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CONTENTS

Editorial

Articles:

**African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Methodology for Mother Tongue
Biblical Hermeneutics**

J E T KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR..... 01

Postcolonial Reading of the Bible

PRINCE SORIE CONTEH..... 25

Therapeutic Indigenous Medical Technology in Emu

KINGSLEY I OWETE..... 38

**Post-Conversion Experience in Pentecostal and Charismatic
Churches: A Study of 1 Corinthians 12:10**

PATRICK YANKYERA..... 63

**Use of Imprecatory Prayers in Contemporary African Christianity:
A Critique**

FREDERICK MAWUSI AMEVENKU AND
ISAAC BOAHENG..... 86

**Ethical, Moral and Spiritual Foundation for a Prosperous Africa:
Climate Justice - The Role of the Church**

SAMUEL ASIEDU-AMOAKO AND
MICHAEL KWADWO NTIAMOAH..... 105

Religious and Social Relevance of *Nsuae* (Oath Swearing) in Akan
Indigenous Leadership Formation
MICHAEL KWADWO NTIAMOAH 122

BOOK REVIEW

"A Study of Pastoral Care of the Elderly in Africa: An Interdisciplinary
Approach with a Focus on Ghana" Reviewed by:
J E T KUWORNU ADJAOTTOR..... 140

EDITORIAL

As routine, the Managing Editor and I, sincerely thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue. We also thank our in-house and external reviewers for their continued support. Those who submitted papers but are not in this volume will be published in the February, 2016 issue.

We continue to encourage scholars in any religious and theological fields who are interested in academic publishing to send their papers to **ERATS**. Our capable internal and external reviewers are ready to work with you.

We are expecting your work.

Professor Prince S Conteh
Chief Editor

African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Methodology for Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics

JONATHAN EDWARD TETTEH KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR¹

ABSTRACT

This paper makes a case for a methodology for doing African Biblical Hermeneutics. It builds on the ideas of earlier scholars of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa who focused on continuity between the Old and New Testaments with reference to their hermeneutical and personal uses in Africa as follows: during social interactions, expressions of courtesies, expression of sympathy and support for the oppressed, the marginalised and the “common person”. Also in criticism of Western scholarship in African theological hermeneutics, feminist exegesis of the Bible, ecumenical and gender issues in Africa. This work argues that current state of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa is about interpreting the Bible from the perspective of African languages because God speaks into the African context in African idioms. The author proposes a methodology for doing Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics which is lacking in the works of earlier scholars.

Introduction

In his book, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous*

¹ JONATHAN EDWARD TETTEH KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR is a PhD candidate, and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi-GHANA.

*Churches*² and article, “African Cultural Hermeneutics,”³ David T. Adamo discusses African Biblical Hermeneutics as a discipline that makes the African social context a subject of interpretation because it focuses on a particular approach - the African context in interpreting the Bible which focuses on reading and analysing a biblical text from an African worldview and culture. This is done not only to understand God and the Bible from the African experience and culture, but to also break the hegemony and ideological stronghold that Western and Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed.⁴ African Biblical Hermeneutics uses a methodological approach that reappraises ancient biblical tradition with the purpose of “correcting the effect of the cultural ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans have been subjected.”⁵

Justification for African Biblical Hermeneutics

G. Mulrain indicates that a study of the history of biblical hermeneutics reveals that there has never been an interpretation without references to or dependent on a particular cultural code, thought patterns, or social location of the interpreter.⁶ What Mulrain means is that, there is no individual interpreter who is completely detached from his or her environment, experience and culture. Thus biblical interpretation is biased in some ways in the sense that, an African scholar born and raised in an African cultural setting, will not throw his or her culture, thought patterns and experiences away in interpreting and translating the Bible.

² D T Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF and Stock Publishers, 2001).

³ D T Adamo, “African Cultural Hermeneutics,” in: R S Sugirtharajah, ed., *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁴ Since Western biblical scholars interpret the Bible from an Eurocentric perspective, Yorke has legitimately termed African Biblical interpretation as “Afrocentric Hermeneutics.” For discussion, see, G L Yorke, “Biblical Hermeneutics: an Afrocentric Perspective,” *Journal of Religion and Theology* 2.2 (1995): 145-58.

⁵ Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible*, 1.

⁶ G Mulrain, “Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context,” *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (1999): 117-21.

The African scholar as such will engage the Bible in ways that are unique to his or her African culture and experience which are different from that of a Western scholar.

The Beginnings of African Biblical Hermeneutics

Between 1960 and 1990, the “liberation”⁷ motif was the agenda that preoccupied progressive African theologians, and the Exodus motif was considered appropriate and relevant to the African situation that the first generation of African leaders were likened to the figure of Moses in the Old Testament. Out of this broad theme came subthemes such as “inculturation”⁸ and “salvation.” Since 1990, Africa entered a new era in which her thinkers are challenged to discern new metaphors and insights to propel the African continent into the twenty-first century.

J N K Mugambi has proposed that “Reconstruction” is such an insight, and that the post-exilic scriptures can provide such a fresh impetus for this new era of “reconstruction.”⁹ Thus, the figure of Nehemiah became more relevant than Moses, and it was used as an exemplary character to mirror the process through which Africa could come out of the ruins of the wars against racism, colonial domination and ideological branding, and rebuild herself. Using the paradigm of reconstruction - a theology of reconstruction - which to me includes biblical hermeneutics and bible translation, hermeneutics was birthed in Africa with the sole aim of promoting African consciousness which had for centuries been covered by Eurocentricism.

⁷ Liberation hermeneutics operates on a three-part agenda: experience, social analysis and action.

⁸ Inculturation means relating the gospel to the cultures of people being evangelized.

⁹ For a discussion see, J N K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christianity After the Cold War* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995); see also M N Getui and E A Obeng, eds., *Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999); U C Manus, *Intercultural Hermeneutics*, (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003).

Pace-setters of African Biblical Hermeneutics

Adamo's points on African Biblical hermeneutics is not new; it is a build-up on earlier scholars whose contributions have shaped, and continue to shape the discipline through their publications, insights and other non-literary contributions. Notable among such scholars are Grant LeMarquand,¹⁰ Gerald West,¹¹ John Mbiti,¹² Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza,¹³ and Mercy Amba Oduyoye.¹⁴

Grant LeMarquand

LeMarquand's work, *A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa* (2000), is a comprehensive biographical collection on articles, studies and other academic literature (published and unpublished) related to the interpretation and use of the Bible in Africa. His other publications are, *New Testament Exegesis in (Modern) Africa* (2000), in which he argues that there is no discontinuity between the New Testament and the Old Testament with reference to its homiletical and private use in Africa;¹⁵ *And the rulers of the nations shall bring their treasures into it: A Survey of Biblical Exegesis in Africa* (1999), in which LeMarquand presents a systematic survey of the different exegetical methods employed by

¹⁰ LeMarquand is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Mission at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, Ambridge. He taught Systematic Theology in Kenya as a missionary for many years.

¹¹ West is Professor of Theology at University of Natal.

¹² Mbiti is the father of African Theology. He taught at the University of Uganda, Harvard Divinity School and Princeton Theological Seminary; was Director of Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

¹³ Fiorenza is Professor of Divinity at Harvard.

¹⁴ Oduyoye is Professor of Theology and Director, Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon. She is a founding member of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. She served for many years as a Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

¹⁵ G LeMarquand, "New Testament Exegesis in (Modern) Africa", in M W Dube & G O West, eds., *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2000), 72-102.

African readers.¹⁶

Gerald West

West is a “socially engaged” scholar whose hermeneutics shows respect and sympathy for the oppressed, marginalised and the “ordinary person”.¹⁷ His article *On the Eve of an African Biblical Studies: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (1997), presents his summarised thesis on challenges facing black people in South Africa – how they perceive and use the Bible in the new South Africa. West presents a much deeper discussion on the neo-traditionalism in African Hermeneutics in *The Interface between Trained Readers and Ordinary Readers in Liberation Hermeneutics – A Case Study: Mark 10:17-22* (1993). *The Bible in Africa* (Dube & West 2000), is the most comprehensive volume of articles that focuses on the contextual interpretation and praxis of the Bible in Africa. In this volume is West's greatest contribution to African hermeneutical dialogue. His article, "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch," provides a good discussion on the Scriptural basis of Black Theology in South Africa, and the contribution it has made to African interpretation as a whole.¹⁸

John Mbiti

Mbiti's contribution as an African is summed up in his work towards an African indigenous theology for Africa. His work, *The Bible and*

¹⁶ His unpublished paper entitled *Acts 19: A Neglected Model of Mission in African Exegesis*, delivered at the 1998 African Christianity: Past, Present and Future conference held in Toronto Canada, is a significant contribution to the exegetical dialogue, especially because it deals with an aspect of African hermeneutics (missiology) which calls for further investigation. Lous Krog (2005), *African Hermeneutics: The Current State*. Online Article. (<http://66.102.9.132/search?q=cache:NdEi6Sb18sEJ:www.theologyinafrica.com/files/Thesis>). Accessed 2/4/10.

¹⁷ G O West, *Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical reading of the Bible*. Sheffield (England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 12.

¹⁸ West, *Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical reading of the Bible*, 29-53.

Theology in African Christianity (1986), surveys how many theologians, though not experts in biblical scholarship, base their theological reflections and writings on the Bible. His survey led him to conclude that, three types of theology exist: written theology, oral and symbolic theology.¹⁹ Written theology is largely limited to the West, whereas oral and symbolic theology are inherent of third-world theology. Mbiti's discovery of the various types of theology has provided a framework for criticism of white scholarship in African theology. Referring to questions of Biblical Studies in Africa, Mbiti writes, "There are a few indications to the answers to these questions, but these questions come only from overseas scholars and not from African theologians".²⁰ Mbiti's answer to the question of how Western theology is done has opened the way for African Biblical scholars and theologians to begin to ask critical questions about the Bible in Africa.²¹

Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza

Schussler-Fiorenza is a feminist theologian who has reinterpreted the position of women in the ministry of Jesus.²² Her exegetical method is found in her book, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (1998). This work has become very significant in theological feminism and is generally regarded as the "bible" of feminist exegesis. Her earlier work, *Searching the Scriptures Vol. 1: A Feminist Introduction* (1994) is equally held as a significant contribution to feminist hermeneutical dialogue and has proven to be very influential for women interpreters in Africa. Almost every work on African feminist hermeneutics cites or recommends Schussler-Fiorenza's 1998 book.

¹⁹ J S Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986), 14.

²⁰ Mbiti, *Bible and Theology*, 52.

²¹ Mbiti, *Bible and Theology*, 52.

²² C Sampson, "The Bible in the Midst of Woman," in D Ackemann, J A Drapper & Mashinini E, eds., *Women held up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa* (South Africa: Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1991), 21.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye

Oduyoye's concerns are wide-ranging. She brings fresh insights on many issues, including biblical exegesis in the African context, ecumenical and gender issues. Among her publications are, *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa* (1992), in which there are several contributing articles from Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. In general, the book discusses the roles and contributions of women in African culture and in the Bible, and calls for the community to see women not merely as biological beings who nurse and care for the family; women should also be seen as persons who fulfil other important roles in society. Two other books by Oduyoye are *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (1995); *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (2002). Even though these do not deal specifically with exegetical matters, they are nonetheless important because of their contributions to the growth of feminism in Africa.

Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa: Dimensions of Mother Tongue Hermeneutics

The current state of Biblical Studies in Africa is about interpreting the Bible to help understand the gospel from the African context. In other words, this is what West calls “appropriation”-understanding the biblical text and the African context, and engaging (interpreting) the two, to change the African context.²³ LeMarquand, West, Mbiti, Schussler-Fiorenza, and Oduyoye have made contributions to this kind of engagement in Africa. Four scholars who have made recent significant contributions in the area of African Biblical Hermeneutics are: Lamin Sanneh,²⁴

²³ G West, *Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa*, (2008), www.chora-strangers/files/chora/west2008, accessed 10/10/2011.

²⁴ Sanneh is Professor of Missions and World Christianity, and Professor of History. He taught and worked at the University of Ghana, the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, Harvard, and (since 1989) at Yale.

Kwame Bediako,²⁵ Justin Ukpong²⁶ and John Ekem.²⁷

Lamin Sanneh

Sanneh, in one of his many works, *Translating the Message*, says that the “Success of Christianity will ultimately come to depend securely on its vernacular roots...Translation would consequently help bring us to new ways of viewing the world, commencing a process of revitalization that reaches into both the personal and cultural spheres.”²⁸ Writing on the topic, “Gospel and Culture: Ramifying Effects of Scripture Translation,” Sanneh notes that, the vernacular translation of the Bible begins with the adaptation of indigenous terms, concepts, customs and idioms for the central categories of Christianity.²⁹

The gist of Sanneh's point is that, if we say African Christianity has grown in the twentieth century, it is not because of the missionary enterprise; it is because the Christian message or the gospel has been translated into African vernacular languages. However, for any vernacular translation of the Bible to be useful to its readers, it must incorporate their indigenous terms, concepts and idioms. This means that, Bible translation should be functional-it must make use of

²⁵ Kwame Bediako was Professor of Theology and Director of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

²⁶ Justin Ukpong was a Professor of New Testament at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He was one of the pioneers of African Biblical Scholarship. He taught at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

²⁷ John David Kwamena Ekem is a Professor of New Testament at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana, and Director of the Centre for Mother-Tongue Hermeneutics at Trinity Theological Seminary. He is the current Translations Consultant of the Bible Society of Ghana.

²⁸ L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 52-53.

²⁹ L. Sanneh, “Gospel and Culture: Ramifying Effects of Scripture Translation,” in Stine, P.C. ed., *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church, The Last 200 Years* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 16-17.

indigenous idioms and terminologies from the culture of the people the Bible is being translated for, terminologies that the people can identify with, and which will help them understand the Christian message; and not necessarily, translating Hebrew and Greek works and phrases which in some cases do not make sense to African indigenous readers of the Bible. Sanneh's proposal for Bible translation is an application of Eugene Nida's theory of Dynamic Equivalence, which can be traced back to the Protestant principle, and to Wycliffe and Tyndale that, ordinary Christians should have the opportunity to read the Bible in their own tongue.³⁰

Sanneh's suggestion that vernacular translation of the Bible should begin with the adaptation of indigenous terms, concepts, customs and idioms for the central categories of Christianity means that there were some problems with the vernacular translations of the Bible in Africa. The Methodist Church Ghana identified some problems with the Mfante full Bible published in 1948, and appointed a committee to revise it using the following principles as a guide:

- The revision is to be a “common language” translation which will seek to express the Biblical message in direct and correct (modern) Fante.
- Although the primary purpose must be to seek the clearest way to express the Biblical message, readings of the present Fante Bible will be considered, and no change will be made merely for the sake of change. The revision will aim at clarity, first and foremost, but where the present translation is already clear, there will be no need to make changes.
- Achaisms, ambiguities, awkward expressions, and inconsistencies are to be eliminated.

³⁰ For a discussion see E A Nida & C R Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1982); E A Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

- The translation is to be based upon editions of the Hebrew and Greek text.
- The exegetical base is to be a modern English translation of the Bible, probably the Revised Standard Version.
- Section headings are to be employed, and the text is to be presented in paragraph form.
- A glossary is to be prepared to explain unusual and difficult words.
- Footnotes are to be employed rarely and only where necessary to aid reader comprehension (for example, the region of Galilee, a stone called cardonyx, a drug called myrrh, etc).
- Divine names are to be capitalized and in some cases (particularly for Spirit) other indicators may be employed to clarify the reference to divinity.
- Figures and idioms which would lead to misunderstanding if retained literally are to be expressed in modern equivalents.
- Word order and clause order are to follow the requirements of the Fante language rather than the Greek, Hebrew, or English.
- Sentence structures and marks of punctuation are to be those required by the Fante language.
- Long and involved sentences are to be restructured into shorter and meaningful units.
- Terms indicating family relationships are to follow the Fante kinship pattern.
- Particular attention will be given to see that “of constructions resulting from the Greek genitive and the Hebrew construct state, are expressed in the most accurate and meaningful way.
- Care will be taken to see that unusual grammatical constructions do not occur at a statistical average far above that employed in current Fante.
- Word classes (for example, noun to verb) will be changed where this can lead to more meaningful and idiomatic expression.
- Particular attention will be given to the difference between verb aspect in the original language and in Fante.
- Where necessary for clarity, pronouns may be replaced by the corresponding noun.

- Doubtful textual element will be enclosed in half brackets [...] and an appropriate introductory statement will be made.
- Every effort will be made to convey accurately the content of the Biblical message, even where this may mean an alteration in the external form. The translation will aim at a dynamic translation rather than a formal equivalence.³¹

These key translation principles recommended by United Bible Societies and other members of the Forum of Bible Agencies International, still govern other Bible Society of Ghana projects, be they revisions or new translations.³²

Kwame Bediako

In Bediako's article on "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context - The Impact of the Translated Scripture",³³ he cites Clement of Alexandria who observed that the Church's Bible in Greek amounted to Greek prophecy. Commenting on vernacular Scripture, Bediako posits that, "The ability to hear in one's own language and to express in one's own language one's response to the message which one receives, must lie at the heart of all authentic religious encounters with the divine realm".³⁴ To Bediako, this is usually the case because "God speaks into the African context in African idioms, and that it is through hearing in African mother tongues 'the great things God has done' (Acts 2:11), that African theology emerges to edify not only the African church but the church

³¹ J D K Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Gã, Twi, Mfante, and Ewe Bibles* (Rome/Manchester: Edizioni di Storia Eletteratura/St. Jerome, 2011), 107-108.

³² Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 109.

³³ K Bediako, "Biblical Exegesis in the African Context – The Factor and Impact of the Translated Scriptures," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 6. 1 (2003): 20.

³⁴ K Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 60.

world-wide.”³⁵

By these observations, Bediako does not only mean that the Bible must be translated into African languages to make its message understandable to African people, so that they can hear and experience the Word of God in context, but also that African theologians must use the African languages in their theologizing endeavours. Bediako's proposal has produced scholarly works in African theology and Biblical Hermeneutics as follows: B Y Quarshie (2000), “The Significance of Biblical Studies for African Christian Theology”;³⁶ B Y Quarshie, “Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context - The Challenge of Mother-tongue Scriptures” (2002),³⁷ S M Tshehla, “Philippians 3:7-11 and African Biblical Exegesis: A Reflection” (2002),³⁸ P T Laryea “Reading Acts 14:8-17 and 17:22-31 in Ga: A Critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from the Exegesis in the Mother Tongue” (2002).³⁹

Justin Ukpong

Inculturation hermeneutics is an intellectual hermeneutic methodology for academic reading of the Bible. Justin Ukpong indicates that he has coined the term “inculturation biblical theology” to designate an interpretation derived from inculturation theology; this approach seeks to consciously and explicitly interpret the biblical text from socio-cultural perspectives of different people including both their religious

³⁵ K Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Gospel in African History and Experience* (Akropong: Editions Clé and Regnum Africa, 2000), vii.

³⁶ B Y Quarshie, “The Significance of Biblical Studies for African Christian Theology,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 3. 1 (2000): 17-26.

³⁷ B Y Quarshie, “Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context-The Challenge of Mother-tongue Scriptures,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5. 1 (2002): 4-14.

³⁸ S M Tshehla, “Philippians 3:7-11 and African Biblical Exegesis: A Reflection,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5.1 (2002): 24-30.

³⁹ P T Laryea, “Reading Acts 14:8-17 and 17:22-31 in Gā : A Critical Examination of the Issues, Meanings and Interpretations Arising from the

and secular culture as well as their social and historical experience.⁴⁰ It is social-critical critique whereby the Bible is read to uncover those texts that could be used to legitimate exclusion in society.⁴¹ It has two main tasks: First, appraising the cultural-human dimension of the Bible in respect to its attitude to, and evaluation of, “other” peoples and cultures. It focuses on a critical reading of the Bible in the light of the basic human and biblical values of love and respect for others, community building, justice, peace and inclusiveness. The purpose is to bring to light such exclusive texts to avoid unconsciously absorbing them as normative, and adopting them as a basis for action; and to view them as challenging us with respect to these values. The other task is reading the Bible to appropriate its message in today's context. The biblical text is read against the background of the social-historical situation reflected in it. The point of departure in inculturation biblical hermeneutics is the Bible which is not culturally and

Exegesis in the Mother Tongue,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 5.1 (2002): 35-43.

⁴⁰ J S Ukpong, “Reading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Theology for South Africa* 91 (1995): 3-14. His earlier works on Inculturation are: “Inculturation and Evangelization: Biblical Foundations for Inculturation, *Vidyajyoti* 58 (1994a): 298-307; “Towards a Renewed Approach to Inculturation Theology,” *Journal of Inculturation Theology* 1 (1994b): 3-15. Other works in inculturation by French scholars include: B J B Matand, “L’herméneutique de l’inculturation dans Ac 15 et Ga 2:11-14, in J Kalonga, dir., *Inculturation de la vie consacré en Afrique à l’aube du troisième millénaire. Actes du cinquième colloque international* (Kinshasa: Carmel Afrique, 1998), 141-168); P L Monsengwo, “Lokola biso tokolimbisaka (Mt 6,9 par): Incidence théologique d’ une traduction, *Revue Africaine de Théologie* (1998): 15-21-24.; N R Mugaruka, “La traduction de la Bible comme moment d’ inculturation du message révélé: Application à la version shi de Mt 5, 1-2, *Revue Africaine de Théologie* 31 (1992): 5-31. For Matand, a true inculturation is the one which crucifies all the sins of culture that receives Christ and allows him to transform the culture into a new creation (Gal 2:19bb-20; 4:19). The contributions from Monsengwo and Mugaruka explore inculturation biblical hermeneutics from Bible translation perspectives.

⁴¹ J Ukpong, “Bible Reading with a Community of Ordinary Readers,” in: M N Getui, T Maluleke, J Ukpong, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Press, 2001), 291.

ideologically⁴² an innocent text. It is the Bible that is studied in both tasks.

Ukpong says inculturation hermeneutics uses an African conceptual framework for reading and in that way, makes the African context the subject of the interpretation. He proposes four assumptions as important aspects of this conceptual framework:⁴³

- The unitive view of reality whereby the spiritual is not separated from the material. Hence the Bible is not spiritualized but read within social, economic, political and religious frames of reference and these are seen as interrelated.
- A creation-oriented perspective whereby humanity is seen as embedded in creation and interacting with other creatures in a dialectical relationship. Nature is therefore seen not as a strange force to be “conquered” and “subdued” by human beings, but as an authentic reality existing in interdependence with humanity within the one realm of creation.
- A community consciousness whereby community well-being rather than individualism provides the hermeneutical perspective in human relations.
- A predilection for expressing things concretely rather than in the abstract.

Ukpong's proposition of Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutics, which Manus calls *Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa* (2003), has motivated African scholars to write, using the Bible as the main text, and the

⁴² Ideology here is used in a general sense to refer to “a particular point of view”. Texts do not contain ideologies per se, but the way the materials in them are constructed, ordered, and organized, is sometimes informed unconsciously by the “point of view” of those who produced them. In that case, they can carry with them, the seeds or the potentials of these points of view. Thus, texts can be said not to be ideologically innocent.

⁴³ Ukpong, “Bible Reading with a Community of Ordinary Readers,” in M N Getui., T.Maluleke, J Ukpong, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, 292.

