

**CARING FOR AKAN MARRIAGES: A CRITIQUE OF THE APPROACH TO THE  
PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY SELECTED CHRISTIAN  
ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA**

by

**JOHN ABEDU QUASHIE**

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School of Historical Studies  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the problem of inadequate pastoral care of marriages among the Akan and the inappropriate theology of marriage underlying such pastoral care. It evaluates the theology and the pastoral care of marriages by three organisations in Ghana: the FLGID, FEM and CCFR, in an attempt to investigate whether they take into account the contemporary Akan context that is characterised by tension between tradition and change.

It is concluded that even though these organisations take into account certain aspects of the context, they fail to take into account certain other aspects that are very important. Even when aspects of the context are appreciated, there is often the failure to appropriate such appreciation into pastoral practice due to lack of adequate models of care and counselling. Furthermore, as a result of the use of a translational model of contextualisation, the organisations operate with a theology of marriage that has been transferred from the West without critically examining it to see whether it is applicable to the Akan context.

As a result of the evaluation, re-villaging and family therapy are proposed as appropriate models for care and counselling and the implications of such proposals with respect to the care of marriages among the Akan and the training of carers are discussed.

## **DEDICATION**

To the glory of God, this thesis is dedicated to Aba Bondziwa, Paa Kwesi Ayadae, Paa Kojo Budu and Maame Aba Kwegyirba, and our extended families with whom I continue to learn and make sense of marriage and family life in my context.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A popular Akan gospel chorus goes: "*Sɛ biribi wo aseda ekyir a anka wo na me de ma wo*" (If there were something beyond thanks I would have offered it to you, God.) This chorus sums up my thoughts and feelings at the end of this study. I have come thus far just by the grace of God and if there were something beyond thanks I would have offered it to God.

But God always demonstrates His grace through people. Many organisations and individuals have been channels of blessing to me. With sponsorship from the World Church Office of the British Methodist Church, the Methodist Church, Ghana offered me this opportunity to study. To both of these churches, I express my gratitude, especially to the Most Rev. Dr. Samuel K. Asante-Antwi, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, Ghana, and to Jane Cullen, the scholarship co-ordinator of the British Methodist Church.

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For a person so much excited about family life, living in a different country away from family can be very stressful. I was able to maintain my sanity in such a situation with the support, friendship and fellowship of fellow students and scholars at the United College of Ascension where I lived during my three year stay in Britain. Fellow Ghanaian students and residents in

Birmingham, Milton Keynes and London also played an important role in offering me emotional support. I thank them all very much.

Finally I wish to express my deepest appreciation for the prayerful and varied forms of support and encouragement from my mother, Maame Adjoa Buduwa, my siblings, my in-laws and my numerous friends. But above all, Aba Bondziwa had to play the role of both mother and father when I had to become an absentee father staying thousands of miles away from home. The kids also bore with the pain of my absence and I really appreciate them. Aba, Paa Kwesi, Paa Kojo and Maame Aba, *mema hom ayekoo. Mbo na edwuma.*

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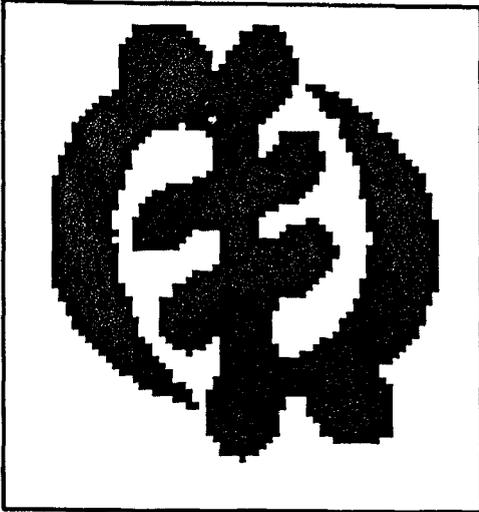
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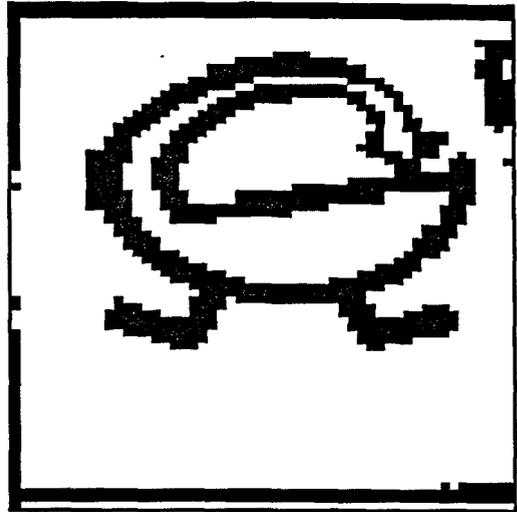


## SOME ADINKRA SYMBOLS

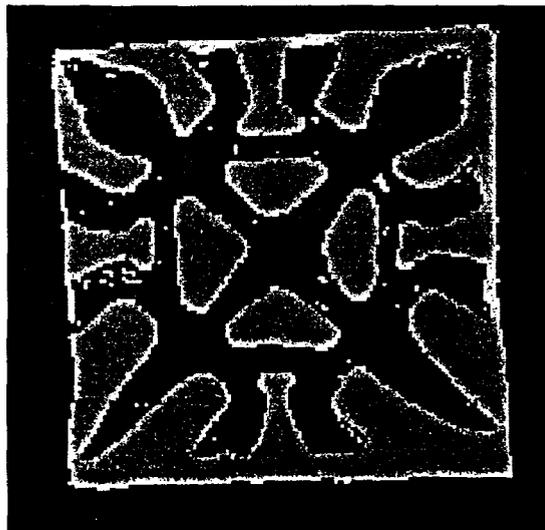
**GYE NYAME**



**SANKOFA**



**FUNTUMFRAFO**



The *Gye Nyame* and *Sankofa* symbols are adapted from Ansa, K. A. *Meanings of Symbols in Adinkra Cloth* (<http://users.erols.com/kemet/adinkra.htm>, 12/04/02), pp. 1-2.  
The *Funtumfrafo* symbol is adapted from Aid to Artisans, *The Adinkra Story* (<http://www.ontheline.org.uk/schools/adinkra/adinkr13.htm>, 24/10/01), p.1.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All-Africa Conference of Churches
AAPSC	African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling
BSPG	Bible Study and Prayer Group
CCFR	Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CCMFL	Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life
DPC	Department of Pastoral Care
FEM	Family Enrichment Ministry
FLGID	Family Life and Gender Issues Division
GEC	Ghana Evangelism Committee
ICGC	International Central Gospel Church
MPRP	Methodist Prayer and Renewal Programme
NCS	National Catholic Secretariat
PCG	Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PNDC	Peoples National Defence Council
PPAG	Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana
SU	Scripture Union
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
WCC	World Council of Churches

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. *PREAMBLE***

This introductory chapter discusses the problem of the inadequacy of the pastoral care of marriage offered to the Akan, which this study seeks to address. Literature on the relationship between Christian marriage and African culture as well as theological and pastoral responses in the changing society is reviewed. A statement of the significance of the study in relation to the problem and how it adds to the body of knowledge is presented and the methodology adopted for the study is discussed. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the thesis.

#### **2. *STATEMENT OF PROBLEM***

The contemporary Akan context is characterised by tension between tradition and change. What model of marriage should be adopted that will recognise the ethos of the context and also be true to Christian teachings on marriage? What approach to the pastoral care of marriage should be adopted in the light of close contact of cultures in the present day? What Christian theology of marriage should underlie pastoral practice in the context? And how can we better apply the insights of theological and psychological research in the care of marriages? This research provides case studies of three Christian organisations in Ghana and

reflects on these questions.<sup>1</sup> It evaluates the approaches of the organisations to the pastoral care of marriages among the Akan. It also evaluates the theology of marriage that underlies such pastoral practice. The evaluation shows that the theology and approaches to the pastoral care of marriages by the organisations are inadequate. The study therefore seeks to suggest a theology of marriage and models of care and counselling that are appropriate for the contemporary Akan context.

In the last few decades, African nationalism led to the creation of many independent African states south of the Sahara. One consequence of this nationalism, which caused Africans to seek and achieve independence from their colonial masters, was that it spurred African theologians to articulate an authentically African Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> The theological expression of “African-ness” has variously been described as indigenisation, inculturation, or contextualisation. Both Western and African theologians of note have engaged in this theological expression and their contributions are contained in a number of books, reviews and journals.<sup>3</sup>

Such theological expressions are a response to traditional Western missionary approaches that regarded almost everything African as ‘evil’ and sought to replace it with a Western way of

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<sup>1</sup> These organisations are the Family Life and Gender Issues Division of the Christian Council of Ghana, the Family Enrichment Programme of the International Central Gospel Church and the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal.

<sup>2</sup> J. Parratt, “Introduction” in J. Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (London: SPCK, rev. ed., 1997), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology has a journal in which these issues are discussed in an academic manner. The name of the journal is *Journal of African Christian Thought*. See also the following books. R. Gibellini (Ed.) *Paths of African Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994). This book contains a number of articles on contextualisation written by noted theologians like J. Mbiti, Jean-Marc Ela, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and others. Other books include J. S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology* (Nashville/ Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1979); K. Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992); J. Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. This book has contributions from Harry Sawyerr, John Pobee, Desmond Tutu, Kwesi Dickson, Julius Nyerere, Tite Tienou, among others.

life. Tite Tienou refers to this as the bulldozer ethos of not only colonialism but also of Western missions.<sup>4</sup> “Like a bulldozer, missions tend to level other traditions, so that the construction workers may erect buildings in ‘international style’ on the new sites.”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps, in no area of life has this missionary approach to replace what is African with what is Western been more pronounced than in marriage. At the request of the Natal Missionary Conference, Shropshire undertook a research of the Bantu family, which was having serious disruptions, occasioned by social and economic forces. The report of the research was published in 1946<sup>6</sup>. In the course of the research he met some Europeans who were opposed to the registration of Bantu marriages. One of them remarked that “Civil or Christian marriage was ... the most satisfactory solution. It would be fatal to acknowledge their traditional marriage system at this stage of their advancement.”<sup>7</sup>

This remark, though specifically made about the Bantu, demonstrates the general attitude of early missionaries towards marriage in Africa. A clear distinction was made between Civil and Christian marriage on one hand and traditional or customary marriage on the other. It also seems as if Akan (African) Christians have generally come to accept without question the notion that it would indeed be fatal or disastrous to acknowledge customary marriage. This has had certain unfavourable implications for church life in Africa generally and among the Akan of Ghana in particular. The use of church (Western form) marriage as a criterion for accepting people into leadership positions in the church and the refusal of polygynists to participate in the Eucharist are well documented.<sup>8</sup> In the Methodist Church in Ghana, for

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<sup>4</sup> Tite Tienou, “Authentic African Christianity” in John Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> D. W. T. Shropshire, *Primitive Marriage and European Law* (London/ Johannesburg/ Salisbury: SPCK, 1946).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> At the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910, it was reported on the conditions of membership that, “every mission in our review refuses admission to the Church in Africa to any man who is actually living with more than one wife”. See World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission II: The*

example, the official policy remains that those whose marriages have not been blessed in church cannot be accepted for leadership.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, polygynists are not permitted to participate in the Eucharist.

One would have thought that with the recent interest in contextualisation, the situation would change. However, it seems that the expression 'African Theology' has become a mere slogan having little meaning.<sup>10</sup> The institution of marriage seems to be more "Westernised" than before. The philosophy of individualism rather than communalism seems to be the major influence in discussions about marriage. Marriage among the Akan (Africans) is regarded more and more by many as a private institution, just as in the West, where, it is argued, that 'selfishness' and 'exclusiveness' are not just undertones but the very heart and soul of marriage.<sup>11</sup> The irony is that while the social nature of marriage is gradually being relegated to the background, the concept of the extended family and its influence on the lives of people is still very strong. Kitembo, Magesa and Shorter argue that, "The disappearance of the family community has frequently been predicted by observers of modern Africa, but although it has undergone severe strain, the family community still continues to operate in one way or the other."<sup>12</sup>

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*Church in the Mission Field* (Edinburgh/London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier & New York/ Chicago/ Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), p. 70. Hastings feels that "the church has become increasingly bogged down in an unimaginative preoccupation with law and its enforcement through exclusion from communion, so that it is coming to a state where, to put it strongly, in many places, the church is in the process of excommunicating itself." See A. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1973), pp. 59-60. See also B. Kitembo, L. Magesa & A. Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London/ Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> Not an official meeting of the church is held without requests from ministers to people with leadership potential to try to 'formalise' their marriage by blessing it in church.

<sup>10</sup> K. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd & Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in A. L. James and K. Wilson, *Couples, Conflicts and Change: Social Work and Marital Relationships* (London/ New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Kitembo et al. *African Christian Marriage*, p. 203.

Furthermore, lack of proper contextualisation has led to the duplication of the marriage ceremony for many couples. They have to have the customary marriage in the family house as well as the church marriage if they wish to qualify as full members of the church and are to take up leadership in it.<sup>13</sup> The financial burden this puts on young couples cannot be overemphasised. Such financial burden becomes all the more serious when globalisation continues to impact negatively on the economic life of many young adults in Ghana.

One wonders how the individualistic model of marriage can survive in a society with strong familial ties. All it can lead to is to cause Akan (African) Christians to suffer from what Desmond Tutu calls 'religious schizophrenia,' a state of struggle between their Christianity and their African-ness.<sup>14</sup> The idea of contextualisation, it seems to me, has become for the most part an 'empty academic exercise' as far as marriage is concerned. The observation Hastings made almost three decades ago seems valid today. It is clear that all of the old questions remain very much with us, despite a formidable heap of literature.<sup>15</sup>

This state of affairs can be accounted for by two main factors. First, there is the implicit assumption that everything Akan (African) is not good enough and has to be replaced with a Western counterpart. Bevans asserts that "Colonialism fostered a feeling among those who were colonised that anything really good and worthwhile originated in the colonising country, and what was in the colony was sketchy, of poor quality, only an imitation of the real thing."<sup>16</sup>

This assertion is true with respect to many aspects of African life. For example, some local manufacturers stamp their products with Western labels to make them look as if they are

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<sup>13</sup> The duplication of marriage has been noted by Kisémbó et al who refer to the church marriage as "a *post factum*" or "patching up". See Kisémbó et al, *African Christian Marriage*, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> See Parratt, "Introduction" p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> S. B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll/ New York: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 6.

imported from the West because it is in so doing that the products will be accepted to be of good quality. The attitude of the church with respect to marriage is not very different from this attitude of manufacturers. Customary marriage seems to be regarded as inferior. For it to be accepted as of good quality, it has to be stamped with Western marriage forms cloaked in Christianity. The comparison between the manufacturer's product and marriage is striking. There is first the need for the local product, without which the Western stamp is not possible. In the same way, there is the need for the customary marriage, without which the stamp of the supposedly Christian marriage is not possible.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, there is a tendency for Christians to separate theory from practice. Those involved in the theological and theoretical reflection on marriage are far removed from those who are on the ground dealing with the reality of marriage itself. In Ghana, for example, the inability to apply theological reflections has led to the confusion of customary marriage with the Western idea of engagement. For theory and practice to meet, the caution of Gehman that contextualising theology is not primarily an academic exercise by individuals but rather an exercise belonging to the community should be heeded.<sup>18</sup> It seems to me that there is no mutual listening between the professionals and the non-technically trained people who are all concerned about marriage, thus creating the gap between theory and practice.

Attempts to deal with the negative influence of modernisation have also proved unsuccessful. There is the tendency to defend traditional practices uncritically, a tendency which the people

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<sup>17</sup> To the best of my knowledge, there is no church in Ghana that conducts the church wedding without the customary rites being performed.

<sup>18</sup> Gehman notes that "Truly contextualised theology cannot be done by theologians in Geneva or Rome. Nor can it be done by men whose minds are immersed with Western categories of thought, and Western philosophies." See R. J. Gehman, "Guidelines in Contextualisation," *East African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, vol. 2 no. 1, 1983, p. 33. Bevans makes a similar observation and argues that "Theology must be an activity of dialogue

in the context themselves resent.<sup>19</sup> This uncritical defence is seen for example in the manner in which some theologians, both Western and African, argue that polygyny is the highest form of marriage every African male aspires to have.<sup>20</sup> This argument seems to derive from an uncritical examination of African culture and sometimes reflects a wholesale acceptance of certain aspects of African culture. But as Tite Tienou observes, “Christianity is doomed in the long term if it allows itself to be imprisoned either in Westernisation or in indigenous cultures and religions.”<sup>21</sup>

There is the further assumption that culture is static in many of the attempts to contextualise theology. The implication of this assumption is that people should go back to old traditional practices. However many Akan (African) Christians have consciously and deliberately left those traditional practices not because of the condemnation of those practices by Western missionaries but because they themselves consider those practices to be either inhuman or irrelevant for today. To ask them to go back to those practices seems to be an affront to them. It is for this reason that many Akan (African) Christians resent the idea of *Sankofa*.<sup>22</sup> For example, Akan (African) Christians do not think it is wise for anyone to encourage couples to go back to the times when having ten children was regarded as beneficial to a couple.<sup>23</sup> Pobee calls the static culture a fossil culture, which does not exist today except in some people’s

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between ‘faith-ful’ but not technically trained people and ‘faith-ful’ and listening professionals.” See Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> I. A. Phiri gives the example of the total condemnation or uncritical defence of girl’s initiation rites. See I. A. Phiri, “Doing Theology as African Women” in J. Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> For example see E. Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> Tite Tienou, “Authentic African Christianity” p. 92.

<sup>22</sup> *Sankofa* is an adinkra symbol of a bird, which has turned the head backwards. It means to go back for what one has left behind. It is a term being used these days to refer to the revival of traditional culture. See p.xvii.

<sup>23</sup> At my wedding, I was privileged to have this wise counsel from Revd. Dr. Agbeti. He said, “when I was going to marry, I wanted to have ten children. I ended up with six. If it were today, I would have three.” Rev. Dr. Agbeti was my former lecturer in Church History and later my District chairman at the Cape Coast District of the Methodist Church, Ghana.

romantic fantasies.<sup>24</sup> The caution of Parratt is timely in this respect. "Care will need to be taken not simply to attempt to resuscitate traditional practices which have largely been abandoned..."<sup>25</sup>

What makes the present situation even more problematic is the fact that scholars in the West have begun to point out the weaknesses of the view of marriage as a private institution, referred to variously as romantic or companionate marriage.<sup>26</sup> There is now a move in the West to promote marriage not only as a private enterprise, but also as a public commitment, not only as an individual but also a social good, and not only as an interpersonal but also a familial, legal, economic, and potentially parental experience.<sup>27</sup> It is in the light of the above that one recognises the need to examine the theology and approaches to the pastoral care of marriages in order to investigate whether they are appropriate for the contemporary Akan context.

### **3. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

In this section literature related to the area of concern of this study is reviewed. Literature that describes customary Akan marriage and family life and seeks to make a distinction between it and that of the West is reviewed. Literature on the changing nature of Akan marriage is also reviewed. In this the effect of the imposition of English law and missionary activity on customary marriage as well as the effect of modernisation and socio-economic factors are

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<sup>24</sup> Pobe, *Toward an African Theology*, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> J. Parratt, "Current Issues in African Theology" in J. Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup> A. Thatcher, *Marriage After Modernity: Christian Marriage in Postmodern Times* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> J. Wall, "The Marriage Education Movement: A Theological Analysis," (Unpublished Paper presented at The International Marriage Conference at The College of St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth, June 26-29, 2000).

considered. Finally, literature on the relationship between customary and Christian marriages and that related to the care of marriage in the Akan (African) context is reviewed.

Sarbah,<sup>28</sup> Danquah,<sup>29</sup> Rattray,<sup>30</sup> Fortes<sup>31</sup> and relatively recently Hayford<sup>32</sup> and Sarpong<sup>33</sup> have described the nature, purpose and process of customary Akan marriage. Fortes, for example, makes the important point that customary marriage rites are legally binding. However, he fails to appreciate that support to parents-in-law is mutual rather than only from the married couple to their in-laws. Important differences are noted between marriage and family life among the Akan and that of the West. Sarbah and Danquah, writing from a legal point of view, observe differences in the structure of Akan society, based on which direct application of the English law of marriage is not helpful. For example Sarbah, whose work was first published in 1897, makes an observation that from the English law point of view, a man's family is that of his father and pedigree is generally traced in the male line but the converse is true of the Akan.<sup>34</sup> It is also observed that unlike English marriage, the Akan wife is independent of her husband.<sup>35</sup> It is further argued that the Akan law of marriage is a physical one and not a

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<sup>28</sup> J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law: A Brief Introduction to the Principles of Native Laws and Customs of the Fanti and Akan Districts of the Gold Coast*, (London: Frank Case and Co. Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1968).

<sup>29</sup> J. B. Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs and the Akim Abuakwa Constitution* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1928).

<sup>30</sup> R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/ Clarendon Press, 1929)

<sup>31</sup> M. Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti" in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown & D. Forde (Eds.) *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London/ New York/ Toronto: Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> Imp., 1956), p. 252-284.

<sup>32</sup> M. C. Hayford, "The African Marriage Institution of the Gold Coast – Should it be Recognised by the Church?" in J. O. Longley (Ed.) *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa* (Article located in the Harold Turner Collection at the Orchard Learning Resource Centre, the University of Birmingham)

<sup>33</sup> P. Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974).

<sup>34</sup> Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>35</sup> See Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 153, and Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p. 22.

'spiritual' one, that marriage is a contract and not a sacrament,<sup>36</sup> and that family life among the Akan, however close, is not exclusive but communistic.<sup>37</sup>

Not only has the literature identified such important differences but also it has helped to clear certain misconceptions and misunderstandings about Akan marriage. It has helped to clear the misconceptions that there is an element of sale<sup>38</sup> and there is no love<sup>39</sup> in Akan marriage. Hayford tries to clear the misconception that young people are forced to marry the choice of their parents. He argues that parents mainly have to give their consent to the choice of their child and that there are structures put in place to check the refusal of consent without justification.<sup>40</sup>

The general view among scholars is that there is tension between continuity and change in marriage and family life in Ghana. Hannigan,<sup>41</sup> Armah<sup>42</sup> and Opoku,<sup>43</sup> from a legal point of view, investigated the influence of English Law on Ghanaian customary law. Hannigan observes that the development of law on the English system in the Gold Coast (Ghana) is not satisfactory and that the only practical alternative is a statutory code on native custom.<sup>44</sup> Both Opoku and Armah argue that there is a certain amount of reception of English law. However

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<sup>36</sup> Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 153.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155. See also Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 145. See also J. B. Danquah, *Cases in Akan Law: Decisions Delivered by the Honourable Nana Sir Ofori Atta* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1928), p. xxvii.; M. A. Oduyoye, "Feminist Theology in African Perspective" in R. Gibellini (Ed.) *Paths of African Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 168.

<sup>39</sup> Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 146., and M. Manoukian, *Western Africa: Part 1: Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples* (London: International African Institute, 1950, Reprinted 1964), p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Hayford, "The African Marriage Institution ...", pp. 129-130.

<sup>41</sup> J. J. Hannigan, "The Impact of English Law upon the Existing Gold Coast Custom and the Possible Development of the Resulting System", *Journal of African Administration*, vol. VIII, no. 3, July 1956, pp. 126-132.

<sup>42</sup> J. E. Armah, *The Influence of English Law on Ghanaian Marriage* (LLM Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1982).

<sup>43</sup> K. Opoku, *The Law of Marriage in Ghana: A Study in Legal Pluralism* (Frankfurt am Main: Alfred Metzner Verlag GmbH, 1976).

<sup>44</sup> Hannigan, "The Impact of English Law...", p. 132.

there is no appreciable evidence of change<sup>45</sup> and social practices prevail over legal norms, suggesting preference for the traditional institution and its functions.<sup>46</sup>

Important studies in the area of the changing nature of marriage also include the edited work of Christine Opong, which basically consists of papers presented at the interdisciplinary family research seminars held at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana in February 1971.<sup>47</sup> In a further examination of marital continuity and change among educated urban migrants of the Akan, Opong found that there was a move towards closeness of the nuclear family.<sup>48</sup> The two fairly recent edited works by E. Ardayfio-Schandorf<sup>49</sup> draw attention to the fact that the move towards the emphasis on the nuclear family is partly due to the influence of socio-economic factors, especially globalisation, on marriage.<sup>50</sup> The move towards the nuclear family is noted to be the effect as well as the cause of changes. While Opong<sup>51</sup> sees it as mainly the result of education and not as a result of the influence of Christianity and culture contact, Nukunya<sup>52</sup> sees it as the cause of the gradual erosion of community support. It is noted that change leads to increasing instability in marriage,<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Armah, *The Influence of English Law*, p. 254

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>47</sup> C. Opong (Ed.) *Domestic Rites and Duties in Southern Ghana*, Legon Family Research Papers no. 1 (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1974)

<sup>48</sup> This study has been published twice with different titles. See C. Opong, *Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants* (London/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) and C. Opong, *Middle Class African Marriage: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants* (London/ Boston/ Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981)

<sup>49</sup> See E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *Family and Development in Ghana: Proceedings of the International Training and Research Workshop held at the University of Ghana, Legon on 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> December 1992* (Legon: Ghana Universities Press, 1994) and E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *The Changing Family In Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1996)

<sup>50</sup> See E. Ardayfio-Schandorf, "Introduction" in E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *Family and Development in Ghana*, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> For example Opong observed more marked changes among third generation-educated people than among first generation-educated people. See Opong, *Middle Class African Marriage*, p. 150. See Also P. C. Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change* (Middlesex/ Maryland/ Victoria/ Ontario/ Auckland: Penguin Books Ltd., 1975)

<sup>52</sup> He notes that the move towards the isolation of the nuclear family has led to the gradual erosion of community support and attributes it to the fact that couples find such support unnecessary. See G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change: The Case of the Family* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1992, Reprinted 1996), pp. 18-20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

however the removal of sanctions and not the erosion of community support is argued to be the cause of instability.<sup>54</sup> Oppong draws attention to the tension between continuity and change making note of resilient traditions and also to the particular vulnerability of marriages in matrilineal societies to conflicts resulting from change.<sup>55</sup>

Among those who have clearly demonstrated the influence of Christianity on marriage in Ghana are Poh<sup>56</sup> and Nukunya.<sup>57</sup> Poh specifically investigated the Basel missionary influence upon aspects of marriage and family life among the South-eastern Akan and concluded that customary practices remained unchanged. These studies help to appreciate the trend with respect to changes in Akan marriage. They all point to the fact that while certain changes have occurred traditional practices are still in existence.

In the light of the influence of Christianity on traditional cultures of Africa, the nature of the relationship between Christian marriage and customary marriage has been a bone of contention for several years. At the insistence of the Churches in the Gold Coast,<sup>58</sup> the African delegates at the Second World Assembly at Tambaram, Madras, in December 1938 prevailed upon the International Missionary Council to research into the attitude of the Christian Church towards polygamy.<sup>59</sup> The report of the research was published in 1953 edited by A. Phillips<sup>60</sup> and written by Phillips, Lucy Mair and Lyndon Harris. The overall judgement of the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage*, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> K. Poh, "Church and Change in Akuapem" in Christine Oppong (Ed.) *Domestic Rites and Duties in Southern Ghana*.

<sup>57</sup> G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1992) and, G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change: The Case of the Family*.

<sup>58</sup> The Gold Coast is the former name of present day Ghana.

<sup>59</sup> The research was delayed because of the Second World War.

<sup>60</sup> A. Phillips, "An Introductory Essay" in A. Phillips (Ed.) *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* (London/New York/ Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1953)

editor was that there was a fundamental incompatibility between customary marriage and Christian marriage.<sup>61</sup>

Later researches conducted in Africa tended to offer a different judgement. Hastings envisioned the compatibility of customary marriage and Christian marriage.<sup>62</sup> He notes that almost everywhere, the vast majority of church marriages have been either preceded or followed by a customary marriage, at least the transference of bride-wealth and other gifts.<sup>63</sup> Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter also argue that it is theologically incorrect to distinguish between natural marriages and sacramental marriages since every marriage, if it is a marriage, is a sacramental one.<sup>64</sup> They envisage practical problems in persuading Christians to convert their marriages from natural ones into sacramental ones.

Hayford,<sup>65</sup> writing about the Fante, argues that in no two countries are the marriage and divorce laws precisely alike. He argues that even in the United Kingdom, the English law of divorce is different from the Scottish.<sup>66</sup> Divergent laws prevail also in America. He sees England and the USA in some respects as the most advanced nations in the world and argues that even in these countries which have the most in common, there are differences in marriage laws. Yet, "with all the differences noticeable in their laws relating to marriage and divorce,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. xxxii.

<sup>62</sup> This research was conducted at the request of the conference of archbishops of the Anglican Church held in Lusaka, Zambia. The report was published in 1973. See A. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>64</sup> See B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London/ Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), pp. 16-20. This book is the final report of a five-year programme of research into the sociology and theology of marriage, known as The Churches' Research on Marriage in Africa (CROMIA). The research was undertaken in eight countries in East, Central and Southern Africa.

<sup>65</sup> M. C. Hayford, "The African Marriage institution of the Gold Coast – Should it be Recognised by the Church?"

<sup>66</sup> At the time Hayford wrote he noted that the Scottish held desertion alone as a justifiable ground for divorce. In England it was only a ground for judicial separation. The Scottish law placed a husband and wife on equal footing, but the English did not.

there are married men and women who are Christians, and who are worthy of the name, although they are married by national laws which do not in every particular aspect correspond with the law of the New Testament.”<sup>67</sup> Hayford therefore rejects the compulsion of converts to marry by any foreign law, whether English, Scottish, Australian or whatever. He sees the imposition of the English law of marriage on the Fante as inappropriate. He hopes for a Christian rite of marriage that affords the “contracting parties” the opportunity of having the Divine Blessing invoked on their union, which is contracted by whatever national and recognised law such as that of the Gold Coast, and of receiving Christian instruction in connection therewith.

It is argued that additional church marriage rites after the customary marriage rites have been performed are unnecessary.<sup>68</sup> The additional rites arise from the fact that “the doctrinal teaching required does not seem to have been provided.”<sup>69</sup> As part of the ‘Rapid Social Change’ study sponsored by the World Council of Churches, Busia organised a conference of Christian leaders, both lay and clergy, in Ghana in 1959.<sup>70</sup> He argued that the church needed to be questioned whether converts from an alien culture had been given adequate instruction as to what the Christian faith has to say about life as a whole – about nature, man, society and God; about the universe and the meaning of life. Even though Busia’s work is not specifically related to marriage it has implications for Christian marriage in Africa. It draws attention to the need for education on what Christian marriage ought to be. The equation of church marriage and Christian marriage has also been noted to be inappropriate. Thomas and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>68</sup> Mbiti argues that such additional marriage rites are not necessary “since marriage is valid in the sight of God whether the wedding ceremony is conducted by the Church or according to other accepted and legal practice.”

See J. S. Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1973), p. 95.

