calls the Galatians his brothers, ἀδελφοι, and claims that ὁκ ἔσονται παιδίσκης τέκνα they are not children of the slave woman but that of the free woman. This affirmative serves as the conclusion.

Part two: application to the ghanaiian context

All that Paul is saying is that there is a temporal Jerusalem which is in bondage and that is where the Judaizers operate from. They therefore look down on other Christians in Galatia. There is also the heavenly Jerusalem from where Paul is operating which proposes freedom and justice for both Jews and Gentiles. In this context, Paul proposes a bright future for the Galatians.

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in a Jerusalem where there would be freedom, impartiality and unity for both Jews and Gentiles.

In the Ghanaian context, the attainment of independence came with the promise of not only freedom and justice in a united country, but also in the adoption of a name which represents a proud and wealthy empire of old, Ghana. Before independence, Ghana was called the gold coast. Gold Coast with its inherent colonial domination and patronage was done away with on the 6th of March, with the shouts of FREEDOM! FREEDOM! FREEDOM! by the nation's Prime Minister and later President when the nation attained republican status. In this period of change, the inhabitants looked forward to the promise of a new nation. The symbol of this freedom was engraven in the nation's coat of arms on which has the following expression: Freedom and Justice. The question now is after more than 50 years, how far has Ghana gone in realizing the freedom and justice that was promised them on independence day? Are Ghanaians still leaving in eschatological expectation of it?

The answers are myriad. We could say that Ghana has gone through a period of mixed blessings. In their national lives politically, we started with the democratization process by adapting Western Democratic practices. However, Ghana is still saddled with her legacies of Western education and lifestyle, tastes and mannerisms. The question, is how have Ghanaians lived as a nation with a promise of a new Jerusalem or nationhood?

With regard to the political realm, our post-independent political leaders together with their political parties started well but somewhere along the line they started behaving like the Judaizers by entrenching their positions and looking down on others who they treated as though they were not also beneficiaries of the new nation Ghana and the promise of freedom and justice. This was evidenced in the detention, imprisonments and the limitation and curtailing of the political freedoms of others to the point that some of them went into exile. This is what led to political upheavals and the numerous coups d'etat, starting from 1966. They robbed Ghana of some of the gains that the nation could have achieved in its journey towards the political heaven that Ghanaians were looking forward to. Through these coups, there emerged a lot of disunity among Ghanaians as a people.

This disunity is also reflected in our educational policy. Since independence, a lot of policies on education have been made accompanied by numerous educational reforms. However, we still seem to be tied to the apron strings of colonial educational structures. We still looked up to Cambridge and Oxford and we have not marched too far into the promise land of educational freedom. Our education is yet to be localized, breaking off its dependence from its slavish adherence to Western methodologies and curriculum
design, to reflect local realities in order to bring about some ground breaking or far reaching strides which may impact positively on our national development.

We are still lost concerning the behaviour of our children in our schools in terms of their violent behaviours, drug use and occultist practices and we are still doing trial and error to fine-tune our educational policies to respond to the felt needs of Ghanaian children in the area of appropriate and relevant training to salvage them from their educational crisis.

In the economic area, after more than 50 years of independence, the march towards economic independence is very slow. Ghanaians are still heavily dependent on Western Europe for support to meet our needs in all the spheres of our economic life.

The taste of Ghanaians and their preferences are still more European than Ghanaian. However, we cannot take the clock back 50 years. But we need a sober reflection of ourselves as a nation. In line with Galatians, Ghanaians need to move into the future as one people rather than the attitude of some who feel they are more Ghanaian than others and behave as if they are the only ones who the country belong to and that they are the future of Ghana and therefore would want to impose their ways on the others. This can be a political party, or a particular ethnic group or religious group. No one group of people are born to rule Ghana.

In the educational set up, we still need to do more in coming out with curricula that are more pragmatic and would assist Ghanaians in their onward march to progress, productivity and proper management of their national resources not forgetting the appropriate resources that Ghanaians need for the enhancement of their national life. After more than 50 years of independence, should Ghana still be in a situation where they are still grappling with more suitable ways of generating electricity apart from the one that was built just after independence? Then what have our engineers been doing over the years? What about the water situation?

There are moves towards usage of made in Ghana goods. However, Ghanaians still prefer usage of made in Europe things. They are still enslaved to some of these things. Ghana still need a lot of education to be able to move out of their enslavement with regard to their taste for European goods towards the promise of the use of made in Ghana goods.

Lastly, the Ghanaian acceptance of mediocrity and the strict adherence to neo-colonial practice have hindered their progress as a nation. As most Africans do, instead of striving for excellence as independent children of promise, they rather live like underdogs and pride themselves about their mediocrity. When there is no electricity, people say, ‘this is Ghana for you!’ And then go on to say they are a developing country instead of finding the solu-
tion for their problems. Sometimes, Ghanaians engage in an unnecessary bureaucracy that delays their development and even makes some Ghanaians feel demeaned and subhuman. That is where people burst out saying, ‘am I also not a Ghanaian’? This is what makes some Ghanaians prefer to leave or invest in other countries than Ghana.