African context as the subject. Examples are found in *Biblical Healing in African Context*,⁴⁴ a publication of The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS), started in 1985.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See, S O Abogunrin, J O Akao, D O Akintunde, G N Toryough, and P A Oguntoye (2004), *Biblical Healing in African Context*, Biblical Studies No. 3 (The Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies, 2004). Articles in this book are: S O Abogunrin, "Healing in African Context"; D T Adamo, "Healing in the Old Testament and in African Context"; C O Ogunkunle, "Prophet Isaiah and the Healing of King Hezekiah in the African Context"; P A Oguntoye, "Healing in the Inter-Testamental Literature in the African Context"; S O E Onofa, "Interpreting the Healing of the Man Born Blind in the African Context: An Exegesis of John 9:1-41"; M I Oguntoyinbo-Atere, "The Healing of the Blind Man in Luke 18:35-43: An African Perspective"; S. O. Omowole, "The Story of the Healing of Lepers in the Synoptic Gospels and Its Relevance to Contemporary Nigerian Society"; D O Akintunde, "Healing of Simon Peter's Mother-in-Law and Tabitha (Dorcas) in the Context of Healing in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria"; R M Owanikin, "The Gentiles in the healing Miracles of Jesus in the African Context"; A O Igenzoa, "Exorcism in the Ministry of Jesus and Demonology in the African Context"; J. Enuwosa, "Mental Health: Demonic Possession in Mark and African Traditional Belief"; D O Akhilomen, "Faith healing and the Spirit of Beelzebub: A Critical Appraisal of Pentecostal Practices in Nigeria"; A M Okorie, "The Healing Miracles of Jesus in the African Context"; O S Bisi, "Healing Miracles in the Acts of the Apostles and Contemporary Miracle Workers"; C A Obi, "Healing Miracles in the Acts of the Apostles: A Safeguard for Pentecostal Propaganda"; A O Idamarhare, "The Therapeutic Techniques in the Acts of the Apostles in the Context of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria"; A Taiye, "The Miracles of Peter and their Relevance to the Contemporary Church"; L B Akande, "A Study of the Inter-Play Between the Divine and Scientific Healing Strategies"; A. Oladunjoye, "Divine Healing in the Orthodox Churches"; E M Ehioghae, "Biblical Healing as a Metaphor for Forgiveness: The African Experience"; C O Isiramen, "Biblical Healing: The Craze in Contemporary Nigerian Society"; O A Dairo, "The relationship of Healing and Sin in the Understanding of The Apostolic Faith Church, Nigeria"; P O Abioje, "A Theological Discourse on the Pentecostal Emphasis on Miracle from the Nigerian Perspective"; G N Toryough, "Healing Miracles and their Impact on Church Planting and Church Growth: A Case of Selected Examples of Nigerian Church Planters".

⁴⁵ The Ghanaian counterpart is the Ghana Association of Biblical Exegetes (GABES), started in September 2000. It publishes the *Journal of African Biblical Studies* (JABS).

John Ekem

Ekem has demonstrated through several articles, three books and a commentary in *Mfante* that, “The varied mother tongues of Africa have a lot to offer by way of biblical interpretation in Ghanaian/African languages as viable material for interpretation, study Bibles and commentaries”.⁴⁶ From Ekem's point of view, a person who wants to do African biblical hermeneutics must of a necessity include formal exegesis that reflects a dynamic encounter between Christian and traditional African world-views, both of which continue to exert a powerful impact on communities.⁴⁷

African Biblical Hermeneutics: The Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics Methodology

Sanneh and Bediako have discussed Bible translation in the African context; in that sense they can be called translating theologians. Ukpung has proposed interpreting the Bible with the African context as the subject. He has thus, introduced a *socio-historico-cultural* dimension of Biblical hermeneutics. Ekem has also introduced mother-tongue as a basis for Biblical interpretation in Africa. But he has not proposed a methodology for doing Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics. This thesis builds on Ekem's proposition by adding a methodology.

⁴⁶ J D K. Ekem, “Interpreting 'The Lord's Prayer' in the context of Ghanaian Mother-tongue Hermeneutics,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 10. 2 (2007): 48.

⁴⁷ For the details of his publications see, J D K Ekem, “The Use of *Archierus* 'High Priest' as a Christological Title: A Ghanaian Case Study,” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XI. 1 & 2 (2001): 57-64; “Translating *Asham* (Isaiah 53:10) in the Context of the Abura-Mfantse Sacrificial Thought,” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XII. 1 & 2. (2002): 23-29; “Biblical Exegesis in an African context: Some Reflections,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 6. 1 (2003): 31-34; “Spiritual Gifts or Spiritual Persons? 1 Corinthians 12:1a Revisited,” *Neotestamentica. Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa* 38. 1 (2004): 54-74; “Interpreting 'The Lord's Prayer' in the context of Ghanaian Mother-tongue Hermeneutics,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*

other-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics uses an eclectic methodology. It borrows from the fields of Biblical Studies, and Language Studies and delves into the realm of Biblical Languages: Biblical Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek, and local Ghanaian/African languages.⁴⁸ The criteria for using this approach is that the user must be a student of the Bible – Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew and must be able to do exegesis of biblical texts; or New Testament and Greek, or both; he or she must be able to do exegesis of biblical texts; be able to read and write, and understand his or her mother tongue; and be a regular reader of the Bible in his or her mother tongue.⁴⁹ The procedure for problem identification and statement, literature review, data collection and analysis is as follows:⁵⁰

- Identify a biblical text which you think has been wrongly translated into your mother-tongue;

10. 2 (2007a): 48-52; "A Dialogical Exegesis of Romans 3:2a," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007b): 75-93; *New Testament Concepts of Atonement in an African Pluralistic Setting* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2005); *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in Some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2008); *Krataa a Pôól Kyerewee Dze Kemaa Faelimôn: Ne Nkyeremyemu Fi Griik Kasa Mu Kô Mfantse Kasa Mu* (A Commentary on Paul's Letter to Philemon Based on the Greek Text in Fante) (Accra: SonLife Press, 2009); "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): Two Case Studies," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 13. 2 (2010): 34-37; *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Gã, Twi, Mfante, and Ewe Bibles* (Rome/Manchester: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura/St. Jerome, 2011); "Reappraising the History and Place of Mother-Tongue Bible Translations," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 15. 2 (2012): 10-14.

⁴⁸ J E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 3. 4 (2012): 575-79.

⁴⁹ J E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Doing Biblical Studies using the Mother-tongue Approach," *Journal of Applied Thought* .1 (1) 2012:55-80.

⁵⁰ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Doing Biblical Studies using the Mother-tongue Approach," *Journal of Applied Thought*, 74.

- Discuss why the translation is problematic in your culture
- State the methodology you will use, and the proponents
- Do a study (an exegesis) of the text, using Bible Study resources-Dictionaries, Commentaries, Encyclopedias, Word Study helps, etc
- Find out what scholars have said about the text, how they interpret it and reasons for their interpretations
- Discuss the usage of the concept in your language/culture; interview indigenous speakers of your mother-tongue for deeper insights into the concept you are researching. Use local terminologies in your writing and explain them in English.
- Compare the text in your mother-tongue with other Ghanaian translations you can read and understand
- Analyse the mother-tongue translations; what do they mean? How are the meanings of the text similar to that of the Hebrew/Greek? How are they different? What might have accounted for the differences in translation?
- Come out with a new translation of the text that fits into your culture

Following the above steps has produced numerous scholarly papers some of which are: J E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Reading of *hudōr zōn* [living water] and its relationship with *pistuō* [believe] in John 4:1-15 through the lens of some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the New Testament and a Practice in Ghanaian Traditional Shrines”, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (2015, Forthcoming);⁵¹ “Reading Acts 17:22-23 Through the Lens of Graeco-Roman Religion and Ghanaian Mother Tongue Translations of the Bible”, *Sapientia Logos* 6. 2 (2014): 1-50; “A Study of the Translation of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Bibles”, *Journal of African Biblical*

⁵¹ This paper won the William Shakespeare Research Award-2015 in Religious Studies, accredited by the International Agency for Standards and Ratings. See usanewscorp.blogspot.com/2025/04/William-Shakespeare-Research-Award-2015-in-; *Daily Graphic*, KNUST Vice-Chancellor's Congregation Report, July 4, 2015, 17.

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- **Conclusion**

Biblical Hermeneutics is not the preserve of Western scholars; it is also an African adventure. African Biblical Hermeneutics is about interpreting the Bible to change the African context. Earlier scholars focused on continuity between the New Testament and the Old Testament with reference to its homiletical and private use in Africa; social engagement, expressing appropriate courtesies, and sympathy for the oppressed, marginalised and the “ordinary person”; criticism of Western scholarship in African theology hermeneutics; feminist exegesis of the Bible; feminist, ecumenical and gender issues in Africa.

The current state of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa is about interpreting the Bible from the perspective of African languages. and culture. God speaks to the African context in African idioms. Proponents of this strand of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa have emphasized Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, but without a systematic approach to achieving results. A methodology for doing Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics has evolved in Ghana. It is yielding fruits in the area of African Biblical Hermeneutics.

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Postcolonial Reading of the Bible

PRINCE SORIE CONTEH¹

ABSTRACT

Postcolonial reading of the Bible is reading the Bible through the view of postcolonial criticism in light of the contexts of the Bible and the life situation of the postcolonial reader. It intends to decolonize the theories and practices of biblical interpretation and theology from Western biases. There are two interrelated outcomes - criticism and context. It is not only about critiquing colonialism and imperialism, the postcolonial reader must be able interpret the context of the Bible and connect it to the realities of the present. The connection between the text and life contexts of reader is one of the most critical elements in reading and interpreting the Bible. it is a proven fact, many people learn best when their learning is grounded in life experience. Biblical scholars who support the contextual model, focus on contextual approaches to the Bible, ones that seriously consider the diversity of readers and contexts, especially those individuals who have been marginalised by Western Christianity-led biblical hermeneutics.

Introduction

Postcolonial reading of the Bible is, "a way of reading, a criticism, an optic that intends to decolonize the theories and practices of biblical

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interpretation and theology from the centers of the West, compared and contrasted with the readings of base communities or of social-groups”² This approach emphasises “the demythologization of the biblical authority, the demystification of the use of the Bible, and the construction of new models of interpretation of the Bible.”³

Throughout history, the Bible has been read, interpreted and reinterpreted to meet the situation and needs of people.⁴ In my continent Africa, biblical reading and interpretation:

Cannot be separated from politics, economics and cultural identity, of the past and present. Biblical interpretation in the African continent is thus intimately locked in the framework of scramble for land, struggle for economic justice and struggle for cultural survival. Biblical interpretation remains wedged between Western and African history of colonialism, struggle for independence, post-independence and the globalization era.⁵

It is right to say that, “any theology concerned with issues of wealth and

² Rubén Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds-A Postcolonial Reading of the Acts of The Apostles" (PhD diss., Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 2008), 10.

³ Pui-lan Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknol, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 30.

⁴ See, L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1990); Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (2nd Edition, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984); Stanley Porter & Craig A Evans, *New Testament Interpretation and Methods* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1997).

⁵ Musa W. Dube, "Introduction The Scramble for Africa as the Biblical Scramble for Africa," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, eds. Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora Mbuwayesango (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 3.

poverty needs to consider more the incoherence of oppression and its multiple dimensions rather than its commonalities.”⁶

Postcolonial readings in general, intentionally contrast, compare, and integrate "into one's understanding elements from the dynamics of oppressed identities, for example, through gender studies, cultural studies, and studies of the relationship of economic power and oppression."⁷ It is "a way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing."⁸

Postcolonial theory, from which postcolonial studies emanates:

Was initially conceived of as Commonwealth studies -- the literary critique of British Imperialism from the people of the former Colonies. Later, it began to include readings from other French and European Colonies, especially from the Caribbean, India, and Africa. During and after the development of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and other philosophical trends, the historical critical method show that every critical method applied to biblical studies is a generalization of studies in contemporary literature.⁹

During the 60s and 70s, anti-colonial responses from former colonial territories, in addition to feminist, civil rights, and Liberation theology

⁶ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 168-69.

⁷ Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 10-11.

⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 192.

⁹ Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 2.

movements opened the way for postcolonialism.¹⁰ In other words, “postcolonial studies emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence.”¹¹

The propagation of postcolonialism in biblical studies has been attributed to Fernando Segovia, R. S. Sugirtharajah and Musa W. Dube.¹² Before the popularization of postcolonial reading and interpretation of the Bible, “Historical Criticism was perceived and promoted not only as the proper way to read and interpret the biblical texts but also as the ultimate sign of progress in the discipline, the offer of the (Christian) West to the rest of the (Christian) world and the means by which the backward and ignorant could become modern and educated.”¹³ This approach begs the questions posed by Justin S. Upkgon:¹⁴

- Why do the religious practices of Africa, Latin America, Asia, and so on always have to be compared with the European? Why are not they studied in their own right?
The presuppositions of the historical critical Method are being used as the norm in these studies “for communicating to Africans the role of Christ in the human community.”

¹⁰ Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 3-4.

¹¹ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, ed. *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub Ltd, 2006), 11.

¹² Fernando Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds, *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. Bible and Postcolonialism. (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007). Stephen Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, editors. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*. (London/New York: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2005). Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).

¹³ Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (New York: Orbis Book, 2000), 38.

¹⁴ Justin S. Upkgon, “Development in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader*, compiled by Susanne Scholz, (Upper Saddle River, NY: Prentice Hall, 2003), 259.

Relevant Methods for Postcolonial Reading of the Bible

Segovia, one of the three propagators of postcolonial biblical studies mentioned above, points out that there are three different but equally important worlds that the reader of the Bible must examine and evaluate, namely, the world of the text, the world of modernity, and the world of today.¹⁵

First, the reader must evaluate the world in which the Bible was written. The Near East or the Mediterranean Basin was dominated by colonial empires. The Jews were successively ruled by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. "The political, economic, cultural, and religious dynamics in those empires between centralized power or authority, and those without power, heavily influenced the production of the Bible."¹⁶ Questions about culture, ideology, and power are important for understanding a text. "For example, in a study of the People of God, it is crucial to analyze the power relationship between Israel and the Near Eastern Colonial Empire."¹⁷

Second, the Bible reader must examine the world of modernity which dominates biblical readings and interpretations. Segovia strongly advises readers of the Bible to pay attention to the expansion of Western imperialism, which is one of Western Christianity's features. "From the early mercantile phase of European imperialism of the 15th century to the Western empire-building era of the 19th century, to the contemporary capitalist stage of high imperialism, Western imperialistic traditions and Christian missionary movements travelled hand-in-hand."¹⁸ Missionaries, who were protected by the colonialists, justified foreign domination as God's will. For example, using Exodus as proof text, many

¹⁵ Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 119-32.

¹⁶ Boyung Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy," Accessed 20 April 2015.

http://old.religioeducation.net/member/04_papers/BoyungLee.pdf.

¹⁷ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

¹⁸ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

Christian missionaries came and took the lands of non-Christian Asians, Africans and Native Americans either to convert them, or to promote self-serving claims of superiority.¹⁹ When American Protestant missionaries came to Korea in the 19th century, they blended American civic religion and its life style with Christianity, and taught Koreans to follow American ways of life as examples of Christian living. In short, the text not only has its own historical world and environment, but also “travels in the world and participates in history, continuing to write its story far beyond its original context and readers.”²⁰

Therefore in reading the Bible today, it is crucial to evaluate how the West world reads and interprets the Bible, and to study the Bible's modern day interpreters' socio-political-economic assumptions.²¹ In that regard, we must seek to demystify the Bible. "This arguably takes hermeneutics a step beyond demythologization, for it requires a heightened level of suspicion about the text, its culture, one's own culture, one's own biases, and postmodernism. This segues to my next point."²²

Third, the world that must be taken into consideration is the world of the present reader. According to Segovia, the reality of imperialism and colonialism is never imposed or accepted passively. There are people who readily accept Western domination, and there those who are vehemently against imperialism. "By analyzing how contemporary readers engage with the Bible and interpretations, we place the Bible in the context of their life situations, and investigate the dynamics of the center and margin among themselves. In short, in biblical pedagogy the analysis of the reality of the readers' world and their reactions are as important as the worldview(s) of the Bible's writers."²³

¹⁹ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 17.

²⁰ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 17.

²¹ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

²² Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

²³ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

From a feminist perspective, Dube offers a similar hermeneutical methodology.²⁴ Because it is strongly believed that the Bible was written in imperialist contexts and worldview, interpreted by Western imperialists, and was used to colonize non-western readers, Dube insists that the essential task of biblical criticism is to decolonize the Bible and its readers. In that regard, Dube categories seven areas of enquiry for postcolonial readers:

- Land - whether the lands in the Bible are empty, unoccupied, and waiting to be discovered
- Race - whether the text legitimizes white imperialism, and the victimization of other races
- Power - whether the Bible endorses unequal power, and the distribution of land based on race
- Readers - whether there is biblical authority for Westerners to invade and take non-Christians' lands
- International Connections - whether modern-day notions about the text prevent Westerners from understanding imperialism, its nature and its scope
- Contemporary History and Liberation - whether biblical texts have any relevance to the modern political world
- Gender - whether the Bible only imagines women as oppressed voiceless victims rather than as the subjects of their life, albeit a harsh one.

Using these categories, Dube analyses imperial messages explicitly and implicitly through Matthew 28:19a.²⁵ After the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, Matthew's community came up "with survival strategies in the Roman Empire by distinguishing itself from its winning rival, the Pharisees-led Jewish community. Matthew tried hard to present the

²⁴ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 2-31.

²⁵ Musa W. Dube, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations" (Matt 28:19a: A Postcolonial Perspective on Biblical Criticism and Pedagogy." In *Teaching the Bible: The Discourse and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, edited by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary A. Tolbert. Maryknoll, NY:Orbis, 1998), 224-46.

Christian community as something not dangerous to the order of the Roman Empire."²⁶ As such, in comparison to the Pharisees, readers find that Matthew's contention for imperial power is not strong at all to the extent that it was almost condoned: "the Matthean Pilate is absolved from the guilt of crucifying Jesus, while his wife is characterized as a divine instrument who receives dreams regarding the innocence of Jesus".²⁷ In other words, "while victims of the imperial power such as Mary, the mother of Jesus is almost invisible and silent, imperial figures are portrayed as divine instruments."²⁸

Dube also argues that Jesus' commission in Matthew 28:19-20, commonly known as the Great Commission is completely resonating with the territorial expansion policy of the Roman Empire.²⁹ "When Christianity became the state religion of Rome and later empires, the Great Commission was often used for religious justification of imperial expansion and domination."³⁰

Similar to Segovia, Dube proposes "a multidimensional biblical hermeneutic that blends the socio-politically complicated imperial world of the Bible, the politically motivated interpretations of the West, with today's readers and their life situations."³¹

Methodological Implications

After analysing the methodologies of Segovia and Dube, Lee, came up with six "Implications of Postcolonial Hermeneutics for the Biblical Pedagogy," which are relevant for the liberation of the marginalised, and five of which are relevant for this study. What follows is a full production of Lee's arguments with few modifications.

²⁶ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

²⁷ Dube, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples," 231.

²⁸ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

²⁹ Dube, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples," 230-32.

³⁰ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

³¹ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

First, postcolonial readers should recognize that the Bible is a culturally conditioned book whose authority is not absolute, but, rather, it is contextual and dialogical. Meaning that the Bible invites today's readers to reinterpret it relative to modern day realities. The question is not whether the Bible is literally binding; rather it is how best to bring God's life-giving message to God's people in their own culture, time, and place.

Second, our reading of the Bible should challenge the universalising forms of Western models inasmuch as their assumptions and biases sometimes present a limited worldview. This task includes challenging Western colonial theology that often identifies Western theories with the Gospel. This task requires readers to be familiar with the history of Western colonialism and its influence on doctrines of biblical authority and the development of biblical hermeneutics such as historical, literary, and cultural criticism.

Third, the reading and interpretation of the Bible should be a countercultural discipline, paying special attention to the hidden and neglected voices both in church and society. The Bible has been both 'bread and stone' for the marginalized, such as for women. For instance, to teach women about the Bible, the Korean church and the missionaries provided modern education for women that was good. However with the same Bible, the church also decreed that women are lesser beings than their male counterparts, and so they cannot take leadership positions in the church. The voices and contributions of women and the poor, those who are in a margin within the margin, are critical for hermeneutics pursuit of truth, liberation and justice. Any biblical pedagogy that purports to be a liberative one should critically examine whether the pedagogy brings justice and peace to the most marginalized in society.

Fourth, we need to analyze social structures such as hierarchy, factionalism, and sexism, that effectively support oppression. Religious education needs to provide counter hegemonic tools and views so that Christians can learn to challenge imperialistic and oppressive Western traditions. The church needs to train its members to be conscious of social structures, and to evaluate how power is used and by whom.

Fifth, bringing hermeneutics of decolonization to the reading and study of the Bible is key to understanding the text, which was written in imperial contexts, and has power dynamics between ancient empires and Israel, and Israel's reactions and responses to power. As in the above analyses of Israel's origins and Matthew's Gospel, power dynamics influenced both content and rhetoric, effectively decreeing imperial policy. Without evaluating such implicit imperialism in its historical context, a truly liberative biblical pedagogy is not possible.

Conclusion

Postcolonial reading of the Bible is reading biblical texts through the lens of postcolonial criticism in connection with the contexts of both the Bible and the life situation of the postcolonial reader. In other words, there are two interrelated outcomes - criticism and context. It is not only about critiquing colonialism and imperialism, we must be able interpret the context of the Bible and connect it to the realities of our present situation. The connection between the text and life contexts of reader is one of the most critical elements in reading and interpreting the Bible. It is a proven fact, many people learn best when their learning is grounded in life experience. Biblical scholars who support the contextual model, focus on contextual approaches to the Bible, ones that seriously consider the diversity of readers and contexts, especially those individuals who have been marginalised by Western Christianity-led biblical hermeneutics.

Examples of the practical application of postcolonial reading of the Bible are found in the works of Muñoz-Larrondo, and Lee. Muñoz-Larrondo after reviewing several postcolonial categories, such as hybridity, diaspora, mimicry, identity, issues of colonialism and race, and representation of the other³², uses these categories to read the Acts of the Apostles as a description of one of many groups of Christianity resisting two centers of power: the Roman Empire and the institutions that define

³² Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 10-38.

Judaism.³³

Lee, present a postcolonial analysis of the story of Hagar, a story which addresses the place of a woman who lives in the margins of the margins, and concludes with several suggestions for a liberative biblical pedagogy in faith communities.³⁴

³³ Muñoz-Larrondo, "Living in Two Worlds," 66-367.

³⁴ Lee, "A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy."

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Therapeutic Indigenous Medical Technology in Emu

KINGSLEY I OWETE¹

ABSTRACT

The first method of healing ever known to humanity is herbal medicine which gave birth to “modern’ medicine. The objective of this paper, against the contemporary scientific critique of its use, is not just to bring to our knowledge the efficacy, availability, effectiveness, and the economic advantages of African traditional medicine but to also encourage our orthodox medical scientists to embrace African traditional modes of health care delivery system there by lifting it to an enviable heights as those found in Asia and North America. This study having examined the various scholarly conceptualization of herbal medicine, its origin, challenges and relevance reveals that herbal cum traditional mode of medication in Africa are scientific. Finally, in the light of globalization and modernization, orthodox medical scientists are encouraged to embrace and modify African medical practices.

Introduction

From time immemorial, man has used traditional medicine in the form of animal parts, flower, leaves, roots, rhizomes, and the bark of trees for treating various diseases. There is also no indication that this form of

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handling the disease that afflict humanity has abated in recent times. On the contrary, traditional medicinal practices are carried out in different parts of the world with great success. The WHO has also estimated that about 80% of rural dwellers depend on traditional medicine for their all-round health care delivery system. This is therefore the time for out scientists, either medical or para-medical, to contribute their expertise in raising the standard of traditional medicine in all its phases to the lofty height it deserves. The objective of this paper, therefore, is not just to bring to our knowledge the efficacy availability, effectiveness and the economic advantages of traditional medicine, but also to encourage our medical scientists to embrace African traditional medical practices, thereby lifting it to such enviable heights as those found in some southern Asian countries and North America, among others.