<sup>69</sup> K. A. Busia, “Has the Christian Faith Been Adequately Represented?”, *International Review of Missions*, vol.50, 1961, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

Chisanga, who conducted a study of church marriage in Kitwe, Zambia, see the equation as simply “folly.”<sup>71</sup>

It is argued that marriage should be seen both as a sacrament and as a covenant.<sup>72</sup> These two views of marriage demonstrate on the one hand the social or public nature of marriage, and on the other, the private nature of marriage. Thus marriage involves personal relationships as well as relationships in community. These views of marriage must be held in tension if one is to be able to effectively respond to marriage issues in Africa. It is also observed that in responding to marriage issues in Africa, the ultimate consideration should be the stability of marriages.<sup>73</sup>

The studies by Hastings and Kitembo et al were mainly based on marriage in East, Central and Southern Africa where most of the people, unlike the Akan, are patrilineal. It may therefore be difficult to generalise all the findings to the Akan of Ghana who are matrilineal. Furthermore, some of the questions they sought to address are irrelevant to the contemporary Akan context. While they addressed themselves to the decline of marriages, presently marriage rates may be said to be increasing in Ghana. There was a marked decline in the percentage of women of reproductive age in a union (married or living together) over a five-year period, 70% in 1993 as compared with 65% in 1998.<sup>74</sup> However, the figures for 1999 indicate an increase again to 70% over the one-year period. The figures for the men are 52.8% for 1998 and 57.5% for 1999. The percentage of married women increased from 51.9% in 1998 to 58.7% in 1999 and that for men increased from 43.0% in 1998 to 49.4% in 1999.

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<sup>71</sup> Cited by Kitembo et al, *African Christian Marriage*, p. 195.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-21.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23. This point is explored further in Chapter Four.

<sup>74</sup> Ghana Demographic Health Survey, (1998), p. 59.

Between 1998 and 1999, the percentage of women in informal unions decreased from 12.7% to 11.6% while figures for the men were 9.8% and 8.1% respectively.<sup>75</sup> These figures indicate a modest increase in marriage rates as well as a tendency for people to formalise their unions.

There are signs of increase in church marriage rates. The Wesley Methodist Church in Cape Coast celebrated 30 wedding ceremonies in the ten-year period between 1970 to 1979. The figure increased to 32 in the next ten-year period. But the church celebrated 61 marriages in a period of four and half years from 1997 to mid 2002.<sup>76</sup> From my interviews I also realised that many young people hope to have a church marriage. They are prepared to have the customary marriage, which the church requires before they accept people for church marriage. The problem arises when people consider the customary marriage as just an engagement, leading to the view that customary marriage can break up if the couple find that they are incompatible. The situation looks very much like the “marriage in stages” which Kisembo et al found not to be helpful.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, in 1985, the Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law was enacted.<sup>78</sup> This law shows the Ghana government’s recognition of customary marriage and its attempt to protect it. Once a customary marriage has been registered, dissolution cannot take place arbitrarily. In fact, the courts have the right to nullify any dissolution where there are legal grounds for objection to the dissolution.

In 1963 the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life was organised. The participants made a call for appropriate family life education and counselling services within

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<sup>75</sup> See Ghana Demographic Health Survey, (1998), p. 59 and Ghana Demographic Health Survey, (1999), p. 59.

<sup>76</sup> Figures are based on data collected from the marriage register of the Wesley Methodist Church, Cape Coast.

<sup>77</sup> Kisembo et al, African Christian Marriage, pp. 25-28.

<sup>78</sup> P.N.D.C. Law 112.

the churches.<sup>79</sup> There are a number of scholarly works related to pastoral care in the African context.<sup>80</sup> These have mainly drawn attention to the need for counselling services appropriate for the worldview of the African. Waratu, for example, advocates that the church can play the role of the kinship system in attempts at offering support to marriages.<sup>81</sup> However I am not aware whether this need has been met. Much of the pastoral practice in Ghana seems to be based on an individualistic view of marriage. A number of individuals involved in the care of marriages have produced books or booklets aimed at educating people on marriage.<sup>82</sup> One important consideration in this literature is the importance of good communication between partners.<sup>83</sup> However, even though the literature notes the importance of the relationship between couples and their in-laws, it views marriage mainly as a union between a man and a woman. It follows that while scholars are saying one thing, those involved in the care of marriages are doing another thing. Furthermore no scholarly work has been done to evaluate the pastoral practice of the growing number of counselling centres and their relevance in the Akan context. This study thus seeks to offer such an evaluation of selected organisations involved in the care of marriages.

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<sup>79</sup> See *Report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life held at Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Kitwe, N. Rhodesia, 17 February to 10<sup>th</sup> April 1963*, pp. 54-58. See also M. Masamba, "Perspectives on African Pastoral Counselling" in M. Masamba and W. Kalu (Eds.) *Risks of Growth: Counselling and Pastoral Theology in the African Context* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1985), p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> M. Masamba, "Perspectives on African Pastoral Counselling"; J. A. Nxumalo, "Pastoral Ministry and the African Worldview" in M. Masamba and W. Kalu (Eds.) *Risks of Growth*, pp. 29-44; D. W. Waratu, "Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society: Challenges in Pastoral Counselling" in D. W. Waratu and H. W. Kinoti (Eds.) *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology* (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2000), pp. 101-119, and Lartey, E. Y., *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective: A Study of Some African (Ghanaian) and Anglo-American Views on Human Existence and Counselling* (Frankfurt am Main/ Bern/ New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1987).

<sup>81</sup> Waratu, "Marriage and Family ...", p. 116.

<sup>82</sup> For example See J. Adjabeng, *How to Enjoy your Marriage: Volume II* (Accra: Olive Publications, 1995); J. Adjabeng, *Teenage Sex and Love* (Accra: Olive Publications, 1996); J. Adjabeng, *Before You Marry* (Accra: Olive Publications, 1999); F. Wiredu, *Love and Submission* (Accra: Florence Wiredu, 1993); F. Wiredu, *How to Leave your Parents and Cleave to your Spouse* (Accra: Florence Wiredu, 1995); D. Y. Annan, *How to Keep your Marriage Happy and Successful* (Accra: D. Y. Annan, 1996); S. Adei, *The Secret of a Happy Marriage: Communication* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1991).

<sup>83</sup> Adei for example, points out that communication is more than talking but encompasses all forms of transmitting and receiving information and messages. Adei, *The Secret Happy Marriage*, p. 19.

#### **4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In the light of the above, and based on the critical investigation of the three organisations selected, this study aims to propose a model of pastoral care of marriages that is authentically Christian and authentically Akan (African). The study will make four main contributions. First, it proposes an appropriate therapeutic or counselling framework that takes the ethos of the Akan context, especially the communal nature of Akan society, into consideration. I indicated that all the talk about contextualisation has had no impact on marriage in Africa in general and among the Akan in particular. This I believe is partly due to the failure to locate an appropriate therapeutic or counselling framework for the Akan (African) context. The importance of recognising the communal nature of traditional marriage if we are to respond to marital issues appropriately has been noted. However, a method to translate this recognition into therapy or counselling is lacking. Thus this study is significant in the sense that it proposes a therapeutic or counselling framework, family therapy, as appropriate for dealing with marital issues in the Akan context.

Secondly, in terms of pastoral care, I explore in this thesis the need for care to be a communal activity. One hypothesis is that for an effective pastoral response to marriage, the support offered by the community in traditional society provides a useful model for pastoral practice. The tendency has been to see the community only in terms of interference in the life of the married couple, and also in terms of the sanctions and control they exercise, without recognising the supportive elements of their activities. This has led to an attitude of antagonism towards the community in pastoral practice. A positive appreciation of the nature of the relationship between the community and the married couple can provide a useful model

for pastoral practice. In this respect, the study is significant in proposing the concept of re-villaging as an appropriate model for pastoral practice.<sup>84</sup>

Underlying every pastoral practice towards marriages is a theology of marriage. The study, thirdly, seeks to contribute to the search for an appropriate Christian theology of marriage that underlies pastoral practice in the Akan context. In this respect the synthetic model of contextual theology has been employed.

Finally, this study through its findings is expected to make a contribution towards the training of ministers, counsellors and family educators for an effective delivery of care towards marriages in the Akan context. Hitherto, the training of persons involved in the care of marriages has given little attention to the worldview of the people. Basically the ethos that undergirds the training has been individualism, which is not consistent with the worldview of the Akan. This study seeks to contribute to the training of carers by emphasising an ethos of bi-culturalism, which is consistent with the contemporary Akan worldview. With such training it is hoped that the need for an adequate pastoral care of marriage will be substantially met. With these I believe that I can make a meaningful contribution towards the pastoral care of marriages among the Akan of Ghana.

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<sup>84</sup> "Re-villaging refers to the attempt of pastoral care and counselling to re-establish selective village functions such as symbolising, support/maintenance, ritualising and mentoring." See E. P. Wimberly and T. Mucherera, "Re-villaging, Crisis Theory and the African Context," (Unpublished Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the All African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling, Yaounde, Cameroon, 2001), p. 1.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

The study is a case study research, which according to Yin is preferred “when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomena within some real-life context.”<sup>85</sup> The method used is mainly contextual.<sup>86</sup> I have used three main sources of data. These are documentation, interviews and observation. I did this to address the potential problem of construct validity.<sup>87</sup> It is argued that in case study research there is often a failure to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures, therefore collection of data is based on subjective judgements. This problem is resolved by having multiple sources of evidence of the same phenomena. When these different sources of evidence provide converging lines of inquiry, they can be taken as reliable.

With respect to documents, demographic material was collected from the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. I collected material on marriage laws in Ghana from the Faculty of Law library at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. I also collected handbooks, reports and study manuals from the organisations under study. These sources of evidence are used mainly to corroborate and augment material from the other sources.

I have also generated data through qualitative interviews, which were conducted between November 2000 and April 2001 and in January 2002. Thirty-two adults of all ages made up of

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<sup>85</sup> R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Newbury Park/ London/ New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> This is explained further in Chapter Four.

<sup>87</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, pp. 41-42, 97.

eighteen males and fourteen females were interviewed with their informed consent. The interviewees were chosen mainly from Accra and Kumasi where the organisations under study operate. These are the two largest urban cities in Ghana and it is believed that the effects of social change on marriage is more pronounced in these cities than in rural settings. Others were chosen from Cape Coast, Akosombo, Komenda, and Kormantse. Apart from two of the interviews that were conducted in Fante and three in Twi, all the interviews were conducted in English. The interviews were all recorded on audiocassettes and constituted important primary sources for the study. Those conducted in Fante and Twi were translated into English. The use of English, Twi or Fante was not regarded as having any correlation with marriage life. The intention was to use English mainly for ease in transcription. However those who could not express themselves clearly in English were asked to speak either Fante or Twi.

The interviewees include the director, two former directors and six individuals that have benefited from the activities of the Family Life and Gender Issues Division of the Christian Council of Ghana, Accra. They also include the director, two family life facilitators who are former counselees, and four other individuals who have been on the counselling programme of the Family Enrichment Ministry of the International Central Gospel Church, Accra. I also interviewed the director, a counsellor and five individuals who have benefited from the counselling programme of the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal, Kumasi. Four experts on traditional Akan marriage, one freelance marriage counsellor and author, and four young adults hoping to marry soon were also interviewed. Fifteen of these interviews have been directly referred to and the transcripts appear in the appendices. The others are on audiocassettes kept with the author and a list of them can be found in the Bibliography. The

real names of the directors of the organisations and the experts on Akan marriage are used but pseudonyms are used for the others.

I used interviews and not questionnaires for very important reasons. Few people respond to questionnaires with the urgency that is needed. Again many people may not be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings clearly in written form. Above all, as Yin notes, since case studies are about human affairs, these human affairs need to be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees who are able to provide important insights into a situation.<sup>88</sup> One may question the validity of the use of interviews with individuals as the basis for the explanation of what goes on in an organisation. The persons interviewed include those who are/were not only directly involved in the development of the various programmes, but are/were also the main architects of the programmes. This gives an idea that they are well aware of the ethos underlying the practices in the organisations. I am aware of the problem of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation.<sup>89</sup> To address these problems, the interviews are corroborated with other sources of evidence such as the documents already mentioned.

The interviews were not structured. They were conducted in the form of conversations, that is, in the form of what has been referred to as the Interactive-Relational approach. Chirban points out the effectiveness of the Interactive-Relational approach in interviewing as compared with the purely fact finding approach which he regards as lifeless and less than effective because it ignores the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee.<sup>90</sup> His opinion is that, by

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-91.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>90</sup> J. T. Chirban, *Interviewing in Depth: The Interactive-Relational Approach* (Thousand Oaks/ London/ New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. xii.

developing an interactive and relational stance, it is possible to access information that would not emerge through formal questioning alone.<sup>91</sup> Such an approach is very necessary in interviews, which look at the very emotional issue of marriage. In the Interactive-Relational approach the interviewer establishes a relationship with the interviewee and this facilitates the giving out of information that would otherwise not have been divulged.

The third source of evidence was observation, both direct and participant. I observed some counselling sessions conducted by the organisations and also participated in a monthly meeting of the Greater Accra Regional Counsellors Association at the Christian Council of Ghana Headquarters, Accra, on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2001. I also participated in the Post-Marital Counsellors' Training for Pastors and Church Leaders organised by the Family Life Mission, Ghana, from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> February 2001 in Accra. Through these, I was able to learn at first hand how marriage counsellors are struggling to find ways of dealing with marital problems in the Akan (Ghanaian) context.

In addition to these main sources of evidence, I was also privileged to be a participant at conferences from which I gained much insight. I participated in the International Marriage Conference held at the College of St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth, from 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2000. This Conference provided me with the opportunity to learn about what is happening in other parts of the world, which has an influence on Akan marriage as a result of globalisation. My participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC) held in Yaounde, Cameroon, from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2001, also gave me an opportunity to reflect on pastoral care in the African context with fellow Africans and Americans of African descent.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

Mcleod notes that “the primary goal of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of how the world is constructed.”<sup>92</sup> He argues that the world can be viewed from different perspectives. Thus qualitative research aims at knowing how particular individuals or groups understand the world. It may be argued that people already have an understanding of the world based on common-sense knowledge. However such knowledge is far from being coherent and consistent. Qualitative research aims at providing formal statements and conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world.<sup>93</sup> This contextual study aims at developing a consistent and coherent knowledge of how marriage and care are understood among the Akan and in the three organisations studied. To that end the analysis of the data was by the use of hermeneutics for as Mcleod observes, “Hermeneutics is all about context, about placing the topic into historical and cultural perspective.”<sup>94</sup>

Hermeneutics has to do with a kind of interpretation that has two characteristics.<sup>95</sup> First the interpretation must be from a particular perspective. In this study the particular perspective has to do with the concern to have a balance between tradition and change. Second, the documents studied in hermeneutics must be in the public domain or must be sufficiently accessible to be known to at least some of the readers of a research report. In this respect, the text for this study has to do with the everyday experience of marriage and its care among the Akan and in the organisations studied. This text is accessible to the Akan and to members of the organisations, all of who can claim to have an understanding of what marriage is. The analysis was organised around such areas as the view of marriage, the basic assumptions held about the person, the theoretical presupposition underlying pastoral practice, and the resources

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<sup>92</sup> John Mcleod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London/ Thousand Oaks/ New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

used for pastoral care. I then sought to investigate whether the understanding of marriage and pastoral practice in the organisations was consistent with the understanding of marriage in the contemporary Akan context.

This study also aims at investigating the theology of marriage underlying the pastoral practice of the organisations. The goal was to find out whether the organisations have been able to adequately contextualise the theology of marriage among the Akan. To this end the synthetic model of contextual theology was adopted.<sup>96</sup> As a result of the analysis the strengths and weaknesses in the approaches to the pastoral care of marriages by the organisations as well as the inadequacy of the theology of marriage came to light. These helped in proposing an adequate theology of marriage and more suitable models of care for the contemporary Akan context.

## **6. OUTLINE OF THESIS**

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter One has introduced the study focussing on the problem that the study seeks to address. Literature related to the study was reviewed and how the study is significant was outlined. The methodology adopted to address the problem was explained. Chapter Two offers an overview of traditional Akan marriage. It takes note of the worldview of communalism and the theological interpretation of reality underlying the nature, purpose and process of marriage. Chapter Three discusses how modernisation has brought about changes in Akan marriage with the trend towards individualism and the scientific interpretation of reality. It is noted that irrespective of these changes traditional

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-24

<sup>96</sup> This is elaborated further in Chapter Four.

culture remains resilient. Chapter Four discusses contextual and methodological considerations adopted in the evaluation of the theology of marriage. The main elements of contemporary Akan society are outlined and the synthetic model of contextual theology is adopted as an appropriate model for contextual theology. Other criteria for evaluation, stability of marriage and the ability to care for childless couples are also discussed. These become the basis for the evaluation of the approaches to care and the theology of marriage of the three organisations studied in the next three chapters.

Each of Chapters Five to Seven focuses on one of the three organisations. In each of the organisations the approach to the care of marriage is described and an evaluation of the approach and the theology of marriage adopted is offered. The strengths and weaknesses of the approaches serve as a basis for the discussion on the quest for relevant pastoral models in Chapter Eight. Re-villaging and family therapy are proposed as appropriate models to care and counselling in the Akan context. A general conclusion that highlights the problem the study sought to address, the method used and the conclusions and recommendations is the focus of Chapter Nine.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TRADITIONAL AKAN MARRIAGE AND APPROACH TO ITS CARE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on marriage and how it is cared for in traditional Akan society. I begin with a brief historical sketch of the Akan and the nature of traditional Akan society in which marriage functions. I then discuss the nature and purpose of marriage and the process of contracting it. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the approach to the care of marriages. The discussions are not exhaustive in terms of detailed descriptions. My intention is to discuss aspects of the society and marriage that have direct relevance to this study.

It is important at the outset to explain the word traditional as used in the study. By traditional, I refer to “beliefs and practices which express the values and purposes of society and help it organise its basic and essential resources. In terms of culture, tradition is an outlook or orientation that can show a long history and a lasting influence.”<sup>1</sup> Tradition includes such things as social institutions, values, ideas, ethos and certain material culture traits. It involves the way the people talk, relate, dress, and respond to problems, etc. as well as the objects and artefacts they use which are customary to them. People behave that way and use those objects because that is how generations before them have done it.

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<sup>1</sup> G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change: The Case of the Family*, p. 3.

## 2. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE AKAN<sup>2</sup>

The Akan form the largest ethnic group in Ghana. About half of the population of Ghana claim to have Akan ancestry.<sup>3</sup> The Akan people include the following linguistic groups, Ashanti, Akim, Akwapim, Brong, Kwahu, Assin-Twifo, Wasa, Fante-Agona, Nzima and Ahanta, Afema, Sehwi and Chakosi.<sup>4</sup> Geographically the Akan can be found in the southern and middle portions of the country stretching from the coast in the south, to the Gonja state in the north, and from the Volta in the east to the Ivory Coast Border in the west.<sup>5</sup> Culturally, the Akan are the dominant group in modern Ghana.<sup>6</sup> The colourful kente cloth, which is Ghana's trademark in the outside world, is Akan, and if Ghana were to have her own *lingua franca*, it will almost certainly be Twi, one variant of the Akan language. The Akan are basically agricultural communities. However, there is some fishing on the coast.

Historians have advanced several theories to explain the common ethnic origin of the Akan. One theory that has received acceptance is the one that traces "their lineage to Songhay, to Melle, to Ghana, to Egypt, to Meroe of the Ethiopians."<sup>7</sup> Among those who have advanced such a theory are Rev. T. Balmer<sup>8</sup> who taught History at the Mfantshipim School in Cape Coast

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<sup>2</sup> The precise meaning of the word Akan is difficult to ascertain. According J. B. Danquah "the word *okanni* ordinarily means a nice, refined, well-mannered man, a civilised or cultured person." Cited in H. W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 2. Debrunner suggests that the immense value put on ordered behaviour and on character training in Akan education seem to give credence to this definition. Akan education thus makes one self-polished (*wapow*) and gentlemanlike (*okanni*).

<sup>3</sup> R. K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Mission and Democracy in Africa: The Role of the Church* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1994), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> J. Berry, cited in M. Manoukian, *Western Africa Part 1*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> C. Oppong, *Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite*, p. 28. The ethnic map of Ghana showing the Akan group appears on page xvi of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Adu Boahen, "The Origins of the Akan", *Ghana Notes and Queries*, no. 9, 1966, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from E. W. Smith by Aboagye-Mensah, *Mission and Democracy in Africa*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Palmer's lectures were later published with the title *A History of the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast* in which he argues that the lands of the Akan in modern Ghana formerly belonged to the empire of Ancient Ghana. Even though his opinion is not fully accepted, it is generally accepted that some elements of the Akan originally emigrated from the lands of the ancient Ghanaian Empire. Cited in Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 11.

between 1907-1911 and Danquah.<sup>9</sup> There is a close resemblance between the customs of the Akan and the ancient Ghanaians. In both groups, succession to the throne was through the matrilineal line, and there were also similarities in burial and religious observations as well as in the institution of kingship. For example certain aspects of Al Bakri's<sup>10</sup> description of the protocol of the court of the king of ancient Ghana fit well the picture of an Akan king sitting in state at festive occasions like *Adae* and *Odwira*.<sup>11</sup> The description of the king adorning himself with necklaces and bracelets, and the elaborate gold decorations, as well as the announcement of the arrival of the king by beating drums made from a long piece of hollowed-out wood fits the picture of an Akan king. It is such similarities in custom, religion, and kingship institutions between the Akan and the ancient Ghanaians that has led scholars to conclude that the Akan originated from the ancient Songhay, Mali, and Ghana Empires.

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<sup>9</sup> Danquah argues that Ghana, the name given by the Arabs to the ancient kingdom is a Semitic rendering of the Akane, a people who settled first at a place south of Libya. Cited in Adu Boahen, "The Origins of the Akan," p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Bakri, describes the protocol at the court of the king of ancient Ghana, and this shows a marked resemblance to that of an Akan king. He writes: "The king adorns himself like a woman, wearing necklaces and bracelets, and when he sits before the people he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and wrapped in turbans of fine cotton. The court of appeal is held in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses with gold embroidered trappings. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the subordinate kings ... all wearing splendid garments and with their hair mixed with gold ... The royal audience is announced by the beating of a drum ... made out of a long piece of hollowed-out wood. When the people have gathered, his co-religionists draw near upon their knees sprinkling dust upon their heads as a sign of respect, whilst the Muslims clap hands as their form of greeting." Cited in R. I. Rotberg, *A Political History of Tropical Africa*, (New York/ Chicago: Harcourt, Brace and world, Inc., 1965), p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> The *Adae* festival is celebrated every 42 days. Within the 42-day period one *Adae* falls on Sunday (*Akwasidae*) and the other on a Wednesday (*Wukudae*). It is a festival in which the ancestral stools are offered food and drink. As the one who represents his people before the ancestors, the chief is the principal officiant, performing the rituals on behalf of his people. The *Odwira* festival is an annual feast during which sacrifices are made to national gods. The chief plays a principal role in the celebration. For a full discussion of these festivals, see K. A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Jurong: FEP International Private Ltd., 1978), pp.12, 39-43.

### 3. THE NATURE OF TRADITIONAL AKAN SOCIETY

For a better appreciation of the traditional Akan concept of marriage, there is the need to understand the context of traditional Akan society in which marriage functions. The main aspects of traditional Akan culture of interest to us are the matrilineal system of kinship, the place of women in the society, the communal nature of the society, the view of the person, and the religious nature of the society.

#### 3.1. The Matrilineal System of Kinship

The Akan follow a matrilineal system of kinship.<sup>12</sup> In this system, the descent group to which one belongs is traced lineally through the female line and it is through this line that one inherits group membership. An individual therefore belongs to the mother's *ebusua* (lineage), which comprises of all the descendants of both sexes by a known genealogy of a single known ancestor in an unbroken line.<sup>13</sup> The term *ebusua* is used both to refer to the lineage and the clan. The Akan are divided into seven clans. Each lineage belongs to one of these seven clans: *Nsona, Anona, Twidan, Aboradze, Ntwea, Kona* and *Adwenadze*. A maximal lineage is regarded as the local branch of a widespread matrilineal clan.<sup>14</sup> It is thus believed that all the

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<sup>12</sup> Kinship is the key to the understanding of traditional societies. It refers to social relationships derived from consanguinity, marriage and adoption. The kinship system prescribes statuses and roles to people who are in particular relationships and it determines the rules, duties and the obligations of individuals and groups in all aspects of social life, where these groups interact. The kinship system determines for example, who can marry whom, where a couple will live after marriage, who succeeds whom, and how property will be transmitted. Kinship determines "almost everything: property relations, political relations, economic and legal obligations". G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> This corporate group is headed by a male leader, called *ebusuapanyin*, who sees to the overall administration of the group. "There is, however, always a female head also, who has high moral authority" See Manoukian, *Western Africa Part I*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana* (London/ Boston/ Melbourne: Kegan Paul International, 1983), p. 13.

lineages of a clan are the matrilineal descendants of a single remote ancestress from whom mythological emergence is generally claimed.<sup>15</sup>

An important aspect of the matrilineal system is inheritance and succession. In this, it is a man's *wofase* (nephew), not his child who succeeds and inherits.<sup>16</sup> Maternal uncles often take up responsibility of the upkeep of children, even though fathers are generally required to be responsible for their children. "Legally the father's position is a weak one; it is the 'blood' tie that really counts among the matrilineal Akan."<sup>17</sup> The consequence of this situation is that it is not uncommon to find some fathers in traditional Akan societies very irresponsible with respect to the upbringing of their own children. The argument is that the children belong to the mother's *ebusua*. There is a proverb<sup>18</sup> that *ohoho a owo awar mu nye kun*, that is, in a

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<sup>15</sup> Manoukian, *Western Africa Part I*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Oral tradition has it that the origin of the matrilineal system, with inheritance by the *wofase*, stems from the fact that long ago, a disaster befell one of the ancestors. The traditional priest requested that he should sacrifice one of his children to appease the gods for them to take away the curse. His wife refused to allow him to sacrifice one of their children. However, his sister came to his aid by offering her own child to be sacrificed. He thus saw his sister and her children as more committed to his welfare than his wife and his own children. He therefore willed all his possessions to his sister and his nephews, one of whom was sacrificed, hence the inheritance by nephews. Matrilineal communities in other parts of Africa have variants of this story. L. Magesa and S. N. Nyaga recount a similar story among the Bakwaya people of Tanzania in a yet to be published work. L. Magesa and S. N. Nyaga, *Telling their own Story: Report on the History, State and Prospects of Christian Marriage and Family in Bakwaya* (Yet to be published), p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Manoukian, *Western Africa Part I*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> I need to say a word about proverbs such as the one above since they will be used to a large extent to substantiate aspects of the discussion. Proverbs have been described as "short, popular, oft-used sentences that use plain language to express some practical truth that result from experience or observation." M. A. Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1995), p. 55. Proverbs point to the crux of an idea with vivid clarity. Every good Akan, (*okanni*, meaning a cultured person) must of necessity use such a precious heritage. As Debrunner notes, Among the Akan, immense value is put on speech, which is cultured, and such speech makes use of idioms and proverbs accurately. See Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 2. Without a tradition of written literature in traditional Akan society, oral tradition becomes very important in the transmission of knowledge. Proverbs become a useful tool in transmitting traditional philosophical wisdom. Proverbs thus serve the role of education. They point to the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which Akans think, speak and act in different situations in life. See S. A. Dseagu, "Proverbs and Folktales of Ghana: Their Form and Uses" in J. M. Assimeng (Ed.) *Traditional Life, Culture and Literature in Ghana* (New York: Conch Magazine Ltd., 1976), p. 88. Pobe points out that for anything to be authentically African, and for that matter Akan, it has to be supported, among other things, by proverbs. As a result of their authority, they are often used in communication to support arguments made and when they are thus used, they seem to be unquestioned. J. S. Pobe, *Toward an African Theology*, p. 54. I therefore use proverbs in this study to point to the authenticity of the issues as the Akan see them, and as a means of supporting my arguments. A number of the proverbs used in the study are cited from C. A. Akrofi, *Twi Mmese: Twi Proverbs* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, N. D.)

matrimonial home, the husband is the stranger.<sup>19</sup> Many have observed that the irresponsibility of fathers towards their children is the weakness of Akan society. However, such weakness is not in the system itself but the persons operating the system. When a man's brother or nephew inherits his property after death, it behoves the one who has inherited to take care of the children and the surviving widow. This is what the system stands for but what happens may be different.

### 3.2. The place of Women in Traditional Akan Society

Theoretically, women have a central place in traditional Akan society. Mercy A. Oduyoye observes that most migration stories of the Akan do put women at the centre, with women leading the community to freedom and prosperity. As an Akan woman married to a Yoruba man and living in the patriarchal culture of the Yoruba for more than a decade and a half, she is able to clearly spell out the difference between the two societies. She writes:

Akan women are the centre of the kinship unit and girls are brought up to feel the weight of this responsibility. Without women 'a lineage is finished,' the Akan say. So I grew up with a keen sense of my own importance and the necessity to play my role faultlessly. ... For the Akan, family meetings included both women and men. Women's concerns in the larger community were taken care of by a chain of decision-making that culminated in the *ohemaa* (Queen Mother), who is in fact senior to the *ohene* (King) in the ruling hierarchy.<sup>20</sup>

She contrasts the position of the Akan woman to that of the Yoruba woman. "The idea of participation shaped by my Akan background was gravely shaken when I discovered that

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<sup>19</sup> Since husbands or fathers are strangers in the matrimonial home, they are rather more concerned with their nephews and nieces whose *ebusua* they belong to and as such are not "strangers" there.

<sup>20</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 7.

among the patriarchal-patrilineal Yoruba of western Nigeria, a wife is a member of the work-force in 'her husband's house,' but not one of the decision-makers."<sup>21</sup> As Oduyoye observes, Akan women, unlike women from other ethnic groups in Africa, are involved in decision-making in the society. However, in their affinal families, she observes, married women are not decision-makers.<sup>22</sup> This view was also expressed in interviews conducted on some aspects of Akan tradition. To the question about the participation of women in decision-making in marriage, Emmanuel Walters had this to say:

Some traditional African women think that since the man is the head of the house, every major decision is to be taken by the man. So, sometimes, even when the woman is being encouraged to contribute to decision-making, she will say, let me wait for my husband. Even when the husband is present and he asks the view of the woman, she'll say, ah, you are the head of the family so what do you say? What do you think? So, most women actually do not accept the fact that they can also make very vital decisions. They always want to look up to the man.<sup>23</sup>

Oduyoye however makes an important note to the effect that the practice of deferring to males in decision-making in marriages is not required by tradition but that the woman does so out of expedience. She argues that it is almost impossible to cope efficiently with being a mother, to be economically autonomous, and to be dutiful to her affinal group as well as to rule in her natal family, so she defers to male relations in the latter. I agree with Oduyoye on this. Considering the position of power of the woman in Akan traditional society, the argument that her non-involvement in decision-making in marriage is as a result of the sanction of tradition, seems illogical. It could be that Walters' comment is influenced by the general situation in Africa, most of which is patrilineal and where the wife cannot be a decision-maker. He actually referred to the African generally. Also, the assumption that the man is the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Ebo Walters, Interview with author, Cape Coast, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

head of the house may also have been influenced by what happens in other cultures. In fact, that was the assumption of some Western observers of the Akan but as Manoukian observes, “the household head (*fiɛ panyin*) may be a man or a woman. Rattray and earlier writers mention male heads only, but according to Fortes, Ashantis say there is complete equality here between the sexes.”<sup>24</sup> Walters also talks about husbands encouraging their wives to contribute to decision-making. This can be an indication of women’s involvement, which had actually ceased as a result of various factors, such as the influence of colonialism and its patriarchal structures. If, traditionally, it were accepted that wives must not take part in decision-making, encouraging them to be involved would not be necessary.