Conclusion
In sum, the power game being played by some Ghanaians is similar to the allegory of Ishmael and his mother Hagar and the Judaizers. This is because of the little advantage that they have because of the positions they hold. The application of certain procedures that makes life difficult for others needs to be looked at as we have entered into another fifty years. This is because ALL GHANAIANS are to enjoy freedom and justice irrespective of their party affiliation, religious orientation or ethnic background or social status. The temporal Jerusalem, which was Gold Coast, has passed away. Ghanaians should wake up to the realization that the New Jerusalem of promise which is Ghana, which is coded freedom and justice is with them, and so they should be part of the process of realizing the gains of this future Jerusalem which is all embracing for every Ghanaian.

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Jacobs Capitein’s Contribution to Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Case Study of his Translation of the Apostles’ Creed into Mfantse

John David Kwamena Ekem

Jacobs Eliza Johannes Capitein (1717-1747) was undoubtedly a torchbearer in the discipline of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics. He is credited with the Translation of ‘The Lord’s Prayer’, ‘The Ten Commandments’ and ‘The Apostles’ Creed’ into Mfantse, using a Dutch orthography, having also bought his understanding of Reformed Theology to bear on this important exercise. This paper focuses on Capitein’s creative rendition of ‘The Apostles’ Creed’. It argues that as a down-to-earth Dutch-Reformed trained African biblical scholar with a flair for anthropology and mother tongue theology, Capitein has succeeded in transposing an important Christian Creed into the Mfantse soil of eighteenth century Gold Coast (Ghana). His pioneering example is indeed an inspiration to present-day African/Ghanaian biblical scholars who seek to interpret the Judeo-Christian Scriptures using thought categories from their own mother tongue.

Introduction

Religious texts do undergo metamorphosis when exposed to particular environments within which they are adapted to the needs of target audiences. This can be illustrated with Jacobs Capitein’s translation of ‘The Apostles’ Creed’ into Mfantse, one of the main Akan dialects of the Gold Coast (Ghana). A closer look at this translation in relation to Greek, Latin, Dutch, Eng-

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1 These have been compiled and put together in the archival document entitled: *Vertaling van het Onze Vader, de Twelf Geloofs-artikelen, en de Tien Geboden des Heeren uit de Nederduitsche taal, in de Negersche spraak, so als die gebruikelijk is van Abrowarie tot Apam* (Leiden: Jacobus de Beunje 1745). It is available in the rare manuscripts section of the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands.

2 Linguistically, Akan belongs to the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family of languages. It is spoken in various dialects by over 40% of the Gold Coast population as their mother tongue. These dialects include: Akwapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, Bron, Mfantse and Wassa. The speakers are widely distributed over the southern half of Ghana, extending even to the south-east of the Ivory Coast. Among the relevant literature on this subject are: F.A. Dolphyne, *The Akan (Twi-Fante) Language: Its
lish and some local Ghanaian language versions of the creed offers significant insights into the dynamics involved in transferring thought from one language to another. It can be argued that, given Capitein’s solid knowledge of existing Greek, Latin and Dutch versions of the creed, he has succeeded in adapting them to the local Mfantse context of eighteenth century Gold Coast. It is generally accepted in scholarly circles that the Apostles’ Creed, though legendarily attributed to the apostles, continued for centuries to be reformulated in Western Christendom for liturgical and catechetical purposes. No matter how much we debate the thorny question of the extent to which Capitein stayed faithful to ‘original texts’ available to him in the translation exercise, there is no doubt that he was not a passive recipient of existing formulated theologies, but a creative translator who did his best, from a Dutch-Reformed perspective, to contextualize the Judeo-Christian faith in a Gold Coast setting. He was thereby engaged in the discipline of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, which concerns itself with the creative communication of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures through the media of languages used by various human communities to express their identity.

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3 Known by its Latin title, *Symboolum Apostolorum* – Symbol of the Apostles; legend has it that each of the Twelve Apostles compiled an aspect of it –, this creed, which was developed between the second and ninth centuries CE, became very popular in Western Christendom. Emerging as an initial response to the threat of Gnosticism, it summarized doctrinal statements current in the apostolic period and subsequently adapted to contexts involving regular worship and catechetical instruction of baptismal candidates. For a discussion, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines; Fifth Edition* (London: A. & C. Black, 1977), 44. An early version of the creed is also alluded to by J. Stevenson in his *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337-461* (London: SPCK, 1966), p. 10.


5 The Mother Tongue can be defined as the language into which a person is born, thereby marking his or her identity. For a discussion, see B.Y. Quarchie, ‘Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context: The Challenge of Mother-tongue Scriptures’, in *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5, 1 (2002): pp. 4-14.
The background of Jacobus Capitein: a concise overview

Jacobus Eliza Joannes Capitein was an ex-slave who became chaplain of the castle at Edina (Elmina), a coastal town in Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast. According to available records, he was likely to have been captured in a slave raid and separated from his parents at a very tender age. Capitein was later transferred from the Gold Coast to Holland by his master known as Captain van Goch who ensured that he received the best of education. Capitein became the first black African to be baptized into the Dutch Reformed Church and was offered an opportunity to pursue advanced theological studies at the renowned University of Leiden in Holland. Having mastered the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages, and having successfully completed his studies in 1742, Capitein was ordained by the Dutch Reformed Church and specifically assigned to Edina (Elmina) as missionary and chaplain of the castle from where Dutch officials pursued their commercial activities including the shipment of slaves to the Americas. Following an unsuccessful marriage to a Dutch lady and the bitter experience of frustration at the hands of his employers and castle co-workers, Capitein died at an early age of thirty. His difficult circumstances notwithstanding, Capitein applied himself diligently to the task of communicating the Christian faith in thought categories that could be easily understood by the local people of Edina. The rationale behind this hermeneutical effort is aptly summarized as follows:

Already in his student days in the Netherlands, Capitein had proposed that missionary work could be meaningful only if the people were taught the fundamentals of the Christian message in their own language... It was therefore his intention to start using the language of the Elmina folk as soon as possible... He was so serious about this matter that, within a year of his arrival in Elmina, he was able to produce his first translation from Dutch into Fanti. He started by translating the Lord’s Prayer... the Twelve Articles of Faith... and the Ten Commandments... Unlike most other missionaries before him, Capitein wanted to approach the African people in a language that was meaningful to them.

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Some early versions of the Creed

The Greek text
Πιστεύεις ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ παντοκράτορα, πατημηνίν οὐρανού καὶ γῆς καὶ (εἰς) ΗΙΣΟΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ, υἱὸν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν, τὸν σωλλοφθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος, ἐν οἴνου,
γεννηθέντα
ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, παθώντα ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, σταυρωθέντα,
θανόντα, καὶ ταφέντα, καταλαβόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα, τὴν τρίτη ἡμέραν ἐκαθάρισαν ἐκ τοῦ νεκροῦ, ἐνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς, καὶ εξέβησαν τὸν δεξιόν θεοῦ πατρὸς παντοδυνάμιον, ἐκαὶ ἰσθενήθη
ἐξ ἐμαυτῶν κρίνοντας και νεκροὺς. καὶ τὸ ΠΗΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ,
ὁ γὰρ καθόλου κυρίον εἰς ἐκκλησίαν, ὁ γὰρ κοινωνίαν, ὁ δι᾽ ὃν κοινωνίαν, ὁ δι᾽ ὃν ἐκκλησίαν, ὁ δι᾽ ὃν καθὸ̀ς ὁμόσποντος ἐν κοινώνῃ αἰώνιον ἀμήν.

The Latin version
Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem,
Creatorem coeli et terrae.
Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum,
Dominum nostrum; qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria virgine; passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et seplitus; descendit ad inferna; tertia die resurrexit a mortuis; ascendit ad coelos; sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis; inde venturas (est) judicare vivos et mortuos.
Credo in Spiritum Sanctum; sanctam ecclesiam catholicam; sanctorum communionem; remissionem peccatorum; carnem resurrectionem; vitam aeternam. Amen.

Dutch version (De Twaalf Artikelen)
Ik geloof in God de Vader, de Almachtige Schepper van de hemel en de aarde;
En in Jezus Christus, zijn ongeloof Zoon, onze Heer;
Die ontvangen is van de Heilige Geest, geboren uit de maagd Maria;
Die geleden heeft onder Pontius Pilatus, is gekruisigd, gestorven en begraven, en neergedaald in de hel;
Op de derde dag opgestaan uit de doden;
Opgevaren naar de hemel, en zit aan de rechterhand van God, de almachtige Vader;
Vandaar zal Hij komen om te oordelen de levenden en de doden.
Ik geloof in de Heilige Geest.
Ik geloof in een heilige, algemene, christelijke Kerk, de gemeenschap der heiligen,
Vergeving van den zonden;
Opstanding van het vlees
En een eeuwig leven. Amen.

Traditional English liturgical version
I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.