Medicine

Medicine refers to substance which people utilize for the treatment or prevention of disease. As K. A. Anele² has observed, the health and welfare of people are promoted through preventive and curative medicine. Again, medicine could be said to refer to the art or science of prevention and cure of disease of diverse nature. Seen from this perspective, it becomes synonymous with charm and medical power. In whatever way medicine is defined, it is an important ingredient of African Traditional Religion. The purpose of medicine is essentially to help the body to help itself. It is curative and preventive. The . The Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, defines medicine as the "Science and art of diagnosing treating, curing and preventing disease, relieving pain and improving and preserving health... any drug or other substance used in treating disease, healing or receiving pain". Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary sees medicine as, "Any substance used for the treatment or prevention of and cure of disease". Ade P. Dopamu

² K.A. Anele, "The Changing of Pattern of Nigerian Indigenous Institutions," in *Footprints of our Ancestor*, ed. B. Okaba (Port Harcourt: Pan-Unique Publishers, 1998a), 219.

defines medicine as the “art of using the available resources of nature to prevent, treat or cure disease.”³ Herbs are one of the available resources of nature.

Traditional Medicine

This can be described as the total combination of knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing, or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease and which may rely exclusive on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing. Traditional medicine is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practice based on the theories, beliefs, and experience indigenous to different culture whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.⁴

A. Sofowora defines traditional medicine as “the total combination of knowledge and practice, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease, and which may rely exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing.”⁵ It is the transmission by word of mouth and by example the knowledge and practice based on customary methods of natural healing or treatment of disease. Dopamu has also described traditional medicine as the "tradition art or science of the prevention and cure of disease. It is the use of natural substance to prevent, treat or cure disease, it can also mean medicament used internally or externally.”⁶

³ Ade P. Dopamu “Heath and Healing Within the Traditional African Religious Context.” *ORITA* 17. 2 (1985):67.

⁴ WHO, 1978, 1991 and 2005

⁵ A. Sofowora, *Medical Plants and Traditional Medicine in African* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1984), 21.

⁶ Ade P. Dopamu, “Scientific Basis of African Magic and Medicines: The Yoruba Experience.” In *African Culture Modern Science and Religious through*, ed.

The term “complementary medicine” or “alternative medicine” are used inter-changeably with traditional medicine in some countries. They refer to a broad set of health care practices that are not part of that country's own tradition and are not integrated into the dominant health care system.⁷ The term “native medicine” is a derogatory version of what should be termed “traditional medicine”. It is a term passed down from the colonial master. Unfortunately, this terminology is still used to describe traditional medicine by many educated people, including indigenous scholars.

Medicinal plant

A medicinal plant is plant which, in one or more of its organs, contain substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes or which are precursors for the synthesis of useful drugs. The WHO consultative group that formulated this definition stated also that such description makes it possible to distinguish between medicinal plants whose therapeutic properties and constituents have been established scientifically, and plants that are regarded as medicinal but which have not yet been subjected to a thorough scientific study. A number of plants have been used in traditional medicine for many years. Some do seem to work although there may not be sufficient scientific data (double-blind trails, for example) to confirm their efficacy. In the author's view such plants should qualify as medicinal plant. The term “crude drugs of natural or biological origin” is used by pharmacists and pharmacologists to describe whole parts of plants which have medicinal properties. A definition of medicinal plants should include the following:

- Plants or parts used medicinally in galenical preparations (e.g. decoctions, infusions, etc.) e.g. Cascara bark
- Plants used for extraction of pure substances either for direct

P.A. Dopamu *et al* (Ilorin: African Centre for Religions and the Sciences, University of Ilorin, 2003), 443.

⁷ WHO, 2005.

medicinal use or for the hemi-synthesis of medicinal compounds (e.g. hemi-synthesis of sex hormones from diosgenin obtained from *Dioscorea* yams).

- Food, spice, and perfumery plants used medicinally e.g. ginger.
- Microscopic plants, e.g. fungi. Actinomycetes, used for isolation of drugs, especially antibiotics. Examples are ergot (*Claviceps purpurea* growing on rye) or streptomycetes;
- Fibre plants, e.g. cotton, flax, jute, used for the preparation of surgical dressing.

Theoretical Origin of Herbal Medicine

Although it is not known exactly when the first men practiced herbalism in Africa, a number of theories have been advanced by scholars and traditional medical practitioners alike to explain the acquisition of this knowledge by early man. One such theory is that early man deliberately selected specific plant materials for the treatment of his ailments since man had the ability to rationalize rather than to rely on instinct as do animals. The choice was certainly not based on knowledge of the plant's constituents. Some anthropologists state that early man lived in fear, and that in order to allay this, he indulged in mystical and religious rituals. Simply put, humanity in quest for relief from disease experimentally discovered the chemical components inherent in herbs. Thus, it could well be that the initial selection of plant material for medicinal purposes was influenced by religious thoughts and its collection was accompanied by a magic ritual. Some plants are still used in the rituals of traditional religion in many parts of Africa today.

It has also been proposed that knowledge of medicinal plants was gained by accident, although this theory has been refuted by a number of traditional medical practitioners who claim that information on such plants was communicated to their ancestors in various ways. However, early man could have gained some scientific knowledge by watching the effects produced by various plants when eaten by domestic animals. Even today some herbalists try out remedies on domestic animals, especially when testing for toxicity, and on themselves or their relations.

Such confirm to the patient that the preparation is harmless and sometimes also confirm that the dosage prescribed is justifiable. Such information on African medicinal and toxic plants has been passed orally from generation to generation and even today there are herbal cures which have not been written down.

According to some traditional practitioners another possibility is that knowledge of traditional cures came from wizards and witches. It is believed that some witches, whether living or dead, attend village markets in strange forms: as goats, sheep, or birds. If their presence in this disguise is detected by someone very shrewd or gifted, such as traditional medical practitioners, the practitioner is promised some useful herbal cures in return for not exposing the witch. The same reward would be offered if a real-life witch was caught in the process of performing an evil act. Hunters, especially in African countries, have been reported as the original custodians of some effective traditional herbal recipes. Such knowledge could have been acquired when, for example, a hunter shot an elephant. If the elephant ran away, chewed leaves from a specific plant and did not die, it is believed the hunter noted the plant as a possible antidote for wound or for relieving pain. Similar observations were made in villages where, for example domestic animal chewed the lead of a specific plant when that animal was ill and later recovered; or when another animal accidentally chewed a lead and died.

Traditional practitioners also claim that, when in a trace, it is possible to be taught the properties of herbs by the spirit of an ancestor who practiced herbalism. Spirits are said to sometimes assume various forms, e.g. an alligator, or a human being with one leg and one arm, using walking stick. If one encounters such a creature in the dead of night it can be a useful sources of original information of herbal cures. In whatever manner early man gained his knowledge of the curative power of plants, one must assume that he was able, thereafter, to recognize the plant, since the detailed floras available today were non-existent then.

Herbalism: A Form of African Traditional Medical Technology

The first method of healing ever known to humanity is herbal medicine it gave birth to orthodox medicine. Prior to the advent of orthodox in African, herbal medicine is one of the available medical systems in that continent. For Parrinder,⁸ medicine in the African context includes healing agencies such as leaves shrubs and roots. For Owete and Iheanacho⁹ medicine in the general African view includes everything that can be used to heal, kill, to possess power, health, fertility, personality, to maintain order or cause disorder. Writing on the efficacy of herbs in the traditional health care system in Africa Owete and Iheanacho¹⁰ refers to herbs as natural healing agencies. IkengaMetuh¹¹ in Owete and Iheanacho explains that the practice of medicine herbal, as well as, psychotherapeutical and spiritual techniques-herbal mixture, ritual objects, incantations and rites capable of changing the human condition for better, or for worse. Herbal medicine is an aspect of indigenous medical technology.

In his taxonomy and types of therapy Ubrurhe¹² remarks that the use of herbs in the treatment of disease is the oldest form of therapy. Its origin is coeval with the evolution of mankind. It was used by the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Chinese and Roman. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, employed herbal remedies in his treatment of ailments. Long before the discovery of sciences, medical science and the development of modern chemical drugs, plants, animals and herbs were the basis for most forms

⁸ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*. (London: SCM, 1969), 156.

⁹ Kingsley I. Owete and Ngozi N. Iheanacho, *West African Traditional Societies: Fundamentals of Religion and Socio-Cultural Heritage*. (Port Harcourt: Stepson Printing Press, 2009), 131.

¹⁰ Owete and Iheanacho, *West African Traditional Societies*, 131.

¹¹ E. Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religious in Western Conceptual Schemes* (Ibadan: Pastoral Institute, 1985), 162.

¹² Ubrurhe, John O. *Urhobo Traditional Medicine*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2001), 43.

of medical treatments. Natural medication was and is still a means of remedy for any disease and sickness. The explication form of traditional medical healing uses different types of traditional medicine whose certain actions and potentials can be scientifically investigate and pharmacologically explained through experimental animal modelers. This includes the use of herbs, roots, flowers of plant, bark of trees, honey, and other materials for healing and treating disease. The inexplicable forms of traditional medicine involve the use of mystical, magic psychic practices in the healing process. This form of traditional medicine cannot be proven scientifically in the laboratory. This is seen as the most dreaded and controversial form of traditional medical practices because it is shrouded in secrecy. Mysticism, sorcery, and spiritism are all involves in this kind of traditional medicine. Medicine is closely associated with religion. So long as it came directly from the Supreme Deity and operates through divinity or spirit. The basis of medicine cannot be dissociated from religion. In the practice of medicine in many parts of African, ancestors are involved. As a guarantee for the efficacy of the medicine; God, the divinities and ancestors are all given their due honour.

In Urhobo medicine, there is communication between medical practitioners and the herbals, which they collect, prepare and administer as medicament. He observes that African communication modes have been put into three broad categories, namely, the verbal and the esoteric/physical mythical non-verbal modern. The employs body language (various movements of the body to convey meaning), symbology (arrangements of artifact to express meanings) dance, music and song. The esoteric/psychomythical mode involves interpretation of dreams divination, telepathy, rituals and miscellaneous interpretation of nature.

Herbal communication process is based on the African's understanding that the concept of vital force or dynamism in nature: nature possesses physical force, energy or dynamism. In the collection of herbs the medicine man/women usually utters some incantation evocation by calling the proper name of the herb and making his/her intension known

to it. In case of herbs with high potent life force, he asserts that, the mode of communication are both verbal and esoteric/psyconmythical sometimes sacrificial offerings are performed. The essence of this communication is to appeal to the herb to permit the medicine man/women to collect the necessary parts. It should be stated that communication is also employed in the preparation of the herbs; this is meant to activate the dormant life in the herb.

Challenges of Traditional Medicine in Africa

The followings are the problems adduced to traditional medicine:

- It is non-scientific i.e. its methods and preparations are not science oriented; however, it has often brought our good results despite this problem.
- It lacks measurement and unattractive in appearance.
- It has low preservative measures.
- The taste is not inviting.
- Some Christians sees it as a linkage to spiritual forces, this is because they believe that the various spirits play a part in health.
- Its methods are considered anti-Christian, thus, traditional healers were regarded as heathens because of their involvement in African Traditional Religion.

Despite these problems, traditional medicine is still patronized mainly because the costs are relatively cheaper compared to orthodox medicine. It is also readily available in villages, towns and even in some urban area. In Nigeria today, out hospitals are ill equipped and the attitude of the medicinal practitioners discourage people to patronize them.

The Relevance of Herbal Medicine

Africans believe that diseases are often caused by natural or physical factors; supernatural or preternatural, or mystic. Dopamu asserts that, "When mystical and supernatural causes are detected, treatment must take place on different levels. In most case, the healer will diagnose to find out the causes."

In any cases, indigenous psychotherapeutic approach in the total management of patient, and herbs are usually recommended. Among Africans, herbal medicine has survived today, playing different roles and adapting themselves to new situations. Herbal treatment is more readily accessible and cheaper than the orthodox one, and many patients seek treatment from traditional physicians.

It is a known fact that there is an acute shortage of medical doctors and pharmaceutical products. As a result of this the teeming populations in Africa rely mainly on local herbal products and the services of herbal physicians, traditional bone setters and birth attendants. Various African governments have demonstrated their national interests in alternative forms of treatment which include herbal medicine. It should be stated that the traditional physician is a keen observer. The traditional physician approached his patients just like the orthodox one. A history of the illness is made and an examination is performed. Such things as skin, character of speech, character of quit and rapidity of pulse are recorded. Palpitations of wounds and of the abdomen are observed. There are various ingredients which go into the preparation of an efficacious medicine. It is not just a simple herb, but must be prepared, mixed with other elements, and have a spell uttered over it. Herbs are essential ingredients to most medicines, and gods have particular herbs that they favour.¹³

Traditional modes of medication are scientific. Science has been defined as a unique knowledge acquired by careful observation, through deduction, of the laws which govern changes and conditions, and by testing these deductions by experiment. Based on the above definition, it is evident that there two forms of traditional medicines, namely, the explicable and the inexplicable.

¹³ E.G. Parrinder, *West Africa Religion: A Study of the Belief and Practices of Akam Eve, Yoruba, Iba and Kindred People*. London: Epworth Press, 1997), 159.

The Emu people

Emu is one of the six Ukwuani clans in Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. It is above 100 kilometers by road away from Asaba, the capital of the state; 200 kilometres from Benin and about 60 Kilometres from Warri. The town is situated between latitude $5^{\circ}38-4^{\circ}2N$ and longitude $6^{\circ}13-6^{\circ}25 E$ of the Greenwich Meridian. The clan shares boundaries with Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale) on the North; Ozoro on the South; Abbi on the West; Ogume on the Southwest and Ashaka on the East. Its land area is approximately 44 square Kilometres and spans about 36 kilometers along Abraka/Kwale Road. The clan with annual rainfall of about one metre lies mainly in the flat rain forest belt of Niger Delta and less than 100 metres above sea level. The climate is humid with mild temperature in the two distinct rainy and dry or harmattan season. Demographically, its population ranks amongst the highest in the local government area. The 1973 national census placed Emu as the ninth most thickly populated community in the Ndokwa region. Since then the population has increased many times over.

There have been diverse versions of locally circulated stories concerning the origin of the Emu people. One of the versions holds that, the founder of this Clan was a man called Olor. Olor and his wife, Emu, migrated from Onitcha, presumably following an alleged homicide that Olor committed. As the couple fled, they took with them the *Ofo* (the household god). The *Ofo* is of a great religious importance amongst the Igbo and it is always in the custody of the heir of the family of Clan. The heir is usually the eldest son of the family. The Onitcha people, who were very incensed by the disappearance of the *Ofo*, went after Olor and his wife to recover their god. Olor and Emu in escape crossed the river on a mysterious log. History holds that the log was later identified as an alligator. This miraculous escape that was wrought by the alligator made it a totem animal. It was henceforth associated with the religious practices of Olor and Emu.

Olor and his wife settled in Emu. The name of the settlement was thus

derived from Olor's wife's name. They had two sons named Ikosa and Ebilige. While they were in Emu, some other people migrated from Isoko and Ndoshimili to join them. These were the Ogbolum family from Emevor in Isokoland and

Umuodio family from Akarai in Ndoshimili. Oral tradition further says that Emu expanded with time following a population explosion in that settlement. This led to the founding of Emu-Obi-Ogo; Emu-Obodeti; Emu-Ebendo; Ekpu-Ikpe and Iyasele. The last two later integrated and became known as Emu-Iyasele. Another version of the origin of the Emu people, posits that they migrated from Benin kingdom to settle in the place they are found today. The much that could be said is that Emu is a high breed of Edoid and Igboid extradiitions. Most Emu people are large-scale farmers. Rubber and palm oil extraction have been the major source of income. Indigenous arts include basket weaving, metalwork and sculpture (*Okpu-Uzo*). They remain a socially tight-knit group. Community unions and clubs are the rule, even among those who have emigrated to North America, Europe, or Asia. The people are deeply religious: like other African societies they believe in the Supreme Being (*Chukwu*), pantheon of divinities, myriads of spirits, the ancestors (who play vital roles in their lives) and magic.

The social life in Emu is punctuated with various festivals at specific intervals during the year. The particular months are February, June, November and December. Prominent among these festivals are the *Ukwuata*, *Ikenge* and *ImeEze Emu*

Therapeutic Medicine in Emu Clan

Therapeutic medicines are preparations used in connection with diseases, sicknesses and is used in general to steer away evil forces. The efficacy of this medicine was cited by my sources as the reason why modern medical services in the Emu Community are hardly patronised. The number of clients that the *dibie* receives relative to the number that visits the hospital lends credence to the above assertion. Lack of use ultimately leads to the closure of the dispensary. Moreover, the people

believed that most diseases and sicknesses, apart from the physical manifestation, have a spiritual cause that requires spiritual intervention in the form of therapeutic medicine. The range of this medicine is vast, it includes the following:

Medicine for Stomach Ache: *OgwuEfo-Olinwa*

According to the information obtained from oral source, Oliver Abanum,¹⁴ the following ingredients are employed in the preparation of the medicine for stomach ache:

- *Uda* (spice)
- *Nwata-tunimeesu* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Nzu* (local white chalk)

The ingredients are put together in a mortar and then pounded until it turns into a liquid substance. Before this, the *nwata-tunimeesu* must be taken from the tree with a cutlass and not by hand. After pounding, the medicine is put into a bottle and mixed with some local gin. However, the patient for whom the medicine is prepared must pay certain amount of money as demanded by the local custom. This payment is called *panyileeogwu*, “raising of the medicine”. For immediate result, the patient is advised to drink half a glass of the mixture at 5 a.m. in the morning and half a glass at any other time as the patient wishes. The patient takes the medicine and recites the following:

*Emonau dine efoobuluolinwaniafuogwuna,
kuogwukpoluosansogbu dine efotufukuogwukeluolu.*
(This sickness that is in my belly, be it gonorrhoea, be it
poison.even bellyache, when I drink this medicine, let the
ritual medicine remove all the problems. Let the medicine
work).

¹⁴ Oliver Abanum is a Medicineman interviewed at Emu Unor in 1990.

It is believed that when this medicine is injected early in the morning, and the incantations uttered, the belly ache will be cured immediately. Usually, the medicine is prepared only once for a patient. Any other subsequent administration of the medicine would lack the ritual power, unless the patient ties two *ego ayaka*, (cowries), to the neck of the bottle that contains the medicine. It is only then that the potency would be retained even with subsequent addition of local gin into the ritual medicine in the bottle.¹⁵

Medicine to Cure Belly Ache: *OgwuEfoOlinwa*

According to our informant, Oliver Abanum, one of the subjects, the goal of this medicinal rite is to cure belly aches. In the ritual procedure of *Ogwuefoolinwa*, there are two ingredients that carry symbolic meanings. These are the *uda*, a spice, and the native white chalk. The *uda* may symbolise peace or trouble, depending on the circumstance of use. The symbolism of the *nzu* has already been explained, it represents sacredness, power, seal or agreement in the spiritual realm. The important stage of this particular rite is the in *ipayi lee ogwu*, “the activation of medicine” This is the ritual custom where the client pays the *dibie* a token fee, as part of the ritual processes of making the medicine work. This aspect of the ritual represents the people's belief that you have to give something to possess anything of value. It is more so when acquiring spiritual powers. With this token of, it becomes obligatory to the *debie* to acquiesce to clients' demand even if such is against his wishes.

Medicine for Venereal Disease: *OgwuIbeleOrenu-ku*

This particular ritual medicine is believed to serve a dual purpose. The first and most common purpose is for the cure of venereal diseases. The second is to cure miscarriage. In this later function, it works in a peculiar

¹⁵ Abanum 1990

way that baffles the client. According to Oliver Abanum,¹⁶ the ritual medicine, when administered correctly, would first help the womb of a woman to hold a baby and preserve it from being aborted; the woman eventually delivers the baby. The medicine is also said to ease labor pain and make birthing painless. Usually, at the time of labour the woman is given some quantity of the mixture in a glass to drink at intervals. The following are the ingredients and prescription for this medicine:

- *Ayamba* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Mgbalaguekobo* (root of coconut tree)
- *Uda* (spice)
- *Mgbalaguobo nkilishi* (lime root)
- *Nwatatunimenesu* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Mgbalaguububa* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Migbalaguabasioji* (root of kola-nut tree)

The above listed items are collected together and washed thoroughly. They are then cut into tiny bits with a knife that is not used for domestic purposes. The chopped items are gathered and put in a bottle along with some quantity of local gin. The *Ego ayaka* are then tied with a string to the mouth of the bottle. The concoction is stored overnight. After then, the medicine is ready for use. This particular medicine can be injected at anytime. However, like most curative medicines that are orally injected, it is advisable according to my informant, to drink this medicine in the morning. It is believed that at this time of the day, diseases or sicknesses are at rest.

Ogwuibeorenu-ku according to Abanum differs from *Ogwuefoolinwain* the sense that, the only function of the latter is to cure stomach ache while the former serves the dual function of curing venereal diseases and preventing miscarriage. In the usage of *ogwuibeorenu-ku*one does not only depend on recited words for its efficacy but also with the *Ego-ayaka*, tied to the mouth of the bottle. This is to keep the powers

¹⁶ Abanum 1990

of the medicine and make it possible to be used again. But for *Ogwuefoolinwa*, a string of cowries is tied to the mouth of the bottle as part of the whole procedure before the medicine is used. A negation of this process mars the efficacy of the ritual medicine. The general principle guiding the selection of medicinal properties in the preparation of therapeutic medicines in Emu community is the idea that behind physical ailments and diseases there exist, as the root cause, spiritual agencies. Therefore, roots, barks of trees, leaves and herbs used in the preparation of these ritual medicines are believed to contain spiritual forces that could be instigated to fight off those malevolent forces that are responsible for such ailments. Studies by pharmacists affirm the medicinal properties of the the root, leaves and barks of trees that are involved in the preparations made by the *dibia*.¹⁷

Lastly, there are some other ritual medicines unlike the ones have been described above, whose ends are not designed to cure a particular disease or sickness *per se*. These particular ritual medicines are best described as medicines to control natural forces or as the Emu people would see them, evil forces. These ritual medicines have formed part of the heritage of the people, they are used purposefully and are approved by the community; therefore they are productive in a sense. Two types of this medicine are introduced following.

Medicine to Cure Venereal Diseases: *OgwuEmoUkuIgbele*

This is another therapeutic medicine used to cure venereal disease and prevent miscarriage. In the ritual proceedings for this rite, the *dibia* gathers appropriate ingredients that are pounded to produce the medicine. Prominent among these ingredients are the root of a coconut tree, the root of a lime tree, and the root of a kola nut tree. The root of the coconut tree symbolises energy, prosperity and fertility. In the olden days, the coconut fruit is eaten as food alone or mixed with other foods. The water from the coconut is sweet and serves as drink to refresh the

¹⁷ Abanum 1990

body. The lime root signifies strength and curative power of the divine. The lime tree symbolises mystical powers that are active in all the properties: roots, bark, leaves and fruit. Its presence in medicinal ritual indicates the presence of the mystical curative power of the spiritual world. The root of the kola nut tree denotes abundant life, the physical and spiritual abundance of life. Thus, it is believed since it stands for life, it will not co-exist with sickness or things that threaten life.. Also, the kola nut tree symbolises sacredness and holiness in the community. The kola nut can never be used for poison or destructive purposes; it is the symbol of God's presence, goodness, wellbeing and happiness. Therefore, anything that threatens this characteristics, ultimately threatens the divine. The cowries tied around the opening of the bottle, containing the ritual medicinal substance, indicates the presence of the divine, sanctity and spiritual sanction. According to my informant, without the cowries tied around the top of the bottle, the spiritual forces active in the medicine will dissipate after the time allotted for its operation has expired.¹⁸

Medicine to Keep a Dying Man Awake:

Mmo Ni MmaluAfuEnya

- *Mba-alibuzoto* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Mbaoketu* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Ntu-egbe* (gun power)
- *Alida* (translation withheld by oral source)
- *Nzu* (local white chalk) (Peter Nwabefa 1990).