The authority of women in traditional Akan society has also been noted by reference to the authority of the *ohemaa* (Queen Mother). The Akan queen mothers, like the chiefs, have their own stools, which are symbols of their power and authority. This signifies that the queenmothers hold office on the basis of their own qualification which distinguishes them from women in other parts of Africa who hold office or derive their power as the consequence of their relationship to a chief.<sup>25</sup>

Being an Akan woman, in a mother-centred community, is theoretically a source of strength, because one’s political, social and economic status depends on who one’s mother is. For example, one can only become a king if one belongs to a particular lineage and one can only belong through one’s mother. Debrunner notes that women have a place of honour in the

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<sup>24</sup> Manoukian, *Western Africa Part I*, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> See B. J. Stoeltje, “Asante Queenmothers: A Study in Identity and Continuity” in M. Reh & G. Ludwar-Ene (Eds.) *Gender and Identity in Africa* (Munster/ Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1994), p. 17.

blood-clan organisation because they are the potential mothers of fighters whose presence are important for the security and continuity of the society.<sup>26</sup>

Having pointed out that theoretically, the woman has an important place in traditional Akan society, I must also add that the existential reality is that women are supposed to submit to their husbands. Oduyoye herself has catalogued folktales and proverbs by which women are socialised to remain submissive.<sup>27</sup> Affinal relations are thus male-dominated to an extent. Not overlooking this fact, I intend to emphasise the strengths of women in traditional Akan society. As Oduyoye points out, “by looking more critically around us, as well as deeper into our history, we can be motivated and empowered to create structures that obviate all that we have denounced in patriarchy.”<sup>28</sup> Truly, looking deep into Akan tradition, one can find that the woman has a position of power in the society. In her affinal home, the Akan woman remains independent and belongs to her own *ebusua* and not that of the husband. The woman is also financially independent. Such elements in the history can be the basis for treating the woman as equal to the man in marriage thus responding to the problem of patriarchy.

### 3.3. The Communal Nature of Traditional Akan Society

Traditional Akan society is communal in nature. Pobee writes that “whereas Descartes spoke for Western man when he said *cogito ergo sum* – I think, therefore I exist – Akan man’s ontology is *cognatus ergo sum* – I am related by blood, therefore I exist, or I exist because I

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<sup>26</sup> H. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and its Effect on the Akan Tribes* (Kumasi: Presbyterian Book Depot, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

belong to the family.”<sup>29</sup> The whole existence of the individual depends on the community and this is evidenced in every aspect of social life: the religious, economic, maintenance of the extended family, etc. To strengthen the sense of community, every important stage of the individual’s life, birth, puberty, marriage and death is marked with communal celebrations.

The Akan say that *onipa firi soro besi a, obesi onipa kurom* (when a man descends from heaven, he descends into a human society). The import of this proverb is that humans are originally born into a society and therefore they are social beings from the outset. It is thus impossible for people to live in isolation because, not only will that be contrary to their nature, but also, individuals by themselves do not have sufficient capabilities to meet basic human requirements. As the Akan put it, *obi yieyε firi obi*, (the prosperity of one depends upon his fellow). The communal nature of the society therefore is seen as a consequence of human nature as well as that which makes for personal well being and wealth.<sup>30</sup>

However, the sense of communality does not negate individuality. Some scholars have a view that communality offers no room for the expression of individuality. They assume that individuality is submerged by communality, and that “communalism is antithetical to individuality.”<sup>31</sup> The following Akan proverb shows that this view is not adequate. It is said that *Ebusua tse dε kwaa, ewo ekyir a ihu dε obo mu kor na ebεn ho a ihu dε dua biara wε ne sibe* (the clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand individually when closely approached). Mbiti’s

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<sup>29</sup> Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, p. 49. See also C. A. Ackah, *Akan Ethics* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1988)

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed discussion of this see K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Chapter 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. Gyekye critiques this view of communality attributed to the Akan and argues that the Akan society can best be described as amphibious.

classic maxim: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,"<sup>32</sup> reveals the tension between communality and individuality in the Akan society.

The Adinkra<sup>33</sup> symbol of *funtumfrafo*, the crocodile with many heads, a single stomach and many tails, buttresses the point that communality does not necessarily exclude individuality.<sup>34</sup> The heads in the symbol emphasise individuality, and they are used in the symbol for very important reasons. In Akan language, the head is regarded as the seat of the intellect, thought, deliberation and determination. It is also regarded as the seat of feeling, that which perceives, thinks and remembers, reasons, wills and desires in humans. The head in the symbol then indicates the will, interests, tastes, and passions of the individual, the desire of the individual for self-expression and satisfaction of one's own needs. This in turn implies that the aims, interests and passions of individuals differ. Another Akan proverb goes that, *ti wopere no nkorkoro*, that is (it is by individual effort that we can struggle for our heads). Thus individual effort is needed for protecting and struggling for our interests and needs. But the common stomach of the crocodile indicates that, at the very least, the basic interests of all the members of the community are identical and that the community of interests forms the basis of the maximisation of the individuals' interests and welfare. This is derived from the symbolism of the common stomach becoming bigger as a result of each mouth being fed.

Philosopher Gyekye explains the importance of communality among the Akan. He writes:

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<sup>32</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London/ Ibadan/ Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Trust Ltd., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1989), p. 106.

<sup>33</sup> Adinkra literally means parting. It is a mourning cloth used by the Akan and has several symbols, each of which has a specific meaning. Each fabric has a particular set of symbols. The fabric one wears and how one wears it depends on one's relationship to the deceased. Today, the cloth is used not only for mourning but also for other functions such as weddings. See Aid to Artisans in Ghana, *The Adinkra Story*, <http://www.ontheline.org.uk/schools/adinkra/adinkrah.htm>, 24/10/01. The symbol of *funtumfrafo* is shown on page xvii of this thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., See also D. Antwi, "A sense of Community: An African Perspective of the Church as Koinonia", *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1996, p. 6.

If one is by nature a social being, and not merely an atomized entity, then ... the conception and development of an individual's full personality and identity cannot be separated from his or her role in the group. The interaction between the individual and the group is thus conceived in Akan social thought to be basic to the development and enhancement of the individual's personality.<sup>35</sup>

So, the communal nature of the society is ultimately for the benefit of the individuals. In fact, tremendous damage is done to the African personality when one is forced to live and function outside of one's community.<sup>36</sup> When that happens, there is a split in the African self that results from one having been uprooted from one's culture and basis of existence. For example, an individual may find it easy to refuse help to his/her mother in need. However, he/she will continue to live with the guilt of refusing to help because that is not part of his/her nature.

The Akan sense of community should also not be confused with communism. In the first place, communism and the Akan worldview are basically at variance because the latter has a religious ontology whereas communism abhors religion.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, communism believes that the destruction of hierarchy is essential for the good of the society. In Akan society however, even though the equality of persons is essential, it seeks to achieve it in the highest sphere of human existence, that is, in relation to God and the ancestors, which communism rejects. The community in traditional Akan society therefore does not only involve the living, but also a

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<sup>35</sup> Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, p. 161.

<sup>36</sup> See D. J. Antwi, "A Sense of Community" pp. 5-11.

<sup>37</sup> See Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, pp.50-51. and Dan J. Antwi, "Koinonia in African Culture: Community, Communitarity and African Self-Identity", *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, vol. 4, no. 2, July 1996.

host of spiritual entities.

### 3.4. The View of the Human Person

Some scholars postulate that in Akan thought, the human person is made up of four components namely *bogya* (blood), *sunsum* (spirit), *okra* (soul) and *ntoro*.<sup>38</sup> In his discussion of these components, Gyekye argues that the human person consists of the immaterial (spiritual) component and the material (physical) component.<sup>39</sup> The spiritual component is made up of the soul and the spirit. They are of divine origin and survive after death. The physical component is the body (*honam*). The *bogya* and *ntoro* are derived from the mother and father respectively and do not have divine origin. The *ntoro* has both spiritual and physiological qualities and together with *bogya* constitute genetic factors responsible for inherited characteristics.

Gyekye therefore argues that Akan philosophy maintains a dualistic conception of the person. The human person is made up of two components, the physical and the spiritual. The spiritual component is highly complex. Of interest to us is the relation between the two components. The relationship in Akan thought is different from dualistic philosophy in the West. Gyekye notes that:

Some dualistic philosophers in the West maintain a doctrine of psychophysical parallelism, which completely denies interaction between the soul and body. Other dualists advance a doctrine of epiphenomenalism, which, while not completely rejecting causal interaction, holds that the causality goes in one direction only, namely, from the body to the soul; such a doctrine, too, is thus not interactionist. Akan thinkers, however, are thoroughly interactionist on the relation between soul

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<sup>38</sup> For example see K. A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 94. and P. Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), P. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Gyekye, *An Essay in African Philosophical Thought*, p. 94.

and body. They hold that not only does the body have a causal influence on the soul but also that the soul has a causal influence on the body (*honam*). What happens to the soul takes effect or reflects on the condition of the body. ... Similarly, what happens to the body reflects on the conditions of the soul.<sup>40</sup>

In traditional Akan society therefore, the person is regarded as consisting of two components, the physical and the spiritual which are interactive. In this view of the person, the soul is seen not only as related to the body but also as related to communities. Thus it is not only the case that the constituent components of the human person interact but that the person is also a person in relationship. The human person is related to the *ebusua*, his lineage, and the *ntoro* group, the group of his father. These communities necessarily include the living dead – the ancestors. The Akan is also related to God and his relationships also extend to nature. Thus Dickson observes that the Akan or the African generally has a fellow feeling with nature.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.5 The Religious Nature of Traditional Akan Society

Africans are notoriously religious. To the African, “life and religion are indivisible.”<sup>42</sup> This is very true of the Akan. Opoku, an Akan, argues that it will not be an exaggeration to say that in traditional Africa, “religion is life and life, religion.”<sup>43</sup> That religion is so pervasive in traditional society explains why it is said that, *obi nkyere abofra Nyame* (no one teaches a child to know God). The role of religion in traditional Akan society can be appreciated when considered in terms of Akan or African cosmology.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 48.

<sup>42</sup> See Mbiti, *African Philosophy and Religion*, p. 1.; C K. Konadu, “The effect of Social Change on the Matrilineal System of the Ashantis of Ghana” in K. H. Federsmidt, U. Atkins and K. Temme (Eds.) *Traditions: Shadows of the Past - Sources of the Future, Inter-Cultural Pastoral Care and Counselling*, Dusseldorf, no. 2. (1997), p. 47.; K. A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 1.; P. Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 1.

Dickson argues that:

The African's approach to the universe is in one sense undifferentiated and unspecialised. In the West it is customary to systematise and label, distinguishing the animate from the inanimate, the physical from the metaphysical, the sacred from the secular, the natural from the supernatural. To the African such distinctions are not as meaningful as one might expect, for the unseen powers are held to be active also in the natural world.<sup>44</sup>

Such an undifferentiated approach to the universe leads to a theological and not a scientific interpretation of the world. For example spirit powers and not bacterial invasion and weakened body systems cause disease and death. The universe is full of spirits, which for one reason or the other may act for or against humans. Dickson further argues that this does not mean that the African has no interest whatsoever in natural causes, but that "the world of natural phenomena may be viewed by the African as part of spiritual reality, but there is no question of one world being real and the other not."<sup>45</sup> In the light of this every physical phenomenon has a spiritual aspect to it which is as real as the physical.

The spiritual aspect of life, or religion, among the Akan centres mainly on beliefs in the Supreme Being (God) who is called *Nyame*, the lesser gods (*abosom*) and the ancestors. God is held to be the creator of the world and everything in it as well as the source of all the powers operating in it. The lesser gods are believed to be created by God and work as God's agents. The ancestors are the living dead. It is believed that death is not the end of human life but transforms life from the physical to the spiritual. People who had lived good and exemplary lives, died honourably and in advanced age qualify to be ancestors. As spiritual beings, they are able to watch over the affairs of the living, punishing offenders and rewarding

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<sup>44</sup> K. A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd & Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

those who conform to acceptable ways and exemplary behaviour. This belief creates a form of social control of people's behaviour. Other categories of spiritual powers that form part of the belief system of the Akan are witchcraft, magic and sorcery (*juju*).<sup>46</sup>

Religion plays a very important role during celebrations marking the different stages in life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Libations are poured and prayers offered to the ancestors during such celebrations. This is done to secure protection and blessings from the spiritual entities. One may use charms, amulets, and talismans, objects believed to possess concentrated magical power, for protection or aggression. Traditionally, it is also believed that a strong personality soul could protect one from the activities of the witches. Furthermore, protection may be sought by appeasing the witch, through charms and special medicine prepared for the purpose, such as herbal water used for bathing, or by the help of the *abosom*, or lesser gods.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4. **TRADITIONAL AKAN MARRIAGE**

The importance of marriage in Africa is summed up in the following words of John S. Mbiti:

For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community meet; the departed, the living and those yet to be born ... marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it

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<sup>46</sup> Witchcraft refers to the "idea of some supernatural power of which man can be possessed and which is used exclusively for evil and antisocial purposes" See Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana*, p. 1. Witches are thought to be malevolent, destroying their prey through chronic diseases, madness, barrenness, marital problems, death, and many other calamities such as the destruction of farms etc. This belief creates a strong search for protection against their nefarious activities. Magic and sorcery refer to the manipulation of physical objects to effect supernatural ends. In these, spells and incantations are used to achieve what is aimed at. When good supernatural ends are aimed at, we refer to magic, but when anti-social ends are aimed at, we refer to sorcery (*juju*).

<sup>47</sup>For a detailed discussion of protection from witchcraft powers see Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana*, Chapter 12.

is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law breaker, he is not only abnormal but 'under-human.'<sup>48</sup>

Not only does Mbiti's statement portray the importance of marriage in Africa but it also reveals certain key issues concerning marriage in Africa. These issues, such as the communal nature of marriage, underlie our discussion of the nature, purpose, and process of the formation of marriage, and the approach to the care of marriages in traditional Akan society.

#### 4.1. The Nature of Marriage

In traditional Akan society, marriage is not an option that one chooses. Every normal adult is expected to marry. But what is the nature of this institution that every adult is expected to partake in? It has been argued that Akan (African) marriage is polygynous, patriarchal and communal in nature.

##### 4.1.1. *Traditional Akan Marriage: Is it Polygynous?*<sup>49</sup>

It is generally asserted that marriage in Africa is potentially polygynous.<sup>50</sup> The Ghanaian philosopher, William Abraham claimed that African marriage is 'polygamous in definition'

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<sup>48</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> 'Poly' means 'many' and 'gamous' means 'marriage.' Polygamy therefore literally means 'many marriages' or 'plural marriages.' It is a condition in which one person can marry two or more people. When it is a man who marries two or more women, the condition is called polygyny. When it is a woman who marries two or more men, the condition is called polyandry. Hillman talks about two types of polygamy. Consecutive polygamy or serial monogamy is a condition in which one spouse engages consecutively in discrete monogamous unions. Simultaneous or contemporaneous polygamy is a condition in which a person has more than one spouse at a time. See E. Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975), pp. 10-11. It is the second type, when it involves a man having more than one wife at the same time, which is of concern to us.

<sup>50</sup> See A. Phillips, "An Introductory Essay" in A. Phillips (Ed.) *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* (London/ New York/ Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. ix-xli.

and he sought to defend it as not immoral.”<sup>51</sup> Arthur Phillips also points out that for African men “monogamy is, for the majority who are in fact monogamists, a matter of necessity rather than a choice.”<sup>52</sup> It is therefore argued that in Africa polygyny is “a socially approved, honoured, and preferential system,”<sup>53</sup> and that leading and respected members of the societies are expected to be heads of polygamous households.<sup>54</sup> Hillman, citing Murdock, claims that polygyny; “is preferential in areas where there is a relationship of mutual support and reinforcement between polygamy and culture, polygamy and tradition, polygamy and public opinion, and where polygamy enjoys superior prestige, as compared with monogamy; so that the respected males in the society will normally seek to acquire more than one wife.”<sup>55</sup>

Many observers of the African scene, such as those whose work have been cited above, have expressed concern about the manner in which missionaries tended to impose Western tradition, especially in terms of marriage, on their converts, and have made attempts to redress the issue. One such scholarly attempt is Hillman’s *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches*. In this attempt, Hillman puts the problem in the context of the relationship between Christianity and culture and argues that wherever Christianity has taken root, there has always been the appropriation of the culture of the people. He argues that “no particular set of cultural patterns and social structures is in itself specifically Christian.”<sup>56</sup> Hillman stresses that all the arguments, whether sociological, Biblical or theological that have been raised against the practice of polygyny are unsatisfactory. He argues for new missionary and pastoral approaches to the issue. I agree

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<sup>51</sup> See K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 183.

<sup>52</sup> Phillips, “An Introductory Essay”, p. xiv.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Haring, “Preface” in Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, p. vii.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi.

<sup>55</sup> Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

with Hillman in his conclusion and advocacy for a new way of dealing with polygynists in the Church. However, my contention is that he and others, who have written in a similar vein, have attributed to polygyny a status in African marriage, which is far from the case, at least in the traditional Akan context.

In traditional Akan society, a man is permitted to marry more than one wife, but the norm and the preferred option seems to be monogamy. According to Konadu, "in Ashanti there is a toleration and even approval accorded to polygamy."<sup>57</sup> This way of speaking indicates that polygyny is not the norm. At best it is "tolerated" or "approved." In fact, Oduyoye<sup>58</sup> observes that there is a large number of proverbs that suggest that polygyny may not be advantageous, or that caution against being polygynous. The Akan say that, *se bayin wo yernom enum a, wo tegyerama ye enum* (if a man has five wives, he has five tongues), and *bayin a ne yernom dɔɔso no, ɔkɔm na oku no* (when a man is polygynous, he dies of hunger). Oduyoye, however, goes on to say that what proverbs tell men to do and what they actually do are not always in harmony. But at least she gives an indication that polygyny is not the ideal that men aspire to, as some authors seem to suggest.

It is even argued that many women favour polygyny. However, Abraham himself who sought to defend polygyny as not immoral had this to say: "It must nevertheless be admitted that the preference, certainly the longing of women, is for monogamy. Monogamy implies the acquisition of new sensibilities, a readiness to attain an integrated discipline, an offering of the self in service and sacrifice, a closed communion. One might even say it is a delightful

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<sup>57</sup> Konadu, "The Effect of Social Change..." pp. 46-51.

<sup>58</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, "The Asante Woman: Socialisation Through Proverbs (Part I)", *African Notes*, vol. VII, no. 1, 1979.

prejudice. It is always an ideal.”<sup>59</sup> In traditional Akan society, the first idea that comes to mind when the term *akorafo* is used is the idea of conflict. The term literally means rivals and it is used for co-wives. It gives an indication of competition and conflict. For example, if siblings like to quarrel, the question that an elder would ask them is whether they are *akorafo*. It is difficult to reconcile how a society, which thrives on good cordial relationships, would see a form of marriage that creates *akorafo* (parties in conflict) as the ideal. Contrary to what some scholars will want us to believe, co-wives do not see themselves as friends but as competitors, and often accusations of witchcraft are directed at co-wives. It is in exceptional cases that some women live peacefully as co-wives but even then, each grudgingly tolerates “the other woman” in the matrimonial home.<sup>60</sup>

Konadu<sup>61</sup>, Kisebo and his colleagues<sup>62</sup> as well as Masamba ma Mpolo<sup>63</sup> all observe that the possession of a number of wives is a mark of importance and success. However, in their observations, the social prestige that a man acquires is attributed to the combined effect of the family, including wives and children, who together constitute the labour force. It can be argued that it is not so much the number of wives that makes a man important, but rather the children born of these wives to the man. In fact, in Akan tradition, a woman who gives birth to ten children is publicly honoured with gifts from her husband and relatives.<sup>64</sup> The husband gives her the gift of a sheep (called *badu guan* – “the sheep of the tenth child”) for her to feast in appreciation. This indicates that if one woman is able to give birth to many children to her

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<sup>59</sup> See Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 145.

<sup>61</sup> Konadu, “The Effect of Social Change ...”

<sup>62</sup> See Kisebo et al, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> Masamba ma Mpolo, “Polygamy in Pastoral Perspectives” in Masamba ma Mpolo and C. De Sweeney (Eds.) *Families in Transition: The Case for Counselling in Context* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), p. 100.

<sup>64</sup> G. Benneh, “Family and Development in Ghana: An Overview” in E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *Family and Development in Ghana*, p. 6.

husband, the man still attained social prestige for which he showed appreciation to the woman. "Children are the glory of marriage," argues Mbiti, "and the more there are of them, the greater the glory."<sup>65</sup> Two of my informants, when explaining the purpose of polygyny indicated that, in traditional Akan society, the number of children that one has makes one highly regarded in the society. It is for this reason that men seek to get as many children as possible, and since it is impossible to get all the children one may desire to have with one woman, one goes in for many wives.<sup>66</sup> As Hillman rightly observes, "the father of many is esteemed by all in a society which sees the destiny of each individual in terms of his family, his clan, his tribe, or his people."<sup>67</sup> It is clear from this analysis that it is not necessarily the number of wives a person has that brings him prestige but rather the number of children. Polygyny, then, is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

It is as a result of this that barrenness of a woman becomes a justifiable reason for polygyny in traditional Akan society. In a society where children are so much valued, childlessness becomes a serious problem. Oduyoye asserts that "if procreation is the essence of being a husband, then polygyny ...is distinctly more advantageous."<sup>68</sup> In addition to the economic significance of children, they also serve to maintain one's name after death. The death of a childless man or woman meant the end of his or her life. If one has children, one continues to live through them.

The basic presupposition underlying the practice of polygyny is that women are inferior. As Masamba ma Mpolo puts it, "women become the major consumer item to be accumulated,

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<sup>65</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 142.

<sup>66</sup> Sekum, Interview with author, Komenda, 24th January 2001, & Kow Amoah, Interview with author, Kormantse, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, p. 116.

<sup>68</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 143.

particularly as labour and reproductive units."<sup>69</sup> In a society in which women are central, as pointed out above, polygyny, which presupposes the inferiority of women, cannot be the norm, as some would want us to believe.

It can be concluded that even though polygyny is accepted it is neither the norm nor the preferred option. In fact the exact opposite of Phillip's assertion referred to earlier can be argued to be true of Akan marriage, that monogamy is the true nature of Akan marriage, but "polygyny is, for the minority who are in fact polygynists, a matter of necessity rather than a choice." Its necessity derives from the fact that through polygyny, many children could be raised up to help in economic ventures and it also maintains ones name after death. This view makes sense when one considers the fact that the main purpose of marriage in traditional Akan society is procreation, a point to be discussed later.

#### **4.1.2. *Traditional Akan Marriage: Is it Patriarchal?***

Oduyoye argues that even though women theoretically have a place of power in traditional Akan society, marital relations are patriarchal. She argues that patriarchy exists whenever one finds systemic and normative inequalities and subordination.<sup>70</sup> The question is do we find such systemic and normative inequalities and subordination of women in traditional Akan marriage?

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<sup>69</sup> M. Masamba, "Polygamy in Pastoral Perspectives", p. 108. His main pastoral argument is that the church should not isolate the problem of polygamy from its social implications and apply sanctions. This will mean imposing old values devoid of meaning for today's society. The Church should rather note the inherent inequality between man and woman in polygamous relationships and help to create a social system which is based on the equality of both man and woman.

<sup>70</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 131.

It is argued that there is differential socialisation of the man and the woman.<sup>71</sup> Men are socialised to be aggressive while women are socialised to be submissive. It is thus concluded that the woman is never wholly independent but should always be under the guardianship of a man.<sup>72</sup> This is exemplified in such a proverb as *akokobedee nim adekyee na nso ohwe onini ano*; “the hen knows when it is morning but she looks at the mouth of the cock” (she waits for the cock to crow). It is also said that *obaa twa bommaa a etwere obarima dan mu* “When a woman makes the giant drum, it is kept in the man’s room.”<sup>73</sup> For the woman, then, marriage only transfers some of the responsibility of guardianship from her original guardian (her maternal uncle or lineage head) to her husband.

Marriage simply transfers the Akan woman from one suzerain (her maternal uncle) to another (her husband) in order that she might serve the interest of both kin groups: she provides children to the one (her matrilineal family) and physical service to the other. Whereas marriage confers full responsibility and a measure of autonomy on a man as a member of the community, the woman remains a “subject.”<sup>74</sup>

Oduyoye explains this transfer in terms of the nuptial gift, the *aseda*.<sup>75</sup> She argues that the *aseda* is a transaction between men over a woman for it is given to the father of the woman by the father of the man. It is never given to a woman hence the proverb, *obaa nngye aseda* (A woman does not receive the nuptial gift). Thus the marriage ceremony symbolises the transfer of the control of a woman’s sexuality from her father or maternal uncle to the husband. It is argued that the payment of *aseda* gives the man sexual rights over the woman.

Oduyoye is right when she argues that the idea of the man having rights over the woman

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<sup>71</sup> M. Oduyoye, “The Asante Woman. ...” p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> See Oduyoye, “The Asante Woman ...”, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 135.

<sup>75</sup> The *aseda* is discussed later in section 4.3.2.

seems to reveal inequalities. However her argument that the payment of *aseda* is between men and that this also portrays inequalities seems unwarranted. Men give and receive *aseda* as recognised leaders on behalf of the *ebusua* they represent. The *aseda* itself, often in the form of a drink, is distributed to relations, both men and women, to serve as a testimony. She also bases the nuptial gift on the *aseda* alone. However, there are other gifts, part of which go directly to individuals like the father, the mother and the woman to be married.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore not wholly true that the nuptial gift is a transaction between men. The independence of the Akan woman in marriage has been observed.<sup>77</sup> Even in marriage the woman belongs to her own *ebusua* and not to her husband's. Furthermore the autonomy of the married Akan woman as a result of her independent economic activities has been noted. Oduyoye herself notes that traditional gender roles operate in such a way as to make both women and men economically productive and that women in Africa did not need wars to make them workers.<sup>78</sup>

Oduyoye also argues that other traditional marriage practices seem to suggest the subordination of women. For example, the *ayete* is a form of marriage in which another family member is substituted for a wife who is dead. A family may even replace an old wife with a young one. This happens without the payment of new *aseda*, meaning it is not a new marriage. "It is as if wives were cars that were being traded in for new models."<sup>79</sup> Another practice is the *kunawadie*, in which the heir of the deceased husband, as part of his estate, inherits a widow. Oduyoye argues that despite the implied benevolence and care towards widows in this practice, the fact remains that the widow is imaged as a minor who must be

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<sup>76</sup> See Section 4.2.3. for a discussion of these other gifts.

<sup>77</sup> See Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 153, and Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986, 5<sup>th</sup> Printing 1995), p. 123.

<sup>79</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 137.

protected and provided for by males.<sup>80</sup> These practices therefore seem to suggest that women are subordinates who have to be taken care of by men, thus marital union does not engender equality between the partners. Arguably, the private aspect of marriage, the union between two individuals, is violated in these practices. However, without justifying these practices, I do not think that they have anything to do with the subordination of women. Rather, if one views them in the light of the understanding that traditionally marriage is first and foremost a union between families, the practices become understandable. The death of the husband does not end the union between the families based on which the deceased's family seeks to make the union visible by offering another person to the surviving widow. The fact that a woman may be substituted for her deceased sister or a man may be substituted for his deceased brother seems to make the argument of the subordination of women unjustified. Thus marriage in traditional Akan society does not reveal any systematic inequalities and subordination and may not be regarded as patriarchal.

#### ***4.1.3. Traditional Akan Marriage: A Communal Affair***

In traditional Akan society, marriage is not simply a union between a man and a woman; it is an alliance between the families of the man and the woman.<sup>81</sup> It is only in a secondary sense that it is considered as a union between two persons. Parrinder observes that "the highly individualistic, and often irreligious, form of many modern European marriages, with two people uniting without the appearance of the families, and strangers as witnesses, would be incomprehensible to most Africans."<sup>82</sup> Daniels notes how married life in Ghana is strongly

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 132. Also see Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: SCM Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1981), p. 79.

Ghunney gives an instance of this. He writes "Kofi met Efua in the United States and got married without getting the blessings of their families. Kofi did not perform any customary rite on behalf of Efua. Efua got cancer and



influenced by the structure and scope of the family. He writes; "Whereas in the 'Western and Eastern world' marriage may be said to be the basis of the family, under our customary laws in Ghana the position is a little different. Marriage is rather an offshoot of the family system."<sup>83</sup> The community of the various families therefore, and not two individuals, is what brings marriage into being. The families play a very important role in "the formation, continuation and the dissolution of the marriage."<sup>84</sup>

The various stages that constitute the formation of marriage give evidence to the fact that marriage is a union between families. From the choice of a partner to the traditional wedding ceremony, the families are actively involved in the formation of marriage. And when marriage is formed existing relationships are changed and new social relations are created, not only between the husband and wife, but also between their extended families. Marriage brings four kin groups into *affinal* relationships.<sup>85</sup> The involvement of the families therefore does not end with the formation but also continues as long as the marriage exists. There is mutual material and emotional support between couples and their extended relations. It is the duty of the families to ensure that marriages succeed. Furthermore a husband and wife cannot by themselves dissolve a marriage. It is the families that can legally dissolve a marriage. This is

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died, and Kofi took her body back to Ghana. Efua's family was informed of her death and was expected to meet the body at the airport, but the family did not. They sent a message to Kofi's family that they had heard somebody from Kofi's family had lived illegally with their daughter in the United States. When their daughter was sick, Kofi did not have the courtesy to inform them. Now their daughter is dead and they had heard rumours that her body is being sent to Ghana by that "stranger" (Kofi). Efua's family will hold Kofi's family responsible for allowing Kofi to live with Efua without performing the marriage rite, which then resulted in Efua's death. Kofi's family has to sacrifice to pacify Efua's family. They will perform the marriage rite before they recognise Kofi as their in-law and widower." J. Ghunney, "Ghana" in R. J. Wick and B.K. Estadt, (Eds.) *Pastoral Counselling In A Global Church: Voices from the Field* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> W. C. E. Daniels, "Problems in the Law Relating to the Maintenance and Support of Wives and Children" in C. Oppong (Ed.) *Domestic Rights and Duties in Southern Ghana* (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 1974) p. 285.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>85</sup> These four groups are the mother's and the father's lineage of both the man and the woman.

due to the fact that marriage is not just a union between the husband and the wife but between their families.

Some scholars see the involvement of families as interference. Fortes, for example, sees a constant danger of friction with in-laws. Obviously, marriage, regarded as communal, has its problems. Relationships with families may have a negative effect on the relationship between the individual partners. A man may, for example, fail to make adequate provision for the wife's needs because he has to take care of the members of his own *ebusua*. The Akan themselves recognise that families can make or unmake marriages, hence the proverb, *awarso na awargu ne fabi gyina nsewnom do* (the success or failure of marriage depends partly on in-laws). However, traditionally, it is wrong for families to interfere in people's marriage without justification. Families cannot, without justification, even prevent two young people from marrying. Writing about the consent parents have to give for their son's marriage, Hayford had this to say:

Where consent is held to have arbitrarily and without justification been withheld by the parties who might have given it, marriage may take place under the same conditions; but the chief, or other person or persons of consequence, before whom it takes place, must thoroughly satisfy himself or themselves that the withholding of the consent was indeed without justification and that the case of the parties seeking the union is an unquestionable one.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, even though interference from families is real, it is not the accepted norm and structures are put in place to check any unjustifiable interference.

Generally speaking, the communal nature of marriage has many advantages. The investigations conducted by family members in the choice of a partner help to ensure that

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<sup>86</sup> M. C. Hayford, "The African Marriage Institution of the Gold Coast ...", pp. 129-130.

partners are well suited for each other. Commenting on the introduction of the English law by some missionaries, Hayford delineates its weakness as opposed to the communal nature of Akan traditional marriage. He argues that in English law:

The entire responsibility is thrown upon the contracting parties, the law upholding the contract, however injudiciously entered into, if only the parties should have arrived at a certain age, not, however, necessarily the age bringing with it the greatest amount of wisdom and sound judgement for the successful conduct of their affairs in the complicated relations in which they presently find themselves, and without having had to go to the maturer judgement of older parties interested in them, as they should have had to do under the African law.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore marriage as a communal affair ensures that the couple is supported and this ensures the stability of the marriage.