Traditional Mfantsa liturgical version
Megye Nyankopon Egya Tumfo, øsor na asaase Bofo midzi.
[I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth]
Ønye ne Ba korionoo Jesus Christ a, ayà hän Ewuradze a, wódze Sunsum Kronkoron nyinsán no, wo Òbaabuun Mary mu.
[And in Jesus Christ his only Son, who is our Lord, who was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit, through the virgin Mary]
Ohun amandze, wo Pontius Pilate nsa, na woboe no mbeanudua mu, owui, na woslee no; osianee kør asamanadze; da a otsia ebiasa no, øsoøree fi ewufo mu; øsowee kør sor, na øse Nyankopon Egya Tumfo n'abanyìmpfa; na hø na ofi bába, ebobu eqyikanfo na ewufo atsán.
[He suffered at the hands of Pontius Pilate, and was crucified; he died and was buried; he descended into the world of the dead; the third day he rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead].
Megye Sunsum Kronkoron midzi, asor kronkoron a øwø mbea nyinaa, ahotsewee fo nkohodi, bofakyà, nyimpunda wumyan, ønye nkwa a onryi ewiè. AMEN.
[I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy church that is found everywhere, the fellowship of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life that never ends. AMEN].
Capitein’s Translation
MIVIÁ [I AFFIRM]
I. Mivía Jancómpon Adjà Pannín óbbóade essúr ónne adàede
   [I affirm God as Senior Father and Creator of heaven and earth]
II. Ónne Jesus Christus nebákor jinnejena atwurá
    [And Jesus Christ His Only Child who is the Lord of us all]
III. Êndi Sanmanpa omá onisèn ni wówone bæsesia onwárreda Maria
    [That is why the Good Ghost caused him to be conceived and given
    birth to through Mary, the young unmarried girl-child/daughter]
IV. Ohoén amandè asè Pontiús Pilatus owóe duahoén ónne wosieên,
    ohoenjejauw
    [He suffered under Pontius Pilate, died on a tree and was buried, he
    experienced pain and anguish]
V. Dánsan (mansan) ofè ewoém ossórey
    [Three days (later) he resurrected from the dead]
VI. Ókkóre essúr (ónne) ókko Jancómpon Adjà Pannín ninsa niemfan
    [He went to heaven where he sits at the right hand of God the Senior
    Father]
VII. Emberée osiè óbeba wabejere innikan ónne niempan wawoè
    [At the appropriate time, He will come and demand accountability
    from those who are alive and from human beings who have died]
VIII. Mivía Sanmanpá
    [I affirm the Good Ghost]
IX. Mivía ãssorum akoerajè ofè Christus endi owobyèn jena
    Endi wojé náwom injenajekor
    [I affirm the unity of the church which comes from Christ and because
    of which it is found everywhere.
    That is also the reason why its members display charity and they are
    all truly united]
X. Wóddé adebônni bèljee
    [Sin= (that which stinks and is evil) will be forgiven]
    Ewoesfoè bëssorro
    [The dead will be raised]
XII. Ónne Jancómpon obesie jinnejé dabâe
    [And God will keep us well at all times]
Dutch text very close to Capitein's translation
I. Ik geloove in God den Vader, den Almagtigen Schepper des hemels ende der Aarde [I believe in God the Father, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth]
II. Ende in Jesus Christus, zynen Eeniggeboomden Zoon, onzer aller Heer [And in Jesus Christ, his Only-begotten Son, the Lord of us all]
III. Die van den goeden Geest ontfangen, geboren is van de Maagt Maria [Who was conceived from the Good Ghost, born by the young lady Maria]
IV. Geleden onder Pontius Pilatus, gestorven aan't hout, ende begraven, tot de uiterste Smerten gekomen [Suffered under Pontius Pilate, died on a tree, and buried, experienced pain to its highest intensity]
V. Ten derden dage weder opgestaan van de Dooden [The third day he rose again from the Dead]
VI. Opgevaren ten hemel, ende gezeten aan de regterhand Gods, des Almagtigen Vaders [Ascended to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Almighty Father]
VII. Van waar Hy komen zal om te verhooren de levendige en de doode [From there he will come in order to demand accountability from the living and the dead]
VIII. Ik geloove in den goeden Geest [I believe in the Good Ghost]
IX. Ik geloove eene goede Kerk van Christus, die overall verspreid is [I believe in the good Church of Christ, which is found everywhere]
X. Dat de zonde zal vergeven worden [That sins shall be forgiven]
XI. En dat de doode zullen opstaan [And that the dead should rise again]
XII. Ende dat God hen altyd wel bewaren zal [And that God shall always keep them well]

Capitein's text in current Mfantse orthography
MUFUA [DO] /MEGYE TO MU
I. Mufua Nyankopen Egya Panyin obeadze ësor ënye asaase
II. Ënye Gyisës Kraes ne Bakor hän nyina Wura
III. Nisi [na] Samampa [a] maa wonyinsàon no na wôwo no babesia Määre a ënnwaree da

* This text is included in the document entitled: *Vertaling van het Onze Vader, de Twaalf Geloofs-artikelen, en de tien Geboden des Heeren...* Although the Dutch version deviates, in a few instances, from Capitein's Mfantse translation, one can conjecture that, given their almost identical forms, this Dutch version was possibly Capitein's back-translation *mutatis mutandis* from his original Mfantse text. A similar observation can be made from Capitein's translation of 'The Lord's Prayer'.

IV. Ohun amandze ase Pontiyes Paélāt, owu diaho na wosie no, ohun [ne] yaw
V. Ndaansa ofi ewufo mu sere
VI. Ókèr sor [naj oko Nyankopon Egya Panyin ne nsa ny fmta
VII. Mber a osá ñbuah ebabýeré enyikan [fó] nye nyimpa a woewu
VI. Mufua Samanpa
IX. Mufua asemu koró a ofi Kraes ntsi òwọ mbea nyina. Nisi waye na hen nyina yá kor
X. Wóde adzëören bákyá
XI. Ewufo basodór
XII. Na Nyankopon besíe hún yie dábaa

Analysis
Before I embark on an in-depth analysis of Capitein’s translation, it may be observed from the above versions of the creed that the traditional English version, often used for liturgical purposes, is a literal rendition of the Latin which departs, at some points, from the Greek text. The traditional Mfantse liturgical version is also a literal translation from the English. It shares the same grammatical structure with Capitein’s translation. One can therefore remark quite legitimately that the English and Mfantse versions trace their ancestry to the Latin. But the Ewe, Ga and Twi versions from the Gold Coast (Ghana) endeavour to stay, as close as possible, to the Greek text, incorporating some modifications which may be regarded as culture specific.