The first three items are to be put together in a mortar and pounded. Then the leaf called *Alida* is then added and pounded together with the other ingredients. The last item to be added to the mixture is *Nzu*; *this* is sprinkled on the pounded substance. The concoction is then mixed thoroughly and moulded into a “medicine ball” ready for use only when a sick person is dying. Getting to the dying person, the medicine ball which

¹⁸ Abanum 1990

is held with the left hand is crushed in the right palm and mixed together with water. It is then rubbed sparingly on the body of the dying person. Emu people believe that rubbing the substance on the body of the ill person makes them invisible to the people in the spirit world and vice versa. Consequently, the dying person will not hear nor heed the call of death. This belief is within African conceptualization of death as evil that intermittently visits the physical world. According to my informant, the efficacy of this ritual medicine could be reduced if oil is brought near where the medicine is prepared.¹⁹

Medicine to Keep a Dying Man Awake: *MmuoniMmaluAfuEnya*

In the view of Nwabefa, my informant, this particular ritual medicine is used to keep a dying man alive and conscious until all arrangements pertaining to his estate has been concluded. This medicine can sustain such a man for for a short period of time. The symbolism involved in this preparation cannot be determined by isolating single ingredients and examining them for meaning, as has been done for other ritual medicines that have been discussed thus far. The goal of the medicine is to sever contact between the man and the pending spiritual world. The ritual ingredients consist of leaves, roots, gun powder and local white chalk (*nzu*). The leaves and the roots which must not be separated symbolises the existence and source of strength. It is believed that death occurs when the original source of strength (breath), is cut off spiritually. This is why the root, together with the leaves, which must be in one whole are used for medicinal preparation. The gun powder symbolises a break, a blackout on the spiritual world. It shuts out the physical world from the spiritual world, making it temporarily invisible to the spiritual world. This means that, the personification of death will be blind and unable to deliver the message of death to the victim. Lastly, the use of local white chalk indicates a seal, a sacred bond on the part of spiritual forces to keep to the goals of the ritual, which thus guarantees the efficacy of the medicine.

¹⁹ Nwabefa is a Medicineman interviewed at Emu Unor in 1990.

Medicine to Cure the Mentally Sick: *OgwuEnyaEnu*

Emu people have 'medicine' to cure madness. The ingredients for this preparation are:

- *Eddo* (translation withheld by oral source).
- *Ncha-oji* (local black soap).
- *Efifiakepuniniinyimmalu* (leaves got from grave).
- *Eyakepuni no ofi* (sand collected with closed eyes).
- *Efifianiisiomi* (leaves from the mouth of the well).
- *Mmiriinakpo* (snail water).
- *Nkplu ego osisor* (old form of money).

In order to preparation, the listed items are pounded together in a mortar except for the last item on the list. These ingredients must be pounded with the snail water. When the ingredients are thoroughly mixed from pounding, then the last item *npkuiu ego osisor* is added and pounded again together until the constitution turns into a medicinal paste. For use, this paste is rubbed in the eyes of a mentally ill patient in the mornings and evenings while muttering the following incantations: “*Enyaluaani, enyaluaani*” (be calm and regain consciousness). This particular ritual medicine is used only for the mental patients.

Medicine to Cure the Mentally Ill: *OgwuEnyaEnu*

The purpose of this medicinal ritual is to cure the mental illness. The mentally ill person must not be a chronic case, the one who had been mad for a long time. This medicine is to reverse to normalcy somebody who had recently become mentally ill. There are symbolisms in some of the core ingredients of this medicine which include: black local soap, leaves from a grave, sand from a burial ground, grass obtained close to a well, and, snail water. There are taboos associated with collecting these items. For instance, when collecting the sand, one must close his eyes before scooping some sand into his hand, so also with grass next to a well. The dibie must not be seen by anyone when collecting these items. The black soap symbolizes spiritual cleansing of the body from all evil forces.

Since the colour black symbolizes evil, so it is believed that the black soap would clean away the spiritual evil that might be causing the mental condition of the person. The leaves from the grave of a dead person symbolize the active presence of the spirit world which is believed to be responsible for what goes on in the visible, physical world. Among the people of Emu, it is a tradition to make a grave for only those that died a good death. Those who died a bad death, usually as a result of evil deeds, are buried or thrown into the bad bush.

The earth represents the collective presence of the visible and invisible powers. The earth is believed to be alive with powers and in this case represent the spiritual world of the dead which are believed to inhabit the earth. Also, the grass from around a well symbolizes the source of being, life and health. The well in the community is the main source of water for domestic purposes. it is a meeting point for everybody, since each makes daily trip to it for water. Therefore, the grass connects with health, life and the source of being. The snail water symbolizes purity, impotence and powerlessness in the visible and invisible realm. The water stagnates, nullifies and reduces the efficacy of negative spiritual powers that comes in contact with it. The liquid from a snail nullifies all negative forces and thus activates the curative powers of the other ingredients in the medicine

Writing on the symbolism of African people Mbiti says, “The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and the African people 'see' the invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. This is one of the fundamental heritages of African people. Thus, the black soap would clean away the spiritual evil, the leaves from the grave world, through the goodness of the spirits and ancestors, will cure the mental illness, the sand will bring in the invisible world to sanction the purpose of the ritual, the leaves from the well will restore normalcy and good health and the snail water will counteract all negative and opposing forces.

Conclusion

Every society in the world possesses one form of technology or the other which is used to satisfy the basic needs of such a society. At the level of environmentalism, there is the unique nature of technology that is available in every society via-a-vise the local environment. From time immemorial, man has used traditional medical technology in the form of animal parts, flower, leaves, roots, rhizomes, and the bark of trees for treating various diseases. This study reveals that this form of handling the diseases that afflict humanity has not abated in recent times. Finally, this study has brought to our knowledge the efficacy availability, effectiveness and the economic advantages of traditional medicine. It has also encouraged our medical scientists to embrace African traditional medical practices, thereby lifting it to such enviable heights as those found in some southern Asian countries and North America.

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Post-Conversion Experience in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: A Study of 1 Corinthians 12:10

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ABSTRACT

1 Corinthians 12:1-11, especially verse 10 which speaks about the different kinds of tongues, has been interpreted variedly using different hermeneutic approaches. This study which uses Exegesis and simple random and purposeful sampling methodology opines that there is mixed reactions within the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches as to whether speaking in tongues is the only initial outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For Paul to devote three whole chapters to address the question of the gifts of the Spirit gives credence to how essential it was. The paper recommends that it is not a matter of speaking in tongues, though it is important, but the devotion of our lives to Christ's lordship in practical obedience is the proof of the Holy Spirit's baptism in our lives. It is further recommended that the members of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches should not focus on the speaking in tongues as the only outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather, they should focus on the primary purpose of baptism in the Holy Spirit, which makes one an effective witness of the Gospel.

Introduction

According to Alfred Koduah, Pentecostalism simply deals with the movement that experiences the gifts of the Holy Spirit, most often,

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prominently including *glossolalia* or “speaking in tongues” (Acts 2:4).² The term Pentecostal comes from the New Testament experiences of the early Christian believers on the Day of Pentecost.³

Pentecostal believers hold that speaking in tongues is the uniform, initial, outward or physical evidence of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁴ The Biblical bases for this view are, first, the three instances in Acts where speaking in tongues are specifically associated with Spirit baptism (Acts 2:8; 10:46; 19:6). Second, are the other two instances: (a) tongues is inferred at Samaria because of Simon's eagerness to buy the gift (Acts 8:18-24); Paul's experience is inconclusive, but it is stated that the Lord Jesus sent Ananias that he might “be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), and Paul later testified: “I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor 14:18). At the house of Cornelius, it was tongues, and tongues only, that convinced the observers that the gift of the Spirit had been poured out in baptism: “The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God” (Acts 10:45-46).

Stanley M. Horton affirms that speaking in tongues is only the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit but not a climatic experience.⁵ As Pentecost itself was only the beginning of the harvest and brought men into a fellowship of worship, teaching, and service, so the baptism in

² Alfred Koduah, *Christianity in Ghana Today* (Accra: Church of Pentecost Press, 2004), 94-95.

³ <http://christian.about.com/od/holyspirittopicalstudy/a/spiritualgifts.htm> (accessed 23/11/13). The word 'Pentecost,' is from the Greek “*Pentekoste*,” meaning “fiftieth.” It became a Jewish festival, which was also called “Feast of Weeks” (Ex 23:14-17). It begins when the harvests were presented to God fifty days after the Passover. It was on that day that the Holy Spirit came upon the church (Acts 2).

⁴ L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1979), 120.

⁵ Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About The Holy Spirit* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1974), 261.

the Holy Spirit is only a door into a growing relationship with the Spirit and with other believers.⁶ When a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, he speaks in other tongues; thus, he speaks in a language that He has never previously known.⁷ This experience leads to the provision of power for victorious Christian living and productive service.

According to Holdcroft, on Biblical grounds, tongues are a necessary and essential evidence of the baptism in the Spirit. He further argues that, believers may enjoy various remarkable experiences with God and His Spirit, but if they do not speak in tongues, their experience is not the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God promised that the Biblical pattern was the standard for future times: “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for, all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). What was true at the Day of Pentecost, and on subsequent occasions in Scripture, must continue to be true throughout the age.⁸

Carl Brumback has compiled “Seven Reasons Why God Chose Tongues:”⁹

- It is an external evidence constituting a visible symbol of spiritual reality
- It is a uniform evidence since tongues are recognizable by all cultures
- It properly recognizes the personality of the Spirit
- It is a symbol of the Spirit's complete control of the believer
- It manifests the Holy Spirit as the believer's source of truth and utterance
- It signifies the honour that God has placed upon human speech
- It is a foretaste of heavenly speech.

⁶ Horton, *What the Bible Says About The Holy Spirit*, 261.

⁷ *Assemblies of God, Ghana, New Members Course Book* (Accra: Assemblies of God Literature Centre Limited, 2010), 24.

⁸ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation*, 122-23.

⁹ Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This?* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1947), 122.

William Arthur observes concerning Biblical instances of glossolalia: “Here we see the Creator taking to Himself the language of every man's mother; so that in the very words wherein he heard her say, 'I love thee,'¹⁰ he might also hear the Father say, 'I love thee.’” The fact of other tongues in Spirit baptism reinforces the command of the Great Commission to reach all nations for Christ.¹¹

Concerning the absence of an explicit reference to glossolalia in two of the passages cited by Pentecostals, A Reuben Hartwick argues that the five instances given as examples are not the only references found in Acts to a supernatural filling by the Holy Spirit.¹² Three other passages describe specific instances where individuals and groups were filled by the Holy Spirit, and none of these contains any reference to *glossolalia*.¹³ Thus the argument for a normative pattern in Scripture seems untenable because the precedent is certainly not as strong as it is presented.¹⁴

The Position Paper of the Assemblies of God notes that although Acts 2 clearly implies that the disciples spoke in intelligible foreign languages, “in the other occurrences in Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned (10:46; 19:6), there is no indication that the languages were understood or identified.”¹⁵ This is a critical justification as the modern practice of glossolalia does not correspond to a known human language. In 1972, noted linguist, William J Samarin published his assessment of glossolalia based on a study of its practice in cultures and languages around the world. He concluded that glossolalia was “only a facade of

¹⁰ William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire* (London: The Epworth Press, 1956), 122.

¹¹ Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation*, 122.

¹² <http://bonikowsky.org/2013/05/responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues/> (accessed 26/11/2013).

¹³ Acts 4:8 (Peter addressing the Sanhedrin), Acts 4:31 (The assembled body of believers), and Acts 13:52 (the disciples in general).

¹⁴ <http://bonikowsky.org/2013/05/responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues/> (accessed 26/11/2013).

¹⁵ http://ag.org/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm, par.1. The Fundamental truths and position papers are provided online at www.org.org. (Accessed 26/11/13).

language,”¹⁶ despite similarities in form and pattern to human languages. His conclusion is corroborated by WA Criswell.¹⁷ According to the Pentecostals, glossolalia can represent either a human language or an angelic one: a real language based on Paul's reference to “tongues of men and of angels” in [1 Corinthians 13:1](#). [Presumably then, the instances of glossolalia studied by Samarin and Criswell were necessarily instances of angelic languages.](#)

The recorded instances of glossolalia described by the church fathers, however, “overwhelmingly suggest that they associate tongues-speaking with a supernatural ability to speak rational, authentic foreign languages.”¹⁸ This nearly unanimous affirmation that glossolalia referred exclusively to actual languages spoken by natives around the world exactly matches the events described at Pentecost. The other two narrative accounts of glossolalia never imply that the tongues being spoken were at all unlike the human languages spoken in Acts 2.¹⁹

Methodology

Exegetical method was used to study the text under review. The essence was to contextualize the text. Furthermore, the study used simple random and purposeful sampling to interview fourteen (14) Pentecostal and Charismatic Church leaders. This approach was used because we needed

¹⁶ William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angles: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 128.

¹⁷ <http://bonikowsky.org/2013/05/responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues/> (accessed 26/11/2013).

¹⁸ Busenitz cites Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1; Hegemonius, *The Acts of Archelaus* 37; Gregory of Nazianzen, *The Oration on Pentecost* 15-17; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, also his comments on 1 Corinthians 1.

¹⁹ Busenitz cites Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1; Hegemonius, *The Acts of Archelaus* 37; Gregory of Nazianzen, *The Oration on Pentecost* 15-17; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, also his comments on 1 Corinthians 1.

an unbiased representation for the study.²⁰

The Greek Text of 1Corinthians 12:10

ἑτέρῳ γένῃ γλωσσῶν

Translation of the Greek Text of 1Corinthians 12:10 to English

To another speaking in different kinds of tongues

The Summary of the 1Corinthians 12:1-11

The first part of Paul's instructions, is signaled by his customary formula Περὶ δε "Now about or concerning."²¹ Anthony C Thiselton has endorsed the widespread view that περὶ δε signals a new topic.²² As the chapter begins, Paul uses his characteristic formula to indicate a change of subject matter and a major new section.²³ Here, the apostle is responding to a report sent to him from the household of Chloe or someone within the church.²⁴

In the first verse of chapter 12, Paul used an indeterminate gender τῶν πνευματικῶν. It is either the neuter or masculine gender of the adjective *spiritual* and so could also be translated "spiritual things" or spiritual people.²⁵ This is due to the fact that in Greek grammar, the three genders

²⁰ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Indispensable Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*, 131. According to Vyhmeister, random sampling is a technique used to ensure, as far as possible, an unbiased representation of a population. It avoids the possibility of choosing only one's friends or enemies to answer questions. Therefore, this sampling method to select the interviewees was used.

²¹ This is the fourth occurrence of that phrase (1Cor 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 16:1, 12).

²² Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 909.

²³ David Jackman, *Let's Study 1Corinthians* (Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 201.

²⁴ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary of 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1983), 239.

²⁵ Earl Radmacher et al., *Nelson New Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1999), 1478.

have the ending in the genitive plural. This is always constant.²⁶ What favours the translation of the verse is the usage in 1 Corinthians 14:1 where Paul used the word with an imperatival force “be zealous for” τᾷ πνευματικᾷ²⁷ “spiritual gifts”. If the term is understood as masculine, Paul is referring to “spiritual persons.” If the term is neuter, Paul is referring to “spiritual gifts.”²⁸ In 1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1, and 14:37, Paul uses the term in the masculine gender, and thus we understand “spiritual” to describe people. In 1 Corinthians 14:1, the term is used as a neuter and thus is rendered “spiritual gifts.” In First Corinthians πνευματικοὶ “spiritual” is used fifteen times in adjectival form²⁹ and in 1 Corinthians 12:1 it is used as parallel usage introducing the issue of the spiritual ones within the Corinthian church who were gifted.³⁰

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 lists a series of spiritual gifts. The context suggests that Paul is not being exhaustive or prescriptive. That is, this list does not contain every single spiritual gift. Rather, the Apostle's purpose is to illustrate the diversity of gifts. This can be seen in the fact that other gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; 13:1-3, 8; 14:6; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 are not identical to 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (nor to each other). Fee suggests that Paul's concern here is to offer a considerable list so that the Corinthians will stop being singular in their own emphasis.³¹

²⁶ Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Spiritual Gifts, Spiritual persons, or Spiritually-Gifted Persons”? A creative Translation of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1a, *Neotestamentica: Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa* 46, no. 2 (2012): 260.

²⁷ R. S. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1937), 490.

²⁸ C. K. Barret, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 2006), 278.

²⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peace body: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 153.

³⁰ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 153.

³¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 585.

Walter A Elwell recognizes that the list that follows is intended to be neither exhaustive nor hierarchical, but typical of the gifts that had been experienced at one time or another by Christians in Corinth.³² According to Denny Miller, the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 fall naturally into three groups of three gifts each.³³ The first group consists of the revelational gifts. They are word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits. The second group consists of the prophetic or vocal gifts. They are gift of prophecy, gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues. The third group consists of power gifts. These are gifts of healings, gift of faith and gift of miraculous powers.³⁴

Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 12:10

Paul's discourse in chapter 12 is principally to educate the Corinthian brethren on the importance of the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in the lives of individual members of the community of faith and to avoid its abuse.³⁵ The early Christians in Gentile communities almost immediately adopted the practices of assembling for prayer, instruction, and edification, usually in the houses of some property-owning members (Acts 18:7; Rom 16:23).³⁶ As a rule, these assemblies met for worship early in the morning of the Lord's Day. In some congregations, the service included hymns, prayers, the reading of Scripture, and a sermon or address known as the "word of exhortation." All were privileged to make a contribution if they so desired. Even non-members occasionally took part. These oral contributions were exceedingly diverse, but they fell under three main headings namely instruction, prophecy, and

³² Walter A Elwell, *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2002), 978.

³³ Denny Miller, *Power Ministry: A Handbook for Pentecostal Preachers* (Lome: Zondervan, 1998), 48.

³⁴ Miller, *Power Ministry*, 48.

³⁵ Olugbenga Olagunju, "Exegesis of 1Corinthians 12:1-11," *America Journal of Biblical Theology* 12, no. 43 (2011): 6.

³⁶ Esv studybible.org. accessed 9/12/13.

speaking in tongues.³⁷ Instead of using these gifts to magnify God and edify other believers, they were using them to show off. They stood up in the meetings and spoke in languages which no one else understood, hoping that others would be impressed by their linguistic proficiency. They exalted the sign-gifts above the others, and attributed superior spirituality to those who spoke in tongues. This led to pride on one hand and to feelings of envy, inferiority, and worthlessness on the other. It was therefore necessary for the apostle to correct these erroneous attitudes and to establish controls in the exercise of the gifts, especially tongues speaking and prophecy.³⁸

ἑτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν “different kinds of tongues” in context is referring to the use of the gift of tongues and its companion gift of interpretation in public worship services. It is a Holy Spirit-inspired way of speaking in an unlearned language.

No wonder, the church fathers consistently stressed the necessity of interpretation if the tongue was unknown to the hearers.³⁹ Hilary writes of “the interpretation of tongues, that the faith of those that hear may not be imperilled through ignorance, since the interpreter of a tongue explains the tongue to those who are ignorant of it”. The patristic example reflects the parameters Paul established for glossolalia in the church in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Paul stressed that in no event whatsoever was *glossolalia* to be practiced in the church if it could not be understood by the listeners, since without understanding, it could not edify (1 Cor 14:5).⁴⁰ If there was no interpreter for the assembly, the speaker was

³⁷ H. C. Alleman, *New Testament Commentary* (Pennsylvania: The Muhlenberg Press, 1994), 475.

³⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1790.

³⁹ Busenitz cites Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.21; Tertullian, *Against Marcions* 5.8; Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 4.61-62; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, also his comments on 1 Corinthians 12:10; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 36.

⁴⁰ [http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Corinthians 14:5](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Corinthians%2014:5) (accessed 23/11/13).

commanded to “keep silent”(1 Cor 14:28).

However, the Pentecostals place little emphasis on the need to interpret tongues.⁴¹ When interpretation is given, it is not understood as translation from one tongue into the native tongue, but rather as a broad “declaration of meaning.”⁴² Moreover, the interpretation of one instance can vary significantly from one interpreter to another.⁴³ The lack of significance ascribed to interpretation within the Pentecostal church is markedly unlike the patristic example, and seems at odds with Paul's statement that five words with understanding taught more than “ten thousand words in an unknown tongue”(1 Cor 14:19).

Although the Pentecostals do cite verses showing that certain instances of the filling of the Spirit in the book of Acts resulted in an outbreak of the display of *glossolalia*, the instances are far too sporadic to result in a normative pattern suggesting that every believer should expect to engage in *glossolalia*.⁴⁴ The pattern has too many discrepancies. The attempt made by the Pentecostals to force a pattern in Scripture and then argue that the pattern is prescriptive is eisegetical.⁴⁵ The terminology, though not of course divinely inspired, is an attempt to encapsulate the thought that at the time of Spirit baptism, the believer will speak in tongues. It conveys the idea that speaking in tongues is an immediate, empirical accompaniment of the baptism in the Spirit. As Robert Menzies points out, the Pentecostal focus on evidence can lead easily to a confusion of

⁴¹ In the sixteen fundamental truths and twenty-three position papers of the Assemblies of God, the interpretation of tongues is referenced twice, both times only as a part of a list, and never in discussion of the practice of tongues.

⁴² <http://bonikowsky.org.responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues> (accessed 23/11/13).

⁴³ <http://bonikowsky.org.responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues> (accessed 23/11/13).

⁴⁴ <http://bonikowsky.org.responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues> (accessed 23/11/13).

⁴⁵ <http://bonikowsky.org.responding-biblically-to-the-practice-of-tongues> (accessed 23/11/13).

the gift of the Spirit with the sign.⁴⁶

Responses on the Post Conversion Experience in 1 Corinthians 12:10.

This section discusses the results of the investigations made about the post conversion experience in 1 Corinthians 12:10.

This study revealed that one of the distinguished marks of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches is the belief in a post-conversion experience called “the Baptism of the Holy Spirit” with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues⁴⁷ which is one of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. The study compared pneumatologies in Acts with pneumatologies in 1 Corinthians to ascertain whether speaking in tongues is the only outward initial evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism or whether it is possible that one might be baptized with the Holy Spirit and still not speak in tongues.

There were mixed reactions within the selected Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches for this study with regards to whether speaking in tongues is the only initial outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Horton, a Pentecostal scholar is cited to have alluded in this study. The field survey revealed that what caused the mixed reactions within the selected Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches is the emphasis on the “only initial.”

Out of the fourteen interviewees, ten are of the view that speaking in tongues is not the only initial outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ransford Obeng, General Overseer of Calvary Charismatic

⁴⁶ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1974), 253.

⁴⁷ Cephas Narh Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 97-8.

Centre and Chairman of Kumasi Charismatic Ministers Fellowship⁴⁸ stated that speaking in tongues is not the only initial outward evidence but an “essential evidence” of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He added that he has met people who do not speak in tongues but their accomplishments are very great.