#### 4.2. The Purpose of Marriage

The ultimate goal of marriage in traditional Akan society is procreation. To Mbiti, “marriage and procreation in African communities are a unity: without procreation marriage is incomplete.”<sup>88</sup> The Akan say; *kwaɛ a nduamba nnyi ase no ye kwaɛ hun* (a forest without the undergrowth is a useless forest). The implication is that, no matter the number of adults in the family, when there are no children the family is a useless one.

The Akan society as noted earlier is divided into lineage and clan groups. The lineage serves as a religious, economic, as well as a political group. The prosperity, security, and even the survival of everyone depend on the well being of the lineage. Many stories of creation in African societies see humans being created as immortal. Humans lost this immortality

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 133.

through their disobedience. Procreation is thus a religious obligation by means of which the individual contributes the seeds of life towards humans' struggle against the loss of the original immortality.<sup>89</sup> It is thus humans' answer to death because, through it, the losses inflicted on society by death are made good.<sup>90</sup> Through procreation, the *sunsum* (spirit) of humans continue to live even after death. This accounts for the interest of the ancestors in procreation. *Ewufo mpo pe hon dodow, na atseasefo* (even the dead want an increase in their number, how much more, the living).<sup>91</sup> As Opoku observes, "it is indeed a religious duty for a man to produce an offspring so that the existence of humanity can be prolonged."<sup>92</sup>

Economic life in traditional Akan society centres mainly on farming. With simple technology, human labour is very important. Harvest yield from the farm is directly proportional to the labour force. The economic unit is the household, which normally consists of a man, his wife or wives and his children. Procreation thus becomes very important in ensuring that there are many people available to work on the farm. The lineage is also the basic political unit. Through procreation, a woman contributes members to her lineage. Her children become automatic members of her lineage and a woman's worth is recognised in terms of this contribution which enhances the political status of the group, such status being determined by numerical strength.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 124.

<sup>91</sup> One of the requests made to the ancestors is for them to send children. In fact, no libation is brought to an end without a request to the ancestors to let the people bear more children. Ancestors become angry at the living when they fail to procreate.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

With procreation as the main focus of marriage, childlessness becomes a very serious problem. Childlessness is looked upon with scorn,<sup>93</sup> and it is often blamed on the woman. The worst insult that could be rained on a woman is to call her *saadwe* (childless). A woman might be referred to as *obonyin* (barren), which does not have the connotation of an insult. But when she is referred to as *saadwe*, it is taken as very insulting. The childless woman is blamed for refusing to play her role in the maintenance of her lineage and also for preventing the husband's *sunsum* (spirit) to live on. Childlessness thus became one of the important grounds for divorce and polygyny.

In addition to procreation, marriage also functions to provide close companionship between the partners, but this is just incidental to the 'real' purpose of marriage.<sup>94</sup> It is believed that human companionship, however bad, is better than loneliness. Companionship however is not the most important function of marriage because the *ebusua* partly provides companionship to the individuals and technically one cannot be said to be lonely. But then companionship between married couples is regarded as important. Even in polygynous unions, the husband is expected to provide companionship to all the wives. Furthermore, the gender related roles in marriage are an indication that marriage also functions as a way of ensuring mutual help and support between the couple.

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<sup>93</sup> To show the abhorrence of the condition of barrenness in the woman and sterility in the man, and to prevent its occurrence, the Akan, in former times, drove thorns into the soles of such childless people when they died. This was intended to prevent them from walking back to society to be reborn.

<sup>94</sup> Oduyoye, "The Asante Woman ..", p. 10.

### 4.3. The Process of Marriage

The formation of marriage among the Akan, like other African cultures, is not an event that takes place on the wedding day, but is a long drawn-out process.<sup>95</sup> Hastings notes that marriage “did not take place at one single moment of time, but it came into being across a series of meetings, negotiations, and ceremonies.”<sup>96</sup> Each stage of the process serves a very important function and there is communal involvement.

There are three main parts or stages in the process of the formation of marriage, each of which involves a form of payment by the suitor’s relations to the would-be bride’s relations. Such payment serves as a form of seal to that part of the contract. Scholars however are divided on the proper names of the various stages and payments. E. A. Asamoah has described these three parts as ‘knocking’ at the door, ‘begging’ for the hand of the bride, and ‘securing the head wine.’<sup>97</sup> His description however is inadequate to explain the process. The knocking and the begging seem not to be separate parts of the process but go together. What Asamoah leaves out is the performance of the marriage rites. From the available evidence, it seems to me that the main elements of the process of the formation of marriage are *abow mu bo* (knocking), *tsirnsa* (securing the head wine) and *reye obaa no no ho adze* (performing the marriage rites of the woman). Each of these is discussed separately.

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<sup>95</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973), p. 63. Fortes, “Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti”, pp. 279-280. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, p. 30. C. Mugaviri, *A Critique of the Wesleyan Methodist Church’s Approach to Marriage in Zimbabwe: Towards an African Theology of Marriage* (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998), pp. 40-57.

<sup>96</sup> Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, p. 30.

<sup>97</sup> E. A. Asamoah, “The Christian Church and African Heritage”, *The International Review of Missions*, no. 44, 1955, p. 296.

#### 4.3.1. *Abow mu bo (Knocking)*

The process of the formation of marriage begins with *abow mu bo* (knocking). The father of the suitor, after making a survey and finding a suitable woman, and also examining the background of the woman (for unwanted conditions such as insanity), sends delegates to the woman's father to ask for her hand in marriage to his son. Normally, this takes place with the consent of the suitor. Sometimes, it is the suitor who indicates his interest in a particular woman and informs the father. The payment that goes with this stage is called *anobuensa* (mouth-opening drink). This payment, which may be in the form of a drink, sometimes together with cash, is to make the woman's father give a favourable response to the request.

Usually, the woman's father replies with the proverb, *wonngyina nkran mu ntutu nkran*, (one does not remove driver ants from the body while standing in their colony). This implies that such important matters do not merit an instant reply. The messengers are sent back, the woman's father promising to give them a reply later. During the intervening period, between the making of the request and the giving of the reply, the woman's father informs her mother about the request and she also informs her elders and, together, they investigate the life of the would-be-in-law.<sup>98</sup> After the woman's elders have satisfied themselves, a formal response is made concerning the request.

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<sup>98</sup> The relatives of each party make sure that the potential *affines* do not have any serious disease such as leprosy, epilepsy, and lunacy; are not given to quarrelling, and that the prospective spouse himself or herself is hardworking and respectful.

#### 4.3.2. *Payment of the tsir nsa (Head-wine)*

The next stage of the process is the payment of the *tsirnsa* (head-wine or head-drink). The suitor's father or his representative pays a drink, called *tsirnsa*, to the would-be-bride's father or his representative. Fortes sees this stage of the process as what formally establishes the marriage as legal.<sup>99</sup> He may have come to that conclusion because scholars like Sarbah fail to mention the third and final stage but bases everything on the *tsirnsa*.<sup>100</sup>

The situation however is that by the payment and acceptance of the *tsirnsa*, the would-be bride becomes committed and the parents have no right to give her in marriage to another man. The acceptance of the *tsirnsa* puts a seal of consent of the would-be bride and her father to the proposal, and gives a 'go ahead' sign to the suitor. It is for this reason that Buaben compares it to the English concept of engagement.<sup>101</sup> One of my informants, when asked whether the *tsirnsa* completes the marriage contract had this to say: "It is not complete, but you have rather committed the woman that you will marry her."<sup>102</sup> Danquah, who distinguishes it from the *tsir-sika* (head money) has described the *tsirnsa* as *aseda* (thanks money).<sup>103</sup> This distinction is important in that it helps us to appreciate the existence of another stage in the process. Danquah makes it clear that after the payment of the *aseda*, *tsir-sika* is then to be paid and that is what is returned to the husband if or when the marriage is

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<sup>99</sup> Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti", p. 280.

<sup>100</sup> See Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law*, p. 47-54.

<sup>101</sup> J. M. Buaben, *A Comparative Study of the Islamic Law of Inheritance and the Fante Customary Law of Inheritance* (MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985)

<sup>102</sup> Kow Amoah, Interview with author, Kormantse, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

<sup>103</sup> Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 159.

dissolved.

#### 4.3.3. *Reye obaa no ho adze (Performing the Marriage Rites of the Woman)*

After the *tsirnsa* has been accepted, the next stage of the process is to perform the marriage rites of the woman. That is expressed as *reye obaa no ho adze*. It consists of a number of payments, the main one being the *tsir-sika* or *tsir-adze*. According to Danquah, the *tsirnsa* and the *tsir-adze* are both required for the “full legal recognition” of the marriage. The payment of the *tsir-adze* ratifies the marriage and may be considered as documentary evidence attesting to the fact that matrimonial union has duly been entered into. It carries an idea of a symbolic exchange. One group receives a wife; the other obtains something in return, for example, money, cloth and drinks. When the marriage rites are performed, the marriage becomes legalised.

Some scholars have interpreted African wives as those who have been “sold into marriage.” This is mainly due to the high bride price paid in patrilineal societies. The Akan do not have a high bride price. What is given is seen as a thanksgiving gift. Oduyoye recollects what her maternal grand-uncle said to her husband: “We are Akan. We do not sell our daughters. If they are unhappy or do not prosper in the marriage, we reserve the right to dissolve the marriage.”<sup>104</sup> She claims that as a result of this the Akan woman stays in the marriage out of her own volition and not because she belongs in any sense to her husband’s family. Such an assertion by Oduyoye’s grand-uncle is not uncommon among the Akan. In response to

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<sup>104</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, “Feminist Theology in African Perspective” in R. Gibellini (Ed.) *Paths of African Theology* (London, SCM Press, 1994), p. 168.

Rattray's implication that in Akan marriage the woman is offered on 'sale' to the man, J. B.

Danquah comments that for Rattray to say this is:

To betray a not very high appreciation of the meaning of the Akan word *odehye*, 'freeborn.' Anyone acquainted with the depth of pride in which an uncle or grand-uncle – the head of a large Akan family – guards and broods over his free 'born' would not lightly speak thus on the subject. To suggest to an Akan head of family, a *Nana*, that his niece who has just been married into a stranger – clan or family has been bought is about the last affront one can offer to a member of the proud and haughty Akan race.<sup>105</sup>

Elsewhere, Danquah argues:

If the theory of sale were to fit in with what "sale" means, in economics, one should expect that the more highly connected and wealthy an attractive and marriageable girl is, the higher or greater should be her price or head-money. But actually what do we find? Just the contrary of the hypothesis. The truth is that the best connected girls of good family and up-bringing, or, generally, girls of wealthy parents, are most commonly those in respect of whom no head-money is demanded, or, if asked, it is of very small nominal value.<sup>106</sup>

In actual fact, the payment of money has been noted to be the Akan method of sealing a deal of any kind. "In any two-part transaction involving the element of law," Manoukian asserts, "the man who benefits produces drink and money to bind the witnesses and to ensure the benevolence of the ancestors."<sup>107</sup>

There are other less significant payments made in this third stage. *Tambobaa*,<sup>108</sup> *bowdotoa*<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> J. B. Danquah, *Akan Law and Customs*, p. 8.

<sup>106</sup> J. B. Danquah, *Cases in Akan Law*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>107</sup> Manoukian, *Western Africa Part I*, p. 31.

<sup>108</sup> *Tambobaa* literally means "the stone for the cloth." It used to be a stone, which the mother tied at the end of her cloth to remind her of her daughter always.

<sup>109</sup> *Bowdotoa* literally means tobacco for the pipe. It is said argued that the bride used to be sent by the father to buy tobacco for his pipe. Now that she is being taken from him, the one taking her gives him tobacco so that he will not be worried about looking for someone to send to buy him tobacco.

and *akontan sekan*<sup>110</sup> are paid to the mother, father and brothers of the bride respectively. The ceremony during which these payments are made is often accompanied by libations to the ancestors, and this signifies the participation of the ancestors in the marriage. They are called upon to bless the marriage with children. Another important aspect of the ceremony is the appointment of elders as *awar n'kyirtaafo* (the backbone of the marriage). These elders have the responsibility of seeing to it that all goes well with the marriage. Normally, two elders are appointed one from the man's family and the other from the woman's family. These appointments suggest the anticipation of marital conflicts which those appointed are expected to help resolve. Couples are therefore not left on their own. Resources are made available for handling conflicts should they arise.

After the ceremony, the man fixes a date on which he will go for his wife. This is what is referred to as *ayeforhya* (meeting of the bride) or the wedding. This ceremony is different from the English concept of wedding, and it has nothing to do with the legality of the marriage. His maternal aunts go for the woman at her home where she would have already been prepared for her husband. A marriage meal known as *edziban kese* (great meal) is usually prepared by the bride and sent to the groom's house to be enjoyed by him and his relatives and friends at the *ayeforhya*. These are the main stages of the process of the formation of marriage. Once the marriage is formed, there is the need to care for it.

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<sup>110</sup> *Akontan sekan* means brother-in-law's dagger. It symbolises the power of the bride's brothers to protect her.

## 5. THE CARE OF MARRIAGES IN TRADITIONAL AKAN SOCIETY

The care of marriages involves not only the care of the couple relationship but also the whole of the network of families that constitutes the marital union. However, the couple at the centre of the union is given the needed attention. The goal of the care of marriage is the promotion of the totality of the well being of the families which have come into an alliance through the marriage. This can be achieved only through peaceful co-existence. So, the Akans say that *asomdwee nye oman ngyinado* (peace makes for the stability of the state), and *se etur afanu hyia a, nsamankwan mu nntɔ pan* (if guns from opposing camps meet, the road to the land of the dead is never deserted). As Twumasi rightly observes, “in such an integrated social setting, a breach in social relations threatens almost the very survival of the group. ... It is even more serious in a traditional social setting where almost always relatives interact with one another in various aspects of their day-to-day activities.”<sup>111</sup> Care involves, among other things, education, support and the resolution of conflict. These are discussed in the following sections.

### 5.1. Care as Education

To promote peaceful co-existence, the care of marriages has a preventive nature. Efforts are made to make sure that problems arising out of marriages are minimal. Education on marriage is therefore an important aspect of care. Such education is not formal but informal. It takes place through some form of apprenticeship. It is primarily the mother's duty to teach her daughter 'how to marry.' For this reason it is said that *obaa dze ne na ko awar* (a woman goes

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<sup>111</sup> P. A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology* (Accra-Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), p. 23.

with her mother into marriage). However, other adult females are involved in education by way of giving the girl tasks to perform, correcting, and encouraging her. Such education basically consists of homemaking; cooking, laundry and taking care of children. These constitute the wife's main role in marriage. At puberty the girl is taught how to take care of herself during menses, the dangers of premarital sex, and faithfulness in marriage. In certain areas, there are special rites performed at puberty and part of these rites includes educating the girl on specific aspects of marriage life.

On the side of the man, it is the role of the father and other male adults to educate him on marriage. In this, the goal is to make sure that the man will be able to fulfil his role in marriage, providing the basic needs of food and clothing for the wife. Thus education includes helping the man learn a trade, which often times happens to be the father's trade. The man is also taught that it is his duty to provide for the wife and children and that it is uncultured to batter her.

## **5.2. Care as Support**

Another aspect of the care of marriages is the material and emotional support offered by the community of families which have been united by the marriage. Kow Amoah points out that "the most important role of the family is that in the past, it was the father's duty to see to it that the couple was established. He gave the bridegroom capital to begin life with. The Akan call this *dwetsir*. The mother also provided some basic household items like cooking pots. The newly married man cannot provide all of the things needed, so whatever she thinks is needful,

the mother of the woman provided for her daughter to enter into marriage.”<sup>112</sup> Material support does not end with these initial gifts but in the course of the marriage, it is normal for parents and other family members to shower gifts on the couple and to help them out when they are in financial difficulty.

Amoah further observes that in addition to the material support, the basic requirement from the families was to see to it that the marriage became stable. Thus the families provide a lot of emotional support in times of stress, such as the stress that comes with the birth of a new baby. The wife’s mother leaves her own ‘business’ to care for her (the wife) and her child until the wife gains enough strength to handle things herself.<sup>113</sup> The very presence of the wife’s mother provides emotional support for her. Also during times of crisis such as loss of job and income, the family will be there not just to provide material support but also emotional support until the couple is able to surmount the crisis. Such support, which takes various forms, helps the stability of the marriage. Marriage in traditional Akan society therefore is not easily dissolved.

### **5.3. Care as Conflict Resolution**

Marital conflict is a very complex issue. A row between a couple is not only an issue between the individual spouses but it is also one between members of their extended relations. If the issue is not resolved immediately, it begins to affect the relationships between the families of

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<sup>112</sup> Kow Amoah, Interview with author, Kormantse, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

<sup>113</sup> This practice is still prevalent today and the researcher is aware that couples living abroad do invite one of their mothers to come and help when a child is born.

the man, on the one hand, and those of the woman, on the other hand.<sup>114</sup> Conflicts between marriage partners may be precipitated by the refusal of one partner to fulfil the defined gender roles in marriage.<sup>115</sup> Conflict may also arise from accusations of the use of witchcraft or *juju* (sorcery) against each other, which adds a religious significance to the conflict.

Augsburger has observed that conflict and its resolution has cultural implications.<sup>116</sup> In Akan culture spouses are discouraged from telling everybody they meet about their marital problems. It is said that *fie asem nnye ntamgow na woahor ahata gua do*, (domestic affairs are not like dirty linen which is washed and dried in an open place). Spouses are rather encouraged to make complaints to the appointed elders when they feel ill treated hence the saying that *se efer a efon* (if you are shy, you lose weight). This implies that if one is shy and fails to make complaints when ill-treated one suffers unnecessarily.

The Akan recognises the importance of third party mediation. They say that *se baanu ko a, nyia otsia ebiasa no ye opatafo*, (if two persons fight, the third person on the scene must be a peace maker). Both Sekum<sup>117</sup> and Walters<sup>118</sup> argue that the purpose of the appointment of *awar n'ekyirtafo* is that the couple would get some people to whom reports can be made so

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<sup>114</sup> The disturbance in relationships may manifest itself in the refusal of members of one party to extend the normal greetings to members of the other party, the use of insinuations against one another and, sometimes, open confrontations and quarrels.

<sup>115</sup> Failure on the part of the woman to cook for the husband on time, laziness in the performance of household chores, infidelity, as well as childlessness, could lead to conflict situations. On the other hand, failures of the man to provide the basic needs of food and clothing and also to provide the sexual needs of the wife are normal causes of conflict. Cruelty, impotence and desertion on the part of the man may also lead to conflict.

<sup>116</sup> D. W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). He identifies differences in mediation between modern and traditional cultures, and argues that the individualism of modern cultures leads to a preference for resolving conflicts by personal action in private interactions while traditional cultures tend to use communal processes. He also draws attention to the fact that in some cultures, whatever counsel there is on the resolution of conflicts is to be found in proverbs quoted, stories told and cases recalled. He writes: "from culture to culture, each has developed its unique patterns of managing differences and resolving disputes. Each constructs its repertoire of conflict behaviours, its hierarchy of values, its codes of laws" (p.22)

<sup>117</sup> K. Sekum, Interview, Komenda, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

<sup>118</sup> E. Walters, Interview, Cape Coast, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2001.

that they would help to resolve any conflict. Thus conflicts are anticipated and provision is made to resolve them when they arise. The importance, wisdom and efficiency of elders in the resolution of conflicts are noted in a number of proverbs. It is said that *sɛ ahondze tsew mpanyin enyim a, onnyew* (if a string of beads breaks in the presence of the elders, they are not lost). The implication of this proverb is that if anything goes wrong in the marriage, the elders put it right with their knowledge and experience. There is therefore a traditional respect for the elderly,<sup>119</sup> which is very important in the resolution of conflict in traditional Akan society. The parties to a conflict, as a result of such respect, give the elders the opportunity to mediate in the conflict. It also gives the elders confidence when they undertake the task of resolution, knowing that the parties involved in the conflict will co-operate with them.

The normal procedure is for the aggrieved person to report to his/her elder. This elder discusses the issue with the other elder on the other spouse's side. This second elder then calls the partner who has offended and discusses with him/her the issue and asks him/her to try and make peace. A report of what happened is then channelled through the same sequence to the aggrieved person. If the issue is not resolved, the two elders may call both spouses for a settlement of the issue. If that doesn't work, other elders from both families are involved.

In all of these attempts there is always the admonition to forgive, to be patient in the face of provocation, to compromise one's stand, to do away with anger, and not to take the law into one's own hands. For example, a husband or wife may be admonished by his or her elder: *se efa wansema ho ebufuw a, ibur wukur*, (if you get annoyed with the housefly, you bruise your sore). The person provoked is represented as having a sore, which a fly tries to infect. The

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<sup>119</sup> C. K. Konadu, "Pastoral Care and Counselling in Africa: The Case of Ghana" in U. Atkins and K. Federschmidt (Eds.) *Human Images and Life -Stories in a Multi-Cultural World: Inter-Cultural Pastoral Care*

person must try to drive it away patiently each time it flies towards him. If he loses his temper, he may, in attempting to kill the fly, bruise his sore. Through this proverb, one is admonished to do away with anger towards the other so as not to damage one's interest and reputation, and destroy the relationships between oneself and one's extended relations and those of the other spouse. Those found guilty in disputes are admonished to confess and to pacify the wronged party. All of this is aimed at creating a community where there is peaceful co-existence. This goal can only be achieved when conflicting parties have been reconciled, a cardinal principle that underlies the judicial system of Akan social organisation.<sup>120</sup>

Kunadu claims that often people are forced to suppress their feelings and pain to obey their elders.<sup>121</sup> This is not really the case. The elders do not give judgements in an arbitrary manner. Factors underlying a conflict are taken into consideration in the Akan administration of justice. It is said that *osuhyefa, wombua*, (if you have not made the two sides of the roof, do not thatch it). This implies that one cannot administer justice until one has heard the two sides of the case. Elders are required to get to the root of a problem and analyse it before giving judgement; hence the Akan saying that *wofi ahoma ano na wosan*, that is, "the knot is untied from the end." Elders are also required to guard against partiality or favouritism, not to act on hearsay, but to be just in their judgements. According to Nukunya, "tradition requires that justice should be done and the flexibility which social relations may require should not work

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*and Counselling*, no.1, 1996, p. 36.

<sup>120</sup> M. Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana: A Study in Persistence and Change* (Accra-Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 101.

<sup>121</sup> Kunadu, "Pastoral Care and Counselling in Africa. ..." He argues that when an elder sits in decision on an issue, he is not expected to find who is guilty or not, but he is required to help settle differences and bring social equilibrium. This emphasis on the settling of differences rather than apportioning blame has been noted to be very useful. Augsburg argues that this is a very important skill, which should be available to the third party negotiator. Mediators need to "search for solutions rather than analysing responsibility. The negotiator can refuse to allow a debate over assigning responsibility. The third party might state: "The purpose of this discussion is to uncover possibilities, not to show who is wrong." See Augsburg, *Conflict Mediation across Cultures*, p.160.

either to the detriment of a person who deserves commendation or make it possible for a wrong-doer to escape rebuke or punishment."<sup>122</sup>

There is a religious element in the resolution of conflict. Nukunya observes that, among the Akans religion is the mainstay of the whole of the legal system.<sup>123</sup> An elder may advise an aggrieved person not to take revenge but to leave the matter in the hands of *Nyame* (God). It is said that *Nyame mmpe bon* (God is against all evil). *Nyame* is seen as a righteous judge who will ensure that justice is done. Such advice can be quite helpful in the sense that it aids the spouse to cope with the situation and eventually the conflict wanes. However, in such situations, since the underlying causes of the conflict are not dealt with, there is the tendency for the conflict to resurface.

Another area of supernatural involvement has to do with the fact that the deities and ancestors buttress the powers of the elders and the judges. It is believed that the elders act on behalf of the ancestors. Their judgement therefore has religious sanctions because they are considered to be the decisions of the ancestors using the elders as a medium. It can thus be argued that the respect for the elders is not only by virtue of the qualities they possess in themselves, but also by virtue of the supernatural backing they have from the ancestors.<sup>124</sup> Such support enables the elders to pursue the course of justice without fear or favour.

Every effort is made to bring about reconciliation in marital conflicts. But when the elders realise that reconciliation is not possible, they may agree to the dissolution of the marriage. Before divorce is granted there would have been a series of arbitrations aimed at

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<sup>122</sup> Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 86.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

reconciliation.<sup>125</sup> Even though elders have generally been quite successful in resolving marital conflicts, there are times when some have gone against the norms of executing just judgements. Some have at times been partial, or have not analysed issues to get to the root of problems as expected of them. But this is a common human problem with individual elders and not with the principles laid down for resolving conflicts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the nature, purpose and process of marriage as well as how marriage is cared for in traditional Akan society has been discussed. Polygyny is permitted but it is not the norm. Marriage is not a patriarchal institution. It is a communal affair. Companionship and mutual support between spouses are part of the reasons for marriage but the main purpose of marriage is procreation. The formation of marriage is a process and each aspect of the process has certain payments, which serves as a seal to that aspect of the process. The family communities that are united through a marriage are involved in each aspect of the process.

Marriage is cared for by way of education, support and conflict resolution. The goal of the care of marriage is the peaceful co-existence not only between the couple but also their families. To this end the community is involved in the attempts to care for marriages. Social changes have impacted on the nature, purpose, process, and care of marriages and yet traditional practices remain resilient. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of the impact

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<sup>125</sup> See W. C. E. Daniels, "Laws relating to Husband and Wife in Ghana" in *Integration of Customary and Modern Legal Systems in Africa: A Conference held at Ibadan on 24<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August 1964* (Ife: University of Ife Press/ Institute of African Studies, 1971) p. 380. He argues that "'Sentence' of divorce is not pronounced *in limine*. When the parties have major disagreements or one of them has been guilty of misconduct, he or she can be summoned either before representatives of their family, or before some of the elders in the locality, to have the matter settled amicably. If this process of reconciliation fails, the matter is taken before arbitrators including

of social change and the resultant effect on the nature, purpose, process and the care of marriage.

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members of the families of both spouses. The arbitrator may again try to effect a reconciliation; if they fail, they will then pronounce the 'sentence' of divorce.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CHANGING NATURE OF AKAN MARRIAGE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Change constitutes “a significant alteration in social structure,”<sup>1</sup> and is always part of society. It could mean the introduction of a new or unfamiliar thing or the transformation of, for instance, an institution such that it attains a new structure, but not necessarily losing all the characteristics of the old structure. Alterations in social structure manifest, among other things, in changes in social relationships. Everything goes through a process of change with time and there is no society in which change of one kind or another has not taken place in history. Change may have positive impact on society. It could be the vital force of development. On the other hand it could have negative effects on the society.

The last chapter was concluded on the note that social changes have impacted on marriage even though traditional practices remain resilient. A renowned Ghanaian sociologist describes the situation as one in which “most Ghanaians operate in the traditional and the modern social systems at various levels of their social interaction.”<sup>2</sup> Put differently, there is an “interplay of tradition and change.”<sup>3</sup> Konadu observes that “people are bombarded with varied pressures: pressures of tradition, pressures of modern living and pressures of religious beliefs.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Moore, *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963)

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Assimeng, *An Anatomy of Modern Ghana*, J. B. Danquah Memorial Lectures, 28<sup>th</sup> Series, March 1995 (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change: The Case of the Family*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> C. K. Konadu, “The effect of Social Change on the Matrilineal System of the Ashantis of Ghana”, p.47.

Two philosophies underlie the changes taking place in Akan marriage. These are individualism and to a lesser degree positivism. Individualism refers to one's self-concept, to the image of oneself as an individual unit whose motivations and behaviour are aimed at individual goals, as opposed, for instance, to a member of a group whose behaviour is directed toward smooth harmonious interpersonal relations.<sup>5</sup> Oduyoye aptly points out that, "almost everywhere it (colonisation) undermined the social relations and, together with Christianity, assumed that cultural practices could be judged at the courts of European culture and be dismantled, validated or enhanced according to European norms. Most fundamental of this cultural re-orientation is the Western philosophy of individualism."<sup>6</sup> She however emphasises that this has not changed social and cultural obligations, which, to an extent, remain communal in nature. But the move towards individualism has led to various conflicts within people and between people, and has impacted on relationships.

Positivism is a philosophical perspective that originated in the West from the eighteenth century. It emphasises knowledge as being based on scientific inquiry rather than theological dogma or philosophical reflection.<sup>7</sup> Central to the positivist viewpoint is the belief that there are certain universal 'facts' about the world and that the discovery of these facts is made possible through neutral and objective observation of the world. The philosophical perspective of positivism is in opposition to the Akan worldview in which reality is interpreted theologically. Bruce<sup>8</sup> points out that the fundamental assumption underlying

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<sup>5</sup> See D. Augsburg, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, *Introductions in Feminist Theology*, Vol. 6, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Lynch, "A Pragmatic Approach to Clinical Counselling in Context" in J. Lees (Ed.) *Clinical Counselling in Context: An Introduction* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> S. Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 51.

science, rationality,<sup>9</sup> makes it unlikely that we will often entertain the notion of the divine. Positivism with its emphasis on science is also fundamental, though to a lesser degree, in the cultural re-orientation of the Akan.

In this chapter the changes taking place in the society and how they have impacted on Akan marriages are discussed. The discussion begins with the causative factors that have led to the changes and it is followed by a discussion of how the changes have impacted on marriages.

## **2. FACTORS OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

Various factors account for the changing nature of Akan society. I don't intend to discuss these in detail but to point out that modernity and its underlying ethos have had a remarkable impact on Akan marriage. The pace of social change among the Akan has increased recently as a result of globalisation and its effects.

### **2.1. Modernity**

In Europe history has been seen as divided into three epochs: ancient or classical, medieval and modern.<sup>10</sup> Modern is taken as the historical period from the sixteenth century to the present. Bruce traces the origins of modern rationality, the rise of individualism and the foundations of modern science to the Reformation, which conventionally started on the last

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<sup>9</sup> 'Rationality' includes the view of the material world as an amoral series of invariant relationships of cause and effect, the componentiality of objects, the reproducibility of actions, the expectation of constant change in our exploitation of the material world and the insistence on innovation. See *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Classical is often used to refer to ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome. Medieval variously refers to the period from 500 AD to 1500 AD. Modern History would begin from the early sixteenth century to the present day. See Assimeng, *An Anatomy of Modern Ghana*, p. 4 and D. Smith, *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 5-6.

day of October 1517.<sup>11</sup> Three powerful forces are at play in the modern age or modernity: the modern nation state, modern science and capitalism.<sup>12</sup> The effects of these forces are the fragmentation of society – the division of single social institutions into smaller but more specialised units, the eclipse of the community – the undermining of small-scale communities by industrial and commercial enterprises, and the emergence of the nation state, and rationalisation.<sup>13</sup> Underlying all of these are two important philosophies, individualism and positivism.

Modernity led to social changes in Europe. Education, urbanisation, industrialisation, bureaucratisation, rapid communication and transportation destabilised closely-knit family networks and increased the tendency towards individualism. The renaissance or new learning of the enlightenment period also led to the questioning of religion<sup>14</sup> and enhanced the move towards positivism. When these Western cultures came into contact with African cultures the African cultures also experienced social changes as a result of the systematic attempts to replace what is African with what is modern. Christianity and colonialism became vehicles in

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, p. 9. Bruce argues that capitalism is the unintended effect of the Reformation. The Reformation brought about the new secular notion of vocation, the stress on diligence, the anxious need to avoid sin, the keenness to see success as a sign of election. If we add the parable of the good steward to these, we find the basis for a new character and a new attitude towards work and accumulation, which he calls the spirit of capitalism. See p. 18. He adds that in insisting that all people had a responsibility for their own spiritual state, the Reformation inadvertently added greatly to the growth of individualism. It also created the need for people to become better informed about their religion and in addition to the promotion of printing and literacy, it contributed to the rationalisation of the world. See pp. 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Zygmunt Bauman*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, pp. 39-59.