Coming back to Capitein’s translation, one cannot fail to observe that the very first line refers to Jancompon= God as Adjá Pammin, ‘Senior Father’, rather than ‘Father Almighty’ (Greek: ΠΑΤΡΑ παντοκράτορα). Here is an example of a creative adaptation to the local context, taking cognizance of the social, political and economic challenges of Capitein’s time. Rather than Nyankopon Egya Tumbo, ‘God the Father Almighty’, which may have sounded ‘authoritarian’ and ‘violent’ in the ears of local people who had experienced the savagery of slavery, economic exploitation and the military superiority of Dutch officials in the Edina (Elmina) castle and armed African agents, Capitein might have thought it prudent to opt for vocabulary, familiar in close family circles, as a more acceptable description of God’s nature. Precisely, however theologically legitimate it might sound to people from ‘orthodox circles’, a God who is described as wielding power/authority, stands the ‘risk’ of being rejected by a people who had been victims of

9 See the Appendix for these versions.
10 All of these represented the ‘abuse of power’ in the local Edina (Elmina) context.
A comprehensive discussion of the situation in Edina (Elmina) is undertaken by
Kpobi in his Saga of a Slave, pp. 8-20, 41-52.
‘power abuse’. Perhaps, the Twi rendition of ΘΕΟΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ παντοκράτορα as Agya Onyankopon a ayē nneāma nyinaa so Tamfoó [Father God who has authority over all things] should be regarded as a milder way of stating this theological axiom without compromising the fact that God is indeed the One who has the final say in the affairs of this universe. Be that as it may, in African communities, an Adja Panin [Egya Panin], who can also be the Ebusuapanyin (family head), is expected to see to the welfare of family members, settling disputes and promoting harmony in the family. Within Akan societies, to which Capitein’s target audience belonged, God was already known as Nyame Baatampa [The Satisfying One who is a Caring Mother/Father]. God’s role as the Creator of the universe is undisputed and appellations such as Amoawia [Giver of the Sun] and Totentobonsu [Giver of rain] are not uncommon. God’s providential care which extends to all creation is often expressed as follows: Abowa a onnyi duo, Nyame na opr na no ho, ‘It is God who drives away the flies from the tailless animal.’

Article II clearly expresses the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ as God’s Only Son, using the phrase jinnejẹna ańwura= hän nyina Wura = ‘The Lord/Master of us all’. This is consistent with the accompanying Dutch translation where it is rendered: onzer aller Heer. Similar to the affirmation of God’s universal Fatherhood/Motherhood in his translation of ‘The Lord’s Prayer’,11 Capitein is emphasizing the vital point that regardless of our ethnicity, skin colour, gender, age or social background, we are all accountable to One Benevolent Master whose lordship supersedes that which pertains in our human world often bedeviled by oppressive distinctions between the dominant and the dominated.12 Though implicit in the traditional Dutch and English versions of this creed which can be regarded as literal translations from the Latin, such an important point might have been missed by Capitein’s contemporaries, especially those representing Dutch imperial and African commercial/military interests on the Gold Coast (Ghana).

In Article III of Capitein’s translation, there is an interesting reference to the Holy Spirit as Samanpa, ‘Good Ghost’ (Dutch: goed Geest). This is quite unlike the traditional Mfantse liturgical version which opts for Sunsum

Kromkrom, ‘Holy Spirit’ in faithfulness to ‘modernized versions’. Consistent with the prevailing world-view among the Mfantse people of Edina (Elmina) who were Capitein’s immediate target audience, it sounded more natural to speak of such an important personality within the Godhead as Saman [p] rather than Sunsum [p], since the indigenous people’s own revered ancestors were often referred to as Nananom Nsamanfo. Significantly, these were believed to be responsible for ensuring good fortune, including abundant harvest, deliverance from evil forces, and procreation. Going by this understanding, it would not be out of place to argue that Capitein is skillfully reinterpreting the Spirit’s role in this creed as ‘Revered Ancestor par excellence’ who makes it possible for God’s redemptive act of procreation to take place. Precisely, the Spirit is the Good [O]-Saman, ‘ancestor’, who generates the conception of Jesus the Christ, the Redeemer and Universal Lord of human-kind. This is accomplished through Mary, the ‘girl-child’ = babesia [young woman] who has never married before and is, therefore, by strict traditional Mfantse standards, a virgin. Here is an intriguing example of Capitein’s attempt to re-package an aspect of this Judeo-Christian creed through the vital process of ‘re-semanticization’ aided by vocabulary and concepts likely to be well understood by his target audience.

The first part of Article IV of the creed draws attention to Jesus’ experience of suffering ‘under Pontius Pilate’, Ohoen amandê asê Pontius Pilatus. This construction is a literal translation from the Latin passus sub Pontio Pilato and is followed by the traditional English liturgical version which also reads: ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate’. The Mfantse liturgical version modifies it slightly to read: ‘suffered at the hands of Pontius Pilate’. Capitein is most likely to have been influenced by existing Latin and Dutch versions with which he was thoroughly familiar. But the Greek expression ποιηθώντα ἔτι Ποντίου Πιλάτου can be better rendered: ‘suffered during the time [regime] of Pontius Pilate’, a translation well captured by the Ga: Ena amanefulu yaa Pontio Pilato yine, ‘He suffered in the reign [time] of Pontius Pilate’ and by the Twi as: ohuu amane Pontio Pilato bere so, ‘He suffered in the time of Pontius Pilate’. Capitein simply expresses the crucifixion process as ‘dying on a tree’, owôe duwohon (Dutch translation: gestorven aan’t hout) rather than wohoe no mbeamudua mnu (Mfantse liturgical version), or the Twi wohoe no sam asamâdua ho, or the Ga Asaa ne, or the Ewe eye wohoe de aito nhu, all of which express the idea of ‘hanging-fixed on a tree’. If this gruesome Roman method of execution was quite similar to that which befell some captured slaves on the Gold Coast, then it would have registered negatively among the local people who had probably witnessed it themselves. Hence