Amponsah, Area Pastor of Christ Apostolic Church, T.U.C.,⁴⁹ who shares the same view specified that speaking in tongues is the “major outward evidence”. He cited an example from the Old Testament that, the day Saul was anointed he spoke in tongues and people wondered if Saul was also among the prophets, indicating that he prophesied. He added that experiences in the book of Acts are enough evidence in scripture indicating that the people who were filled with the Spirit spoke in tongues. He said that in 1970, while some members of the Christ Apostolic Church were praying at Asamankese, Central Region of Ghana, fire descended upon the church and the people spoke in tongues. Whenever God descends, people go beyond the ordinary, so there is no ambiguity in the scriptures that speaking in tongues is the major outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But then if one does not speak in tongues, we should not conclude that he is not baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Smith Gyimah, Area Head Church of Pentecost, Asokwa-Kumasi,⁵⁰ echoed that speaking in tongues is “one of the evidence” but not the “only initial evidence.” He said speaking in tongues is not the only initial evidence but should someone get the baptism and is taught well and avails himself or herself, he or she can speak in tongues. Nana Nyamekye Adane-Ameyaw, Police Superintendent and Pastor of Christ Apostolic Church, Asokwa-Kumasi,⁵¹ one of the advocates of this view shares that speaking in tongues is just one of the many gifts given by the Holy Spirit

⁴⁸ Interviewed on January 8, 2014.

⁴⁹ Interviewed on January 14, 2014.

⁵⁰ Interviewed on December 30, 2013.

⁵¹ Interviewed on February 14, 2014.

and some may have while others may not have. He made reference to Acts 2 where Apostle Peter talks about prophesying and having visions which are all solid and concrete evidence to confirm the baptism. Charles Adarkwa, prophet in Atonsu Rhema Assembly of Assemblies of God,⁵² added his voice to Nyamekye's opinion that Zachariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist from the New Testament as people who were all filled with the Holy Spirit without any scriptural empirical evidence of speaking in tongues (Luke 1:41: 67). According to Adarkwa, Billy Graham, one of the greatest American evangelists of our day does not speak in tongues. Philip Arthur, Registrar/Dean of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary,⁵³ in the same vein said, if there is a “temporal filling” for a specific service, there could be a filling without speaking in tongues. This is supported by the initial fillings in Luke's Gospel when those filled rather prophesied. Chris Dzoagbe, a Lecturer at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary⁵⁴ admitted that the assertion in question is possible because males in particular are shy of speaking in tongues.

Agyemang, General Overseer of Christ Redemptive Chapel International, Atonsu,⁵⁵ is of the view that speaking in tongues is very much associated with the Spirit filled-life but as to whether it is the only initial evidence, that one he does not believe. He cited John Wesley as someone who did not speak in tongues but people spoke in tongues in his meetings. He continued that, tongues speaking should not be used as the only initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit since it is possible for some people to exercise some gifts of the Spirit but not speak in tongues. Agyemang concluded that there are people who are filled with the Holy Spirit and doing well in the kingdom without necessarily speaking in tongues. He cited an elder in his church that he has been with for 13 years who does not speak in tongues. Agyemang explained that he

⁵² Interviewed on January 3, 2013.

⁵³ Interviewed on December 20, 2013.

⁵⁴ Interviewed on January 7, 2014.

⁵⁵ Interviewed on January 7, 2014.

sometimes went to the mountains with him to pray for him to receive the gift but he does not. He said when “I compare him to those who speak in tongues in terms of loyalty and commitment, he is far better than those people.”

Contrary to the views above is the belief that speaking in tongues is the only initial outward evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Out of the fourteen (14) interviewees, five (5) share the view that speaking in tongues, is the only initial outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Among the adherent of this view is Mensah, Territorial Apostle of Christ Apostolic Church, Ashanti West.⁵⁶ He is of the view that before one can be sure that one has the Spirit of God, there should be evidence and the first evidence is speaking in tongues based on Acts 2. He reiterated that even when Jesus was baptized, there was a voice. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him as an evidence of baptism. He concluded that in the Christ Apostolic Church, after water baptism, the ministers spend considerable time on people to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit whether one likes it or not.

But do people receive it when they are prayed for? Can someone receive the baptism against his or her will? It is about time that the Pentecostal Churches should look beyond the “only initial evidence” debate to other results of a genuine baptism in the Holy Spirit such as : (a) a life that brings honour to Jesus Christ (John 16:13-14; Acts 4:33); (b) a greater desire to pray (Acts 2:41-42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 6:4; 10:9; Rom 8:26); (c) a deeper love and understanding of God's Word (John 16:13; Acts 2:42). In effect, the baptism in the Holy Spirit enhances Christian's personal worship and empowers their public witness (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 14:2-4) and not necessary to speak in tongues per se.

Frimpong-Manso, General Superintendent of Assemblies of God-Ghana,⁵⁷ indicated that speaking in tongues has become the common

⁵⁶ Interviewed on January 14, 2014.

⁵⁷ Interviewed on December 23, 2013.

denominator of the baptism of the Holy Spirit based on (Acts 2:4; 10:44-48; 19:6). He further indicated that there is difference between the gifts of tongues which is for the edification of the body of Christ and tongues as initial baptism of the Holy Spirit which is for every believer. One is gift, that is the promise of the Father which is for everybody whereas the other one in 1 Corinthians 12 is the gifts of the Spirit referring to spiritual gifts that come after one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One receives the Spirit when one is born again but gets baptized when one is over-flowing with the Spirit.

Donald Stamps⁵⁸ in support of Frimpong-Manso's view explains that to be baptized in the Spirit means to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5; 2:4). According to him, the word “baptize” actually means “to immerse” or “dip into”; but since the Spirit works within a person, baptism in the Spirit implies an overflow of the Spirit. For example, a person who receives spiritual salvation is like a container that was once empty being filled with fresh, clean water. Like the container, the person is no longer empty, but has the Holy Spirit living inside (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). Then, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is like pouring more clean water into the container until it overflows from within (Jn 7:38-39). A person who is baptized in the Spirit becomes saturated and immersed (e.g., “baptized”) with God's presence to the point that it spills out of his or her life and is so evident that it influences others. Stamps in his contribution wants to say that, when one is filled with the Holy Spirit speaking in tongues is nonnegotiable.

Gordon Tito Adjei, Ashanti Regional Superintendent of Assemblies of God and Vice Chairman Ghana Pentecostal Council⁵⁹ affirming Stamps' argument, said, speaking in tongues is the only effective evidence to make us know that one is baptized in the Holy Spirit and that it helps build and encourage the individual. Godfred Abeka, an Associate Pastor

⁵⁸ Donald Stamps, and Wesley Adams J. *Fire Bible: Global Study Edition New International Version*. Springfield: Life Publishers International, 2009). 1989.

⁵⁹ Interviewed on January 14, 2014.

of Calvary Redemption Church, Daban⁶⁰ on the question above adds that from New Testament studies and from historical antecedent, speaking in tongues is the only initial outward evidence. He further stresses that speaking in tongues is the only evidence that will prove to others that something totally different has happened to the speaker whom they know very well.

Boachie, Ashanti Regional Secretary of Assemblies of God⁶¹ explained that the person after conversion is filled with the Holy Spirit. However, he needs a special empowerment for service and that is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The disciples were already filled with the Spirit but on the day of Pentecost, they received further empowerment which is the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4). It is therefore impossible for a person to be filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues. Kuranchie, Atonsu District Pastor of Assemblies of God,⁶² shares that the possibility of being filled with the Holy Spirit is seen in John 20 where Jesus breathed on the disciples for temporal filling but in Acts 1:8 they received the fullness of the Spirit and spoke in tongues. When one is full of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues becomes a natural phenomenon. It is therefore impossible for a person to be filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues.

Theological Implications of Post Conversion Experience

On the basis of the passages in Acts, the overall Pentecostal and Charismatic position has been that all believers should have a Pentecostal experience similar to that of Acts 2. According to this position, the experience of Acts is normative and should be the common experience of every believer. Anthony D Palma⁶³ expresses that if this

⁶⁰ Interviewed on January 5, 2014.

⁶¹ Interview on January 3, 2014.

⁶² Interviewed on January 13, 2014.

⁶³ Anthony D. Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 157-58.

unique phenomenon occurred solely for historical- redemptive purposes, it should have been withdrawn by God after the event in Acts 19. On the contrary, Paul continued to speak in tongues and wished that all the Corinthians would do the same. Donald A Johns says that a worldwide, common technique in story-telling is to tell things in groups of threes and that “three times should be enough to tell anything. The paradigmatic effect of these stories should lead us to expect the same things in our own experience with the Spirit.”⁶⁴

Against this general Pentecostal and Charismatic position, we may draw from Emmanuel Asante quoting Michael Griffiths who advances the following arguments:

- It should be noted that the Pentecostal experience cannot be limited to only one evidential sign, namely speaking in tongues. Several evidential signs occurred including “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and appearance of a cloven tongue like as of fire (Acts 2:2-5). Our question is, why select only tongues-speaking as the sign?
- Those who spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost were the disciples. There is no record that three thousand who believed as a result of Peter's preaching also spoke in tongues. All we are told is that those who believed Peter's message were baptized and added to the group of disciples (Acts 2:41).
- There is no conclusive evidence that speaking in tongues and being filled with the Spirit are connected. According to Griffiths “of the nine references in Acts to being filled or being full of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:4 is the only occasion when being filled with the Spirit is directly connected with speaking in tongues.”
- The Pentecostal experience is different from the Corinthians'

⁶⁴ Donald A. Johns, “Some New Directions in the Hermeneutics of Classical Pentecostalism's Doctrine of Initial Evidence,” in *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 163.

practice of speaking in tongues. On this score, let's draw the following contrasts between the tongues spoken on the Day of Pentecost and that which was exercised at Corinth:

(a) Whereas all the 120 disciples spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, at Corinth, not all spoke in tongues (Acts 1:15; 2:4; 1 Cor 12:30).

(b) The tongues spoken by the 120 disciples in Acts 2 needed no interpretation. What was said was understood by all who heard the disciples (Acts 2:7ff). As a matter of fact, Luke presents the Pentecostal phenomenon, which he describes a *heteraisglossais* in terms of *xenolalia* that is the speaking of actual foreign language. At Corinth, tongues called for interpretation (1 Cor 14:2). This of course does not rule out the fact that Paul also thought of speaking in tongues as *xenolalia* among others.

(c) At Pentecost, the 120 disciples who spoke in tongues witnessed to the wonderful works of God in the language of at least some of the audience (Acts 2:6, 8, 11). At Corinth, tongues were primarily spoken to God (1 Cor 14:2) and only indirectly to the audience when interpreted.

(d) At Pentecost, the experience of speaking in tongues brought salvation to others. At Corinth, the experience, as such, directly edified only the speaker (1 Cor 14:4).

Griffiths believes that the Pentecostal events recorded in the book of Acts do not provide a basis for considering other baptized believers as second rate Christians just because they have not had the so-called “second experience” an experience defined in terms of baptism in the Spirit, which is habitually evidenced by *glossolalia*. In response to Griffiths concern regarding why the Pentecostals have selected only one evidential sign – speaking in tongues as only evidence of baptism of the Holy Spirit and have neglected other signs such as mighty rushing wind and appearance of cloven tongues like fire, it has been understood that, the wind and fire are sometimes called theophanies – visible manifestations of God. On historic occasions like the giving of the Law there were thunder, lightning flashes, a thick cloud, and a very loud trumpet sound (Ex 19:16); so on this historic day the Lord manifested Himself in a most

unforgettable way with heaven-sent wind and fire. We should note however, that the wind and fire preceded the infilling of the Spirit; they were not part of it. Furthermore, nowhere else in Acts are they mentioned again in conjunction with people being filled with the Spirit.

J Oswald Sanders also contributes to the discussion when he writes that:⁶⁵

- At Pentecost, the disciples spoke to men (Acts 2:6) but at Corinth, the speaking was to God (1 Cor 14:2:26, 27).
- At Pentecost, tongues was a sign or credential to believers but at Corinth, to unbelievers (Acts 14:22; 2:12, 13).
- At Pentecost, the unbelievers were filled with awe and marvelled (Ac 2:7, 8, 12-13), but at Corinth, the unbelievers thought the Christians were mad (1 Cor 14:23).
- At Pentecost, there was harmony (Ac 2:1); at Corinth confusion (1 Cor 14:23).

According to Asante, what seemed to be the reoccurrence of the Pentecostal experience on three different occasions Acts 8, 10, 19 can be explained in terms of the public unification of the different groups who represented believers of all races and ages, that is the universal church.⁶⁶ The point is that, the outpouring of the Spirit recorded as “typical of what happened time and time again, and a pattern of what ought to happen every time a person comes to a living experience of Christ.” At this point, let it be reiterated that all those who through faith in Christ have committed themselves to God are born of the Spirit. They have been baptized in the Spirit (Jn 1:12; Gal 4:6).⁶⁷

In effect, one section of the people believe that speaking in tongues is normative and should be the common experience of every believer since

⁶⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *In the Power of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 115-16.

⁶⁶ Emmanuel Asante, *God the Spirit* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2005), 79.

⁶⁷ Asante, *God the Spirit*, 84-85.

there is difference between tongues in Acts which is the promise of the Father according to Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 1:4-5 and the tongues in 1 Corinthians 12:10, which is spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit bestows on the members as He determines. In as much as speaking in tongues in the book of Acts is closely associated with the Spirit baptism, it is extremely difficult for the Pentecostal and Charismatic believers to discern and to know the particular tongues that one is speaking, either the tongues in Acts which is for every one or the tongues in 1 Corinthians 12:10 which is one of the gifts of the Spirit.

Conclusion

Regarding speaking in tongues being the only initial outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there were mixed reactions within the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The findings indicate that the emphasis placed on the phrase “only initial” brought about the mixed reactions. The writer is of the opinion that it is not a matter of speaking in tongues, though it is important, but the devotion of our lives to Christ's lordship in practical obedience is the proof of the Holy Spirit's baptism in our lives. A Spirit-filled believer is a fruit-bearing believer because the character counts. On the last day the statement of the whole purpose of the believer's life time is you who did the will of my father and not you who spoke in tongues. It is further recommended that members of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches should not focus on the speaking in tongues as the only outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather, they should focus on the primary purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which makes one an effective witness of the Gospel.

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Use of Imprecatory Prayers in Contemporary African Christianity: A Critique

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ABSTRACT

The offering of imprecatory prayer in African Christianity is alarming. Today, in Africa, it looks as if everyone has an imaginary or a declared enemy against whom vengeance is sought. Imprecatory prayers are very common, filling up churches, airwaves and television networks. Almost every African prayer is geared towards destroying one enemy or the other. People throng to prayer meetings with canes and ropes to tie, whip, and eventually destroy their enemies. Interestingly, no matter where prayer meetings are held, no matter the occasion and prevailing conditions, people pray loudly, passionately and dramatically against their imagery and declared enemies. Do these prayers resonate with Jesus' teaching regarding how we should treat our enemies?¹ Increasing concerns about the theology of imprecatory prayers have prompted us to critically examine the issue. This paper examines prayers collected from meetings of some contemporary African churches and posits that Christian prayer ought to be ordered differently from this pervasive pattern.

Introduction

A few months ago, one of the co-authors² witnessed the prayer meeting of

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a group by name “Fire for Fire Prayer Warriors.” The name of the group, in the words of the founder, means “when your enemy puts fire near you, you must put him into fire.” It was a two-hour prayer meeting led by one of the 'warriors.' After thanking the Lord for some few minutes, the 'warrior' led us to 'fire our enemies' by asking God to destroy them. This was basically all that we did throughout the prayer session. Two weeks later, this researcher visited another prayer meeting organized on a football pitch.³ This prayer meeting was more aggressive and energetic and was much more filled with imprecatory words than the previous prayer meeting attended.

Whether in the church, on the field or elsewhere, the prayers are almost always the same. For example: “By fire, by thunder, Lord, kill my enemies for me”, “Lord, destroy my enemies”, “May thunder strike and devour my devourers in the name of Jesus”, “I destroy my destroyer by Holy Ghost fire”, “*me bo m'atanfo tuo pee!*” (Literally meaning “I shoot my enemies”).

It is not uncommon to find Christians gathered on play grounds, in classrooms, in various chapels and buildings "decreeing" and "declaring" with loud voices and commanding God to put their "enemies" to death or to harm their "enemies" in one way or the other. Usually, leaders of such prayer sessions psyche up their members by quoting certain imprecatory passages from scripture as their basis. A typical passage often quoted is Psalm 35:1-6:

Contend O Lord with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul 'I am your salvation.' May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.

After reading such a passage, the leader raises a prayer topic like “Pray that anyone in your family who hinders your progress should be destroyed by fire and by thunder.” He goes on to encourage the members: “Pray... Pray... Pray... until something happens.” When the leader wants the session to end so that other topics could be raised, he screams “Holy Ghost...” and the people respond with a loud “fire!” So it goes like this: “Holy Ghost.... fire!”, “Holy Ghost....fire!”, “Holy Ghost....fire!” Another way of encouraging the members to pray is to ask them to repeat carefully crated prayers after the leader. Apostle Lyanne Koffi, an advocate of imprecatory prayers, gives us this classic example of imprecatory prayer which can be repeated after him:

In the name of Jesus
The God of back to sender
Arise on my behalf
Trouble my troublers
Destroy my destroyers
Persecute my persecutors
For you have given commandment over my life
Saying: touch not my anointed and do my prophet no harm
Lord I am your anointed
Deliver me now
In the name of Jesus⁴

Once members are asked to pray such a prayer of vengeance, the prayer session reaches its apex. Everybody prays more aggressively and gymnastically than before. More often than not, these prayers are accompanied by the clapping of hands and stamping of feet as a sign of attacking the enemy. Clearly, these prayers reveal that, in Africa, there is a conscious awareness created that enemies are present and a danger to progress. Confirming this, Adamo avers that in Africa, “children and adults are taught the existence and the activities of enemies.”⁵ But who are these 'enemies'?

A woman, interviewed on her way to a prayer meeting, answered, “My enemy is anybody, especially family, relative or any spirit who hinders

my spiritual, physical and socio-economic progress or the progress of any of my children in one way or the other.”⁶ In the view of Stiles-Ocran, the enemy, *otanfo*, could be the devil, close friend, relative or even a neighbour.⁷ But do these prayers work at all? How many “enemies” die as a result of these prayers? Is it right for a Christian to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense can they make the Psalms their own?⁸ We attempt answers to these questions in the following sections.

What are Imprecatory Psalms?

Psalms, including imprecations are like prayers⁹ which were often put to music and sung by Jewish worshippers in Old Testament (OT). They are directed to God and not to humankind. Based on this understanding, the terms *imprecatory Psalm* and *imprecatory prayer* have been used synonymously in this article. That said, what then is imprecatory prayer? An “imprecation”, according to J. Carl Laney, “is an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse uttered against one's enemies, or the enemies of God.”¹⁰ Such a psalm (or prayer) is described as imprecatory because it expresses a desire for God's vengeance on the worshipper's enemies. Laney observes that, “Crucial to the definition of an imprecation is that it (a) must be an invocation-prayer or address to God, and (b) must contain a request that one's enemies or the enemies of Yahweh be judged and justly punished.”¹¹

In H. C. Leupold's view, the term “imprecatory Psalms” refers to “those psalms in which the writer prays that God may afflict the evildoer and punish him according to his just deserts.”¹² In a similar vein, J. A. Motyer notes, imprecatory Psalm refers to calling upon God to remedy those injustices which neither we as individuals, nor the state, are competent to remedy. Hence the psalmists do not seek personal vengeance; rather they leave vengeance to God, as God has demanded.¹³ According to E. Zenger, imprecatory psalms have been referred to by different names such as “cursing psalms”, “psalms of vengeance”, “psalms of violence”, “psalms of hate”, and others because of the nature of the contents of these psalms.¹⁴ We could also refer to these prayers as doom pronouncements.

The Rising use of Imprecatory Prayer in Contemporary African Christianity

It appears that imprecations are more common in Africa than in Europe and other parts of the world. Why? What might be responsible for this situation? We suggest some of the factors responsible for the rising use of imprecatory prayer in African Christianity as follows:

The African's worldview

“A world view”, in the words of Craig Rusbult, “is a mental model of reality, a framework of ideas and attitudes about the world, ourselves and life.”¹⁵ In other words, “Our basic set of beliefs, or system of faith, or way of thinking is our worldview.”¹⁶ A person's worldview is informed by factors such as his/her inherited characteristics, attitudes, background, life experiences, values, habits and so on. Our worldview, as Martin avers, “dictates our values and character.”¹⁷ Martin further notes that behaviour is the outward expression of the root or our worldview. The African world view comprises belief in the existence of ghosts, witches, evil spirits, idols, ancestors and the like. Generally speaking, traditional Africans believe that spirits are everywhere-there is no area of the earth, object or creature which does not have a spirit of its own or which cannot be inhabited by a spirit.

Christianity is widespread in Africa. However, until the establishment of African initiated churches, Christianity, was seen as white people's religion because of its Euro-American characteristics - worship style, language and idioms. With the establishment of African initiated churches which strongly encourage clapping and dancing, Christianity is now seen to fit the African context than before. Further, the 'Africanization' of Christianity has led to the injection of elements of the African religion and beliefs into Christianity. The influence of African traditional religio-cultural thoughts on African Christian beliefs and practices is so strong that African traditional beliefs and values have overshadowed biblical values and principles, thereby, resulting in serious syncretism.¹⁸ The syncretic society remains constantly conscious

of a myriad of evil spirits lurking in readiness to attack them. This, according to Kodua, has made Africans become “demon-conscious Christians” rather than “Christ-conscious Christians.”¹⁹ Thus, the change from traditional religion to Christianity has had little influence on the Africa worldview - since most African Christians still attribute forces hindering their progress to witchcraft, water spirits, demonic forces and ancestral spirits. Confirming this fact, J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu, argues that, “Anybody who knows African Christians intimately will know that no amount of denial on the part of the church will expel belief in supernatural powers from the minds of the Christian...”¹⁹ As a result, Asamoah-Gyadu adds, the African Christian “becomes a hypocrite who in official church circles pretends to give the impression that he does not believe in these things, while in his own private life, he resorts to practices which are the results of such beliefs.”²¹ In other words, because of this entrenched worldview, African Christians still have the fear that these invisible spirits can still influence them negatively in spite of the fact that one has become a Christian.²² Of course this claim is not necessarily true for all African Christians, for there many who accept and rest in the protection and care that Christ offers, without living their lives in fear and subsequently do not launch attacks on perceived and imaginary enemies.

Against the backdrop that spirits are believed to be capable of causing havoc to life, most African Churches try to provide their followers with weapons needed “to fight back against the forces of evil as they manifest themselves in disease and discord.”²³ In an attempt to find weapons for this spiritual warfare, some African churches resort to imprecatory prayers as a means to make the evil forces powerless.

Improper Hermeneutical and Exegetical Approach to Scripture

Biblical Hermeneutics is the art or science of the interpretation of Scripture. Exegesis on the other hand is the explanation or exposition of Scripture. Exegesis and interpretation are intertwined but exegesis precedes any effective interpretation of Scripture. The Bible contains a lot of expressions and prayers that connote imprecation. In the Old

Testament, one needs not get to the book of Psalms before encountering imprecations. Moses' "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" principle (Exo 21:24), Moses' morning prayer in which he says that the enemies of Yahweh, (who were Moses' enemies as well), would be scattered and flee from His presence (Num. 10:35), the concluding part of the song of Deborah and Barak which suggests that Yahweh's enemies might perish (Judg 5:31), are but a few of the numerous statements with connotations of imprecation.