<sup>14</sup> Assimeng, *An Anatomy of Modern Ghana*, p. 6.

these attempts.

### **2.1.1. Christianity as a Vehicle for Modernisation**

Both Christianity and Islam have played a role in the changing nature of Akan society. However, Islam accommodated traditional culture quite well.<sup>15</sup> Christianity however did not accommodate traditional culture but sought to change it with a modern culture. The first contact of the Akan with Christianity was when Portuguese explorer-traders led by Diego di Azambuja landed at Elmina on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1482 and celebrated mass on an altar set up at the foot of a tree on a hillock.<sup>16</sup> They later erected the St. George castle at Elmina and the mass was celebrated in one of its chapels. Attempts were made to carry on missionary activities among the inhabitants of Elmina but these initial attempts proved unsuccessful. It was not until the nineteenth century that successful missionary activity got established among the Akan of Ghana through the Basel Missionary Society in 1828, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1835 and the Roman Catholics in 1880.<sup>17</sup>

The missionaries pursued a dual mandate in Africa, evangelisation and civilisation. The tools used to achieve the mandate of evangelisation had the underlying ethos of individualism and positivism. Evangelisation aimed at conversion of the Akan from their indigenous religions to Christianity. Such conversion reflected the whole new consciousness of the individual that

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<sup>15</sup> See G. M. Okafor, *Christianity and Islam in West Africa: the Ghana Experience* (Wurzburg: Echter Verlag & Atenberge: Oros Verlag, 1997), p. 62. Sanneh also argues that there is a pervasiveness of African elements in Islam. See L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity, The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1983), p. 213.

<sup>16</sup> J. K. Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations, 1482-1919, Vol.1* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) chap. 1. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, p. 17. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> Agbeti, *West African Church History*, Chapters. 5, 6, &10. See also Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 125. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, Chapter. 5.

emerged in the West at the dawn of modernity.<sup>18</sup> Missionaries sought individual conviction and conversion. Thus “the whole ideology of the nineteenth century missionary movement can be said to have begun with a simple evangelical individualism grounded upon the Bible first and last.”<sup>19</sup> Response to such individual conversion for the Akan meant that he/she had to break, to some degree, from his/her descent group. So Christianity influenced social change by fostering an individualistic view of conversion and personal relationship with God. This impacted, to an extent, the convert’s relations with their descent group.

The mandate of evangelisation was pursued mainly through the tool of education, and in a limited way, through health delivery. Okafor points out that mission schools turned out to be the most efficient instrument in not only spreading Christianity but also in the accompanying social change.<sup>20</sup> He observes that “of all the systems which participated in reforming, developing and turning Gold Coast and Ashanti into a modern state (Ghana) ... educational contributions remain the most outstanding and influential.”<sup>21</sup> Sanneh also observes about education that “no subject was as effective in the revolutionary transformation of African societies.”<sup>22</sup> However, it is the same education that seemed to undermine traditional culture. In the schools and institutions established by the missionaries, much emphasis was laid on the building of individual character, spirituality and responsibility rather than on the material and

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the new consciousness of the individual, see S. B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), chap. 1. See Also Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, chap. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Okafor, *Christianity and Islam in West Africa*, p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79. Up to today, mission schools stand out as the best run schools in Ghana. It is for this reason that Kwame Nkrumah, an Akan and the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Ghana paid tribute to the early missionaries when he addressed the International Missionary Council meeting at Accra in 1958. See *ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, p. 127. The missionaries took education serious as a result of a statement attributed to Nana Addo Dankwa, chief of Akropong, and said to have been made to Rev. Andreas Riis, a missionary of the Basel Mission: “When God created the world He made books for the White man and fetishes for the Black man. But if you can show us some Black man who can read White man’s books, then we will follow you.” See Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 127.

social welfare of the people. Thus Western education instilled in the young Akan mind, the philosophy of individualism. E. E. Obeng clearly describes this:

This type of education ... struck at the very root of our social structure. It created a new African or Ghanaian or Ashanti who depended very much on his own "knowledge and education" for his livelihood. He depended very little, if at all, on his traditional family ties in his daily activities and leaned more and more onto his own achievement. Consciously or unconsciously the new educated youth in Ashanti ... gradually became alienated from his own people. Traditional authority and values came to be rejected by the educated youth.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to making the youth feel self-dependent and individualistic, education further impacted on traditional society by leading to the drift of the youth from the rural to the urban areas in search of 'white-collar jobs.' This further weakened communal bonds.

The new knowledge and education introduced by the missionaries also had the underlying philosophy of positivism. Everything needed to be explained in terms of science, of observable universal 'facts.' Anything that could not be explained in terms of science was regarded as superstition. A number of practices among the Akan were thus regarded as superstition, for example, belief in the power of witchcraft.

Another tool used by the missionaries in the pursuit of the mandate of evangelisation was health delivery. In this the philosophy of positivism was clearly evident. Okafor explains that a new understanding of causes of sicknesses and diseases arose from the health centres and clinics of the missionaries.<sup>24</sup> This new understanding is the scientific understanding of causation which is different from the traditional theological understanding of causation that includes both the physiological and the spiritual. Healing thus becomes only the relief from

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Okafor, *Christianity and Islam in West Africa*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

physical symptoms and not the relief from the powers of negative spiritual forces. Also the philosophy of individualism is evident here. Healing becomes an individual's search for cure and not the community's search for wholeness. Thus the whole idea of evangelisation, together with the tools of education and health delivery, used by the missionaries in its pursuit had the underlying ethos of individualism and positivism, an ethos that contrasts with the Akan worldview of communalism and theological interpretation of events.

### ***2.1.2. Colonisation as a vehicle for Modernisation***

The missionaries also had a second mandate of civilisation. Even though they pursued this mandate, it is the colonial authorities that made civilisation their main goal. Together with the missionaries, the colonial authorities had preconceived ideas about Africa typical of the Victorian period: that Africa was a Dark Continent without civilisation and devoid of moral codes.<sup>25</sup> Civilisation then meant the wiping out of the culture of the Akan people and replacing it with European culture. Lloyd therefore writes:

To a substantial degree the West African states have been provided with the prerequisites of modern and industrial societies. But in each case the metropolitan power bestowed upon the colonies her own institutions. The early forms of central government, the educational and legal systems were all imposed upon traditional African societies – in no instance did they develop naturally out of them.<sup>26</sup>

Underlying this civilisation that was promoted was the ethos of individualism and positivism characteristic of modernity. This is observed in, for example, the legal and the family institutions. The goal of the legal system in traditional society is to achieve peaceful co-

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> P. C. Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change* (Middlesex etc.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967, Reprinted with Revisions, 1972), p. 157.

existence in the community. This goal can only be achieved when conflicting parties have been reconciled, a cardinal principle that underlies the judicial system of Akan social organisation.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, "Western styles of conflict resolution value one-to-one direct address, confrontation, self disclosure, negotiation, and resolution."<sup>28</sup> While the goal of the legal system in traditional society is the communal well being of all the people, in the West it is the well being of the individual. Thus in the legal system, civilisation meant replacing the philosophy of communalism with that of individualism.

We find the same notions of individualism in the modern form of family introduced as part of the civilisation package. In traditional Akan society, the family is a broad institution. It consists of direct descendants of a putative ancestress through the female line referred to as *ebusua*. The Akan do not even have a word for the nuclear family.<sup>29</sup> However the modern form of family introduced by the colonial authorities and the missionaries is the nuclear family, the model family of the Victorian period. Lloyd thus observes that the nineteenth century missionary tended to see the acceptance of Christianity as inseparable from the adoption of Victorian family life.<sup>30</sup> This type of family has the underlying ethos of individualism because it seeks individual goals and not the goals of the group. I shall mention later that the philosophy of positivism also played a role in the changes with respect to marriage.

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<sup>27</sup> J. M. Assimeng, *Social Structure of Ghana: A Study in Persistence and Change* (Accra-Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 101.

<sup>28</sup> D. Augsburg, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures*, p. 183.

<sup>29</sup> See K. E. de Graft Johnson, "Family Research: The Ghanaian Situation" in E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *Family and Development in Ghana*, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change*, p. 159.

One other aspect of the civilisation process was industrial capitalism. This has to do with the massive economic and technological developments that were offshoots of the enlightenment and modernity in the West. Production and consumption were organised on the basis of a market economy, involving large-scale monetary exchange and the accumulation of capital.<sup>31</sup> This led to massive demographic shifts and urbanisation. A similar effect was experienced when industrial capitalism was introduced into Ghana. As noted earlier, young adults left the village to look for white-collar jobs in the new industries, which were being created in the urban areas. With the weakening of the ties between young adults and their families, the shift towards individualism was reinforced.

The shift was further reinforced through the acquisition of personal wealth, which fostered a feeling of self-sufficiency and independence from the family. Thus the acquisition of personal wealth became the overriding goal of many young adults. But the ties with the family were not totally severed. Often, it takes the whole family to help educate the young adult to be able to gain employment in the urban centres. It behoves the young adult, then, to reciprocate the gesture of the family by also offering support to members of the family. Thus the young adult feels that they are committed to the family while at the same time they feel that because they have gained wealth through their own efforts, the family need not bother them. As a result, the young adult is always living with the tension between individualism and communalism.

Industrialisation itself arose as a result of discoveries in science and technology. As Bruce points out, “technological production takes it for granted that any creative complex of actions can be subdivided into simple acts which can be repeated infinitely and always with the same

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<sup>31</sup> E. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London/ New York: Mowbray, Cassell Imprint, 1996), p. 19.

consequence.”<sup>32</sup> He argues that while there is no obvious clash between these assumptions and the teachings of most major religions, “there are serious incompatibilities of approach. There is little space for the eruption of the divine.”<sup>33</sup> Underlying industrialisation therefore is the philosophy of positivism, which also began to have an influence on the young Akan who found themselves in the industries. Coupled with their distance from the village where the influence of the divine was evident through ritual sacrifices, the impact of positivism could have been massive. But it is said that the African is notoriously religious hence as I shall discuss later in Chapter Four, the impact of positivism was not as massive as one may assume.

## 2.2. Globalisation

If Christianity and colonialism were vehicles by which modernity was introduced in the past, improvements in transportation, communication and information technology have led to a far closer ‘culture contact’<sup>34</sup> between traditional Akan culture and modern culture. The world, it is said, has become a global village. While some view globalisation as a recent development, others like Teresa Okure see it as having a long history of existence starting in Africa with the slave trade and intensifying through colonialism, new-colonialism and modern globalisation.<sup>35</sup> Modern globalisation has been defined as the “emergence of interconnected systems of communication, transportation, and economic exchange knitting the world

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> Term used by A. Phillips. See A. Phillips, “Introductory Essay” in A. Phillips (ed.) *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*, p. xviii. Tippit discusses the powerful changes that have taken place in recent times as a result of improvements in transportation, communication and information technology. See S. Tippit, *The Gathering Storm: Winds of Change in a Post-Christian World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), pp. 15-30.

<sup>35</sup> T. Okure, “Africa: Globalisation and the Loss of Cultural Identity” in J. Sobrino and F. Wilfred (Eds.) *Concilium, 2001/5: Globalisation and its Victims* (London: SCM, 2001), p. 68.

together into a transnational, heterogeneous global community.”<sup>36</sup> Globalisation has become a subject for much scholarly discussion. Such discussion have emphasised aspects of life such as trade, market economy, education, ethics, culture etc.<sup>37</sup> Globalisation has had, and continues to have, mixed results for different peoples. As Stackhouse puts it, “some people will be winners and some losers.”<sup>38</sup>

Two aspects of globalisation are of interest to this study. These are cultural homogenisation and the global economy. Cultural homogenisation includes the communication of idealised, Western lifestyles through the global media, including television, movies and music.<sup>39</sup> On this Okure argues that “globalisation is an ill wind that blows no culture any good, a broad road that leads subtly and steadily to the destruction of local cultures and persuades many world-wide to follow it.”<sup>40</sup> She argues that African culture is a person-centred culture, one that values people and human life over things and material gains, one of caring, sharing and hospitality. African culture has an in-built structure of human relations based on communalism. Economic progress as a global culture requires the survival of the fittest and thus it fosters individualism.<sup>41</sup> One effect of globalisation among the Akan is that personal acquisitiveness and accumulation of wealth have in some instances, replaced the values of sharing and hospitality. For example, in some Charismatic churches in Ghana, a lot of emphasis is placed on personal success, health and wealth, a replica of the faith movement

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<sup>36</sup> R. Osmer, “The Teaching Ministry in a Multicultural World” in M. L. Stackhouse and D. S. Browning (Eds.) *God and Globalisation*, Vol. 2, *The Spirit and the Modern Authorities* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> See G. Robinson, “Globalisation and the Prophetic Voice of the Church” in I. J. M. Razu and P. M. P. Peter (Eds.) *Dialogue on Globalisation* (Bangalore: Student Christian Movement of India, 2000), p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> M. L. Stackhouse, “Remarks on Globalisation” in I. J. M. Razu and P. M. P. Peter (Eds.) *Dialogue on Globalisation*, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> R. Osmer, “The Teaching Ministry in a Multicultural World”, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> T. Okure, “Africa: Globalisation and the Loss of Cultural Identity”, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68-69.

mainly from the West.<sup>42</sup> Another pervading philosophy in the dominant culture from the West is positivism, which has no doubt, impacted on Akan culture. Some Akans today claim, as the missionaries did, that witchcraft is just superstition.

The effects of globalisation on the economy of Third World countries are very negative. In Ghana policies of the World Bank and the IMF such as the Structural Adjustment Programme have had very negative effects on the economy such that there is a disastrous drop in standards of living.<sup>43</sup> Such falling standards of living affect relationships between spouses and between couples and their extended families. As Jenkins points out one of the basic problems facing marriages in Ghana is finance.<sup>44</sup> In the next section how the above factors have impacted traditional Akan marriage is discussed.

### 3. *THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE ON MARRIAGE*

The process of change has had varied effects on individuals, institutions and societies. Phillips observes, "once the age-old rhythm of life in a small closely-knit society was disturbed, once the individual African was enabled to place himself outside the effective range of traditional controls, it could not be expected that the customary system of marriage and family life would long survive unchanged."<sup>45</sup> This observation is largely true of the Akan. Basically, changes

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<sup>42</sup> See P. Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), pp. 78-79. Among the leaders of the faith movement are Robert Schuller, Oral Roberts, Casey Treat, John Avanzini, Kenneth Hagin and T. L. Osborn

<sup>43</sup> De Graft Johnson, "Family Research: The Ghanaian Situation" in E. Ardayfio-Schandorf (Ed.) *Family and Development in Ghana*, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Phillips, "Introductory Essay," p. xix.

“conduce to the abandonment of traditional family patterns in favour of a Western-type conjugal family...”<sup>46</sup>

With effective colonial rule the ‘Marriage Ordinance’ law CAP. 127, was passed by the colonial government on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1884. Among other things, this law implies that marriage is properly monogamous and it is essentially between two individuals. Marriage contracts can only take place in designated places and not the homes of the couple. Furthermore, marriage registrars and clergymen are charged with the responsibility of administering marriage contracts and not the parents and elders of the couple.<sup>47</sup>

Improper contextualisation led the missionaries to impose a church wedding, which is essentially the marriage ordinance performed in church, as the only proper form of marriage. Either they did not really understand the nature of traditional marriage or this imposition was part of the civilisation process.<sup>48</sup> They viewed customary marriage as ‘unchristian’ and requested couples to bless their marriages in church to make them ‘Christian.’ Failure to bless one’s marriage in church meant one had not fully accepted the teachings of the church and was therefore not allowed to hold office in the church since that constituted a bad example. Monogamy was accepted as the only right form of marriage for Christians. Men in polygynous marriages were therefore refused full membership in the church and refused participation in the Eucharist.

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<sup>46</sup> C. Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage*, p. ix.

<sup>47</sup> Article 4(1) of the marriage ordinance reads: “The Governor shall, from time to time, appoint a fit and proper person to be the registrar of marriages for each marriage district...” Article 6(1) also reads: “The Governor may, by writing under his hand, appoint any minister of religion to be a marriage officer for such marriage district or districts as may be named in such writing.”

<sup>48</sup> The missionaries opposed almost everything tradition, considering them pagan. “They opposed puberty rites, dancing, payment of bridewealth, polygyny, pre-adolescent betrothal and anything at all that displeased them.” See Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 127.

The insistence on church weddings and monogamy did not only last during the missionary period but continued when Africans took over the management of the church. In the early 1960's, the administration of Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first Prime Minister of Ghana, issued a Government White Paper on the subject of marriage, which pleaded for the recognition of traditional customs and usages that are not contrary to Natural Law and Natural Morality. The church, among other groups, opposed the idea and forced the government to withdraw the white paper.<sup>49</sup>

The value underlying marriage ordinance and church weddings is the philosophy of individualism, as shall be shown later. These forms of marriage decreased the families' involvement in marriage. A few years ago, this applied mainly to the choice of partners and the minimal contact between the couple and their families. In recent times, the necessity of the customary marriage rite is itself being challenged with the teaching among a section of the Christian church that the marriage ordinance and the blessing of the church is all that is necessary. What is the effect of all of this on the nature, purpose and process of marriage?

### **3.1. Effects on the Nature of Marriage**

#### ***3.1.1. Effects on Polygyny***

Church and civil (ordinance) marriages legally bind the parties to monogamy.<sup>50</sup> By the imposition of these on the Akan, Christianity seems to have made a little headway against

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<sup>49</sup> See Pobee, *Towards an African Religion*, p. 122.

<sup>50</sup> M. Peil, *The Ghanaian Factory Worker; the Industrial Man in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 190.

polygyny,<sup>51</sup> and the practice is decreasing. As Oduyoye puts it, “this formerly prestigious institution of African marriage is beginning to lose its glamour and appeal as changes in society affect the nature and demands of marriage.”<sup>52</sup>

There are various reasons that account for the decrease in the rate of polygyny. In the first place, the philosophy of individualism underlying social change does not permit a man to share his life with two or more people or a woman to share her husband with another woman. There is also the traditional view that polygyny is a means of caring for widowed women. With the philosophy of individualism, there is lack of concern about the welfare of others. Celebration of life, which leads to hospitality,<sup>53</sup> and care for others no longer remains the prevailing value system. Individuals are rather more concerned with their nuclear family than caring for a widowed person through marriage. Furthermore, if polygyny is intended to help one bring forth many children to ensure the continuance of his name, the philosophy of individualism challenges this idea. Individuals are more interested in the name they make for themselves and not through their offspring. The acquisition of personal wealth from ‘white collar’ jobs and not from the number of children working with an individual on the farm is important in this respect. The ‘white collar’ job is made possible as a result of Western education, which was introduced with an ethos of individualism.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> Oduyoye argues that one of the classic elements of African culture is the celebration of life leading to hospitality. See Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>54</sup> Peil found that people with no education were more likely to be polygynous than those who had at least attended middle school. See Peil, *Ghanaian Factory Worker*, p. 192

Polygyny is also intended for religious ends. Through it a deceased man's brother may marry his widow in addition to his own wife so that he can bring forth a child for the deceased brother. Such an arrangement is necessary if the deceased man is to maintain a spiritual link with the world. With the influence of the philosophy of positivism, such maintenance of spiritual links through the marriage of a man to his deceased brother's wife is thought to be unnecessary.

The practice of polygyny, however, still persists so far as procreation continues to be the main purpose of marriage. Oduyoye argues that "this psycho-religious force [procreation] seems to me the primary need, more than any other, that sustains the existence of polygyny in Africa. It is likely to continue as long as this need remains unchanged."<sup>55</sup>

### 3.1.2. *Effects on Patriarchy*

Marriage is not necessarily patriarchal in traditional society even though there are tendencies towards patriarchy. Social change reinforced patriarchy in marriage. With social change, the authority, clear identity and the autonomy of the Akan woman diminished. Oduyoye comments: "I maintain that the identity and autonomy of women fare not much better today under the matrilineal systems of the Akan group than under the overt patriarchies of southern Nigeria, and most particularly, the patriarchal systems that operate among the Yoruba."<sup>56</sup> She argues that while in traditional times a peasant woman was self-supporting, a farmer first and a wife second, she is now losing her autonomy to her husband, her male relatives, or local rulers.

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<sup>55</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

Colonialism introduced Victorian morality and values into traditional Ghanaian society and this worsened the position of women.<sup>57</sup> Such morality derives from the period of enlightenment. While enlightenment made claims to universal rationality, it denied those qualities to women. Elaine Graham argues that one of the features of modernisation was a greater separation of public and private, and a greater gendered differentiation within economic and political activity between the female domestic sphere and the male world of rational bureaucratised work and the state.<sup>58</sup> She further argues that this gendered differentiation echoes the dualistic patterns of Western culture: “of maleness (and full humanity) as resting in reason, knowledge, adulthood and civilisation; and femaleness with non-rational, the private, childhood, dependence and nature.”<sup>59</sup> It was such greater gendered differentiation that was introduced to the Akan society through the social reforms. Even though the wife in traditional marriage was socialised to submit to the husband she had great strengths in trade and in governance. With colonial rule, the colonial administration excluded women from local governments. The significance of the *ohemaa* (queenmother), for example, was never appreciated by Westerners. Rattray, who did a lot of work among the Ashantis, only recognised the importance of the *ohemaa* far later. When he asked why he had not been made aware of the *ohemaa* earlier, he was told, “the white man never asked us this. As you have dealings which recognise only men, we supposed the European considered women of no account, and we know you don’t recognise them as we have always done.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> T. Manu, *Law and the Status of Women in Ghana* (A Paper Prepared for the U. N. Economic Commission for Africa, 1984).

<sup>58</sup> E. Graham, *Transforming Practice*, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>60</sup> Rattray, Quoted in Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 95.

Such consideration of women as of no account led European men to communicate to Akan men the unsuitability of women for conducting affairs of substance. Educated Akan men also began to encourage their wives to wear Western clothes and to leave the *tam* (traditional apparel) to the *adesefo*, the unsophisticated rural woman. As a result, Akan women in Western dress were automatically excluded from the market place, creating an image of the husband as a man of substance whose wife has no need to work.<sup>61</sup> With the loss of her own income, her authority in the affinal home became weakened. If the woman voluntarily deferred decision-making to her husband in traditional society as a matter of expedience, colonialism took away what made her a person of influence resulting in the woman not having a right at all in decision-making in her marital home. Furthermore, in Victorian society, the head of the household was always a male so the introduction of Victorian morality reinforced the domination of women in the marital home.

Missionaries also attempted to turn the women they westernised into housewives, with hobbies to occupy their idleness, and who make themselves useful only as helpmates, but not going into the evil world of the market place.<sup>62</sup> They also taught women to be dutiful, obedient and submissive wives. In fact Ama Ata Aidoo, a novelist, sees the submission of women as a Western idea. She captures this in the words of a woman to a man from whom she had just separated:

I could not shut up and look up meekly to you even when I knew I disagreed with you. But you see, no one taught me such meekness. ...It seems as if much of the softness and the meekness you and all the brothers expect of me and all the sisters is that which is really western. ...See, at home, the woman knew her position and all that. ...But wasn't her position among our people a little more complicated than that

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<sup>61</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 107.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

of the dolls colonisers brought along with them who fainted at the sight of their own bleeding fingers and carried smelling salts around.<sup>63</sup>

Modernisation linked with patriarchy created a situation in which the woman's identity was lost. While the man's individuality was encouraged, the woman's identity was lost in that of her husband. The marriage union was regarded as a one-flesh union. Whose flesh then was the couple? Because of patriarchy, it couldn't be the woman. It had to be the man. The effect of this on the Akan woman was that she bore a name that was approved by the missionaries and then she had her husband's family name, neither of which her ancestors could recognise. She had become an extension of her husband.<sup>64</sup>

Recently though, the status of women is changing. Greenstreet observes that the numerous and valuable economic activities of the woman now enables her to enjoy a great deal of economic independence and equality.<sup>65</sup> The dominance and supervision of the wife's behaviour by the husband are now reduced and the wife now has a part to play in the decision-making process. Most married women interviewed for this study claimed that they play important roles in decision-making in their marriage, though they would leave the final word with the husband. When questioned about her involvement in decision-making, one interviewee had this to say: "... we discuss a lot of things, try to bring out the pros and cons, and then most times, most times, I leave it with Frank to make the final decision. But sometimes, when the decision is not favourable with me, I try to push out my point. If he still says no, then I'll leave it for an opportune time." When asked whether leaving the final decision to the husband didn't mean he was superior, she said, "No, most times, before we

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>65</sup> M. Greenstreet, "Social Change and Ghanaian Women" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. VI, no. 2, 1978, pp. 351-355. The viable economic activities of women have mainly been influenced by Western education. For example, Sue, the interviewee mentioned below is highly educated. She is an architect, just like her husband.

settle on a final decision, it would have been a consensus sort of, it would have been an agreement between the two of us.”<sup>66</sup>

With the decline of the economy and the consequent lowering of the standard of living as a result of globalisation, both husband and wife have to engage in some form of wage-labour if the family is to have a fairly decent living. One major issue arises out of this situation: who takes care of the domestic chores? In many instances, the woman still takes care of the domestic chores in addition to the wage-labour. “Not many husbands play a very active part in the general cleaning and tidying of the house...”<sup>67</sup> However, many husbands do not insist that household chores are the preserve of the wife. Some couples try to get around this problem through the engagement of househelpers. In a study of ‘senior members’ and their wives at the University of Ghana, Agyeman-Barwuah found that both husbands and wives participated less in the performance of household tasks and that the tasks were mostly delegated to househelpers.<sup>68</sup> Even though this seems a good compromise, househelpers bring many problems into marriages.<sup>69</sup>

While some men welcome these changes, others feel threatened and go to the extent of deciding not to marry educated women, a situation which makes it very difficult for some highly educated women to find husbands. A columnist of one of the national dailies therefore

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<sup>66</sup> Sue and Frank Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage*, p. 109.

<sup>68</sup> V. Agyeman-Barwuah, *The Changing Trend of Division of Household Tasks: A Study of Senior Members and Their Wives on University of Ghana Campus* (BSc. Dissertation, University of Ghana, 1983)

<sup>69</sup> Househelpers are often the source of tensions in marriage. Sometimes, the manner in which mistresses treat househelpers cause husbands to protest which eventually leads to conflict. Also, some househelpers when established in the home, “take over the marriage” from their mistresses. The issue of househelpers is a major concern such that a popular author on marriage and family life has given much attention to it in one of his books. He suggests that what needs to be done in this situation, is the integration of the househelpers into the family for them to feel that they are part and parcel of the family. He also suggests that couples need to co-operate to prevent any attempts made by househelpers to break their marriage. See J. Adjabeng, *How to Enjoy your Marriage: Volume II* (Accra: Olive Publications, 1995), chapter 2.

compared finding a husband with obtaining a PhD.<sup>70</sup> Other married men still emphasise the fact that their wives should have no part in the decision-making process. This leads to serious conflicts in marriages. But in all, one can say that even though patriarchy was reinforced through contact with Western culture, to an extent, its incidence has reduced in recent times.

### 3.1.3. *Effects on the Communal Nature of Marriage*

The communal nature of Akan marriage has been affected by social changes. It is in this area that the philosophy of individualism is most glaring. In traditional Akan society marriage is regarded as primarily a union between families. Church and civil marriage, introduced with modernisation, on the other hand presuppose that marriage is properly a union between two individuals and emphasis is placed on the nuclear family. Dickson points out that the wedding liturgy of the British Methodist Church clearly depicts that marriage is a union between individuals.<sup>71</sup> He writes:

The principal actors in the wedding drama are, apart from the officiating minister, the prospective bride and bridegroom; the bride's father plays only a fleeting role when he says 'I do' to confirm that he is the one giving her away. The prospective bride and bridegroom are at the centre of the stage: they are the ones who make their vows. This contrasts with the African system of marriage in which two families, rather than two individuals, come together.<sup>72</sup>

This has led to a situation in which some regard marriage as basically an individual affair. Young men and women make their own choice of partners. Parents may only be informed about the choices made. There are even isolated cases where some young adults, based on the teaching of certain churches which are Western in orientation, have said that their parents and

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<sup>70</sup> Mentioned in Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> Until two years ago, this liturgy was what was used by the Methodist Church, Ghana,

<sup>72</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 104.

families need not have anything to do with their marriages and the involvement of extended families is regarded as interference.<sup>73</sup>

One consequence of the emphasis on the nuclear family is that the socialisation of children has ultimately become the responsibility of biological parents, siblings, schools, peer group and the mass media rather than the extended family. To an extent, therefore, fathers now seem to be much more responsible towards their children. Another consequence is that the material, moral and emotional support between couples and their extended families is diminishing. This leads to increased conflicts, especially between wives and in-laws. A family sends their son to school to be educated in order to raise his status only for him to get married and forget about them altogether or just send them money occasionally. This situation generates a lot of resentment with accusations and counter-accusations. In some instances, the husband's mother and/or sisters have succeeded in removing or replacing the wife altogether.<sup>74</sup> Joshua Adjabeng reports a case in which a man divorced his wife "because of her mother's insistence that he should end the marriage. He went ahead to divorce his wife against his wishes. The mother's insistence was on the basis that she could not accept his wife as her daughter-in-law."<sup>75</sup> A large number of marital problems that the counsellor or minister has to deal with are, in one way or the other, related to the issue of in-laws. Daniel Jenkins, a marriage counsellor, writes: "Through the influence of ... in-laws, many couples have had to

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<sup>73</sup> The Family Life and Gender Issues Co-ordinator of the Christian Council of Ghana recounts an incident in which a woman just went home one day and mentioned to her mother that she was getting married. When asked whom she was going to marry and why she had not informed her or the father, the girl's reply was that her pastor said there was no need. The girl's father tried to prevent the marriage from taking place, but before he was aware, the daughter was married. Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

<sup>74</sup> Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> Adjabeng, *How to Enjoy your Marriage: Volume II*, p. 61.

accommodate a lot of bad terms that have crippled their marriages or at best afforded them the most boring love affairs of a lifetime”<sup>76</sup>

The example about the involvement of in-laws in marriage shows that the move towards individualism is not the norm. Even though many young adults will want to make their own choices of future marriage partners, the consent of their parents to their choice is regarded as very important. To the question whether family elders were involved in one way or the other in making her choice, one young woman had this to say: “Yes, because there is a saying in our dialect that an old man is better than a fetish priest. Because they are experienced and they’ve lived long on this earth and passed through the stages which I am passing through, they know the best. So, despite the things that I was looking for, I sought their consent to the choice.”<sup>77</sup> She said her family didn’t have any objections to her choice. When asked what she would have done had they had some objections, she said, “that would be tough, if my family has objections. I think I would have to consider that and let whoever is concerned think about it too. They may be raising genuine concerns. I will see how far their concerns may be true and how it will affect my relationship.”<sup>78</sup>

It is largely true that though the Akan culture remains dynamic and is ever changing, it has firm foundations in tradition.<sup>79</sup> Individuals still maintain a certain degree of relationship with their extended family. Margaret Peil writes: “Very few migrants cut themselves off from their relatives and townsmen ...relatives will come to visit them, bringing produce from the farm. They will be expected to give small gifts in return. If their home is not very far away, they

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<sup>76</sup> D. Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage* (Accra: Alter Publications Ltd, 1996), p. 123.