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13 Many older versions, including the traditional English liturgical version, speak of ‘Holy Ghost’, a rendition closer to the Mfantse concept of Samanfo.
Capitein’s hermeneutical attempt to ‘re-express’ the process in a manner that would capture the fact of Jesus’ dying on a tree without at the same time recalling some possible horrifying/painful memories of slavery in Capitein’s time. In this hermeneutical exercise, however, Capitein can be said to have taken a big theological risk, since the New Testament evidence itself does not shy away from the horrifying nature of Jesus’ execution.

What is more intriguing about Capitein’s translation is his avoidance of the phrase expressing Jesus’ descent into the world of the dead, controversially rendered in Latin as: descendit ad inferna and literally as well as problematically translated into English as ‘he descended into hell’. Fortunately, the Ga, Mfantse and Twi liturgical versions avoid this translation flaw by using the more natural expression: Ekplekeshi kā tee gbohii aje / ostanee koor asamanade / ostan koo asaman, ‘he descended into the world of the dead’, which better translates the Greek καταβάσεως εἰς τὰ κατώτατα. Belief in an underworld where the dead are supposed to reside is prevalent among many African peoples including the Ewe, Ga, Mfantse and Twi speaking communities. It is in any case very puzzling that Capitein substituted a concept that his people would have well understood with the condensed expression oboenemjaaw, ‘He experienced pain’. If one were to ask why he opted for this intriguing translation, the answers would not be conclusive enough. Could it be that there were heated controversies surrounding the interpretation of Jesus’ descent εἰς τὰ κατώτατα, and that the idea of a resurrected Saviour who actually went to the world of the dead could not easily be digested by sections of Capitein’s audience? Given his training in Reformed Theology, it is much more likely that Capitein was influenced by the popular ‘Dutch-Reformed’ catechism of the day which laid emphasis on the intensity of Christ’s sufferings on the cross where he experienced, as it were, the pain of ‘hell’ for sinful humankind.14 It could also be argued that this debatable component of Capitein’s rendition was an attempt to describe the fact of dying and being buried and going through the experience of descent into the ‘lowest part of the universe’ where the dead are believed to dwell, as a very painful process, even for Jesus the Christ. This can be viewed as a powerful affirmation of Jesus’ solidarity with humankind and indeed the rest of creation, that have, to borrow Paul’s language in Romans 8, not been spared the experience of sufferings (παθήματα) and emptiness/vanity (ματαιότης).15 It is also consistent with that aspect of the Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews which ex-

14 Reference can also be made to the popular Heidelberg Catechism with which Capitein was possibly familiar.
presses Jesus’ experience of what it means to be human without succumbing to sin.  

If Article V affirms the traditional confession of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on the third day, Article VI, as in I, makes reference to Jancompon Adja Panmin at whose right hand the resurrected and ascended Jesus is seated. Capitein is obviously being consistent in his description of God as ‘Senior Father’ rather than ‘God the Father Almighty’ which, as hinted at previously, might have carried connotations of ‘power abuse’ in the local Edina context.

Article VII states categorically that ‘at the appropriate time’, Emberée osiè [mer a osà no...], this resurrected, ascended and glorified Jesus will come and expose/reveal to the living and the dead, what their deeds have amounted to. This idea of judicial exposition of deeds or misdeeds is powerfully expressed as wabelejeree. The novelty of Capitein’s rendition lies in his introduction of the κορός concept which periodizes salvation history, showing that events will take place according to their divinely-ordained plan.

If Article VIII reaffirms Capitein’s understanding of the Third Person in the Godhead as Sammanpa, ‘Good Ghost’, IX introduces us to an ecclesiology that is very profound. In this section, Capitein is careful to point out the unity and universality of the church, which are built on a strong christological foundation. Precisely, the church is one everywhere because it is founded and dependent on Christ as its Head. This thought is not clearly brought out in other versions of the creed, as indicated above. Simply put, it is the Christ factor which gives the church its sense of unity and universality, since Jesus the Christ is, as stated in section II, jimejena aûwurá, ‘The Lord of us all’. This fact also has far-reaching ethical implications. Hence Capitein’s rendition in part 2 of Article IX: Endi wojè nàwàon injenajekòr [hsì woye na hòn

nyina yà kòr], ‘That is why they are good/upright and are all united’. One is inclined to see in this thought-provoking statement, an attempt to portray an ethics that stems from ‘Justification by Faith’, generated by means of the ‘Christ Event’. This should not be surprising, considering Capitein’s own background as a Reformed theologian trained in Holland. In Pauline language, ‘Righteousness’ proceeding from God’s redemptive initiative in Christ (Greek: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is magnanimously offered to a universal church that is nonetheless subjected to imperfection within the constraints of human existence.