When one comes to the Psalms imprecations and curses are common. For example, "Arise, O Lord, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice." (Psa 7:6) Imprecations are not limited to the Old Testament, but are also found in the New Testament. Paul's statement that "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: The Lord will repay him according to his works. Of whom be thou ware also; for he has greatly withstood our words" (2 Tim 4: 14 – 15), is considered imprecatory.²⁴ The presence of such passages in the Bible requires that we develop effective interpretation skills in order to find the accurate meaning to such passages.

Unfortunately, instead of building "solid foundation in Biblical exegesis"²⁵ through serious studies, most contemporary African pastors/prophets are of the view that once they have spiritual gifts, rules of interpretation of scripture do not matter. There are some ministers who claim that the Holy Spirit will "drop" interpretations into their minds. Such people usually frown upon any attempt to take academic work seriously. Their focuses in ministry include exorcism, healing and prosperity. Such people fall prey to Biblicism.²⁶ The result of this is that most contemporary African prophets give a literal interpretation to almost all parts of scripture. For example, in the view of one advocate of imprecatory prayers, the importance of the parable of the tenant in Luke 19:11-27 is that "we should bring our enemies to the church and kill them", forgetting that Jesus says we should pray for such people (Matt 5:44). Luke 19:27 is used as a proof-text to justify pronouncement of curses on one's enemies. Again, some of these prophets, based on people's experiences, form their own theologies in such a way as to suit

their audience without paying adequate attention to the biblical context. Once this form of interpretation is accepted, promoted and popularized, it is generally accepted as fact and part of the doctrine of their churches. With “limited biblical understanding”, some of these prophets defend this practice by arguing that “Jesus said that for the sake of the kingdom or being his disciple, one's family could be torn apart.”²⁷ For this reason, some ministers encourage their members to “humiliate family members that are alleged to have brought misfortune”²⁸ to them.

Improper Understanding of Spiritual Warfare

Resulting from the literal reading of scripture is the improper understanding of spiritual warfare by some pastors, prophets and their followers. The theologies of some ministers — as portrayed in songs, sermons, books, themes for programmes, pictures and captions on billboards, etc. — depict spiritual warfare as a physical battle with one's opponent. For instance, bill boards depicting two people in the boxing ring may be erected to portray spiritual warfare going on in the world. One billboard had the caption, “Shoot the Shooter.” Also on it was the picture of someone dressed in red cloth shooting a monster (representing the enemy) with a powerful gun. On another billboard is the picture of a Christian flogging an enemy who had been bound to a tree. Its caption was, “Binding and Loosing Conference.”

The 'WhatsApp' status of a member of Fire for Fire Prayer Warriors, whose profile picture depicts two boxers, reads, “The devil will give up when he sees that you are not going to give in...Glory be to God.” These and other instances point to people's naivety regarding spiritual battle. Clearly, the message sent across is that there is a physical warfare for Christians to fight. The result of such a misconception of spiritual warfare is the use of canes, ropes and stones into some churches to tie and beat enemies. Some people go to church with granulated pepper and *bentoa*, a local syringe, to administer to their enemies. The *kyekyere no ma me* ("tie the enemy for me") prayer group physically tie pieces of wood (representing their enemies), believing that their enemies will be tied by such act. This is Christianized sympathetic magic. Such practice

made a young man butchered his elderly mother she believed was responsible for his failure in life.

With this (mis)understanding of Christian warfare, many people resort to the use of imprecatory prayers which, in their view, has the weapons required for their battles. Once people are assured that through such prayers they will win their battles, they persist in the practice? In the end, people who get involved in this practice pray in anger, bitterness and vigour with the mindset of dealing with their enemies once and for all.

Superstition

Another reason for the use of imprecatory prayer in African Churches is superstition. By superstition, we mean a belief or practice generally regarded as irrational and as resulting from ignorance or from fear of the unknown. It implies a belief in unseen and unknown forces that can be influenced by objects and rituals. African societies are usually immersed in beliefs such as soul eaters, bewitchment and so on. From African perspective, nothing happens by chance. Everything that happens must be explained. The African lives in fear of diseases, demons, spirits and the like.

Due to superstition, people try to find explanations to every phenomenon. When a satisfactory explanation cannot be found, the cause is attributed to the temperament of a divinity, perhaps annoyed by the infringement of a customary law. For instance, school failure is often interpreted as caused by the jealousy of a third party who has accomplished a transfer of intelligence from one person to another. When someone is sick, it means that evil spirits has entered his/her body. In Burundi and Tanzania and other parts of Africa, there have been massacres of albinos because of the belief that certain organs in their bodies can be used for rituals that bring money.

The sudden death of an individual who appeared perfectly healthy is attributed to the work of a brotherhood of soul eaters; failure of a clever child at school or at an exam is considered the work of a jealous co-wife

or uncle who has stolen the child's chances. It is believed that the witches have night meetings in the forests and seas where they meet and agree on how to hurt people. Moreover, many nocturnal animals, especially birds, are suspected as witches. In many villages in Africa, witches are blamed for strong destructive winds, drought, infertility, illness, hunger, misery and all other disasters.

African superstition is related to magic or sorcery, and the occult in general. African proverbs, idioms, songs etc, often reflect such superstition. Consider the common Akan proverb, “*Se aboa bi beka woa, na efiri wo ntoma mu*” meaning, “Before you can be bitten by any insect, it might first have to be in your cloth.” The point in this proverb is that evil things that happen to us come from our associates. With this mindset, most Africans attribute anything bad to 'some imaginary insect in their cloth.' This point also finds its expression in the Akan saying, “*Se wotwe biribi firi esoro na amma, biribi kura mu*”, meaning, “If you pull a rope and it does not come down then something might be holding it up.” An alcoholic, based on this saying, believes superstitiously that someone has placed some barrel in his/her stomach which never gets filled no matter how much he/she drinks. Eventually, should anything evil happen to a superstitious African Christian, the next thing the person does is to resort to imprecatory prayer and return the evil 'back to the sender.'

Imprecatory Language of Libation and Incantation

Libation refers to the pouring of wine accompanied by a prayer to invoke the spirits. In African societies, libation is commonly performed on occasions such as festivals, funerals, community gathering, in times of crisis or joy. It is usually performed by the *Okyeame* ("spokesperson") or the *Okomfo* ("priest" or "priestess"). According to M. Kilson, the liturgy of libation usually follows the sequence of invocation, message or explanation, supplication and a curse or imprecation.²⁹ A critical analysis of the words of libation and incantation leads to the fact that Africans' love for imprecatory prayers might be deeply rooted in the imprecatory nature of libation and incantation. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, Adamo reports that there is a belief that everybody has at least a known or an

unknown enemy called *ota*.³⁰ The Yoruba believe in “two types of enemies, *orogun* and *aye*.”³¹ Adamo adds that, “One cultural way of *protection against enemies* consists of the use of imprecatory potent words (incantations) called *ogede* ...”³² Part of the *ogede* reads: “*Ki awon ota mi lo ghere*”, meaning “So let my enemies be lost forever.”³³ Definitely, such a statement in no uncertain terms teaches the people that the best way to deal with their enemies is to eliminate them.

In Ghana, the Akans reserve the concluding part of *apae*, libation, for the pronouncement of a curse on evil forces and agents of chaos. The *Okyeame* prays, regarding evil forces, saying, “May the society be rid of these evil forces.” He uses two concluding sentences to achieve this. First he says, “*Obi nto nsa nhyira enko hyira ne busuefo*” meaning “in the process of prayer one does not seek the welfare of his/her enemies.” He then adds, “*Onipa bonefo a onpe yen yie die no dee, ne nkonko enbo ne so*” meaning “anyone who does not want our progress should fall and die.” All the worshippers declare their support for this pronouncement by unanimously shouting the congratulatory phrase, *mo ne kasa*, meaning “well spoken”. By these words, the enemy's downfall and eventual death is clearly sought.

It is therefore not surprising that curses have become common in African communities and have crept into the church as well. The African Christians understanding of how to deal with their enemies is to pay evil with evil; to pay enemies back in their own coin. In view of this, some Africa churches do not see anything wrong with encouraging imprecatory prayer in order to deal with enemies. In such churches, imprecatory prayer is merely a form of Christianization of the libation language.³⁴ Thus, Novieto is right to opine that these “back to the sender' and 'summoning the enemy' prayers could be said to be in line with traditional practices.”³⁵ They are words of libation in Christian garments.

Current Trends in Prophetic and Healing Ministries in Africa

Another reason for the use of imprecatory prayer in the African Church is the current trend of prophetic and healing ministry. *Nkomhye* (prophecy)

and *adiyie nsem* (revelation) is a widespread and prominent phenomenon in many African churches today. Unfortunately, today's prophets are not like Old Testament Prophets who protested against kings, priests and individuals, predicted the future regarding Yahweh's intentions and called Israel to repentance. Most African contemporary prophets tend to ignore the fact that calamities may proceed from human character, conscience, thoughts, and desires. They attribute every problem to the effect of either evil forces or to family members and other relatives. For such prophets everything is spiritualized. Everything is caused by one demon or the other.

H. W. Debrunner has observed that “the ordinary man in the street and in the bush expect four things from religion (a) Social fellowship; (b) emotional experiences; (c) healing; (d) security against real or imagined evil forces.”³⁶ This observation really captures the aspirations of the African on his/her expectations from religion. To be more specific, Asamoah-Gyadu contends that, “In Africa, healing is a function of religion not only in traditional religions but also in indigenous expressions of Christianity.”³⁷ This requires setting captives free from generational or ancestral curses and liberating demon-possessed people from the hands of the devil through healing and deliverance (exorcism). Imprecatory prayers are considered appropriate in the fight against the people perceived to be the cause of the victim's problem. Contemporary prophets, therefore, promote the use of contemporary prayers because they believe that it resonates well with the trends of prophetic ministry.

A Brief Look at Major Hermeneutical Approaches to Imprecatory Psalms

Different hermeneutical approaches have been used in interpreting imprecatory Psalms. First, there are scholars, who like J. W. Beardslee, contend that “the Old Testament saints lived inferiorly prior to the full light of the truth as taught in the New Testament. Their theology is not as developed and therefore New Testament ethical teaching and practice should not be expected of them.”³⁸ As a way of critique, it must be pointed out that this approach is inadequate because it “underestimates the Old

Testament's provision of ethical guidelines.”³⁹ Again this position suggests that the imprecatory Psalms are not suitable for today's believers, a position not supported by this article. As Laney aptly observes “Christians do enjoy the benefits of progressive revelation, but that progress is not from error to truth; instead, it is a progression from incomplete revelation to a more full and complete revelation or divine disclosure.”⁴⁰ If by that argument Beardslee is suggesting that the New Testament presents us with more complete ethical guidelines than the Old Testament then his position can be fused with Laney's view.

The second approach is that the imprecations are prophetic declarations from the psalmist. This approach finds support in New Testament passages which are quotations of imprecatory Psalms.⁴¹ Against this view is the claim that the imperfect form of a verb is sometimes preceded by an imperative, in which case the imperfect form is translated as a jussive (Ps. 69:25-26).⁴² In such cases, the imprecation becomes a wish, desire or prayer that it may happen rather than a prophetic declaration. For example, the literal translation of Psalm 137:8-9 reads: “O daughter of Babylon, who will be dealt violently with, **O the happiness of the ones who will reward you** your recompense just as you have dealt fully to us. **O the happiness of him that will take hold** and dash your little children against the rock.”⁴³ This Psalm involves a third person which indicates that the psalmist is not making a prophetic utterance but expressing his own feeling as one who will be happy when judgment overtakes the evildoers.

Another approach suggests that the psalmist is “God's wholly committed man, yet a man who is estranged from God's spirit.”⁴⁴ According to this view, the imprecatory Psalms express the full humanity of the psalmists who love God, or Jerusalem, or an attribute of God, and who hate God's enemies passionately, to the extent that they wish that those enemies' children be dashed against the rocks.⁴⁵ Bright contends that the psalm must not be read and received as God's word for today's believers outside of the light of the gospel.⁴⁶ This view, even though, offers a New Testament understanding and application to today's believers, denies the divine authorship of the imprecatory psalms by distinguishing between

the human author (as one estranged from God) and the divine.⁴⁷

A further approach suggests that imprecatory Psalms are the psalmist's *spiritual* opponents (who are personified as evil people) rather than human personages. Sigmund Mowinckel claims that the imprecations in these psalms are curses uttered in the name of God who is a sure defense against the powers of darkness and is able to defy and overthrow the hosts of evil which stir themselves up against His servants.⁴⁸ As a way of critique, Laney contends that this approach presents “an unfortunate subjectivity and indefiniteness to the meaning of the biblical language.”⁴⁹ The point is that, it becomes very difficult for us to know when to make the transition from a literal to a spiritual interpretation of a particular passage. More so, if the psalmist's enemies are really evil principles and forces, it is strange that their families should be mentioned.⁵⁰

Finally, there is the view that the imprecatory Psalms are the prayers of Christ. James E. Adams, sharing this view, argues that all the imprecatory Psalms are really the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵¹ He states that:

The Lord Jesus Christ is praying these prayers of vengeance. The prayers that cry out for the utter destruction of the psalmist's enemies can only be grasped when heard from the loving lips of our Lord Jesus. These prayers signal an alarm to all who are still enemies of King Jesus. His prayers will be answered! . . . They are not the prayers of a careless and compassionless tyrant, but the effectual prayers of the Lamb of God who bore the curse of God for the sins of all who bow their knee to Him. The wrath of the psalms must be preached as the wrath of the Lamb of God.⁵²

As a way of evaluation, we contend that the imprecatory Psalms are in reality the prayers of Christ. This is allegorical-spiritualizing of the text. This approach seems not to pay attention to the context in which the Psalms were written. This paper takes the position that Psalms, like all the other books of the Bible, are inspired by God without destroying the

writers' personalities. However, the manner in which inspiration is done through the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Imprecatory psalms are therefore cries from individual psalmists to the LORD for divine justice upon God's enemies or believers' enemies who try to hinder the progress of God's work. They were not imprecations made out of a vengeful heart but out of a desire to see God's glory and His justice prevail. Thus the prayers were directed at God, not at the perceived enemies!

A Christian Attitude towards Imprecation

Three significant points must be taken into consideration. Vengeance is the Lord's, not ours (Deut 32:35). David has many imprecatory Psalms attributed to him. It has to be noted that David never prayed that he may be permitted to take vengeance on his enemies, but always that God would become his avenger. Personal vengeance is not the basis for imprecatory prayers. The Christian cannot pray imprecatory prayers against a careless driver who knocks down his/her only son and did not even stop to say "I am sorry." David, realizing that a crisis had come, simply requested that God use judgmental retribution for His own glory and for the deliverance of His servant. "Vindication" must be distinguished from "vindictiveness." David's passion in the imprecatory psalms was for justice, and not for personal vindictiveness or malice that seeks revenge.

What David pleaded for in his imprecations was that justice should be done and that right be vindicated. How this was to be done depended entirely on the will of God for David's life. The imprecations reflect an Old Testament saint's abhorrence of sin and evil. The perceived troublemakers were not the private enemies of David, but those who opposed God and His cause. Divine judgment was pleaded against those who were the very incarnation of wickedness. A Christian can pray the imprecatory Psalms as his/her own provided that, first, he/she is not praying for his/her own personal advancement or victory over his/her private enemies but for "the advancement of God's Kingdom - that God's enemies be destroyed"⁵³ and second, he/she prays in accordance with God's revealed will based on God's word. This way the prayer becomes a

plea to God to intervene and punish the enemies who are opposed to both God and his worshipper.

Conclusion

The worldview of the African, superstition, misunderstanding of Christian spiritual warfare and some traditional African religious practices are responsible for the widespread phenomenon of imprecatory prayers in African Christian worship. We have argued that imprecatory psalms or prayers were not meant for one to curse enemies out of revenge or from a vengeful heart. The believer must first examine his/her heart before any form of imprecation is made. The imprecations are prayers calling upon God to implement divine justice, not for the worshipper to seek personal vengeance, because vengeance belongs to God. Thus, care must be taken in the use of the imprecatory psalms for evil intention. It should be submitted to God with humility and with the understanding that God is a righteous Judge and that He is also a God of vengeance who, will do justice when justice is necessary, no matter how long it takes. Over reliance on imprecatory prayers will make people irresponsible as they will always apportion blame to others for their predicaments which may genuinely result from their own actions and inactions. As we wish our enemies dead, we must not fail to realize that we are also enemies to other people. For this reason, if God destroys our personal enemies, then he will also destroy us, because we are also enemies to others. We must therefore pray for a change of heart for people we perceive to be our enemies. This is why Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for their conversion (Matt 5:43-46). The salvation of a wicked person is more important to God than his or her punishment.

Endnotes

¹ For example in Matthew 5:43-46 Jesus teaches us to love instead of curse our enemies.

² The, co-author, Isaac Boaheng witnessed this prayer session in Berekum in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana on January 2nd, 2015.

³ Isaac Boaheng witnessed this prayer session in Berekum in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana on January 16th, 2015. It was held at the football pitch of St. Monica's JHS.

⁴ Apostle Lyanne Koffi, *'Pray Through into Breakthrough Series; Back to the Sender; Audio CD*, as quoted by Ernestina Enyonam Novieto, *Women leaders in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2013), 156. (pdf)

⁵ David Adamo in *Reading Psalm 109 OTE* 21/3 (2008), 575-592, 582

⁶ Mad. Mary Ampomah gave this definition in an interview on 7th June, 2015.

⁷ Stiles-Ocran, *'Prophetism in Ghana: A Case Study of Some Charismatic Churches,'* as paraphrased by Novieto, *Women leaders in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2013), 156. (pdf)

⁸ Johannes G. Vos, *"The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms," Westminster Theological Journal* 4 (May 1942), 123.

⁹ Prayer is "a personal communication with God." Wayne Grudem, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 376.

¹⁰ J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (Jan-Mar, 1981): 35-36, 35. (pdf)

¹¹ Laney, "Imprecatory Psalms", 36.

¹² H. C. Leupold, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1969), 18.

¹³ J. A. Motyer, "Imprecatory Psalms," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd Edition) edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapid, MI: [Baker Publishing Group](#), 2001), 554.

¹⁴ E. Zenger, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath* [transl. L M Malaoney] (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 46.

¹⁵ Craig Rusbult, *Worldview*, <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/education/views/index.html> [Accessed 10 May, 2015]

¹⁶ Jobe Martin, *The Evolution of a Creationist* (Texas: Biblical Discipleship Publishers, 2002), 22-2. (pdf)

¹⁷ Martin, *The Evolution of a Creationist*, 22-23.

¹⁸ By syncretism we mean accepting different and opposing religious views and merging them into a new breed of religion.

¹⁹ A. Koduah, *Christianity in Ghana Today* (Accra: Advocate Publishing, 2004), 34.

²⁰ J.K. Asamoah-Gyadu, "Pentecostalism and the Missiological Significance of Religious Experience: The case of Ghana's Church of Pentecost", *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*. Vol. XII, Number 1 and 2, (2002), 29-34

²¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, "Pentecostalism and the Missiological Significance of Religious Experience", 29-34

²² John D. Kwamena Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A Case Study of Priesthood in Some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and Its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Ghana, Sonlife Press, April 2009), 39

²³ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (MA: Adisson-Wesley, 1995), 246-47.

²⁴ Other portions of the New Testament that are considered to contain imprecations are Acts 13:10-11; 23:3; 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9; 5:12, Rev. 6:9-10.

²⁵ J. Parratt, "African Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics," *African Theological Journal* 12 (1983), 92.

²⁶ Biblicism refers to quoting a Bible text out of context and using it as a proof-text to support one's own ideas.

²⁷ Pashington Obeng, "Abibisom (Indigenous Religion) by Another Name: Critical Look at Deliverance Ministries in Ghana", *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, Vol. 18 No. 2, Sept., 2014, 27-40, 34.

²⁸ Obeng, "Abibisom (Indigenous Religion) by another Name: Deliverance Ministries in Ghana, 35.

²⁹ M. Kilson, "Libation in Ga Ritual", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 3(1), 1970:161-178, 169-170. (pdf)

³⁰ Adamo, *in Reading Psalm 109*, 582.

³¹ Adamo, *in Reading Psalm 109*, 582.

³² Adamo, *in Reading Psalm 109*, 583.

³³ Adamo, *in Reading Psalm 109*, 583.

³⁴ Asempa Dedwuro (A publication of the Methodist Church Ghana), Vol. 2, No. 006, April - June, 2011

³⁵ Novieto, *Women leaders in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches*, 155.

³⁶ H.W Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 320.

³⁷ J.K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum Books Internal, 2013), 130.

³⁸ J. W. Beardslee, "The Imprecatory Element in the Psalms," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 8 (1897):496. Scofield confirms this position when he says, "The imprecatory Psalms are the cry of the oppressed in Israel for *justice*--a cry appropriate and right in the early people of God, . . . but a cry unsuited for the church, a heavenly people who have taken their place with a rejected and crucified Christ (Luke 9:52-55)." Scofield Reference Bible, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1945), 599.

³⁹ Laney, "Imprecatory Psalms", 39.

⁴⁰ Laney, "Imprecatory Psalms", 39.

⁴¹ Examples of imprecatory Psalms quoted in the New Testament are: Ps. 69:25 and 109:8 in Acts 1:20; and Ps. 69:22-23 in Rom. 11:9-10.

⁴² E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley, 2d ed as paraphrased by Laney in "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms", 40.

⁴³ Transliteration ours, bold portions are for emphasis.

⁴⁴ John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 238.

⁴⁵ Psalm 137:8-9 is often cited as an example.

⁴⁶ Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, 238. Bright adds that the imprecation of the psalmists is "unworthy and sub-Christian" but a record of the frustration of the whole man who needs to confront Christ. Bright, 238

⁴⁷ The inspiration of all parts of scripture is taught by 2 Tim. 3:16.

⁴⁸ Sigmund Mowinckel. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas. 2 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:44-52.

⁴⁹ Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms", 39.

⁵⁰ In Psalm 109 names are mentioned. Also many of the Psalms were written in a time of oppression from enemies like Doeg the Edomite (Ps. 52:1; 1 Sam. 21:7) and Shimei (2 Sam. 16:5-8).

⁵¹ James E. Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1991), 33.

⁵² Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace*, 33-34.

⁵³ Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace*, 56.

Ethical, Moral and Spiritual Foundation for a Prosperous Africa: Climate Justice - The Role of the Church

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ABSTRACT

Climate Change and Climate Justice should be discussed together for proper perspective, clear understanding, and appropriate action. Climate Change impacts and challenges have given rise to Climate Justice. Those who are least responsible for climate change experience its worst and greater impact. We must therefore create international and national laws to protect the poor and the vulnerable in Africa. The church in Africa has resources to create security and sustainable development for the people in Africa. The ethical, moral and theological resources of the church are the spiritual foundation for a prosperous Africa. Hence, there is the need to apply these resources to bring about justice and fair treatment of all people and to ensure freedom from discrimination with the creation of policies and projects that address climate change; and deal with the systems that create climate change and perpetuate discrimination. Climate justice would bring about fair and equitable development in Africa.