<sup>77</sup> Janet Aggrey, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Janet Aggrey, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001. Young people see their parents and other adults as being in the position to give better inputs regarding a choice which a younger mind would easily ignore. See C. K. Konadu, *National Marriage and Family Church Study* (Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 1996), p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 80.

will probably go home frequently, or at least for special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, and the yam festival.”<sup>80</sup> There is always the tension between loyalty to the nuclear family and loyalty to the extended family. Some couples make conscious effort to support each other’s extended family with mutual consent and agreement. This is in the right direction for as Lucy Mair observes, “the orderly development of African life will depend in a large measure upon the successful maintenance of the solidarity of the family unit in the course of the modification of its role under modern conditions”<sup>81</sup>

### **3.2. Effects on the Purpose of Marriage**

In traditional Akan society, procreation is recognised as the primary purpose of marriage with companionship and mutual support being secondary purposes. This is so because marriage as a union of families is intended to help extend the lineage through the birth of children. Modernisation has led to the situation in which some have begun talking about companionship and not procreation as the primary purpose of marriage. In answer to a question on what marriage is, marriage counsellors, Lydia Adadjawah and Isaac Ampah emphasised companionship, mutual support and happiness and said nothing about procreation.<sup>82</sup> Some of the young adults interviewed for this study also indicated companionship and mutual support as the main purpose of marriage. They mentioned that procreation is a blessing from God, but is not a reality for every couple.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Peil, *The Ghanaian Factory Worker*, p. 203.

<sup>81</sup> L. Mair, *African Marriage and Social Change* (London: Frank Case And Company Limited, 1969), p. vii.

<sup>82</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001 and Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Janet Aggrey, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001.

Individualism makes the extension of the lineage no more the concern of some young Akan women. It has also led to the situation in which the relations between individuals and their extended families have become distant leading to the loss of emotional support that the individual receives from the extended family. In such a situation, a closer companionship with the spouse is necessary to meet emotional needs. Furthermore some Akan men don't believe in the sustenance of their spirits through their children because that cannot be proved scientifically. These have led some to emphasis on companionship as the main purpose of marriage.

However, procreation remains the main purpose of marriage in the thinking of many Akan couples. They take it for granted that they need to bring forth children. It will be unusual to hear that a couple has consciously decided not to procreate. In traditional society, procreation is not only a physical but also a religious duty. It is the means of sustaining the community, which includes the living, the ancestors and those yet to be born. It is also a means of achieving the immortality of humans, present at creation, but which was lost as a result of disobedience. Through procreation, people are reborn and so continue to live. Since the Akan continue to live with a religious worldview irrespective of the social changes, procreation continues to be their main purpose of marriage.

If anything, the greatest impact in terms of procreation is the continuous decrease in the number of children couples decide to have. The statistics indicate that in 1988, the mean number of living children born to men under 30 years was 1.7. The figure for the 30 –39 age range was 3.5, that for the 40-49 age range was 5.9 and that for men over 50 was 8.5.<sup>84</sup> One

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<sup>84</sup> Ghana Demographic Health Survey, (1988), p. 93.

may interpret these figures as due to the fact that younger men have not finished procreating and that by the time they grow older, they would have had more children. However, that is not likely to be the case since men procreate at any age and it is noted that men over 50 still procreate. It will not be wrong to interpret these statistics as indicating a decrease in the number of children born to men with the passing of time as changes are introduced into the society. For example, the statement of J. K. Agbeti at my wedding, mentioned in chapter one, indicates the continued decrease in the number of children born to couples.

The number of one's children no more determines one's status in the society. This is so because economic standing, which defines status, is no more determined by the number of children a man has to help him work on the farm. With technological advancement, as well as the opportunity to work in factories, offices, etc., the dependence on subsistence farming, where many hands are needed, as one's economic base has greatly decreased. Added to this, with improvement in medical health, the incidence of infant mortality has decreased drastically. Traditionally, the birth of many children serves as a form of insurance so that even if some died, others will live. In modern society, such insurance is not needed because improvement in medical health has helped people to do away with the fear of infant mortality. In modern society, the quality of life and not the number of one's children rather indicates one's importance in the society. Due to financial constraints, such quality of life can only be achieved when the children are few. This might partly account for the decrease in the number of children born to couples.

### 3.3. Effects on the Process of Marriage

Phillips writes: "Another sign of the slackening hold of tradition is seen in the curtailment of the procedure of celebration of a marriage, extending sometimes to an almost complete abandonment of the customary sequence of rites and observances."<sup>85</sup> Social change has led to changes in the process of the formation of marriage. However, contrary to the view that there is a shortening of the process, it can be argued that there is rather an elongation of the process. In modern Akan marriage, the three main aspects of the process of the formation of marriage are retained but in addition there is the civil or church wedding. Crabtree observes that the majority of men "still marry in accordance with native custom, but some of the marriages are later blessed in church, and in some cases a church or civil ceremony is held in addition to the customary rites, sometimes at a much later date."<sup>86</sup>

The addition of church or civil marriage to the stages has led to the categorisation of customary marriage rites as 'engagement.' Frank, one informant had this to say about the 'engagement': "... I have lived in the village setting so I knew how marriage was contracted, the customary ones. I have been away for some time. ...But when I came back and I had to witness this 'engagement,' at the end of the day, I thought that that was marriage, because it was just in line with what I knew in the village."<sup>87</sup> The consequence of such a categorisation is that many people think that customary marriage rites do not make a marriage legal. In a radio discussion on the issue on one of the local radio stations in Ghana, a caller phoned in to say that when a couple feel that they are incompatible after the customary rites are performed,

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<sup>85</sup> Phillips, "Introductory Essay," p. xviii.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Lucy Mair, "Part I: African Marriage and Social Change" in A. Phillips (Ed.) *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*, p.149.

<sup>87</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

they could separate. That separation, to him, doesn't constitute divorce, because they have not been married after all. This situation has led to a lot of confusion, because to the Akan, the customary rites make the marriage legal. Separation after these rites are performed constitutes divorce, which can only take place when a court of the elders is convened to consider the issues.

Until recently, few people had the church or civil marriage.<sup>88</sup> The expensive nature of church marriage made few outside the elite able to afford it. According to Peil, the few who go for it do so mainly for the benefit of seeking church leadership.<sup>89</sup> Civil marriage was likewise ignored. Recently however, both church and civil marriage have become common. This may be due to a number of reasons. First, there is the assumption that such marriages are more stable than customary marriage. Joshua Adjabeng, a marriage counsellor and author, in a comparison of customary marriage on the one hand and church and civil marriage on the other argues that customary marriage is not 'tight enough' and that it is a bit too loose. He argues: "For example, if you are going to marry my daughter, I'll tell you, I'm giving my daughter to you to stay with. ... If you think you can't stay with my daughter, bring her back to me. And so, traditional marriage permits a lot of divorce."<sup>90</sup> In the *National Marriage and Family Church Survey*, it is claimed that "once ordinance marriage is entered into, it will be difficult to divorce or take a second spouse."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Peil, *The Ghanaian Factory Worker*, p. 191.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>90</sup> Joshua Adjabeng, Interview with author, Asamankese, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2001.

<sup>91</sup> Konadu, *National Marriage and Family Church Survey*, p. 16-17.

Second, the church has made church marriage a requirement for acceptance into leadership roles. With the churches' emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the vision of many young adults to make use of their gifts in the church, they recognise that their gifts will only be appreciated when they are married in church. A number of marriage counsellors and young adults interviewed for this study expressed these views.<sup>92</sup> Young adults interviewed for this study all hope to have a church or civil marriage.

There are some other effects on certain aspects of the process of marriage. The investigation, organised by family members, that takes place in traditional marriage about the background of a would-be spouse is now almost a thing of the past. Young adults themselves now make their own choices and conduct their own investigations, however inadequate that might be, before informing parents. This has led to the situation in which the knocking, the first stage of the process of marriage takes place after the investigations. In traditional society, the investigations, especially from the girl's side takes place after the knocking. Secondly, young adults don't investigate the background of the would-be spouse's family to find out what sort of family it is. Their interest is only in finding out more about the would-be spouse. These two issues reveal the influence of individualism. First, it is the individual, and not the family, who makes their own investigations. Second, it is the would-be spouse, and not the family, who is investigated. The presupposition is that marriage is properly between individuals and not the families hence the involvement of, and the investigation about, the families are not necessary.

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<sup>92</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001 and Charles K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.

Another effect on the process is that the second and third stages, securing the head wine and performing the marriage rites, now take place at the same time. However, the distinct payments involved in these stages are made. These stages are normally performed at the house of the girl's father. Since there is the need for people working in the urban centres to travel long distances to the village to perform these stages of the marriage, bringing them together is a practical option. Also with the addition of the church blessing or wedding, another stage is added and if the other stages took place at different times, then there will be lots of journeys to make hence the practical decision to bring these two stages together.

The formation, sustenance and dissolution of marriage in traditional society are all communal affairs. With social changes, not only is the process of the formation of marriage becoming more individualistic but also communal support during the marriage is diminishing. Individualism has led to the isolation of couples from their extended families and the breakdown of the authority of the elders. As a result the material, moral and emotional support which couples receive from the extended family is sometimes not available. Furthermore, the wisdom of the elders in conflict resolution is no longer available to many couples and resolution of conflicts has become more of an issue of personal action. When conflicts arise in marriage therefore, many young couples, who lack the skills to resolve their conflicts, have no other option than to break the relationship. The consequence is that divorce rates are on the increase. Divorce itself has almost become an individual and not a community affair. The stability of marriages has thus been affected since individuals on their own cannot cope with all the problems of marriage.

Despite these changes however, church and civil marriage have not replaced customary marriage. Rather, they have become an addition to the stages of the process of the formation

of marriage. In almost every church in Ghana, before a wedding is celebrated the officiating minister finds out whether all the required customary rites have been performed.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Changes that have taken place in traditional Akan marriage has been the focus of this chapter. Factors that have led to the changes have been discussed noting the influential role of modernity with its philosophies of individualism and positivism. Christianity and colonisation were vehicles of modernisation in the past. Globalisation as a recent phenomenon has also impacted on marriage through cultural homogeneity and global economic influence. All of these have affected marriage in the sense that an institution regarded as a union of families is now regarded more as a union between individuals. The shift from the communal to the individual is recognised in the emphasis on companionship as the main purpose of marriage, and the focus on the couple, and not their families, in both the church and civil marriage rites. The present economic problems of the country have also led to the lowering of standards of living for many people and this also impacts on marriage negatively.

The factors of social change have however not eroded traditional culture completely. Church and civil marriage have not replaced customary marriage but have rather become additions to the latter. Akan society has thus become one in which traditional and modern values and behaviour coexist in the same society. There is the “tendency for Ghanaians to be both traditional and modern at the same time.”<sup>93</sup> Any attempt to offer pastoral care to Akan couples in the present situation needs to take into consideration this tendency. In the next chapter, I

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<sup>93</sup> Assimeng, *An Anatomy of Modern Ghana*, p. 17.

examine the contextual and methodological issues involved in an attempt to assess the theology and the pastoral care of marriages of the organisations studied.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF THE PASTORAL CARE OF AKAN MARRIAGES: CONTEXTUAL, METHODOLOGICAL AND HERMENEUTIC CONSIDERATIONS**

#### ***1. INTRODUCTION***

It was noted in the last chapter that the nature of the formation and continuation of marriage among the Akan has changed over the years. Old approaches to the care of marriages may therefore not be appropriate in the contemporary context. Individuals and organisations have therefore developed new approaches towards the care of Akan marriages. This study seeks to critically evaluate these new approaches to the pastoral care of Akan marriages by assessing the pastoral practice and the theology of marriage of three organisations in Ghana. The aim of this chapter is to establish the criteria used for the evaluation of the organisations.

I begin by first clarifying the present context in which Akan marriage functions. The main elements of the context are that it is bicultural, it is religious, it is matrilineal and the view is held that the human person is relational. Such clarification leads to a discussion of contextual issues. The synthetic model of contextual theology is chosen as the appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the theology of marriage adopted by the organisations. Criteria for evaluating the pastoral practice of the organisations are explained. These include how far the organisations take into account the main elements of the context mentioned above. It also includes how the Bible is used in their pastoral practice. Narrative is suggested as the appropriate hermeneutic approach for the context and is therefore used as the criteria for

evaluating the use of the Bible. Other important criteria suggested for the evaluation of the pastoral practice of the organisations are how far the organisations are able to help couples deal with issues of childlessness, how their pastoral practice is able to help marriages achieve stability and how they respond to the issue of polygyny.

## **2. THE CONTEMPORARY AKAN CONTEXT**

In Chapter Two traditional Akan marriage was described, and in Chapter Three, the changing nature of marriage among the Akan was discussed. It was hinted that even though there have been considerable changes, traditional views and practices continue to be resilient. This situation has resulted in what Shorter calls unresolved duality among many Christians, a situation in which people are torn between two worlds.<sup>1</sup> In this section I attempt to clarify further the nature of contemporary Akan society, which was only hinted at in the last chapter. Such clarification is necessary because it is in this context that the pastoral care of marriages takes place and if pastoral care is to be effective it needs to take the context into account.

### **2.1. The Bicultural Context of Contemporary Akan Society**

The modern-day Akan find themselves being influenced by two different worldviews: the traditional cultural worldview of communalism and theological interpretation of reality, and modernity with its philosophies of individualism and scientific interpretation of reality. Thus the present day Akan is bicultural or has a double consciousness, a phrase first used by W. E.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Shorter, *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation* (Sydney/ Auckland/ Toronto/ Johannesburg: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), p. 147.

B. Du Bois.<sup>2</sup> Billingsley made the discovery that many African American parents taught their children to be both black and American simultaneously.<sup>3</sup> Parents taught their children to be related to the African heritage, which includes dress, language, family customs and the worldview of relation to the extended family. This observation of African Americans living in America is not different from Akans living in Ghana.

Even though we may not talk about parents' explicit teaching of children to be Western in worldview, there are indications that such education goes on both at home and at school. One important area is language. Many parents in Ghana today, especially in the towns and cities, communicate in English with their children. Thus children do far better communicating in English than in Twi or Fante or any of the Akan languages. At school, the children are also expected to use English. They are even punished if they speak in an Akan language, except in classes where Akan and other Ghanaian languages are taught as a subject. The reason given for this trend is that English is the official language in Ghana and if children are to be useful in the field of work, then they need to be literate in English. Children are also socialised into the modern worldview of individualism through an educational system that continues to engender individualism, even after the era of the missionaries and colonialists who introduced these schools. The worldview of individualism is further reinforced by the view of personal conviction and conversion in a Christian community which is largely evangelical in orientation.

However the traditional worldview of communalism is not lost. The frequent unannounced

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<sup>2</sup> See Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

visits by members of the extended family make it clear to children that they are active members of a community of extended family relations. Furthermore, the mutual physical, financial and emotional involvement of parents in extended family activities socialises the child, though unconsciously, to the worldview of communalism. Such involvement is normally through celebrations during rites of passage especially during birth, marriage and funerals.<sup>4</sup> The extended family is thus regarded as, using Assimeng's words, "an economic, emotional and social insurance corporation" that people could opt out from but at their own risk.<sup>5</sup> This risk is made clear in many ways to people, for example, through narratives in the form of songs. In his numerous Ashanti ballads, Koo Nimo<sup>6</sup> tells the story of the son of an Ashanti woman who travelled overseas. He claims that the son had made a terrible journey. Part of the reasons he gives for considering the son's life overseas as terrible is from a statement the son makes in his stranded situation. The son claims, "There can be no witness to what I endure."<sup>7</sup> The implication of this statement is that the son has no one with whom to share his problems. The son later speaks about the strength of the extended family in these words: "So many troubles could be settled by speaking to the family."<sup>8</sup>

Any approach to pastoral practice must recognise the reality of this biculturalism and be aware of the impact it has on marriages and families. One of the observations I made in the

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<sup>4</sup> During a visit home for holidays from December 2001 to January 2002, I became actively involved in a number of family activities. First was the wedding of my wife's sister in which my son was a pageboy and I was actively involved in the preparations towards the ceremony and the ceremony itself. Second was the naming ceremony of a son born to my junior brother. Irrespective of my personal commitments that day, and the fact that I was preparing to return to Britain, I had to travel a distance of about one hundred and thirty kilometres to attend the function together with my wife, another brother, and a sister and her husband. Being the eldest brother, I was expected to play an important role in my father's place since our father died while we were young. There was no way I could opt out of the ceremony. These go to show the nature of the involvement of the extended family in the lives of one another and it clearly reveals the underlying worldview of communalism.

<sup>5</sup> Max Assimeng (1981) *Social Structure of Ghana*, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Koo Nimo is a very popular Ashanti musician who sings ballads with various themes on the Ashanti people.

<sup>7</sup> See Koo Nimo, *Overseas life (Aburokyire Abrabo)*, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/~gkea04/ashball.htm>. 12/03/02, p.20

<sup>8</sup> See Koo Nimo, *Overseas life (Aburokyire Abrabo)*, p.21

field research was the reality of this bicultural nature of the society. It became clear that two different worldviews were at stake in many marriages. Sometimes one was emphasised and at other times, the other was emphasised. The emphasis on the worldview of communalism was noted in references to the importance of communal relations and the extended family. For example, when it was mentioned that there has been an incident in which a pastor of a church had advised a member that she didn't need the parents involvement in her marriage, one counsellor said unequivocally that that marriage, if it takes place, was not going to be successful.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis on individuality was noted especially in references to the involvement of extended family in marriage as intrusion, and to marriage as a 'romantic adventure.'<sup>10</sup> A number of counsellors warn couples against the involvement of the extended family in their marriages.

Waratu gives the impression that apart from the occasional violation of the normative procedures in traditional culture, everything about traditional marriage is okay. He therefore suggests that the desirable thing to do is the strengthening of traditional values. The fact however is that emphasising one of the prevailing worldviews and leaving the other is not helpful. Total assimilation to Western culture has been noted to constitute cultural suicide while total immersion in traditional culture is unwise and impossible.<sup>11</sup> It is unwise because it doesn't take the contemporary context into consideration but pastoral practice must be contextual if it is to be relevant. It is impossible because the effects of modernisation cannot simply be wiped away.

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<sup>9</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Phrase used by Waratu. See D. W. Waratu, "Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society: Challenges in Pastoral Counselling" in D. W. Waratu and H.W. Kinoti (Eds.) *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology* (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2000), p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages*, p. 28.

There are elements of traditional culture which are positive, but there are also elements in it which are negative. It is the same with Western culture. Waratu argues about the influence of Western culture that “the crucial question today is not whether these value changes have taken place, but which of these values would be considered positive or negative.”<sup>12</sup> I may also add that it is crucial today to ask which of the values in the traditional culture would be considered as positive and which considered as negative. Any approach towards the care of marriages in such a bicultural context should have a balance between the traditional culture and the modern Western culture. Such a balance should take note of the positive as well as the negative values in each of the cultures.<sup>13</sup> In the evaluation of the approach to the care of marriages a guiding question is whether the approach takes into account the bicultural nature of contemporary Akan society .

## **2.2. The Religious Nature of Contemporary Akan Society**

The philosophy of positivism with its scientific interpretation of events underlies modernity, which continues to impact the Akan. However, this philosophy has not had any lasting influence on the Akan whose worldview continues to remain one in which spirits, both positive and negative, strongly impact the physical world. The Akan therefore continues to interpret reality religiously or theologically.

The religious nature of contemporary Akan society is evident in the manner in which Akans, old and young, educated and uneducated, the rural and the urban dweller, all seek religious interventions in their existential problems. An evidence of this can be gleaned from the

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<sup>12</sup> D. W. Waratu, “Marriage and Family ...” p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> The question of the guidelines to use as a basis for judging between the positive and negative values is addressed later in the chapter.

changes that have taken place in the mission churches over the years.<sup>14</sup> Influenced so much by the positivist worldview, the mission churches began to conduct their activities purely in terms of observable cause and effect relationships found in science. Witchcraft activities were discounted as superstitious because they were not observable. Disease, childlessness, loss of jobs, death and such existential problems were interpreted only in terms of natural phenomena and not spiritual; as such, physical remedies were the only interventions applied. Many in the church felt that the church was not capable of addressing their existential problems. As a result even though they remained members of the church and took part in the church's activities, when they were faced with existential problems they visited the traditional priest. Birgit Meyer gives clarity to such a situation in her study on the Ewe people of Ghana:<sup>15</sup>

Expectations of EPC<sup>16</sup> church members echo those of non-Christian worshippers: they want a long life, a good spouse and many children, to be and remain healthy, and to achieve some prosperity. In addition people are proud of being able to show, through their membership of the EPC, that they are 'civilised' – after all, it is the church with the highest local prestige. But when they experience severe troubles and insecurities, many members forget about 'civilisation' and search for the kind of help that can restore their fortunes. ... Other members ... are not satisfied with the protection available in the EPC and consider magic to be more effective.<sup>17</sup>

With the emergence of the African Initiated Churches, which took the African religious worldview into consideration, many members of the mission churches stopped visiting the traditional priest but left to join the African Initiated Churches. Meyer observes that most

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<sup>14</sup> I have used the church as an example because the philosophy of positivism, as noted in Chapter Three was partly introduced by the missionaries.

<sup>15</sup> Though this is another ethnic group, what she describes of them is not different of the Akan.

<sup>16</sup> EPC stands for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a mission church started by the Bremen missionaries in the nineteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe of Ghana* (Trenton/ Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), p. 177.

members of Agbelengor – The Lord’s Pentecostal Church, were initially EPC members who fell ill and could not obtain treatment in their own church.<sup>18</sup> “Indeed, those people who left the EPC for another church attributed their move ... to the fact that the EPC failed to deal with demons satisfactorily because its leaders would take neither the Holy Spirit nor the Devil and his demons seriously.”<sup>19</sup> As a result of the unbelief of its leaders, the EPC church was unable to ward off or cast out evil spirits in the name of God, thus protection and healing could not be achieved.

Recently, though, the mission churches have begun to take seriously the worldview of the people, a worldview that consists of spirits, both good and bad. As a result a number of their members who left for the African Initiated churches have returned and many who used to visit the traditional priest have stopped.<sup>20</sup> Further evidence for the prevailing religious worldview derives from the number of people from all walks of life and with all types of problems who patronise special healing and deliverance services. To them, their problems are not only physical but also spiritual. Purely physical intervention would therefore not be able to successfully deal with their problems.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Meyer describes an incident in 1989 that depicts the recent appreciation of the African worldview by the mission churches: “I visited a prayer service attended by virtually all the Christian churches represented in the area. It was held in the chapel of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), ... This all Churches Prayer brought together various denominations such as Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians, as well as a great number of African Independent and Pentecostal Churches. I was struck by the fact that these various and competing churches appeared to be united by a common enemy: the Devil.” See Ibid., p. xvii. A similar service was held in 1998 at Akosombo, a small township where Ghana has a Hydroelectric project, the main source of electricity for the country. A drought that had occurred earlier in the year had led to low water level and the country was facing a crisis of shortage in electrical energy. All the churches in the township came together for an all night of prayer to petition God to intervene in the situation. The belief was that ultimately, God was in control of the rains and God was the only one who could intervene in the situation. The author, at the time a minister of the local Methodist Church had the responsibility of organising this all night of prayer.

The religious nature of the society is appreciated not only in terms of the nature of interventions during problems but also in everyday life. Gifford observes that Christianity in Ghana has obtrusiveness as great as any African country.<sup>21</sup> The point I am making is that the worldview of the contemporary Akan is still a religious worldview and that the philosophy of positivism has not been able to erode this worldview. In such a religious context, any approach to care that is based on purely social scientific models without religious considerations may not be relevant. For pastoral practice to be relevant there is the need for the consideration of the religious nature of the contemporary Akan context. A guiding question may be “to what extent does the approach to the care of marriage take the religiosity of the people into consideration?”

### 2.3. The Matrilineal System

Another important aspect of the contemporary context is that the Akan are matrilineal. With modernisation, matrilineage has been questioned especially when it comes to the care of children. Konadu thinks that even though the matrilineal lineage system has got some positive elements, following it in the modern world is going to create problems.<sup>22</sup> To him, it must be the responsibility of the parents and not the uncle to take care of the child. In terms of marriage though, matrilineage continues to be the norm and seems to be asserted in contemporary society. This is especially the case when women are asserting themselves and matrilineage is regarded as having the potential to engender the autonomy and equality of the

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<sup>21</sup> He points out that about 50% of vehicles have Christian slogans painted across the front and or on the bumper. Firms are frequently given Christian names and even the distinctive Ghanaian *Kente* cloth may have ‘Jesus loves you’ or Jesus saves printed on it. Furthermore, On Ghana’s one TV channel, in the public announcement slot every evening, up to a third of the notices can be of Christian events, and newspapers freely utilise Christian images and metaphors. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst and Co. Ltd., 1998), p. 61-62.

<sup>22</sup> C. K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.

woman and the man. Matrilineage therefore becomes an important aspect of the Akan context that must be taken into consideration in any approach to the pastoral care of marriage.

#### **2.4. The View of the Human Person**

Pastoral practice is dependent on the view we have about the human person. For example, client-centred approach is dependent on humanistic views of the person. It was noted in Chapter Two that traditionally the Akan have a dualistic view of the person; the human person is both physical and spiritual. But the physical and spiritual do not exist in isolation. They are in relationship. Not only do the two components of the human person exist in relationship to each other but also the human person exists as a person in relationships. Individuals are related to the *ebusua* and the *ntoro* groups. These relationships include those with the ancestors and other spiritual entities including God. Individuals are also related to nature.

Modernisation with its philosophies of individualism and positivism affected the view of the human person as a person in relationship. Some individuals began to see themselves as separate from their *ebusua* and as persons seeking their individual goals. Also because the spiritual component of the human person cannot be verified objectively, its effect on the physical was discounted as unreal. However as noted in earlier discussions this influence was not a lasting influence. In contemporary Akan society, the human person is regarded as a person in relationships and it is taken that the physical component of the person is influenced by the spiritual component and vice versa. Thus the interactionist view of the person is the prevailing view.

To the contemporary Akan, therefore, human existence is physical and spiritual, social and individual, determined and free.<sup>23</sup> Lartey observes that both *sunsum* and *mogya* make one a social being for they link one to a patrilineal (*ntoro*) as well as a matrilineal group (*ebusua*).<sup>24</sup> To Lartey therefore, that human existence is relational is the most important aspect of the Akan concept of the human person. He argues: "In a study of the Biblical encounter with Japanese culture, Charles Corwin argued that in every language and culture there is to be discerned a dominant concept which colours all others. He calls this prevailing concept 'a concept-clearing-centre' affecting all other concepts. ... Using this terminology in Ga and Akan culture, the 'concept-clearing-centre' would be existence-in-relation."<sup>25</sup>

The interactionist view of the human person is recognised in Wimberly's concept of the soul as an embodied soul.<sup>26</sup> In this view, the soul is seen not only as related to the body but also as related to communities. Wimberly emphasises the importance of the person as existing in relationships, and claims that it is essential to its very nature to place the embodied soul in its relational and social context. "In short, soul is embodied in physical and social contexts; being relational the soul seeks growth in relation to God, self, and others."<sup>27</sup> This view of the person is also in line with theological understanding. Christian theology has a communitarian view of individuals, which locates them in the community of the whole people of God. Thus Thatcher observes that theology has an understanding of the human person as a person-in-relation which is ultimately derived from belief in the nature of God as a communion of coequal Persons-in-relation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> E. Y. Lartey, Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> A. Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, p. 65.

Any approach to pastoral practice among the Akan needs to take into consideration the view of the person as existing in relationships. A guiding question may be “to what extent does the practice recognise the person as an interacting physical and spiritual being and to what extent does the practice recognise the person as existing in relationships and in community?”

### 3. *THE CASE FOR A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH*

Florence Dolphyne<sup>29</sup> recounts that in the mid-decade conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Denmark, in 1980, there was a clear polarisation of positions held by women from the Western world and women from Africa on certain burning issues of concern. Such issues included polygamy, bride-wealth and female circumcision. Both groups agreed that such practices were an obstacle to the emancipation of women but they were divided on the measures to be taken towards their eradication. The Western women advocated for immediate legislation to which the African women did not agree. The African women explained that the practices were deeply rooted in the traditions of the societies, such that legislation would not be an effective means of solving the problem. In her discussion on the way forward, Dolphyne argued for methods that took the cultural values behind the practices into consideration.

Dolphyne’s argument, though not necessarily from a theological perspective, exemplifies the shift that has occurred within the church in the second half of the twentieth century. The traditional Christian theological discussion that had gone on before this period was conditioned by the quasi-scientific world-view at the time, a worldview that came about with the dawn of the Renaissance and the subsequent industrialisation and technological

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<sup>29</sup> F. A. Dolphyne, *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1991)

breakthroughs.<sup>30</sup> This is understandable since all theologies are conditioned by particular cultural worldviews, or expressing it in a different way, “contextualisation ... is the *sine qua non* of all genuine theological thought, and always has been.”<sup>31</sup>

However, Western missionaries generally did not take the fact that theologies are conditioned by particular worldviews into consideration in their activities in other cultures. They sought to apply the theology conditioned by their particular culture to other cultures that were very different to theirs, thus using Kraft’s words, they used the ‘Judaisers’ approach to theologising.<sup>32</sup> This led to the situation on the mission fields in which “old answers were being urged upon cultures and regions with new questions.”<sup>33</sup> As a result, as Imasogie points out, what were given by Western missionaries frequently “scratched the receivers where they didn’t itch.” He adds, “even the best of Western theological thinking has been found by non-westerners to be answering questions that they are simply not asking, while completely ignoring questions about which they are desperately concerned.”<sup>34</sup> Thus such theologising began to be seen as irrelevant to the existential needs of the African.<sup>35</sup> Such theologising is irrelevant because it fails to answer certain existential questions such as the ones Schreiter poses: “What was one to do in those cultures where cereal products such as bread were not known, in which the unconsecrated bread itself became a magical object because of its foreignness? Or how was one to celebrate baptism among the Masai in East Africa, where to pour water on the head of a woman was to curse her with infertility?”<sup>36</sup> In terms of marriage

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<sup>30</sup> Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Accra: African Christian Press, 1983), pp. 48-49.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in S. B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> C. H. Kraft, “Forward” in Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*, p. 9. This approach is derived from the problem of Judaisers in Scripture, where Hebrew Christians wanted to impose circumcision and other Hebrew religious rituals on Gentile Christians. (Acts 15: 1-34)

<sup>33</sup> R. J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 2.

such theology proposes a view of marriage that is individualistic, a view which is in opposition to the communal nature of marriage in Africa. This has led to a lot of confusion about the nature, purpose and process of marriage as noted in the last chapter.

The irrelevance of the theologising of Western missionaries due to their ethnocentrism led to the situation in which Christianity was regarded by some as foreign and extrinsic to Africa. As Hillman puts it, Christianity “has the appearance of an imported shirt that can be readily slipped on and off as the occasion requires.”<sup>37</sup> It is no wonder that when people are faced with existential problems that threaten their lives, they readily slip off the garb of Christianity and go to the diviner who really understands and is able to deal with their existential problems.

The ‘Judaisers’ approach to theologising is not only irrelevant but also oppressive. For example Bevans talks about the discovery of Latin American theologians that traditional theology failed to speak a word of hope to the marginalised masses of the poor, but was rather used ideologically to justify continued domination by the rich and powerful.<sup>38</sup> Hillman argues that oppression was given justification in Africa through the socialisation process. “The institutional constructions holding together any society are always in need of legitimations which ‘explain’ to the members, and ‘justify’ to them, what is going on. Such ‘explanations’ and ‘justifications’ need to be contrived in situations of colonial domination. A plausible story, rationalising vast inequalities, gross injustices and patent absurdities, is worked into the socialisation process.”<sup>39</sup> He explains further this process using the Berger-

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<sup>37</sup> E. Hillman, *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied* (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Hillman, *Toward an African Christianity*, p. 8.