There is a sense in which it can also be legitimately argued that, as a biblical scholar trained in one of Europe’s best universities, Capitein is probably

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16 This profound gesture of solidarity is aptly expressed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in 2: 8b-18. This is well discussed by P. Hingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1993), pp. 148-192.
considering the Greek expression ἀφεσις μαρτιων, ‘forgiveness of sins’, in a manner that would speak clearly to his audience. Wődde adebônni békjey jwode adzebon bükýij, ‘sin/evil deed will be forgiven’, points to forgiveness as transcending the present and reaching into the future. Precisely, Capitein is locating the concept of ‘forgiveness of sins’ in an eschatological context that looks forward to God’s future gracious dealings with alienated humankind and possibly, the rest of the corrupted cosmos. It is, however, difficult to tell whether this statement is hinting at cosmic reconciliation in toto. Perhaps, Capitein is attempting to reconcile the concept of forgiveness, which is embedded in ‘Justification by Faith’, with the stark realities of evil in his immediate surroundings that also require divine forgiveness. Nonetheless, the matchless grace of God which does not overlook sin, triumphs over evil in all its past, present and future manifestations. Similarly the concept of σάρκος ἐυάνστος, ‘resurrection of the body’, originally formulated in response to the threats of Gnosticism and Docetism in the Early Church, is re-expressed in Article XI as Ewoofe béssorro, ‘The dead shall be raised’. Apart from its being clearly portrayed as a future event, it also avoids speculation regarding how exactly the resurrected body will look like, a problem Capitein might have previously encountered in his attempt to communicate this aspect of the creed to a community that was unfamiliar with the Christian concept of ‘bodily resurrection’. Fortunately, the people of Edina, like other Gold Coast communities, believed that death was not the end of human existence, but a doorway to another life. Nananom nsamanfo (departed ancestors) who dwelt in the spiritual realm, could also reveal themselves to the living, as and when the need arose.

Capitein’s translation of Article XII as Ōmmé Janceomén obesie jinnejé daháe [Na Nyankopen besie hán yie daba], ‘And God will keep us well at all times’, is an attempt to re-formulate the concept of ζωή αἰωνίων, ‘life everlasting’. In my opinion, this is an intelligent re-packaging of a key Article of Faith for an Mfantse community who view salvation holistically as the unbroken enjoyment of material and spiritual well-being as well as the main-
tenance of society’s equilibrium. God is unambiguously presented as the One who truly guarantees this holistic well-being and is, therefore, the embodiment par excellence of ζωή, ‘life’, in all its fullness. That is all the more reason why we can consistently enjoy quality life, not only at the present moment of our earthly existence, but also in the hereafter.

Concluding remarks
Our study has shown that Capitein’s translation of the Apostles’ Creed is characterized at some points by creativity and innovativeness. Compared with the Greek text and its various translations into Latin, Dutch, English, Mnansæ, Twi, Ewe and Ga for liturgical purposes, Capitein’s special rendition demonstrates an awareness of the local Edina (Elmina) context. This necessitates an intelligent re-packaging of concepts embedded in the creed for a more effective communication to his target audience. Even if doubts have been expressed in some circles as to whether the ‘inaccuracies’ within Capitein’s translation were genuine mistakes or intentional, his pioneering efforts to communicate Judeo-Christian concepts in a Gold Coast (Ghanaian) setting, is a positive challenge to African biblical interpreters. Given this admirable ability to re-interpret source texts in the process of translation into an African language, Capitein can be considered as a trail-blazer in the discipline of mother tongue biblical hermeneutics.

References

19 Kpobi, Mission in Chains, p. 149.
APPENDIX
TRANSLATIONS INTO SOME OTHER MAJOR GHANAIAN LANGUAGES

ECEE VERSION
Mexo Máwu, si enye To, ñusekatato, si wó dzi kple anyigba dzi se.
[I believe in God, who is Father, Almighty, who made heaven and earth]
Mexo Yesu Kristo, Máwu ñe Tenuvi, si enye mia Ašeto dzi se;
[I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s begotten, who is our Lord]
Amesi ñe fu wofo .iso Gbogbo kókèe me, eye Mariá ñeñugbi la džii;
[whose conception came from the Holy Spirit and Mary the ‘virgin’ gave birth to]
amesi kpe fu le Pontio Pilato te, eye wohee de ati ñtu, eye woku, eye wodii;
amesi yi isieše, eye wogafó .iso aме kuwuwo dome le ñkeke etoagbe;
[one who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was hanged on a tree, and he died and he was buried, one who went to hell and rose again from among the dead on the third day]
eye woji dzió, eye wonó Máwu, Eto, ñusekatato ñe núdusimè. Afimù wogagato ava adro asunu aме gbogbe wó kple aме kuwuwo.
[and he went to ‘heaven’ and he sat on the right-hand side of God, Father, Almighty. From there he shall come and judge both the living and the dead]
Mexo Gbogbo dzi se, kple Kristo ñe hame kókøe ñeka, si enye aме kókòewo ñe somédodo nwekeke, ñitila ñe tsiretsitsi, kpakple agbe mava dzi se.
[I believe in the Holy Spirit, and the holy congregation of Christ, which is the fellowship of all holy people, forgiveness, the rising up of the body and life everlasting].