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Introduction

Africa produces way far less carbon dioxide compared to the US and Japan, but she suffers the most.³ The effects of climate change are widely seen and experienced in most African countries. Rising temperatures and thinning ozone layer have serious repercussions on animate and non-animate existence in Africa.⁴

Do African countries have the resources to mitigate against climate change? When there is crop failure as a result of bad weather, who pays for the losses to make African economy stable? When there are floods resulting in infrastructural destruction, who pays to fix the infrastructure? Demand for the richest nations to address the grievances of African countries suffering from the devastating impacts of climate change usually come very late or never come at all. Even if it came, it always had strings attached. The prospects of African countries to install refrigeration using CFCs to cut down the process of pollution, as the one used in Europe or North America, has not been positive since that is a monumental threat to the value of the material holdings, not to mention the health and safety of the people of Africa.⁵

Emission Cuts

Together countries in Africa produce substantial amount of carbon dioxide emission which cannot be compared to Europe, and cannot pollute enough to gain any bargaining power on international level to demand cuts on emissions. It is true that international environmental agreements do not hold as far as the cutting down of emissions are concerned. The evidence on the ground is that some destructive climate

³ <https://www.modernghana.com/news/602825/1/climate-justice-demands-a-global-deal-that-protect.html>. accessed on 20/07/2015

⁴ Henry Shue, *Climate Justice-Vulnerability and Protection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 29.

⁵ Shue, *Climate Justice*, 32.

changes have already been set in motion and can no longer be prevented, for example, it seems likely that average global temperatures are going to rise during the next century because of (among other things), carbon dioxide that have already released into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels, as such the best possible accord any international action can possible accomplish now is to slow the rate of an already inevitable temperature rise.⁶

Africa continues to suffer from climate change without justice. African governments even though agreeing to try to ameliorate the effects on its citizens of the climate changes that can no longer be prevented even by implementation of the concerted action agreed to in the climate change negotiations, with only the wealth and resources that will be left to that nation after the performance of its share as specified in the agreement emerging from the climate negotiations. The nation must live with the results of even the full implementation of the best attainable climate accord entirely within whatever then happens to be its own assets. As noted earlier, Africa still lacks the resources and wealth to fight negative impacts of climate change.⁷

According to climate change experts, agreeing to a climate accord is certainly going to entail at least for rich nations (US, Japan, France) making economic sacrifices in the sense of putting wealth and resources that might have been invested otherwise into less polluting but not necessarily more productive technology.⁸ What about poor African state?. What kind or type of otherwise less polluting technology investment can African make?. Suppose the US and Japan can agree to on climate accord. What then, will be the implications for the worldwide fight against emission cut?. More questions continue to agitate our minds as regards to climate change and climate justice. Who is going to take the

⁶ <https://www.modernghana.com/news/602825/1/climate-justice-demands-a-global-deal-that-protect.html>.accessed on20/07/2015

⁷ Shue, *Climate Justice*, 34.

⁸ www.achieve-edu2012.com/60featured on KOB TV.SE Nov 20, 2012. Africa Progress Panel Climate talk 2012.

lead in designing and implementing a global accord that will tackle climate change fairly and effectively?. And what action will be required to reduce the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases while at the same time respecting the right of the poor to dignified lives, sustainable development and economic opportunity?. It is argued that while African countries are poor, it is just unacceptable and unrealistic to expect them to focus their valuable resources on climate change crisis.⁹

Facts about Climate Change

In the Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication, the following facts about climate change are stated:¹⁰

- Climate change is already taking place. From 1906 to 2005 global average temperatures have increased by 0.74°C (23°F). The rate of global warming has increased massively from the 1970s to the present. This has led to a rise of the global sea levels and highly increased frequencies of extreme weather events such as heat waves, drought, flooding and hurricanes. It is again, observed that eleven of the warmest year on record have occurred during the last twenty years and recent findings indicate that the year 2007 was the second warmest year in a century.
- Global warming is generally caused by human activities. It is now accepted by the world's scientific communities that human activities intensify the natural greenhouse effects by emitting heat- trapping gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), Methane(CH₄)and Nitrous oxide (N₂O). Between 1970 and 2004, global greenhouse gas emissions have increased by seventy (70%) due to human activities and atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and ethane in 2005 exceeded by far the natural range of the last 650, 000 years. By 2100, global temperatures

⁹ WACC, *Media Development: Journal of World Association of for Christian Communication* 2 (2009):2

¹⁰ WACC, *Media Development*, 8-9.

could increase by 1.1°C to 6.4°C depending the international communities ability and willingness to effectively mitigate greenhouse gas emission. These negative impacts on human activity with regard to climate change have serious consequences on humans and other life forms. Vulnerable population in Africa which including women, children, the elderly and the poor are disproportionately affected.¹¹

Principles for Climate Justice¹²

Climate change caused by human activities is threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people and the existence of millions of species. We need to reduce global greenhouse emissions dramatically, while at the same time, raising the quality of life for the majority of the world's poor. Social movements and religious groups around the world are calling for urgent and radical actions broadly based on the following principles:

First, the burden of adjustment to the climate crisis must be borne by those who created it. This means that:

- A 90% cut in greenhouse gas emissions from industrialized countries by 2050
- There should be a reduction to over production for over consumption and a dramatic reduction in wasteful consumption by Northern and Southern Elites
- Financial support from the North to South to help with the cost of adjusting to the effects of climate change and continuing to develop along sustainable lines. This transfer of wealth should be based on the principle that the “rich world” owes the “poor world”

¹¹ Perry E. Sheffield et al., "Global Climate Change and Children's health: Threats and Strategies for Prevention," *Environmental Health Perspective* 119, no. 3 (2011): 291.

¹² WACC, *Media Development*, 15.

an “ecological debt” and it must be subjected to democratic control.

Second, leave fossil fuel in the ground, since climate change is caused by burning fossil fuels. We need to stop at source, by leaving the coal in the hole, the oil in the soil, investing instead in energy efficiency and massive expansion of community controlled renewable energy. In other words, we should explore alternative sources of energy.

Third, climate solutions should actually work effectively and not create further problems. This means:

- Ending the aggressive promotions of false solutions such as carbon trading, agro fuel and geo engineering. These allow the rich to avoid their responsibility to make major changes, help cooperation to increase their profits and have negative effects on the world's poor and the planet's ecosystem
- Planning and executing a just transition to a low carbon society that protects people's rights, jobs and well-being.

Fourth, there should be equal access to natural resources. Natural resources must be conserved for common good not privatized and unsustainably exploited. People's sovereignty over lands, forests, water, sea, even the sky must be upheld and reclaimed. These should be protected by laws.

Challenges¹³

Climate change has several environmental challenges world-wide. Scientists have warned that destabilized ecosystems could react with non-predictable, abrupt and non-linear events with catastrophic

¹³ The Earth Charter Guild to Religion and Climate Change. Version 1.0 11 November 2008. Produced by Earth Charter International and available at http://www.earthcharterinternational.org/religion/2008/11/earth_chapter-guide-on-religion.html.

consequences for humans and the environment.¹⁴ In Africa, more than half of the high forests have been destroyed as a result of human activity. In Ghana, for example, the loss in forest cover between 1990 and 2010 is 125,400ha or 1.68% per year. In total, between 1990 and 2010, Ghana has lost 33.7% of its forest cover or around 2,508,000ha. For many species, climate systems are changing more rapidly than they can adapt. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the current rate of extinction of species is up to 1000 times higher than the fossil records indicate. This rate could increase 10 times in the coming decade. Climate change is contributing massively to this problem.¹⁵

Agriculture Production and Food Security

Agriculture production and food security are affected by changes in temperature, rainfall patterns and water availability. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimate in 2008 that an expected increase in average world temperatures of 1 to 3°C would lead to a drop in cereal production, in more than 65 countries now accounting for half of the world's population. In 2012, a food crisis in the Sahel region affected 18 million people according to UN estimates. In 2013, the banana plantations in the Volta Region from Senchie to Peki environs suffered great losses of their production to heavy rainstorms that came unpredictably.

Rising Sea Levels and Exposure to Climate Disasters

According to UNDP some 250 million people were affected by climate disasters from 2000 to 2004, over 98% of them in the developing world. The risk of being affected by a natural disaster in a developing country is almost 80 times higher than in the developed world.

¹⁴ WACC, *Media Development*, 9.

¹⁵ WACC, *Media Development*, 9.

Global Warming and Human Health

Global warming is expanding the risks of mosquitoes and carriers of water-borne diseases. Malaria is on the increase in most developing countries. These human induced changes are mostly severely felt in Africa.

Water Stress and Water Insecurity

Most African countries are experiencing dryness and most rivers are drying up. In Ghana, the Akosombo Dam is drying up and therefore, the dam is unable to generate enough hydro power for use as a result, businesses are collapsing and the nation is in economic hardship. The cost of production is very high because Ghana cannot produce cheap electricity. Most river basins are drying up affecting the availability of fresh water. Most towns and villages in Africa are experiencing long term risk of drought.

These negative impacts raise strong global justice issues since the population mostly gravely at risk live in some of the poorest areas that are highly prone to climate change. The fact is that, 50 least developed countries of the world account for less than 1% of the greenhouse gas emission that cause climate change. No one is safe from climate change impact and therefore, international laws and security are needed to protect the vulnerable. If every person in developing countries would adopt the same carbon-intensive lifestyle as most people in the Western societies, we would need nine planets to absorb the emitted gases.

African States and “Emission Down Campaign”

Africa is suffering from the negative effects of global warming every day. In Ghana, climate change is not just a theory - it is a painful unfair reality. Recent floods and heat waves in parts of Northern Ghana resulting in Cerebral Spinal Meningitis (CSM) are stark reality of Climate Change. Farmers from Sahel countries who have spent half a year expecting a single drop of rain know that Climate Change has

already led to recurrent drought. In 2012, a food crisis in the Sahel region affected 18 million people according to the UN estimates. In 2013, the banana plantations in the Volta Region from Senchi to Peki environs suffered great losses of their production to heavy rainstorms that came unpredictably.

Climate experts in Africa are asking African governments to demand emission reduction from the advanced countries that limit average global warming to a maximum of 2°C. The experts made the following demands from the advanced countries that continue to increase greenhouse gases:¹⁶

- The world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases make the largest emission cut
- African countries should receive the financial, technical and institutional support they need to deal with Climate Change.
- African States must be compensated for loss and damage they have been enduring due to Climate Change. They should be supported in making a transition to low carbon power generation at their own pace, without compromising their rights to energy security.
- More investments are needed for the protection of forests and African farmers

By pushing for a fair global climate deal, the UN under the auspices of UN Human rights Council can make a significant contribution towards the realization of human rights for all people. In the same spirit of fairness, developed countries should support the right to life, water, food in countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change. Unless emissions are reduced by all countries, there is no way how Africa can develop. Our common slogan therefore, should be: Emissions Down, African's Human Right Up.

¹⁶ <https://www.modernghana.com/news/602825/1/climate-justice-demands-a-global-deal-that-protect.html>.accessed on20/07/2015

Greenhouse Gas Emission Dilemma

We cannot live healthy lives in an unhealthy environment.¹⁷ The impact of climate change is the result of living in an unhealthy environment. In Africa, family life, friendship, community life, trade and commerce, sports, recreation, governments and various institutions can only thrive in an environment that is inclusive for social interactions. We cannot see real prosperity and development in Africa unless all Africans care for Mother Earth so that the Earth can care for us. The impact of environmental damage is not always evident in one's immediate environment. While global heating is mostly caused by industrialized countries, African countries are predicted to suffer disproportionately under its impact. The problem is that environmental damage is intertwined with the forces of globalization: the current global economic order, the impact of neo-liberal policies, trade agreements, the burden of international debt and structural adjustment programmes. The impact of such policies is often not visible in places where they are developed.

While the natural limit on the earth's capacity to handle anthropogenic additions in excess of natural emissions is given, the global ceiling would be a political limit that we impose upon ourselves. If we wish to protect ourselves against the natural effects of limitless increases in anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emission, we may have no good alternative to the adoption of global ceiling. Nevertheless, the adoption of global ceiling is a political choice and we are responsible for the effects of the policies we adopt.

Equity

A political decision to adopt global ceiling in GHG emissions has implications for equity that are far more radical than so far been recognized. A serious decision to deal with the natural limit on the

¹⁷ Ernest Conradie, *Christianity and Earth keeping* (Western Cape: Sunpress, 2011), 19.

planet's capacity to dispose of GHG emissions by imposing a political limit on the emissions produced by humans totally transforms the international situation. The reason is simple: imposition of an emissions ceiling makes emissions “zero sum”. For equity, this change has powerful implications.

A total is zero-sum if more of it for anyone means less of it for everyone else. A total that is zero-sum is a total that cannot be enlarged. If there is +3 for you, there must be -3 for the rest of us; the sum is always zero: +3 and -3 are zero.

Implications

Each time that some of whatever is in question is used by someone; less of it is left for all the others. Establishing a global ceiling on GHG emissions make GHG emissions zero-sum. Since the total cannot be increased, because a ceiling has been placed on the total, each unit of emissions used up by one party will be a unit not available for use by all other parties. In this context, the definition of “zero-sum” is obvious and undeniable. Once a total is zero-sum, anyone who consumes more than his or her share harms others who share her/his thereby takes away. Overconsumption is an encroachment.¹⁸

In the consumption of anything the total of which is to be kept zero-sum, there is no such thing as “a little harmless” overindulgence. Once one has used up one's share, continuing to consume is always using someone else's share, provided only that the case is one in which there are fair share. One is doing harm to the person whose share one is consuming. Because one is depriving the other person of the only share she could have had. Overconsumption always wrongs someone once a total has become zero-sum. Overconsumption is no longer, if ever it was, a victimless time. Those for whom the supply of something important is zero-sum face the ultimate scarcity; one cannot exceed one's share

¹⁸ Shue, *Climate Justice*, 110.

without doing wrong. In a zero-sum context, other people are always affected by consumption in excess of one's own share. With the ceiling in place, a party that does not refrain from excessive emissions— meaning emissions in excess of its own fair share of the total— is far from simply not volunteering to help, inflicting harm. Using up emissions that in equity belong to another party constitutes the doing of harm to that other party.¹⁹

Biblical Resources for Africa Prosperity

The church in Africa develops her environmental ethics from the biblical resources thus the church draws her eco-theology from the creative biblical resources. When these biblical resources are employed to the letter, genuine prosperity is ensured. However, the ecological situation and the climate change and global warming in Africa have heightened strong awareness among African churches; questioning Christians' ethical responsibility to the physical environment in which we live. The church believes in the proper respect for and use of climate resources. The respectful utilization of our physical environment grows out of the church's concept of creation and our divinely appointed obligation to be good stewards of what God has given us. Both testaments of scripture support the contention that the physical universe is good and that it reflects the glory of God (Psa 19:1; 1 Tim 4:4).

The first resource is to think of the earth as “our home” created by God. This makes the earth our “oikos”, the Greek word means home or household, is the root word for both economics (oikos-nomos) which is the rules of the house and ecology which is (oikos-logos) the wisdom of the house and this provides us with an integrative vision that seeks to balance the struggle for humanization with the struggle for earth keeping.²⁰ According to Gruchy, thinking of our earth as our home,

¹⁹ Shue, *Climate Justice*, 112.

²⁰ Steve de Gruchy, "Environment and Ethics in Africa," *Media Development*, LVI, no.2 (2009): 18.

reminds us that the way we construct and structure our human economy in terms of our production, consumption and waste has to be in harmony with the ecological logic of the earth. As humans, we simply cannot afford to work against what God has set in place, and we need to find a greater harmony between our human economy and God's economy that is God's rule of the house.²¹

The second resource is to acknowledge the truth that “the world is a creation of God”. The Bible holds that God is the creator of the world and that the universe has a beginning (Gen 1:1). The church does not believe that the world emerged “ex materia” (out of matter). The church again, does not hold that the world arose “ex deo” (out of God). On the contrary, the church holds to creation, as “ex nihilo” (out of nothing). Such doctrine of creation has two implications for ecology: divine ownership and human stewardship.²²

Divine ownership

By divine ownership, the scriptures imply that the world is a possession of God, possession for God, sustained and operated by God. Christ is sustaining all things by His powerful word (Heb 1:3). God owns all the land, the trees, the animals and the minerals (Psa 50:10, 12).

Human stewardship

God commanded Adam and Eve, “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.; rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:28). Also, God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen 2:15). From the above verses, it is observed that man has three basic obligations to his environment and the church has

²¹ Steve de Gruchy, "Environment and Ethics in Africa," 18.

²² Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 322.

obligation to carry on this ecological assignment:

- To multiply and fill it
- To subdue and rule it
- To work in it and take care of it

The church is duty bound to serve and preserve the earth. The church's obligation over creation is to serve well. In the Christian sense, ecology implies good stewardship. God has entrusted the earth and its resources to our care and we must act responsibly with them. "The scripture says it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor 4:2). It is not a sign of good stewardship to increase greenhouse gas emission to cause global warming. It is also not stewardship to squander our valuable resources. The earth is God's garden and the church is its keeper. God said to Job "everything under Heaven belongs to me" (Job 41:11). We must not turn God's beautiful garden into garbage nor the atmosphere into a smoke space.

Practical Solution to Climate Change

In the employment of climate resources, the church is governed by sound reason and true religion. Divine guidance and moral restraints hold man's dominion over nature.²³ It is not the Christian worldview that encourages the abuse of nature but the materialist view. It is those who see nature's resources as unlimited and humankind as the ultimate authority in the use of them are the exploitative ones. Some humanists speak "raping nature". The church by contrast, believes that God is the owner of nature and humans are His servants. Our "dominion" is one of faithful stewardship of natural resources. We are over the natural world but we are also called to protect and preserve it. The biblical command to control nature does not mean to corrupt it. Our power over nature does not confer the rights to pollute it. On the contrary, the Christian has the responsibility to care for and keep the natural world. The church is called

²³ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 322.

to be good stewards of the land; any action that fails to faithfully care for the land will be sin. The church believes that caring for life and earth is a spiritual commitment. People and other species have the right to life unthreatened by human greed and destructiveness. The church therefore, calls on governments of the rich industrialized nations to keep the promise they made in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This call is very urgent because the world is rapidly approaching the point of “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”.²⁴ The rich nations bear the primary responsibility for causing climate change and must adapt strategies to drastically reduce their emissions. Again, the church calls on all nations that the Kyoto Protocol must be fully implemented by all those who ratified it and industrialized nations that did not ratify must meet targets at least as strict as those included in the protocol. Drastic emission reductions by the rich nations are required to ensure that the legitimate development needs of the world's poor can be met. The church in Africa believes that African countries deserve to benefit from the bounties of creation. Equitable development for all African countries is possible while maintaining the ecological integrity of the biosphere. The church in Africa is addressing the problems of climate change and global warming because it is a spiritual and ethical issue of justice, equity, solidarity sufficiency and sustainability.²⁵ The situation is critical and we must all act now by employing all the biblical resources for African development. African leaders are called upon to demonstrate genuine leadership in responding to the climate change menace in Africa.

Conclusion

From the above issues raised, if climate change impacts are drastically reduced in Africa, the rising level of the sea will not submerge the cities

²⁴ WACC, *Media Development*, 20.

²⁵ WACC, *Media Development*, 20.

and towns and African Islands, unpredicted flooding will not destroy our infrastructure that will call for huge resources to fix it. Again, flooding will not create breeding grounds for mosquitos that will increase malaria attacks, the heat waves will not cause skin diseases and high incidence of CSM, ecological dryness would not happen to dry up water bodies. Again, reduction in environmental dryness will prevent wildfires that destroy African forests and vegetation. If climate change impacts are reduced as being indicated, African countries will be on the path of progress, development and advancement and would then develop at their own pace. In applying the theological, moral and ethical resources of the church to bring about climate justice for fair treatment of all countries and freedom from discrimination with the creation of national and international laws, policies and projects that mitigate effects of climate change; and ensuring climate justice for all African countries would then enjoy prosperity and development.

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Religious and Social Relevance of *Nsuae* (Oath Swearing) in Akan Indigenous Leadership Formation

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concept of nsuae (oath swearing) in Akan indigenous leadership formation. Through qualitative and descriptive approach, it argues that Akan indigenous oath (nsuae/ntam), does not necessarily point to the divine, but inclined to a specific line of action; a pattern of moral behaviour and affirms one's commitment to duty. However, it suggests a notion of religious attachments due to the fact of ancestral connection in nsuae. The study particularly, holds that leaders are obliged to observe all the moral and religious precepts attached to the office of chief-ship, which traditional/natural leaders publicly declared when taking the rites of oath or vows.

Introduction

Oath swearing dates "back at least to the Sumerian civilization (4th-3rd millennia BC) of the ancient Middle East and to ancient Egypt."² Oaths are said to have originated from religious customs, and later extended to secular and social situations, for example to the court of law and legal matters, used in varying ways from region to region. However, it is also

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² Oath: Religious and Secular Promise. <http://www.britannica.com/topic/oath-religious-and-secular-promise>

not certain that oath was always considered a religious act. This is because, ancient peoples, such as the Germanic tribes, Greeks, Romans, and Scythians swore by their swords or other weapons, invoking a symbol of the power of war machinery as a guarantee of their trustworthiness.

K. Agyekum³ has indicated that Akan oath is not based on religion but rather, it is 'reminiscential' invoking past unpleasant events in the society. Oath is not based on religion because it seldom connects with a divine being hence, its 'reminiscential' in nature.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, oath is as a formal promise to do something. It is also a solemn promise either, (1), invoking a divine witness, to ascertain the truth of something or (2) as a commitment to future action. In the context of this study, our interest of oath would be limited to the latter definition.

This study is about the place of the administration of oath in Akan indigenous leadership, and the correlation between oaths and leadership formation. The study acknowledges the various roles that oath swearing and taking play outside leadership formation. However, this study limits itself to *nsuae* (oath) in leadership formation, and how it facilitates communal co-operation, protection and continuity in change.

The Akan

According to the Ghana National Population and Housing Census held in 2010, the Akan constitute about 47.5% of the total 24, 658, 823 Ghanaian population. Akan is composed of the Asante, Bono, Fante, Agona, Akyem, Wassa, Akuapem, Kwawu and others, including those living outside Ghana, and occupy about five out of the ten regions.⁴ The various

³ K. Agyekum, "Ntam 'Reminiscential Oath' Taboo in Akan," *Journal of Language in Society* 33, no. 3 (2004): 317-42.

⁴ P. K. Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1977.

political life, and they are identified by the Akan language and traditional political system with the traditional leader (a chief) at the centre of governance.⁵

The Concept of Oath in Akan Leadership Formation

Our ancestors [...] instituted the oath swearing systems, which, in effect, is a sort of Social Contract binding both the family offering leadership and the families forming the community to observe strictly the agreement they had accepted. The leader had jurisdiction over all the members of the community and gave political direction, led tribal armies to wars, settled disputes, administered land and did many acts for the good governance of the community.⁶

There is scanty information regarding the history and origin of Akan forms of oath. It can be inferred that the institution of oaths owe their origins and legitimacy to the Akan's religious roots. As such, we cannot overlook the indigenous religion of the people which provides the justification for oaths. Religion, morality and the organisation of the society were inextricably linked. The pre-eminence of religion as the substance that holds society together is most visibly expressed in traditional leadership institutions-the legal, social, moral... [and] authority of traditional leadership is based on the spiritual leader.⁷ Religious activities are among the deepest and the most manifested passions of Ghanaian people.⁸ Ghanaians demonstrate a religious

⁵ See J. M. Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana: A Study in Persistence and Change* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1999), 37, and K. Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012), 1.

⁶ N. A. Dankwa, *The Institution of Chieftaincy: The Future* (Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004), 72.

⁷ A. Akrong, "Religion and Traditional Leadership in Ghana," in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*, ed., I. K. Odotei and A. K. Awedoba (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006).