Luckmann analysis of socialisation. "As part of their social control system, the foreigners' definitions of situations (social, economic, political, religious, ethical, artistic) were imposed and maintained in fairly official tones. In due course these impositions were painstakingly institutionalised, lest the indigenous systems, values and views of the colonised populations reassert themselves 'seditiously' in the form of challenges, redefinitions, or even as pointed questions."<sup>40</sup> A case in point is where the social situation of marriage was defined in terms of ordinance marriage. This was institutionalised in such a way that anyone who failed to go by it forfeited some benefits.<sup>41</sup> Concerning the oppressive tendencies of the 'Judaisers' way of theologising, Imasogie asserts:

It is characteristic of groups in power – whether the power is political or theological and whether the group in power is well or poorly motivated - not to notice the injustice they are perpetrating. Generations of highly motivated, sincere, well-meaning missionaries, for example, have seldom seen themselves as oppressors. Indeed, they have often seen themselves as giving "their" people "God's very best" – meaning, of course, what the missionaries themselves considered to be the best from their point of view.<sup>42</sup>

While these missionaries see themselves as giving "God's very best," Africans see missionary theology as designed and imposed by the dominant or the privileged group in order to support and justify its own ideological interests and to maintain the oppressive status quo.<sup>43</sup> Martey questions why the missionary interpretation of the gospel did not take into account the oppressive conditions in which Africans were living under colonial administration and argues that missionaries were drumbeaters of colonialism.<sup>44</sup> He argues, "not even Karl Barth, despite

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> For example during the field research for this study one informant related that his parents had the ordinance marriage because his father was a soldier and as a serviceman, his wife would not get free medical treatment without the ordinance marriage.

<sup>42</sup> Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> E. Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

his stance against the naked aggression and violence of Nazi Germany, addressed the issue of colonial violence and military oppression against Africa.”<sup>45</sup> From the perspective of the Akan such oppressive tendencies can be noted in attempts to exclude people, who are legitimately married but have not had church marriage, from the Eucharist and from the leadership of the church.

Furthermore, the ‘Judaisers’ approach to theologising creates a situation in which the identities of a people are eroded so as to replace it with a new Western identity. “Africans were taught that their ancient ways of life were deficient or even evil and had to be set aside if they hoped to become Christians. But it is clear today that that process of Christianisation was too often a process of Europeanisation,”<sup>46</sup> or what passed for evangelism was in reality a dissemination of Western experiences and expressions of the Christian faith.<sup>47</sup> As a result of this cultural values which had been very helpful to people came under serious attack as many people came to believe that ‘progress’ consisted not in being themselves, but in imitating foreign ways.<sup>48</sup> Among the Akan, as it is with all Africans, the values of family, the promotion of life and communal care<sup>49</sup> has been shaken by this approach to theologising though not totally eradicated. “The bitter irony”, says Schreiter, “... is that African values and customs are often closer to the Semitic values that pervade the Scriptures and the story of Jesus than the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> R. J. Schreiter, “Introduction: Jesus Christ in Africa Today” in R. J. Schreiter, (Ed) *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. viii.

<sup>47</sup> E. Hillman, *Toward an African Christianity*, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> See Schreiter, “Introduction: Jesus Christ in Africa Today,” p. vii-viii. Although Schreiter mentions that these values have resisted the corrosions of modernity and that they reveal the tremendous human resources that Africa is bringing to bear on the future, the fact remains however that these values are seriously being shaken today.

European Christian values that have been imposed upon them.”<sup>50</sup> Lamin Sanneh observes another variant of this irony:

Missionary Christianity as the propounder of a universal God turned out to be an exclusive religion tied to an ethnocentric Western world view, whereas traditional religions, criticised as restrictive tribal affairs, offered hope and reconciliation by their tolerance of religious diversity and by their inclusive view of human community. This makes them more in tune with Biblical teaching than the politically divisive form of European Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

All the same, the ‘Judaisers’ approach to theologising has fostered the feeling among many Third World countries that anything good and worthwhile originates from the West.<sup>52</sup>

From the foregoing, the call by Dolphyne to take the culture into consideration in any endeavour that seeks to really make an impact is in the right direction. If the pastoral care of marriage is to be effective among the Akan of Ghana, then there is the need to take the Akan culture or context into consideration. But what exactly does it mean to take the context into consideration? Several models have been suggested in this respect. I turn to a discussion of these models and make a choice of one that is appropriate for the contemporary Akan context.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>51</sup> L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1983), pp. 243-244.

<sup>52</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 6.

### 3.1. Models of Contextual Theology<sup>53</sup>

#### 3.1.1. *Three Factors in Models of Contextual Theology: Gospel, Church and Culture*

Various models have been suggested as a means of constructing contextual theologies. Certain factors are important in such construction. Schreiter asserts that a contextual theology<sup>54</sup> is the dynamic interaction among gospel, church and culture.<sup>55</sup>

Gospel, according to Schreiter means:

The Good News of Jesus Christ and the salvation that God has wrought through him. This includes, and reaches beyond, the proclamation of the Scriptures. This includes the worshipping context of the local community and the presence of its Lord there. It includes those aspects of the praxis of the community announcing the Good News. It includes that Word which missionaries find already active in the culture upon arrival. It refers to the living presence of the saving Lord that is the foundation of the community, the spirit of the risen Lord guiding that community, the prophetic Spirit challenging the culture and the larger church.<sup>56</sup>

Even though the Gospel, as defined by Schreiter, reaches beyond the proclamation of the scriptures, all the other elements mentioned hinge on how the scriptures are interpreted. Thus Biblical hermeneutics become an important aspect in contextualisation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> A model is "a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are complex and differentiated." Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 24. Since the idea of culture or context is a complex phenomenon, there should be a simplified way of applying theology to it. Models provide a way forward in this respect. However, it must be mentioned that as constructions, they are not mirrors of reality, but point to the ideal. Therefore even though they should be taken seriously they should not be taken literally.

<sup>54</sup> Schreiter uses local theology for contextual theology.

<sup>55</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>57</sup> The particular manner of the use of scripture, which I employ, will be explained later.

Schreiter defines church in this instance as “a complex of those cultural patterns in which the gospel has taken on flesh, at once enmeshed in the local situation, extending through communities in our own time and in the past and reaching out to the eschatological realisation of the fullness of God’s reign.”<sup>58</sup> Thus church refers to the concrete community of Christians who are united in word and sacrament in the one Lord. He argues that the gospel does not fall from the sky but is always incarnate, and that our faith is a faith we have heard from others that brought the gospel to us and helped us nurture the beginnings of the faith. These are the people who together with us constitute the Church. Without the church there is not an integral incarnation of the gospel, that is, the gospel does not come to its full realisation. The gospel thus needs the church to become real in the lives of people and the church needs the gospel to become alive.

Culture refers to the concrete context in which the integral incarnation of the gospel takes place. “It represents a way of life for a given time and place, replete with values, symbols, and meanings, reaching out with hopes and dreams, often struggling for a better world.”<sup>59</sup> If a church and its theology are not sensitive to the cultural context, Schreiter argues that it may either become a tool of domination or lapse into Docetism, as though its Lord never became flesh. But culture as defined here does not only have to do with traditional culture but also with the present way of life. Culture is not static but dynamic. In every place and age, a lot of factors come together to make up the prevailing culture. For example, as noted earlier, the cultural context during which much of traditional Christian theology was formulated included the Renaissance and industrialisation that was taking place at the time. The cultural context of the Akan today is not the same as that of hundred years ago. So in considering the culture, care

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<sup>58</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

must be taken not only to concentrate on traditional culture but the contemporary context lest the approach also becomes irrelevant. Bevans, however, separates culture from social change, hence he identifies four interacting elements – culture, social change, gospel message and tradition.<sup>60</sup>

This leads to the preference of the word contextualisation and not indigenisation or inculturation. Indigenisation and Inculturation seem to imply that the traditional culture becomes the focus of analysis. Contextualisation on the other hand, seems to suggest that the focus of analysis should be the current context of secularism, technology and the struggle for human justice, which characterises the historical moments of nations in the Third World, while not ignoring the traditional culture.<sup>61</sup> In an attempt to construct a theology of marriage for the Akan, there is the need to analyse the current existential life situation of the Akan. This contemporary context includes values of both traditional culture and Western culture. Thus the analysis of the current situation will necessarily involve a critique of the traditional culture as well as the influence from Western cultures. It has been pointed out that while indigenisation or inculturation tends to see both the home culture and the culture ‘out there’ as good, contextualisation tends to be more critical of both cultures.<sup>62</sup> But what are the criteria for this critique and what values will be accepted as representing the present context? We leave these questions to a later section in the chapter.

The interaction between these three factors – gospel, church and culture, in constructing a contextual theology, must be dialectic, that is, there must be a continuing attention to first one

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<sup>60</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 27.

<sup>61</sup> From a 1972 WCC Document, *Ministry in Context*, Cited by G. A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), pp. 22-23.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 22.

factor, and then another, leading to an ever expanding awareness of the role and interaction of each of these factors.<sup>63</sup>

### ***3.1.2. Theological Orientations in Models of Contextual Theology***

Among the issues that differentiate one model from another is what Bevans calls the basic theological orientation.<sup>64</sup> He points out that two theological orientations influence the choice of model. These are creation-centred orientation to theology and redemption-centred orientation to theology. "Creation-centred orientation to theology is characterised by the conviction that culture and human experience are generally good. Its perspective is that grace builds on nature, but only because nature is capable of being built on, of being perfected in a supernatural relationship with God."<sup>65</sup> According to Bevans, this orientation does not presuppose that the world is perfect. It recognises the reality of sin but holds that sin is sin because it is an aberration in such a beautiful world. Sin is an attempt to get out of life what God has not put into it.

On the other hand, redemption-centred orientation to theology is characterised by:

The conviction that culture and human experience are either in need of a radical transformation or in need of total replacement. In this perspective, grace cannot build on or perfect nature, because nature is corrupt. In a real sense, therefore, grace replaces nature. ... Rather than being already holy with the presence of God, Christ must be brought to a culture for that culture to have any saving meaning whatsoever.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The theological orientation one favours determines to what extent one will see culture as a source for theology. Those who have a creation-centred orientation see culture as a source equal with the Bible and church tradition. They approach life with an analogical, and not a dialectical, spirit or imagination. They see continuity between human existence and divine reality. On the other hand, those who have a redemption-centred orientation do not see culture as a source equal with the Bible in theologising. They approach reality with suspicion – with a dialectical imagination.

Niebuhr discusses different theological positions based on the virtues of Christ. Each theological position he discusses reveals a leaning towards a particular theological orientation. Religious liberalism magnifies love.<sup>67</sup> For religious liberalism, Jesus lived and thought a double love, of the neighbour as well as of God. His ethics thus have two foci, “God, the father, and the infinite value of the human soul.”<sup>68</sup> This view reveals that religious liberalism has a creation-centred orientation. Eschatologists describe Jesus as uniquely characterised by expectancy rather than love. Jesus’ teaching and conduct is explained by reference to His hope for the Messianic promise. “If the thought of the eschatological realisation of the kingdom is the fundamental factor in Jesus’ preaching, his whole theory of ethics must come under the conception of repentance as preparation for the kingdom of God....”<sup>69</sup> The idea of repentance reveals that the eschatologists are redemption-centred for it presupposes that creation is not good in itself.

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<sup>67</sup> H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York/ Hagerstown/ San Francisco/ London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1951, 1<sup>st</sup> Harper Colophon edition, 1975), p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20

In the same way, the existentialists see Jesus' life as characterised by radical obedience. For such obedience, man does not meet the crisis of decision armed with a definite standard; he stands on no firm base, but rather alone in empty space. The essence of a man's life consists in the full freedom of his decision.<sup>70</sup> The existentialists then have a creation-centred orientation for they consider creation as good: thus man is fully free. The Protestant concentration of Jesus' virtue of faith reveals a redemption-centred orientation to theology. As Niebuhr points out "only romantic fictionizing can interpret the Jesus of the New Testament as one who believes in the goodness of man, and sought by trusting it to bring out what was good in them."<sup>71</sup> Since man, and as such creation, is not good it needs to be redeemed. Niebuhr argues that it will not be surprising for a new school of interpreters to arise with an attempt to understand Jesus as the man of radical humility. Such a school will be redemption-centred in orientation, for in his humility Jesus remarked that no one is good but God alone. Thus each theological position is orientated towards viewing creation as good or viewing creation as needing redemption. Every model of contextualisation is either creation-centred or redemption-centred.

### **3.2. Translational and Anthropological Models: Described and Rejected**

There are various models of contextualisation. Before I discuss the particular model used in this study, it is appropriate to mention briefly other models and why I fail to use such models. Each model of contextual theology has its ideological aspects. Vincent points out that particular people with particular presuppositions, methodologies, and group interests are those

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

who do contextual theology.<sup>72</sup> The most important thing is for one to be aware of the presuppositions with which one approaches the task of constructing a contextual theology.

Bevans identifies five models depending on the attitude to culture, social change, Gospel message and church tradition. He offers a helpful summary of these models:

The most conservative of the five models, the translational model, while certainly taking account of culture and cultural change, puts much more emphasis on fidelity to what it considers the essential content of scripture and tradition. The most radical of the five models, the anthropological model, will emphasise cultural identity and its relevance for theology more than scripture or tradition, which it considers important but a product of culturally relative theologies that have been hammered out in very particular contexts. The practitioner of the praxis model will zero in on the importance or need of social change in his or her articulation of faith, while the one who prefers the synthetic model will attempt the extremely difficult task of keeping each of the four elements in perfect balance. Finally, the view of the transcendental model focuses not on a content to be articulated but on the subject who is articulating. The hope here is that if one is personally authentic in one's faith and in one's being-in-the-world, one will be able to express one's faith in an authentically contextual manner.<sup>73</sup>

Bevans goes on to point out that there is no one completely adequate way of doing theology. Each of these models has its strengths and its weaknesses. I explain this with the two models at the opposite ends of the continuum, which emphasise culture and social change at one end and scripture and tradition at the other end. These are the translational model and the anthropological model.

The strength in the translational model lies in the fact that it takes seriously the message of Christianity. It recognises the fact that Christianity has something to say to the world and its message is truly one that can bring light and peace to a dark world, thus the theological

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<sup>72</sup> J. Vincent, "Developing Contextual Theologies: A Discussion Article" *Epworth Review*, vol. 27, no.3, 2000, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 27.

orientation here is redemption-centred. The model recognises the ambivalence of culture and social change;<sup>74</sup> that is, culture and social change cannot be totally good or totally bad.

On the other hand, there is the assumption in the translational model that the Christian message is like a kernel (the naked gospel) which is covered with husk (the cultural element). However, it has been pointed out that it is improbable that there exists such a thing as “the message of the Christian message” or the “naked gospel.”<sup>75</sup> Schreiter asserts that a “closer examination of this kernel-and-husk theory would show that kernel and cultural husk are given together, even in the Bible. And they come to have a profound effect on each other over a period of time.”<sup>76</sup> This implies that the contents of the Bible cannot be applied literally in every culture since cultures are different. Also, this model assumes that there are parallels in cultures so that the message can be translated from one culture to its parallel in another culture. The question arises whether there are really such parallels and whether such parallels have the same place of significance in the new culture or whether more significant patterns might be drawn upon.<sup>77</sup> It is in the light of this that Dickson points out that doing theology in Africa as translating Christian theology is to misunderstand the theological task facing the church in Africa. “The task consists not primarily in thinking through the theological deposit from the west; *it consists in thinking through faith in Africa.*”<sup>78</sup> It has also been pointed out that the translational model gives more attention to the surface patterns of a culture than to its deeper meanings or to the interconnections between different cultural patterns. Bediako’s

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>76</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, pp. 7-8.

questions are relevant here: “Have Christian churches adequately indigenised the Christian Gospel when they have accepted ‘traditional’ drums, dance and dress into their practice?”<sup>79</sup>

The strength of the anthropological model is that it regards human reality with the greatest seriousness. It affirms that all creation is good and the world is loveable, thus it has a creation-centred theological orientation. It recognises that revelation is not essentially a message but the result of an encounter with God’s loving and healing power in the midst of the ordinariness of life. The model also helps people to see Christianity in a new light and not just as an importation of foreign ideas. Thus Christianity is a perspective on how to live one’s life more faithfully in terms of whom one is as a cultural and historical subject.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore the anthropological model starts from where people are and takes the existential issues of the people seriously and does not impose questions from other contexts. As Schreiter puts it, the particular strength of this model, which he refers to as the ethnographic model, “lies in beginning with the questions that the people themselves have – not those posed immediately by other Christian churches or those necessary for a systematic understanding of faith.”<sup>81</sup>

The dangers of this model include the fact that it can easily fall prey to cultural romanticism. This leads to a lack of critical thinking about the culture in question. Secondly, Schreiter offers a warning about this model that “in its concern with identity and stability, [it] can often overlook the conflictual factors in its environment for the sake of maintaining harmony and peace. It can become a conservative force in situations where change is called for.”<sup>82</sup> Thirdly, it has been pointed out that *Theo-logy* has to do primarily with God, and all other things must

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<sup>79</sup> K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 35.

<sup>80</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

spring from or hinge on that. African theology loses its perspective and can no longer be regarded as theology if it starts with, or even concentrates upon, anthropology.<sup>83</sup> Finally, using this model is more easily said than done. Bevans points out that discovering the gospel from a particular culture is the ideal of the anthropological model but in practice, that is not the real situation.<sup>84</sup>

With the above evaluation of the models at the extreme ends of the continuum, it becomes clear that using any one of them alone may not be very advisable since they emphasise one area against another. Bevans suggests that one model may be suitable to one situation and the other to another situation. Making reference to the rejection of African culture for a long time by Western missionaries, he suggests that the anthropological model will be highly appropriate.<sup>85</sup> Bevans' argument echoes the stand of Idowu, who advocated a 'radical indigenisation of the Church' in response to the peculiar historical connection with Western cultural dominance.<sup>86</sup> I disagree with Bevans and Idowu on this suggestion and rather propose the Synthetic model as appropriate for the Akan and the African context in general.

It was noted that the anthropological model romanticises traditional cultures, accepting every culture as good. But everyone knows that in every culture, even though there are good elements, there are bad elements also. Even though polygyny is practised in traditional Akan culture and scholars, both Western and African, have tended to justify it, the Akan knows too

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<sup>83</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 186.

<sup>84</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 54.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>86</sup> See K. Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Yaounde: Editions Cle and Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2000), p. 54.

well the ills of polygyny. Its patriarchal tendencies as well as the bitter rivalry that often exists between co-wives are very well known. To endorse such a culture, which the anthropological model does, is to endorse patriarchal relations in marriage, which is contested the world over and regarded by the Akan as unhelpful. Secondly, it is clear that culture is dynamic and so must contextual theology be. A theology which is based on outdated or extinct cultural elements has no future.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, if we are to take popular religion seriously in attempts to contextualise, we cannot do so with the anthropological model. This is so because Christianity in Ghana is very critical of certain aspects of traditional Akan culture. To attempt to contextualise by absolutising traditional culture will meet with rebuffs, as happened in Latin America with the development of Liberation theology.<sup>88</sup> In Ghana attempts to introduce the traditional religious rite of the pouring of libation into the Christian church has always been met with rebuff among the masses of the Christian community. It is interesting to note that the group of indigenous churches in Ghana that use traditional religious rituals are decreasing in Ghana.<sup>89</sup> Also, the Afrikania Movement,<sup>90</sup> the attempt to re-establish African traditional religion, as a world religion by an ex-Catholic priest, Kwabena Damuah in 1982, became almost extinct in the early 1990s.<sup>91</sup> The organisation did not survive because popular religiosity among the Christian masses did not subscribe to this idea of *sankofa*.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> C. Nyamiti, "African Christologies Today" in Robert J. Schreier (Ed.) *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> Schreier points out that at the early stages of the development of Liberation theology in Latin America, the proponents often found themselves confronted with massive, unmovable reality of the *religiosidad popular* of the villages and barrios. The first inclination was to reject this reality, but to do so would have meant rejecting the actual context of their work. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 27.

<sup>89</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 63.

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion on this movement, see K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, chapter 2.

<sup>91</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 63.

<sup>92</sup> *Sankofa* is an adinkra symbol of a bird with its head turned backwards. It literally means to go back and take. The *sankofa* symbol is shown on page xvii

Furthermore, in Ghana, as in other parts of Africa, the observation of Sidbe Sempore is true that the Christianity of the masses represents an authentically African and potentially evangelical response to the gospel message.<sup>93</sup> Gifford makes a similar observation.<sup>94</sup>

Generally, evangelicals are very critical of traditional religion.<sup>95</sup> With popular religion in Ghana being clearly evangelical as shown above, adopting the anthropological model, which sees Christianity in continuity with traditional religion, means leaving the very context of Ghanaians in attempts to contextualise. Nyamiti suggests that the main reason for which existing African Christologies have not had any appreciable influence in the life of the African churches is that the channels, through which they could penetrate – catechises, liturgy, theological institutes, and bishops' conferences, have not been utilised.<sup>96</sup> Without rejecting this view outright, I think the main reason may be that it is because popular religion among the Christian masses has not been taken into consideration in these Christologies. As a

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<sup>93</sup> Cited by Jacques Van Nieuwenhove & Berma Goldewijk, "Popular Religion, Liberation and Contextual Theology: Exploring Some Question" in Jacques Van Nieuwenhove & Berma Goldewijk (Eds.) *Popular Religion, Liberation and Contextual Theology: Papers from a Congress* (Kampen: Faculty of Theology, Catholic University of Nijmegen, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> He argues, "Ghana's mainline churches are linked to the World Council of Churches (WCC), but they can hardly be said to represent any WCC Christianity. ... Most of them could best be described as Evangelical. ... A Bible study that month, led by the Anglican pastor, was quite fundamentalist: ... The sermon that day, delivered by another Anglican, was on the importance of the Bible: ... In the course of his sermon the Anglican preacher introduced the notion of the rapture', an element of premillennialism more normally associated with American fundamentalists. The same theological eclecticism is evident in the library of the mainline ministerial college, Trinity College near Legon. Throughout 1994 and 1995, among the few new acquisitions on display were books by the American Charismatics Charles Swindoll and John Wimbur. The Christian Leadership College in Kumasi, an extremely well run theological college, ... its whole ethos is thoroughly Evangelical. The Akrofi Kristaller Memorial Centre is a Presbyterian Theological centre, yet its significant links are mainly evangelical. ... An Anglican priest writes a book on the prosperity gospel, another writes the preface to a book on witchcraft. The Christian Messenger, produced by the Presbyterians, carries speeches of both Emilio Castro, then head of the WCC, and Rev. Bob Jones, America's archetypal fundamentalist. ... Everyone in Ghana use the word evangelisation, but it seems that almost all subscribe to the idea of evangelisation of AD 2000 and Beyond, or the church growth school that underpins it. Many Ghanaian Presbyterians and Methodists adopt this position; the WCC to which they are affiliated would not." See Gifford, *African Christianity*, pp. 72-74.

<sup>95</sup> See Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), chapter 13. Kato was one of the great African evangelicals of the last century. He categorically makes it clear that the evangelical "rejects veneration of African traditional religions" and that this is not due to a lack of patriotism but only a safeguard to the gospel of Christ. p. 177.

<sup>96</sup> Nyamiti, "African Christologies Today," p. 18.

result of these factors the suggestion by Bevans that the anthropological model is the best model for Africa cannot be taken as helpful in attempts to construct an Akan theology of marriage that underlies the approach to the care of marriages.

In my view, the translational model is also not helpful for the Akan context. The fact that this model only attends to the surface patterns of culture and does not touch its deeper meanings with any seriousness has led to the accusation that Christianity is a foreign religion. This accusation may not come from the masses of Christians but from very critical thinkers. The fact that these critical thinkers are part of the community of the church family indicates that their concerns cannot be ignored. Furthermore, at a time like this when issues of identity have become very important in national life, any light treatment of the culture in theologising is not going to be helpful. For example, Bediako criticises Kato, a perfect representative of the translational model, in that he stresses the distinctiveness of the experience of the Christian Gospel to such an extent that he rejects any positive evaluation of pre-Christian religious tradition. But there are positive elements in pre-Christian religious tradition, which make it what Mbiti calls, a *praeparatio evangelica*,<sup>97</sup> that is, pre-Christian religious tradition belongs to the nature which grace comes to perfect, and from which the creator was never indeed absent.<sup>98</sup> It is for these reasons that the translational model is also regarded as an unhelpful

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<sup>97</sup> J. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology*, p. 189.

<sup>98</sup> See also Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, p. 45. He discusses Niebuhr's five theses about Christ and culture: 'Christ against culture', 'Christ above culture', 'Christ and Culture in Paradox', 'Christ of Culture' and 'Christ the transformer of Culture', and argues that the notion of *praeparatio evangelica* corresponds to Niebuhr's 'Christ above Culture.'

choice in our attempts at contextualisation.<sup>99</sup> This leads me to the choice of the synthetic model.

### 3.3. The Synthetic Model: A Relevant Choice

An alternative to the translational and anthropological models is the synthetic model. The “synthetic model is ‘both/and.’ It takes pains to keep the integrity of the traditional message, while acknowledging the importance of taking culture and social change seriously.”<sup>100</sup> Thus it can be likened to the inter-cultural approach to theology of Lartey which seeks to “allow genuine Ghanaian insights (culture) to ask questions as well as to supply answers; to receive as well as to give the newness of life which Christianity witnesses to.”<sup>101</sup> The model presupposes the composite nature of human cultures; thus every culture or context has elements that are unique to it and elements that are held in common with other cultures. It emphasises both this uniqueness and complementarity.<sup>102</sup>

With regard to the procedure of the synthetic model, Schreiter suggests a dialectic interaction between the three factors of gospel, church and context.<sup>103</sup> He suggests that circumstances may require entry into the process at different places, thus one circumstance may lead to beginning with the questions the gospel raises while another circumstance may lead to beginning with the questions the church or the context raises. Vincent suggests that there must be first a Situation Analysis, that is, “subjecting all the experiences, people, alliances, structures, systems, powers, victims, operators, operations and results of the new Context to in-depth

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<sup>99</sup> Bediako, *Jesus in Africa* p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 82.

<sup>101</sup> Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, p. 46.

<sup>102</sup> Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 83.

<sup>103</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, pp. 22-23.

study, critique and evaluation.”<sup>104</sup> Alongside this the process is fed with a similarly analytical and critical reading and discernment of the Bible (gospel) and theological tradition (church). The two bodies of material: the present socio-cultural analysis of the new context and the revisited socio-cultural analysis of scripture and theology, are brought into dynamic interplay. Out of this dynamic interplay will come the new creation, the new context’s own new Contextual Theology.

The basic methodological attitude of openness and dialogue may be argued to be the strongest aspect of the synthetic model. Thus as noted by Ukpong, “Cultures need to be opened to the gospel and converted to Christ, and the gospel also needs to be opened to African culture so that it may attain fullness of meaning.”<sup>105</sup> This openness and dialogue is necessary in the Akan society and our world today, which is one of “radical pluralism and multicultural consciousness.”

Bevans points out that the dialogical way of understanding truth in the synthetic model does not mean that anything goes, or that personal convictions and traditional, classic formulations of faith are watered-down or sold out. He quotes Tracy’s insistence that:

Conversation is a game with some hard rules: say only what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other says, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if the evidence suggests it.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Vincent, “Developing Contextual Theologies ...,” p. 65. The basis of such an evaluation will be the usefulness of the features that make up the context. This is discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>105</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, “Christology and Inculturation: A New Testament Perspective” in Rosino Gibellini (Ed.) *Paths of African Theology*, p. 42.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 87. Often, the impression given about dialogue is that one has to do away with one’s personal convictions in order to be able to converse with the other person. For example, the impression is given that for a Christian to dialogue with a Muslim, the Christian should do away

This view of dialogue is necessary if dialogue is to take place in the Akan context where people have very strong convictions about their faith.

The choice of the synthetic model as relevant derives from the fact that firstly, it “tries to balance the insights of each of the ... models ... and reaches out to insights from other cultures and ways of thinking. ... The Synthetic model is ... midway between emphasis on culture/social change and gospel message/tradition.”<sup>107</sup> Thus it looks to a synthesis of the other models described above. In doing that, it develops in a creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints.<sup>108</sup> The model also points to the possibility of linking the ‘old’ and ‘new’ in the African experience through Christ. Bediako writes:

As well as a widespread consensus that there exists an African pre-Christian heritage to be taken seriously, there has been also the realisation that it is important to recognise the integrity of African *Christian* experience as a religious reality in its own right, and that Christianity as a religious faith is not intrinsically foreign to Africa. ... The eternal Gospel has already found a local home within the African response to it, showing that Christ has become the integrating reality and power linking ‘old’ and ‘new’ in the African experience.<sup>109</sup>

Secondly, the presupposition that cultures are both unique and complementary implies that every culture can borrow and learn from every other culture and still remain unique. True human growth thus derives from the situation in which cultures are in dialogue, each having something to give to the other and each having something from which it needs to be exorcised.<sup>110</sup> Culture is looked upon as ambivalent. “ ... some features of a culture, however,

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with his/her convictions of the divinity of Jesus. It is for this reason that some people do not want to have anything to do with dialogue.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>109</sup> Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 55.

<sup>110</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p. 84.

are clearly good or clearly bad.”<sup>111</sup> The model reaches out to the resources of other cultures, thus it acknowledges the mutual enrichment of cultures.

This makes the synthetic model particularly suitable due to the bicultural nature of the contemporary Akan context. The model presupposes that an analysis can be made of both the traditional culture and the modern culture that exist concurrently in contemporary Akan society. This analysis will necessarily include finding out the useful elements of each of these cultures and making use of them but rejecting the elements that are not useful.

Thirdly, the true universality of the Christian faith is affirmed in the synthetic model. “The fact that every culture can learn from every other and the present can continue to learn from the past points to the reality of ‘something,’ however elementary or preconceptual, that is a constant in Christian identity.”<sup>112</sup> The understanding of this constant is however different from that of the translational model in which, for example revelation is understood as a set of propositions.

Furthermore, this affirmation of the true universality of the Christian faith leads to the situation in which the model when applied well is able to achieve authenticity in the local culture on the one hand and respectability in other church circles on the other hand.<sup>113</sup> This respectability comes out of the fact that the categories, names, and concerns of the local culture are expressed in ways that are easily understood by people of other cultures.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 84. One may not want to discuss the features of culture as good or bad but rather as useful or not useful. This view of judging culture is discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>113</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 10.

There is however a built-in danger in this model. Even though the openness in the synthetic model is a good thing, such openness can always lead to the danger of 'selling out' to the other culture, especially when the other culture is a dominant culture. There is also the danger of developing a theology that is not truly a synthesis but a mere juxtaposition of ideas that do not really enhance one another. These are dangers that the theologian needs to be aware of in order to avoid but they do not necessarily constitute a weakness of the model. It is this model that serves as criterion in the evaluation of the theology of marriage adopted by the organisations studied.

#### **4. *THE ISSUE OF HERMENEUTICS***

It was mentioned that the procedure of the synthetic model should include an in-depth study of the context alongside which there is a critical analysis of scriptures and church tradition. Thus biblical hermeneutics is an important aspect of the model. Dickson's question is relevant here: "if the scriptures constitute a factor in theological formation, then the question arises of how the centrality of the scriptures, the source to which Christians go in matters of faith, is to be viewed in relation to African life and thought."<sup>114</sup> Since Christians go to the scriptures in matters of faith, it therefore plays an important role in the pastoral care of marriage of people of faith. But how is scripture used in pastoral practice among the Akan?