GA VERSION
KRISTOFORI AHEMOKAYEVI
Miheo Nyoemí ní ji Teé Ofe là kā Ñwāl kā shikpoñ feeló là nọ miyeò
[I believe in God who is Almighty and Creator of heaven and earth]
Kà Yesu Ebinu kome ní ji wò Nuntse là
[In Jesus His only Son who is our Lord]
Mòni ènì là he kajà Muma Kòñkòñ là mì
[Who was conceived from the Holy Spirit]
Ni oblayoo Maria là ìò là
[Born of Mary the young lady].
Ena amanehulu yà Pontio Pilato yínò
[He suffered during the reign of Pontius Pilate]
Asàà là, egbo, ní afù là.
[Was crucified, he died and was buried]
Ekplekeshi kà teee gbohii aje
[He descended into the world of the dead]
Gbi ni ji eti la ete shi okooh kaj la gbosh bi aten;
[On the third day he rose again from the dead]
Etee uwa, ni eyatashiyaa. Etsi-Ofo la nine juro no.
[He went to heaven and sat on the right hand of His Father Almighty]
Jai eejub eba, ni eba kojo mai ni hiia kamo kaj mai ni egboi la.
[From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead]
[I believe in the Holy Spirit. And in the only Church of Christ universal]
Mai kronkroni naanyaoboe la, kaj eshai faa la kaj gbeseeso shtee la
[the friendship of the saints, forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body]
Ká naanoo waal la ne myea. Amen.
[And I believe in the everlasting life. Amen]

TWI VERSION
ASOMAFO OYIDIKASÂM [APOSTLES' CONFESSION OF FAITH]
Mige Agya Onyankpon a ayâ mneâma nyinâa so Tumfo ne Âsorâ ne asase yio no mdi.
[I believe in Father God who has authority over all things and is creator of heaven and earth]
Mige ne ba a owoo no koro no, Yesu Kristo a ayâ yân Awurade no mdi;
[I believe in his only begotten child, Jesus Christ who is our Lord]
o no na wade Honhom Kronkron na enyinsâm no,
[who was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit]
aa abadum Maria woo no; [and was given birth to by the virgin Mary]
aa oohu amane Pontio Pilato bere so,
[and he suffered in the time of Pontius Pilate]
aa wobaa no sam asânduâ ho,
[and he was nailed to a cross]
aa owui, na wositi no;
[and he died, and was buried]
aa oâian koe asaman,
[and he descended to the world of the dead]
aa ne mansa so no Âsore fii awufo mu;
[and three days later he rose from among the dead]
aa oko Âsoro; âho na aee n'agyaa Onyankpon. mneâma nyinâa so tumfo ne nfaa;
[and he ascended to heaven; there he sits at the right side of God his Father, who has authority over all things]
âho na ofi bëba abebu atesejo ne awufo mân.
[from there he will come and judge the living and the dead]
Migye Honhom Kronkron ne Kristofo Asafo Kronkron a dyi biako wo mmaw nyinaa a ahotofo wo mw ayonkofa ne bone fafiri ne konam sore ne daa nkwa, mid. Amen.
[I believe in the Holy Spirit and the one Holy Christian Church which is everywhere and in which are sanctified people who share fellowship, and in the forgiveness of sins and in the resurrection of the body and in life that never ends. Amen]
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The essays in this volume speak to many of the interests Pobee pursued in his own research platform. One of the central debates in the academic world of learning today is the relationship between theological enterprise and the academic study of religion.

In this collection, we recognize some of the same themes that Pobee himself helped to define, explore and advance in the study of religion. In particular, the contributing scholars of this volume consider the importance of theology and education, as well as the notions of religious pluralism and multi-faith learning environments. Other essays examine some of the distinctions between European theology and African theology, also recognizing the important role of African Indigenous Religions in the collaborative religious spaces of the African continent. Due attention is given to semantics and the importance of language in the study of religion, and a nod here is given to expanding notions of African ontology with regard to individuals and the community. A number of articles also consider the importance of gender and power within spheres of religion in West African cultural contexts. These articles also point out the need to better understand the relationships between African religions and political and structural violence, ethnic conflict and human rights on the continent and elsewhere.

Ultimately, this festschrift in honor of John Pobee includes a variety of scholarly voices. In the chorus of their essays, the authors expertly consider both the local and the global dimensions of themes in African religion and theology, an impressive feat, and one that John Pobee has insisted upon in his own contributions to the field.

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J.S's sense of mission has led him to search for God as God could be found in the various arnapagi of human existence, be it in the traditional religions of Africa or in the historical struggles for political freedom on the African Continent.

Prof. Pobee is however known and always remembered both at home and abroad for his very insightful and academic contributions on Ecumenism, on Christian Mission and Religious Education. In this context, I can well say that the emblematic topic for the festschrift in his honour is most apt, and the array of contributors speaks volumes of the man being thus honoured.

Very Reverend Canon Professor John Samuel Pobee indeed made himself "all things to all people...” and I can say without any doubt that he continues to attract many to Christ Jesus, whom he so loves and for whom he has dedicated his whole heart and soul, mind and might. Who will not be proud of such a man of God!

Most Rev. Charles G. Palmer-Buckle,
Catholic Archbishop of Accra, Ghana.