⁸ Atiemo Abamfo, *Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana*.

consciousness that suffuses their entire life. Most public and private events are turned into religious ones or, at least, are accompanied by some form of religious activity.⁹

Dankwa¹⁰ notes that ancestors of particular communities or families instituted the oath swearing systems, which, in effect, is a sort of 'Social Contract' binding both the family offering leadership, and the families forming the community to observe strictly the agreement they had accepted.

It should be stressed that Akan form of oath differs from that of the western type but shares some similarities. Most western oath may allude to, or have a direct divine connection; while in Akan indigenous setting, it may not necessarily point to the divine, but inclined to an incident (unexpected death, unspeakable event, etc.) involving an ancestral connection. Agyekum¹¹ has observed that Akan oath is 'reminiscential' in that; it evokes past unpleasant events in Akan society. Agyekum's view is that it refers to any experience or event that has happened to an individual, a family, or a whole nation in the past. It may have occurred during a war; or an epidemic, a plague, a famine, a tragic accident, or an unexpected death.

Oath functions as a guarantee that a statement is absolutely binding, whether it is a statement about something in the past or a declaration of intent for the future.¹² In a culture like Akan, this was until recently without writing, with no records to serve as proof and no legal documents, the binding nature of oath was of unique importance, and still is.¹³

(New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 32.

⁹ Abamfo, *Religion and the Inculturation*, 95.

¹⁰ Dankwa, *The Institution of Chieftaincy*, 72.

¹¹ Agyekum, "Ntam 'Reminiscential Oath'."

¹² Agyekum, "Ntam 'Reminiscential Oath', 320.

¹³ Agyekum, "Ntam 'Reminiscential Oath', 320.

J. M. Assimeng has observed that an oath connotes a solemn declaration, and in chieftaincy, this involves a declaration by the chief to serve his people, seek their advice, follow customs and tradition, and rule with their consent.¹⁴ In Akan indigenous expressions, *ntam*, *nsew di*, and *nsuae* are all names for oath in different usages. Generally, all the three are solemn declarations/ vows, either invoking a higher authority as a witness to statements and promises or affirming one's commitment to duty. The fundamental principle here is that it binds the speaker to remain in truth, and to go contrary to such promises may call for one's punishment or removal from office. *Nsew di* is invoking or calling on divine intervention by adherents to impress upon others their innocence when one is accused of an offence. Agyekum¹⁵ defines *ntam* as that which evokes past unpleasant 'unspeakable' events in the history of a state. It may have occurred during a war; or an epidemic, a plague, a famine, a tragic accident, or an unexpected death. While the *nsuae* (oath of allegiance) our focus is that which affirms one's commitment to duty. *Nsuae/ ntam*, is the oath of allegiance to a king, and it varies from situation to situation and from participant to participant. It can be given by a *Kurontihene* before a new chief, or a newly installed chief before a king, or a king before his subjects. On the installation of a new chief or king, the elders or sub chiefs of the state, swear an oath of allegiance to the king, who is the custodian of the state.

Results/Discussions

Oath Swearing in Akan Indigenous Leadership Formation

Among the Akan of Ghana, *nsuae* is the oath of allegiance to a king or a paramount chief and other *abrempon* and they vary depending on the situations and the community concerned. It is one of the most solemn and

¹⁴ J. M. Assimeng, "Traditional Leaders' Capability and Disposition for Democracy: The Example of Ghana" [Online document] (2008), Available at: <http://www.abibitumikasa.com/forums/php/37288-Traditional-leadership-in-Ghana>. (Accessed: 06/05/2014)

¹⁵ Agyekum, "Ntam 'Reminiscent Oath', 320.

moving rites in the installation ceremony of the Akan chief. *Nsuae* (oath) is very crucial in the installation process of the Akan indigenous leadership formation. Because until a new leader takes the oath of office, he is not considered as fully enstooled.

In Akan chieftaincy, a stool becomes vacant when a ruling chief dies, abdicates or destooled. The elders who are divisional chiefs, and lineage heads make an appeal to the queen to nominate a candidate for the position. The queen upon this note will summon members of the royal family and give them the message. In the selection process, one institution and agents that are very crucial for the selection is the family that has a direct link to the original settler or the founding ancestor of that community. In the Akan tradition, the queen is a key figure in the process to nominating a royal member as heir to the stool; in her absence, the *abusua panin* ("family head") is asked for the nomination. According to K. A. Busia, when a chief dies and a new one had to be appointed, the elders held a meeting at which the *kontihene* presided to approach the queen-mother and ask her to nominate a candidate for the stool. He further notes that: "The queen-mother then calls a meeting with all the adult men and senior women of the branches of the royal lineage. They considered the eligible candidate in turn and choose the one they thought most suitable. When they had decided on a candidate, the queen-mother is sent to inform the *kontihene*."¹⁶

When all parties involved are satisfied and a chief is nominated and installed, then comes the moment of oath swearing and enstoolment to complete the traditional chieftaincy process. During the *nsuae* moment, a chief is examined based on the 'content' of his/her oath of office. In the light of this, Dankwa recounts that, oaths swearing in the Akan indigenous context, thus becomes 'Social Contract' between traditional leaders and their people.¹⁷ He argues that the oath is not just a social

¹⁶ K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 9.

¹⁷ Dankwa, *The Institution of Chieftaincy*, 98.

contract, but also; that which facilitates good governance and political direction.

At the moment of enstoolment, the admonitions of the public are repeated to the chief either by the *ɔkyeame* or the queen. This becomes the moral precepts that a leader in Akan community is expected to observe after the ceremony of the swearing of the sacred oath, which in effect can be invoked against the chief to be destooled if he/she breaks, any of them. This means that chiefs are enstooled with such words of caution (moral precepts) in the *nsuae* ringing in their ears.

K. Gyekye¹⁸ writes that before any chief is deemed of his/her position, he/she must take an oath of office before both his/her councillors and subjects to cement the process of the installation. According to Gyekye, on that occasion, the new chief promises to rule in accordance with the laws, customs, and institutions of the town or state and that should he/she renege on the oath, stands condemned and liable to destoolment.¹⁹ Series of injunctions are publicly recited before the new chief during the ceremony of the *nsuae*, which outlines the chiefs' limitations and the wishes of the people concerning the conduct and political relationship expected of him/her and the subjects.²⁰

I. K. Odotei takes a similar view about the limitations in the content of oaths as used by chiefs.²¹ She avers that oath may also expose the leader to face judgment from the power of the ordinary citizen: "The oath of the King-designate placed him under the law and the power of the people. He

¹⁸ K. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. (Accra: Sankofa Publishers, 1996), 113.

¹⁹ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 113.

²⁰ See Busia, *The Position of the Chief*, and Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*.

²¹ I. K. Odotei, "Participating in Event," in *The King Returns: Enstoolment of Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II and the Ayikeseɛ (Great Funeral) of Otumfuo Opoku Ware II*, ed. I. K. Odotei and G. P. Hagan (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 2003), 17.

would be judged by his subjects by due process of the law if he conducted himself in a way that would bring this high office into disrepute. It was also by these oaths, that the King wielded power as supreme judge, lawmaker and supreme military commander.²²

All of the above suggests that in Akan leadership, the oaths they swear and which constantly remind traditional leaders, according to Odotei, facilitate their removal or maintenance of duty.

An Examination of the Contents of Two Akan Nsuae

Let us in the context of this study; examine the contents of two typical examples of *nsuae/ntam* among the Bono and Asante section of the Akan during an installation process. Busia has observed that on the day of *nsuae*, before the elders and all lineage heads, and the public, the *kontihene* through the *ɔkyeame* formally sent for the chief-elect... accompanied by the members of the royal lineages. The *ɔkyeame* addressed the chief-elect as:

Konti, Akwamu, Bokoro, Konton, Asere, Kyidom, Benkum, Twafɔ, Adɔnten, Nifa—all the elders say that I should give you the stool. Do not go after women. Do not become a drunkard. When we give you advice, listen to it. Do not gamble. We do not want you to disclose the origin of your subjects. We do not want you to abuse us. We do not want you to be misery; we do not want one who disregards advice; we do not want you to regard us as fools; we do not want autocratic ways.... Take the stool. We bless the stool and give it to you. The elders say they give the stool to you.²³

After the injunctions (above) have been spelled out to him, according to

²² Odotei, "Participating in Event," 17.

²³ Busia, *The Position of the Chief*, 17.

Busia, the chief-elect then holds the *afena* (ceremonial sword) and takes the oath to the elders standing before the *Krontihene* and *Akwamuhene* says: " I ask your permission to speak the forbidden oath of Thursday. I am the grandson of Anye Amoampon Tabraku, today you have elected me, if I do not govern as my ancestors who came before me, if I do not listen to the advice of my elders, if I make war upon them, if I run away from the battle; then I have violated the oath."²⁴

Another example of oath in recent times in Akan context can be seen during the installation of *Otumfoɔ* Osei Tutu II as *Asantehene* in the year 1999. He swore the *ntamkeseɛ* (the great oath) of Asante in the following Akan (Asante) words:

Osei ne Poku Nana ne me
Bonsu Nana ne me
Agyeman Nana ne me
Me wɔfa ne Kwame Kyeretwie
Opoku Ware II yɛ me nua Panin
Sɛ ɛnɛ me nua panin Opoku Ware kɔ n'akuraa, na
Kumasefoɔ adaworoma, mode ne tuo ama me,
Sɛ m'anfa anhwɛ mo so hwɛpa, amma mo amanmuo pa,
sɛdɛɛ me nananom yɛɛ a, me to Ntam Keseɛ!

(Lit, translation)

I am the great grandson of Osei and Poku
 I am the great grandson of Bonsu
 Agyeman is my great grandparent
 Kwame Kyeretwie is my uncle
 Opoku Ware II is my elder (senior) brother
 Today, if my senior brother Opoku Ware has gone to the
 village and the people of Kumasi in their wisdom have
 given me his gun
 If I do not look after you, and give you good governance
 as my ancestor did (rule), I commit the great oath!

²⁴ Busia, *The Position of the Chief*, 12.

From the foregoing (the two examples), the content of the oath of office, which Busia observed and *Otumfoɔ* Osei Tutu II swore can be examined from the following three perspectives:

Firstly, we note from the above oaths (Wenchi and Asante languages) that, the swearers revealed that they are true descendants of their great ancestors and fit for the position they have been elected; “I am the grandson of Anye Amoampon Tabraku and great grandson of Osei, Opoku, Bonsu and Agyeman, and nephew and brother to Kyeretwie and Opoku Ware” respectively. The first part reveals one's establishment of ancestral connection. Secondly, the swearer (on both occasions) identifies the occasion and the platform, and acknowledges the vacancy and his endorsement by the family and community. Thirdly, there is the moment of affirmation where they promise to follow the injunctions and observe all taboos concerning the throne. In addition, it is the moment that seals the oath and binds the swearer (social contract) to preserve all they have said and by which they could be destooled—“I have violated the oath” and “I commit the great oath” respectively.

When one follows closely the illustrations above on the contents of the oath in the Akan indigenous leadership, the chief-elect, queen, or such a leader vows to abide by the moral and religious injunctions attached to the chief-ship. The leader is then under moral and religious obligation (ancestral connection) to observe all the moral and religious precepts attach to his or her position. The leader concludes by affirming his or her moral and religious obligation to fight and to defend his or her people in times of war and declares his or her preparedness to die for his or her people in battlefield rather than to run away from the enemy. We see also in oath swearing from the above presentation that, the one who swears pledges, and commits him or herself to the truth propositions in the oath (if I do not look after you, and give you good governance as my ancestor did), and as a result, can be judged by his or her own words. This point is thrown into bold relief when Elmar Klinger writes: "In taking an oath, a person not only assumes an obligation but also becomes liable to prosecution; the state and society have an interest in his [or her] act. Oaths serve as objective guarantees of what is promised. Swearing to tell

the truth, one guarantees that what one says is true. Oaths are self-endorsing. It is a best verification of the truth."²⁵

Akan oaths also project Akan indigenous change and continuity in development. This therefore suggests the dynamic nature of Akan traditional religion as not static as being the impression given sometimes by some scholars. Different leaders may bring innovations into the traditional leadership institution. For instance, when *Otumfoɔ* Osei Tutu II, was installed as *the Asantehene*, he outlined developmental projects that needed to be taken. Such initiatives included education, health and economic development among others. Nonetheless, embracing change in indigenous leadership, the vision and values of predecessors should remain as a bedrock or foundation to build upon.

It could be deduced from the examples above, that oaths had an inherent power to bind a speaker to abide by what he or she says. An oath's force does not respect the status of the speaker in Akan societies. It has been revealed that the violation of the Akan oaths in the olden days goes beyond destoolment and may include death penalties (My informants revealed in an interview). Through the oath swearing, Akan traditional leaders subject themselves to traditional discipline, authority, checks, and become responsible leaders.

Dankwa strengthens his assertion on the Social Contract nature of the oath swearing that, the affirmation re-echoes the expectation of all the lineages, the traditional council and the kingmakers due to the fact they all exercise some sort of "conventional political authority". By this, they expect the chief, leader to govern in consultation with his/her councillors. He indicates that:

After election, the chief-elect is schooled in his duties, powers and the limitations thereto. All these are strictly

²⁵ Elmar Klinger, "Vows and Oaths," in *The encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol. 15 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 301.

defined. As if this is not enough, these duties and limitations are recited publicly at his installation. They include an admonition, never to act without the advice of his councillors and queen mother. He is made aware of the fact that the Stool or skin is always greater than he the occupier...²⁶

Following Dankwa's arguments, chiefs are exposed to the conditions and clauses that can cause their destoolment as we have seen. Thus, they show all zealotry to lead their people and abide by the provision of good governance and security during the oath swearing. K. Opuni-Frimpong has indicated that considering the names and the titles of some chiefs, one may conclude that they are 'powerful' beyond 'control' and 'checks'.²⁷ However, a close examination of Akan indigenous oath reveals that they are not all-powerful to that extent. They have limitations and parameters within which they are expected to function, contrary to what is enshrined in the oath administration would cause their termination of the Social Contract by revoking the injunctions and taboos they were expected to observe.

Religious and Social relevance of oath swearing in Akan leadership

Religious

The religion of a people is perhaps the most important aspect of their culture. What they believe governs their lives and provides their worldview. Gyekye holds that religion is all pervasive in Akan society, and it can be seen that a good deal of the communal activities and social institutions in the Akan society is inexplicably bounded up with religion. In traditional and contemporary Akan communities, as in other human

²⁶ Dankwa, *The Institution of Chieftaincy*, 16-17.

²⁷ K. Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Missions* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2012)

communities throughout the world, religion is connected with such facets as ... installation of traditional officers, inheritance, among others.²⁸ Gyekye maintains that the African look at the universe from purely religious perspective and that the people's religion is inextricably linked to their cultural identity and heritage. He also notes that; religion revolves round every aspect of African - whether it be cultivating, sowing, harvesting, eating and travelling, religion is at play. This means that when one is born into African society, he or she is born “into a culture that is intensely and pervasively religious and that means, and requires, participating in the religious beliefs and rituals of the community.”²⁹

Although, oath in Akan traditional context does not evolve directly around the divine, its allusion to ancestral veneration suggests its religious nature and significance of this work. One major factor that deserves mention in the oath-swearing period is the individual's connection to his predecessors (ancestral reverence) of the community. Thus, the ancestral presence or acknowledgement of them is an underlying factor in Akan indigenous religion. This becomes visible during the oath swearing where new leaders connect themselves to their ancestors and even pledge to follow their footsteps imply the people's reliance on higher beings in the spiritual realm. Here, when a chief-elect is revealing that he/she is a true descendant of his/her great ancestors, it makes his/her person sacred because of the stools of the ancestors they occupy.

The oath of a leader during the installation is the means by which leaders subject themselves to conditions (spiritual, moral, social). In the same way, the taboos connected with the office of leadership are meant to regulate the leader from defiling the office, which represents and links with the ancestors A. Akrong.³⁰

²⁸ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 4.

²⁹ Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, 4.

³⁰ A. Akrong, Religion and Traditional Leadership in Ghana. In Odotei, I. K. And Awedoba, A. K., (eds). *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*. (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers 2006), 196-97.

It must be acknowledged that during the oath swearing in Akan indigenous settings, *afena* (sword) and black stool are the major authority symbols that come to play. Many of the Akan symbols like the black stool symbolise a link between either the occupant or the family and their founding ancestors. In that sense, such symbols assume the sacred status, which explains various rites associated with them. In this direction, when one closely examines the activities surrounding entoolment rites, then Akan oath has an element of religiosity. Moreover, the core value of Akan oath, although not explicit, is to be God fearing, the zeal and the will to serve the people.

Social

Socially, oath swearing guarantees continuity in leadership values. We can thus consider an oath as one of the Akan oral art forms by which important socio-cultural and historical information is stored. Oath in Akan chieftaincy constitutes a powerful and interesting form of social memory and reproduction of history that draws people into a common understanding of their history. It plays an important role at the traditional politics and governance. Oaths can be considered as a system of language use among the Akan by means of ensuring social power and control over the remaining members of a group on both formal and informal occasions. When a chief swears an oath, it enjoins his/her subjects to be very meticulous about certain customs. Again, the oath swearing facilitates the framework to measure the commitment level of leaders and justify their election to such traditional leadership offices. It can also be said that this moment raises one's status to a higher position and makes one a whole and a new being because of his new office.

Conclusion

We have seen that oath is a multifunctional concept that could be used in many different situations. It has stood the test of time, irrespective of modernisation, and the influx of foreign religions. The functions and the importance of oath revealed that it as an indispensable socio-cultural event that will continue to thrive in Akan communities. Contents of oath

in the Akan indigenous leadership formation, reveal that indigenous leaders vow to abide by the moral and religious precepts attached to the office of chieftaincy.

The importance of the oath in Akan traditional leadership provides a social contract, which gives indigenous political direction, established between the new leader and the community on the day of the *nsuae*. Oath swearing is a very important rite in the installation process of the Akan chieftaincy - until a new leader takes the oath of office, he/she is not properly considered as having the power to rule the people. Akan oath as we have seen has two main angles from which one can look at it; there is an oath of allegiance (*nsuae/ ntam ka*) which has no direct connection with the divine rather, it alludes to any unspeakable event of the past, and *Nsew di* (oath) which depends solely on the divine intervention.

Another point that needs to be addressed is that, Akan traditional oaths, especially, the *nsuae/ ntam ka* (oath swearing) is purely a cultural act and has no direct religious connotations, which therefore cannot affect Christian principles if observed.

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BOOK REVIEW

A Study of Pastoral Care of the Elderly in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Approach with a Focus on Ghana, by Samuel Ayete-Nyampong. Britain,UK/Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2014, 279 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4969-8909-3 (sc); ISBN: 978-1-4969-8910-9 (e). Price £12.95.

Reviewed by Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor.

A Study of Pastoral Care of the Elderly in Africa addresses the problems of aging in Africa – a subject for discussion, research and social policy in many developed and developing countries – using Ghana as a case study from a Christian pastoral care perspective. The book proposes a communal pastoral care model for elderly persons in Africa.

Samuel Ayete-Nyamong (PhD) is a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), and Clerk of the General Assembly Office of PCG. His interest in pastoral care of the elderly aroused during the early years of his ministerial career, when he had to visit many elderly people, coupled with the care for his elderly parents, challenged and inspired him to write this book.

The thesis of the book is that: the church in African can develop relevant pastoral care programmes, informed by pastoral and gerontological theories and insights gleaned from the experiences of some "partner" churches involved in pastoral care of the elderly in other continents. Any methodology of pastoral care "imported" from any Western culture, ought to be contextualized to establish its relevance in addressing African pastoral and gerontological problems. Contextualization of pastoral care should take into consideration the religious ontology and worldview of traditional society, the sense of community which the African society upholds, and the contemporary socio-economic situation in Africa (p. 7).

The author uses his study of churches in Britain (pp. 98-132) and gives a critique of the British welfare system, which he says is influenced by '

'political initiatives' rather than "public consensus" (p. 134) and as such affects the "welfare system which the elderly rely on for survival" (p. 135).

He compares the socio-economic situation in Britain with that of Ghana's in which in Britain only 13% of persons over 65 years receive income from work and 100% from pension welfare, and in Ghana which has a higher family dependency ratio, where only a smaller percentage of elderly persons receive pensions. He finds that there is a provision of care in Britain where hospital provision is made for elderly patients in geriatric medicine and general surgery, and in Ghana where there is no geriatric hospital treatment for elderly persons except general medical provision (pp. 142-43); in the case of Ghana the author says hospital treatment is supplemented by some congregations organizing annual "gift giving" to the elderly members and the infirm. The author proposes that organized communal approach should form the basis for pastoral care for elderly people in Ghana (p. 145).

Dr. Ayete-Nyampong supports his proposal with the fact that Ghana, unlike Britain, is a religious country, and religiosity is a major factor in wellbeing and social functionality. Thus any attempt to "contextualize a programme of care should take into consideration this socio-religious characteristic because religion can be a contact point between various communities" (p. 146).

The author adopts with some modifications, the programme structure of Pastoral Gerontology (Pastoral Care for the Ageing) of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies based in Australia, and proposes that ageing which is "multidimensional reality" and as such requires an interdisciplinary approach for its study (p. 237). The content of such a study in Ghana and Africa should include discussions on the traditional and chronological perspectives on ageing. Also, on the theoretical concept of ageing, psychological, sociological and biological, with a focus on problems and needs of adults in society – physical, psychological, mental health, and socio-economic; effective methodologies, techniques and

therapeutic procedures in dealing with some of the problems associated with ageing – crisis intervention, practical assistance, advocacy, supervision and evaluation (pp. 235-46).

The book is a valuable resource for capacity building in the area of pastoral care for elderly persons. It is a useful text not only for ministers in training and practice, but also for all who have a passion for giving support to the ageing in Ghana and Africa.

The strength of this book lies in the fact that it provides a curriculum for training and re-training for both ministers and lay people on how to provide pastoral care for the elderly particularly in Ghana, and Africa in general, using a communal approach. Its weakness however, is that, its content is similar to *Pastoral Care of the Elderly in Africa: A Comparative and Cross-Cultural Study*, (Accra: Step Publishers, 2008) by the same author, which he unfortunately does not make reference to.

The book does not address the issue about pastoral care for ageing persons with disabilities. This is an omission. Since the goal of pastoral care of the ageing is to help them maintain their spirituality whilst they age, consideration of the following works would have improved the quality of the book:

- Jewell, *Spirituality and Well-being*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004.
- D. Jolley et. al. “Spirituality and Faith in Dementia,” *Dementia*, 9, no.3 (2010): 311-25.
- D. A. Linberg. “Integrative Review of Research Related to Meditation, Spirituality, and the Elderly, *Geriatric Nursing* 26, no.6 (2005): 372-77.
- A. E. Molzahn. “Spirituality in Later Life: Effects on Quality of Life.” *Journal of Gerontological Nursing* 33, no.1 (2007): 32-39.
- L. P. Gwyther. Spirituality and Caring for Older Family Members.” *Southern Medical Journal* 99, no.10 (2006): 1106-07.

- C. Trevitt, E. Mackinlay. “Just because I can't remember...!: religiousness in older people with dementia.” *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 16, nos. 3-4 (2004): 109-21.
- H. R. Moody. *Religion, Spirituality and Aging: A Social Work Perspective*. Bringhamton, NY: Haworth Social Work Practice Press, 2005.

Ageing is a reality which cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Everyone is ageing slowly. The author has succeeded in constructing a communal pastoral care model for the care of elderly persons in Ghana and Africa. I recommend this book to the Christian laity interested and passionate about the care of the elderly, and to itinerant ministers, and those in training, whose call to service includes providing pastoral care not only for children, youth and young adults but for the elderly as well.