This raises issues about the legitimacy and necessity of an African interpretation of the Bible. The history of the Church is full of different interpretations depending on the context. This is evident in the formulation of the great creeds, the rise of the papacy, the monastic movement, Augustinian Platonism, and Thomistic Aristotelianism, the Reformation and the Renaissance,

the Revival and the Enlightenment, liberalism and the Social Gospel.<sup>115</sup> We also have the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of late antiquity and the New Hermeneutics and Frankfurt schools in the Western world and EATWOT in the Third world in the twentieth century.<sup>116</sup> Dickson argues that the methods of Biblical study and interpretation Africans inherited from the West were developed from specific cultural context, the enlightenment.<sup>117</sup> Since the Akan (African) context is different from the Western context, the case for an African interpretation of the scriptures is thus a legitimate and necessary one. It is legitimate and necessary because it takes the African existential context into consideration, thus making the biblical message meaningful to Africans and it also helps correct “biased Western theology and biblical interpretation.”<sup>118</sup> Pastoral practice in Africa then will depend on an African interpretation of the Bible. Different people in Africa interpret the Bible differently. What approach to interpretation then will be appropriate for the contemporary Akan context?

#### **4.1. The Narrative Approach to Hermeneutics: An Appropriate Choice**

Wimberly identifies three alternative possibilities to the interpretation of scripture.<sup>119</sup> The first is the propositional model, which emphasises cognitive uses of scripture that formulate truth into objective realities and call for rational and behavioural allegiance by its adherents. The second is the experiential-expressive model, which puts emphasis on the inner feelings, attitudes and experiences of people; thus it draws on the experiences of people and makes

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<sup>114</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 141.

<sup>115</sup> Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Martey, *African Theology*, p. 54.

<sup>117</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 141.

<sup>118</sup> F. J. Verstraelen (1993) “The Christian Bible and African Cultural and Religious Realities” in I. Mukonyora, J. L. Cox, & F. J. Verstraelen, (Eds.) *Re-writing the Bible: The Real Issues* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993), p.279.

<sup>119</sup> Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families*, p. 2.

scripture secondary when understanding family relations. Wimberly argues that the propositional statements made about male and female relationships and relationships between family members exclude the experiences of other family members and thus produce dysfunctional families. Moreover, focussing on individual experiences of family members could lead to making one family member's experience normative for all family members, or as pointed out by Dickson, it could make an individual's private convictions the ultimate basis of faith.<sup>120</sup> For this reason, the experiential-expressive model cannot be used for the general Akan context. Furthermore in such a bicultural context as the contemporary Akan, it is likely that propositional statements will be very much varied and conflicting hence unsuitable to be applied generally. These approaches may therefore not be appropriate methods of biblical interpretation in the Akan context.

Wimberly proposes the narrative approach as appropriate. Narrative is the telling and retelling of a community's story, the meaning of which unfolds through the interaction of characters over time. From the point of view of the Christian faith, narrative is reflection on the Christian faith story as told and retold in scripture and in the traditions that proclaim Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.<sup>121</sup>

Narrative has been found to be useful in forging a distinctive rationale for pastoral practice, especially where there is no moral consensus.<sup>122</sup> For example, Hauerwas recognises the lack of conceptual categories to deal with moral development in the Christian life, and argues that "moral growth involves a constant conversation between our stories that allows us to live

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<sup>120</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 24.

<sup>121</sup> Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families*, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup> See E. Graham, *Transforming Practice, Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London/ New York: Mowbray, Cassell Imprint, 1996), p. 114. She discusses the use of narrative in the works of Stanley Hauerwas, Charles Gerkin and Alastair Campbell.

appropriate to the character of our existence.”<sup>123</sup> He points out that utilitarianism and formalism assume that the possibility of integrity of moral identity depends on a single moral principle sufficient to determine every moral situation. However the necessity of character for the morally coherent life is recognition that morally our existence is constituted by a plentitude of values and virtues, not all of which can be perfectly embodied in any one life. On the other hand deontological theories seem to allow us to be held responsible for our behaviour even though we are personally not able to avoid what we did or did not do. But if responsibility were to be relative to each agent’s character, public morality would be undermined. To Hauerwas:

What is needed is not a theory that will insure correspondence between public and agent responsibility, but an account of how my way of appropriating the convictions of my community contributes to the story of that people. ... it is useful to think of such an account as a narrative that is more basic than either the agent’s or observer’s standpoint. To claim responsibility for (or to attribute responsibility to) the agent is to call for an agent to be true to the narrative that provides the conditions for the agent to be uniquely that agent.<sup>124</sup>

A community’s convictions, often related in their stories, are very important in the narrative approach. Hauerwas, for example, argues that ‘theodicy’ is not a problem. It is not a problem because as he argues, “the question of God’s justice can be posed only against the background of a community’s tradition.”<sup>125</sup> However, the “problem of evil that creates a discourse called ‘theodicy’ occurred at the same time that modern atheism came into being. The creation of ‘the’ problem of evil is a correlative of the creation of a god that, it was presumed, could be known separate from a community of people at worship.”<sup>126</sup> To Hauerwas

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<sup>123</sup> S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Towards a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame/ London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 132-133.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>125</sup> S. Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine and the Problem of Suffering* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 43.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

therefore, once theodicy was created separate from a community's tradition, it was not a problem. The point being made here is that in narrative, one's story needs to be situated in the context of a community's story.

It cannot be claimed that the problem of the lack of moral consensus is as serious in contemporary Akan society as it is in the West. However the bicultural nature of the society indicates the existence of different values which cannot be embodied into any one life. Therefore, rather than seeking sanctions for marital and family relationships in theological propositions or in the experience of marital partners or family members, the narrative approach may be appropriate in the sense that it looks to scripture as narrative to inform marital and family relationships. Thus the narrative approach captures the dynamic way in which scripture can work in the lives of people. It understands the function of scripture in interaction with human beings. In evaluating the pastoral care of marriages by the organisations under study, it is asked whether narrative characterises their use of scripture.

##### **5. OTHER CRITERIA FOR JUDGEMENT**

Current pastoral practice, especially by the liberal wing of the church, seems to be based on the idea that values do not have an important role in pastoral practice. Don Browning observes that for several decades the mainline Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic, have been tempted increasingly to handle questions of care and counselling without the guidance of normative theological principles.<sup>127</sup> The reasons for this include the relativising pressures of the secular society and the influence of the secular disciplines of the

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<sup>127</sup> D. S. Browning, *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 16.

social sciences. However, underlying every practice are certain values and ethical considerations. The idea of a value-free practice is a deception. "The fact is that," argues Pattison, "where pastoral care ignores ethics, it is in peril of promoting values or dealing in practices which, on reflection, it might find rather undesirable, dubious or harmful. All human activities have ethical aspects and consequences. This may be implicit and unconscious or conscious and explicit."<sup>128</sup> Lynch also adds that the view of care as consisting of developing a warm relationship with those cared for, understanding them and refusing to judge them, has its own values. He writes:

In entering the therapeutic relationship, the therapist has a notion of the good life which they hope their client would move towards in the course of their therapy. The therapist may seek consciously to guide their clients towards this form of the good life, or less consciously, the therapist may direct their client towards this good life through the questions they ask, through the language they use to reflect back the client's statements and even through their body-language which indicates to the clients what statements are acceptable or unacceptable, interesting or dull.<sup>129</sup>

Christian pastoral practice depends on sources and norms. Sources are the various authoritative and definitive resources which inform theological discourse and practice, such as gospel, tradition, culture and social change described earlier. Norms indicate the criteria by which such sources are interpreted; the principles upon which sources are designated authoritative and binding.<sup>130</sup> Pattison asks: "What are the norms and values which pastoral care should promote? What are its ultimate aims? What values and behaviour patterns should it be encouraging? What vision of being human should it adopt? What sort of person is it

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<sup>128</sup> S. Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 35.

<sup>129</sup> G Lynch, "Moral Reflection and the Christian Pastoral Counsellor," *Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies*, 117, 1995, p.4.

<sup>130</sup> Graham, *Transforming Practice*, p. 112.

trying to shape?”<sup>131</sup> For our purposes, the question is what norms should be the basis for designating the values that underlie pastoral practice as authoritative and binding.

Gordon Lynch has noted the assumption that the chief criterion for assessing the adequacy of a counselling theory has been the examination of the theories' truthfulness.<sup>132</sup> But he argues that this is a problematic assumption since our world is socially constructed, a product of the language and concepts of our particular culture and therefore it is impossible to talk about an objective world or one truth.<sup>133</sup> He proposes another criterion for the assessment of counselling practice: “A promising option, ... is to think in terms not of the truthfulness of the ideas that inform our counselling work, but of their *usefulness* in achieving desirable outcomes for us and our clients.”<sup>134</sup> Lynch's option of usefulness lies at the centre of pragmatism, a philosophical perspective characterised by a view of knowledge not as “a matter of getting reality right, but rather as a matter of acquiring habits of action for coping with reality.”<sup>135</sup> Thus the determination of the value of an action depends on whether it fulfilled its purpose, not whether it followed a particular recipe.<sup>136</sup> I am inclined to agree with Lynch that the criterion of *usefulness* might be appropriate to the contemporary Akan context. This is because the bicultural nature of the society makes it difficult to point to one value or the other as the objective truth. Thus the criterion for designating whatever values underlie pastoral practice as authoritative should not be how true those values are but how useful they are.

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<sup>131</sup> Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, p. 35

<sup>132</sup> G. Lynch, “A Pragmatic Approach to Clinical Counselling in Context” in J. Lees (Ed.) *Clinical Counselling in Context: An Introduction* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>135</sup> Rorty, Cited in G. Lynch, “A Pragmatic Approach to Clinical Counselling in Context”, p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> Polkinghorne, Cited in G. Lynch, “A Pragmatic Approach to Clinical Counselling in Context”, p. 28.

But then, the question is what goal or goals become the criteria for judgement on how useful a value or an approach to pastoral care is? In my opinion, in addition to taking into account the context as explained earlier, procreation and the stability of marriage judge the success of an Akan marriage. It has been noted that procreation remains a main purpose of marriage. A marriage in which there are children is said to be successful. It is for this reason that in conversations, everyone seems to express concern when a couple has no child born to them. Modernisation has not been able to change this purpose of marriage. The usefulness of any value or approach to care may thus be judged by how such a value or approach is effective in dealing with the issue of procreation. The Akan themselves know very well that children are a gift from God and that not every couple will have children. However, as mentioned earlier, every Akan couple looks forward to having children. Apart from being cultural, this deep desire for children seems to reflect the idea of generativity,<sup>137</sup> the seventh stage in Erickson's 'eight stages of man.' It helps couples to have a sense of parental responsibility. The usefulness of an approach to care will be judged by how it is able to help couples cope in situations of childlessness.

Since procreation is not always possible it is difficult to use it as the sole criterion for judging a successful marriage. The stability of marriage is another criterion by which a marriage is judged as successful or not. So, even if a couple does not have children but the marriage is stable, it is taken that the marriage is successful. Kisembo et al point out that the problem of

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<sup>137</sup> Erikson describes eight epigenetic developmental stages or ego crises. Five of these occur during childhood and adolescence: trust vs. basic mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority and identity vs. role diffusion. The three developmental stages or ego crisis that Erikson describes as occurring during adulthood are intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair. See E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1950), chap. 7. According to Erikson, "generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation or whatever in a given case may become the absorbing object of a parental kind of responsibility. Where this enrichment fails, a regression from generativity to an obsessive need for pseudo intimacy, punctuated by

the church in Africa is not simply a question of converting customary marriages into Christian ones but rather helping to ensure stability in marriages.<sup>138</sup> It is very clear among the Akan, and of course all Ghanaians, that the stability of marriage is a basic thing everyone looks forward to.

A successful marriage then is one in which the couple is able to resolve their conflicts to ensure the stability of their marriage. This became clear in the field research. This study is not a quantitative study to find out the general view of the population about what a successful marriage is. However, it became clear from the interviews with various categories of people (marriage counsellors, traditional elders, couples and young adults intending to marry soon) that aside from procreation, which is not possible for all couples, what everyone regards as a successful marriage is a stable marriage. A marriage in which the couple is able to resolve their conflicts and remain in the marriage is a successful marriage. Asked whether their marriage was successful or not, one informant had this to say: "Yes, it's a successful marriage. If the marriage is not going to be successful, you see the couple is not able to resolve when they get into conflict situation, and I don't think there is any marriage that doesn't have any conflicts."<sup>139</sup> So, what Akans look forward to is not to have a conflict-free marriage, which is an unreality, but rather to be able to resolve their conflicts so that they can have stable marriages.

Even for those who are currently not in stable marriages, that is what they had hoped for. One informant who is divorced had looked forward to a stable marriage: "I felt that bringing

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moments of mutual repulsion, takes place, often with a pervading sense ... of individual stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment." Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>138</sup> Kisembo, et al, *African Christian Marriage*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>139</sup> Frank Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

up children is best done in a stable relationship, so that was my main objective initially. ... They were not met in the sense that it looks like personal ambitions always overrides certain things, so we didn't give it a chance to work."<sup>140</sup> The important thing for my purpose here is that this particular informant was living in one of the Western countries prior to her marriage. Her husband was living in Ghana then. When they got married, she says, "I was not ready to come and settle." This she says was because of her personal ambitions. However irrespective of her personal ambitions, which she may have acquired as a result of her long stay in the West, she still felt that what she actually needed was a stable marriage.

In Chapter Two it was mentioned that the reason for the appointment of elders to be the backbone of a traditional marriage is to equip the couple with resources to resolve their conflicts. It was further mentioned that stability of marriage is what is always hoped for and the elders try their possible best to help couples to achieve this goal. Such a goal for marriage has remained the same irrespective of social changes. So in Chapter Three, it was mentioned that the usual reason given for the option of church or civil wedding is that it is believed these forms of marriage help the stability of marriage. Therefore, whether it is customary marriage or church marriage, what is hoped for is always the stability of the marriage.

To some people, such a goal might seem inhibiting to the individual because it forces people to stay in relationships which are not working. However, if pastoral care is not necessarily supposed to relieve people from their problems but to help them to cope, then this critique may not be justified. In caring for the sick, for example, our aim is not necessarily to see to their cure, which at times is impossible. Our aim is to help the sick to cope in their situation.

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<sup>140</sup> Gwendo, Interview with author, Accra, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

In the same way, helping people to cope in the midst of problems and to maintain a stable marriage would be a useful goal in the Akan context. Even in the United States of America current research seems to indicate that achieving stability may be a better option than divorce.<sup>141</sup> Thus for the Akan, the extent to which a value or an approach to care helps a couple to achieve marital stability and to cope with childlessness when the couple is faced with that condition might be good criteria for judging the usefulness of that value or approach.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has sought to establish the criteria for evaluating the theology and the pastoral care of marriages adopted by the organisations studied. Every theology must be a contextual theology. However Western missionaries, to a large extent, failed to contextualise theology when they worked in Africa; thus a theology of marriage that is essentially Western has been applied in the African context for a long time. To care for marriages among the Akan today, the need for an Akan Christian theology of marriage is essential. The synthetic model of contextual theology is suggested as appropriate for the contemporary Akan context. It is this model that will be used as criteria for evaluating the theology of marriage adopted by the organisations.

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<sup>141</sup> Most people assume that a person stuck in a bad marriage has two choices: stay married and miserable or get a divorce and become happier. The last option is referred to as the divorce assumption. A recent scholarly study conducted by a team of leading family scholars headed by University of Chicago sociologist Linda Waite, tested this assumption. The study found no evidence that unhappily married people who divorced were typically any happier than unhappily married people who stayed married. Furthermore, the researchers found that two-thirds of unhappily married spouses who stayed married reported that their marriages were happy five years later. In addition, the most unhappy marriages reported the most dramatic turnarounds: among those who rated their marriages as very unhappy, almost eight out of ten who avoided divorce were happily married five years later. See L. J. Waite et al, "Does Marriage Make people Happy?: A Study of Unhappy Marriages", [http://www.americanvalues.org/html/r-unhappy\\_ii.html#PressRelease](http://www.americanvalues.org/html/r-unhappy_ii.html#PressRelease), 11<sup>th</sup> July 2002

The usefulness, and not the truthfulness, of an approach to pastoral care, has also been noted to be a better criterion for assessing the appropriateness of an approach to care. An approach is held to be useful if it helps in the stability of marriages and if it helps couples to cope in situations of childlessness. Furthermore an approach is held to be useful if takes into account the contemporary context of biculturalism, religious ontology, matrilineage, and the view of the person as existing in relationships. These constitute the criteria used in evaluating the approach to the pastoral care of marriages by the organisations under study. The next three chapters are devoted to such an evaluation beginning with the Family Life and Gender Issues Division of the Christian Council of Ghana.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE FAMILY LIFE AND GENDER ISSUES DIVISION OF THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF GHANA**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter Two the approach to the care of marriages in traditional society was discussed. With the changing nature of the Akan society, various organisations have arisen to offer support for marriages. In this chapter and the next two, the work of three Christian organisations are evaluated. This chapter evaluates the pastoral care of marriages, as it is done today, by the Family Life and Gender Issues Division (FLGID) of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG).

The selection of this organisation is due to the fact that it has a well acclaimed programme towards the enrichment of marriages and families. Furthermore the approach to the pastoral care of marriages by the FLGID may be expected to reflect to a certain degree the approach to pastoral care by the mission churches in Ghana.<sup>1</sup> The FLGID is a division of the CCG, the organisation that brings together the Protestant mission churches in Ghana. It is the FLGID that offers basic training in the care of marriages to members of these churches. The training

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<sup>1</sup> By mission churches is meant the churches which were established through the activities of Western missionaries from the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

programmes of the FLGID as well as the annual Christian Home Week<sup>2</sup> are jointly held with the Department of Pastoral Care (DPC) of the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS).<sup>3</sup> There might be some differences in approaches to the care of marriage by individual members of these churches, and the churches themselves may have different positions on certain issues. However, one can assume that as a result of the same training, such approaches may have similar characteristics and thus reflect to an extent similarities in the approach to the care of marriages in the mission churches.

Data for this study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Data was generated from primary sources through qualitative interviews conducted between November 2000 and April 2001 and in January 2002. Nine individuals including the director, two former directors and six individuals that have benefited from the activities of the FLGID were interviewed. The six individuals who were chosen from Accra, Cape Coast and Akosombo have benefited from the FLGID through the activities of the counsellors trained by the organisation and through the Christian Home Week. I also participated in two counselling sessions of counsellors trained by the organisation and a monthly meeting of the Greater Accra Regional Counsellors Association. Secondary sources of data include written documents in the form of books, manuals, handbooks, souvenir brochures and reports of the organisation. The chapter begins with a brief history of the FLGID. Their approach to the pastoral care of marriages is then discussed and it is concluded with a critical appraisal of the approach.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a week set aside each year during which an issue related to marriage and family life is discussed by the member churches of the CCG and the Roman Catholic Churches all over the country. Each town has a local Council of Churches, which meet together during the week for the Christian Home Week activities.

<sup>3</sup> The involvement of the DPC dates back to 1966. See CCG, *40 Years: Ghana Christian Council Anniversary Handbook* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1971), p. 8.

**2. BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE FAMILY LIFE AND GENDER ISSUES  
DIVISION (FLGID) OF THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF GHANA (CCG)**

The CCG was established in 1929. It was at the time called the Christian Council of the Gold Coast.<sup>4</sup> The Council has the following functions among others:

1. To foster and express the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in Ghana ...
2. To uphold the principles of comity or fellowship among churches ...
3. To enable the member churches to consult together concerning their Christian witness and service in Ghana ... and
4. To promote study of changes in the national life – social, cultural, etc. – as they affect the task of the Church of Jesus Christ in Ghana.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the establishment of the Council, which has become her mission statement, is “to unite in service for the benefit of people and mission.” Her motto is “service unites, doctrine divides.”

The beginnings of the FLGID date back to a seminar sponsored by the All-African Conference of Churches (AACC) in collaboration with the World Council of Churches (WCC). The All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life was held at Mindolo

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<sup>4</sup> The founding churches include “the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME), the English Church Mission (Anglican), the Ewe Presbyterian Church (now Evangelical Presbyterian Church), the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast and the Wesleyan Methodist Church.” See Fraternal message from Rev. J. A. A. Solomon during the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Christian Council of Ghana. See CCG, *70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations* (Unpublished Souvenir Brochure, 1999), p.17. Later, other churches became members. These include the Society of Friends, F’EDEN Church, Mennonite Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Orthodox Church, Baptist Church, Salvation Army, and Lutheran Church. Affiliated organisations of the Council are the YMCA and the YWCA. See CCG, *70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> CCG, *40 Years: Ghana Christian Council Anniversary Handbook*, p. 5.

Ecumenical Centre, Kitwe, N. Rhodesia, from 17<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> April 1963. The seminar was intended to initiate continuous work on Christian home and family life in each country. After the seminar resolutions and recommendations were sent to the Assembly of the AACC meeting at Kampala, Uganda, 20-30 April 1963 and to all Christian Councils and Churches in Africa. The recommendations to all the Christian Councils and Churches in Africa include the following:

1. That programmes of study, training and action be undertaken, centrally by a Department of Home and Family Life under the AACC, regionally by national Christian Councils and Churches in every country.
2. That there be the fullest co-operation between Churches and other agencies, national and international, working for the well-being of the family.
3. That every Christian Council establish a Home and Family Committee, with sub-committees where necessary to assure effective coverage of the whole country; and that these committees inaugurate and extend work as outlined in the relevant chapter of our report.
4. That encouragement or initiative be given to the founding of Marriage Guidance Councils in the urban parts of Africa, with an organisation and method appropriate to local needs.<sup>6</sup>

It was in the pursuance of these recommendations that the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL) of the CCG was established in 1961.<sup>7</sup> The committee was established before the seminar so that it could be part of the initial preparation for the seminar. Councils had earlier been asked to initiate a process that would be ongoing even after the seminar.

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<sup>6</sup> *Report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life Held at Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Kitwe, N. Rhodesia, 17<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> April 1963*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>7</sup> David Dartey, Interview with author, Accra, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2002. David Dartey was the former Executive Secretary of the Christian Marriage and Family Life Committee and immediate past General Secretary of the CCG. He worked with the committee for 18 years and served as the General Secretary for 9 years. See CCG, *70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations*, p.58

Councils were asked to set aside workers, preferably married couples, for an initial period of three years, to give leadership to the work for the Christian home and family life done in each Council's name. These workers should begin by studying the situation in their own countries; they should then come together in the Seminar to pool their experiences and take counsel together; and then go back to their countries and initiate programmes of study, thought and action in accordance with local need.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of the CCMFL was to "promote positive Christian teaching on sex, marriage and family life."<sup>9</sup> Programmes of the committee included family planning, family counselling and family life education.<sup>10</sup> Following the increase in the breakdown of marriages and weakening of family relationships that accompanied the rapid socio-economic and political development after independence, the stability of marriage and family life and that of the church as an institution were threatened. This led to the introduction in 1967 of organised family counselling by the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life.<sup>11</sup>

The CCMFL later came to be known as the Family Life and Gender Issues Division (FLGID) with the restructuring of the CCG. This division now has two main objectives:

1. To help married people and families to deal with the stresses that come as a result of social changes.
2. To train people who will be able to help couples and families in stressful situations.

To accomplish the first of the above objectives, the division is involved in pre-marital education, pre-marital counselling and post-marital counselling. It is the co-ordinator who is in charge of these activities at the office, but a number of family counsellors have been trained

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<sup>8</sup> *Report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> CCG, *40 Years: Ghana Christian Council Anniversary Handbook*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> See CCG, *Towards a New Community: The Christian Council of Ghana in 1978* (Accra: CCG, 1978), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> See Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling: A Training Handbook for Counsellors* (Accra: D. A. Dartey, 1997), pp.8-9.

over the years from all over the country who offer such counselling services in their various communities. The co-ordinator, due to the workload, sometimes refers some of the clients to these trained counsellors.

The second objective of training aims at “helping the would-be counsellor to acquire and develop relevant skills and techniques for helping others deal with their situation.”<sup>12</sup> Well-planned and well-resourced programmes are organised by the division with the view to achieving this objective.<sup>13</sup> These include a residential course held for two weeks each year. In the first year training, participants are introduced to the basics of counselling and when they have successfully completed, qualify to become family life educators. Participants who successfully complete the first year of training are accepted for two more years of training in counselling practice.

Teaching methods in the training programmes include lectures, discussions, role-plays, communication games, excursions, film shows, reading, the sharing of ideas and experiences, and practical counselling.<sup>14</sup> Experts from various fields like clinical psychology, secular and pastoral counselling, theology, nursing, social work, agriculture etc. serve as resource persons for the training, which is intended to offer a holistic approach to family and marital counselling. The training is also intended to address the cultural context of the Ghanaian.

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<sup>12</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Syllabus covered in the training include techniques in marriage and family counselling, human development, counselling in sexual problems, working with groups, pre-marriage counselling, family life education, dealing with young people’s questions, case studies, the psychology of inter-personal relationships and the formation of value systems. See CCG, *Towards a New Community*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, pp. 9-12.

Their local congregations and organisations such as World Vision and other Non Governmental Organisation's may sponsor trainees or they may participate as individuals interested in the welfare of families. The Council is able to subsidise the cost of programmes with aid from such organisations as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) through the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG). On completion, the council expects that the skills acquired would be used in the pastoral care of marriages in the communities from which the trainees were recruited. To facilitate this a National Association of Family Counsellors has been formed to group the counsellors into an effective voluntary organisation that can meet the counselling needs of the country.<sup>15</sup> This association has regional branches, which meet periodically for the purposes of reviewing their work and further training.

### **3. *APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE FLGID***

#### **3.1. The View of Marriage**

The answer to the question "what is marriage?" is a basic factor in the pastoral care of marriage. This question however is often not amenable to a straightforward answer. Lydia Adadjawah makes clear certain ideas about how marriage is regarded by the FLGID.<sup>16</sup> Three considerations can be identified.

The foremost consideration is the recognition that marriage is an institution created by God. Genesis 2:18-25, which describes the creation of woman and the subsequent bringing of the

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<sup>15</sup> CCG, *Towards a New Community*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

woman to the man, is regarded as the first marriage and it is regarded as the pattern for all marriages. It is clear that such an understanding of marriage is influenced by the work of Walter Trobisch, especially, his book entitled *I Married You*.<sup>17</sup> The ideas of Trobisch seem to have had much influence on the African scene because of his special interest in marital issues among Africans. As David Mace points out, in the introduction to an earlier publication by Trobisch, as a missionary in Cameroon Trobisch “had been especially concerned with the sexual and marital problems of the people among whom he worked. ... he was ready to reach out to these people at the level of their most intimate personal needs in a way few missionaries ever can.”<sup>18</sup> At the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life out of which the FLGID developed it is asserted that Trobisch “gave generously, and to the benefit of us all, from his deep experience and sensitive mind.”<sup>19</sup> Thus even though the connection may be distant, there is no doubt that his ideas have found a cherished place in marriage counselling in Ghana and many other African countries. This is more so when one considers the fact that Trobisch has an evangelical background and as discussed in Chapter Four, the church in Ghana is clearly evangelical.

Trobisch’s discussion on Genesis 2:24<sup>20</sup> on the ideas of leaving, cleaving and one flesh has become the standard for discussions on marriage in Ghana. Konadu thus assert that:

In the churches, if there is any programme on marriage and family, we begin from my perspective, with the foundation of Christian marriage, how God instituted marriage. In fact I dwell very much on Genesis 2:24 and I try to let people know that

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<sup>17</sup> W. Trobisch, *I Married You* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1<sup>st</sup> British ed., 1971) This book seems to be the standard text recommended to all by counsellors. Even though it was published three decades ago, one can find it on the shelves in many Christian bookshops in Ghana today.

<sup>18</sup> W. Trobisch, *I Loved a Girl: A Private Correspondence Between Two Young Africans and their Pastor* (Guildford/ London: Lutterworth Press, 4<sup>th</sup> Imp., 1978/1963, 1964), p. v.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> This discussion is found in Chapter 2 of the book.

leaving, cleaving, and one flesh, need to be understood if we want our marriage to work.<sup>21</sup>

Konadu regards these ideas on marriage as a departure from traditional marriage and more closer to the Western form of marriage. They became accepted because it was felt that the traditional views about marriage were inadequate and that the “traditional arbitration system was becoming increasingly ineffective in dealing with the mounting complex situations facing people in their marriage and family relationships.”<sup>22</sup> It is for this reason that the FLGID aims at training “leading church members to work as voluntary family advisors and educators to assist their pastors in offering Christian alternatives to the traditional way of dealing with marriage and family issues.”<sup>23</sup> By arguing that the Western view of marriage is closer to the biblical view, the Western form of marriage is unconsciously taken as the only Christian form of marriage. This is more so the case taking into consideration the fact that it was from the West that Christianity was introduced in Ghana. Distinction is not made between what is Western and what is Christian.

It is also taken that since God has instituted marriage, His blessings should be sought for it so having a church wedding or blessing is regarded as an imperative for the Christian even when the traditional customary rites have been performed. “At least, the orthodox churches<sup>24</sup> accept that customary marriage is marriage. But then, all Christian organisations including the orthodox churches insist that people should bring their marriage before God,” says Adadjawah. What bringing the marriage before God means is nothing more than having a church wedding. Again in this we see how a Western form of marriage is upheld as against

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<sup>21</sup> C. K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001. Konadu is a former co-ordinator of the FLGID

<sup>22</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Orthodox Church is the term often used for the churches that were established by Western missionaries.

customary marriage. The churches, to date, exclude people who have not had a church wedding or blessing from leadership positions, even though they may have been properly married traditionally. The argument is that God has not blessed their marriages.

The second consideration is the element of love. "God brings people who are in love together," declares Adadjawah. Marriage is considered to be the union between a man and a woman who are in love. In this the understanding of love is romantic love and not the practical love of the African, demonstrated by giving and receiving of gifts that takes place before, during and after marriage ceremonies. This view also seems to be influenced by a modern trend in which romantic love is generally taken as the basis of marriage. This view of marriage is individualistic and leaves out the role of the families in the marriage as we find in traditional society. A comment made by Trobisch after an interaction with a woman who was living with a man but not properly married to him makes this point clear. When Trobisch suggested that the woman went back to her parents until the man had properly married her, she replied that that was impossible because the parents did not approve of him. When Trobisch asked why, the lady's response was that the man was a European.<sup>25</sup> Trobisch makes this comment about the man afterwards, "This explained many things: that he had money, didn't want a child and wanted 'free love.'" The whole idea of free love or romantic love is foreign to the Akan of Ghana. For it to be considered an important element in marriage reveals a modern influence. This view of the FLGID does not however exclude the fact that marriage is regarded as a union between families. The role of the families in marriage is taken as important by the FLGID, even though in practical terms, the involvement of families in marriage is discouraged.

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<sup>25</sup> Trobisch, *I Married You*, p. 14.

The third consideration is that marriage is intended to provide companionship and mutual help and assistance. The idea of mutual help and assistance seems to derive from the communal nature of the Akan society, which thrives on these qualities. In marriage both the man and the woman have certain responsibilities towards the other and aimed at helping the other person. Companionship, though important, is not a major reason for marriage in traditional Akan society since loneliness which calls for such companionship is not an issue in a communal society like that of the Akan. The idea of companionship as a main reason for marriage seems to be an influence from modernity.

Surprisingly, in the interview granted by Adadjawah and the former directors of the FLGID, nothing was mentioned about procreation being a main purpose for marriage. Trobisch's influence cannot be ruled out here for in concluding his discussion on Genesis 2:24, he claims that "in this key verse about marriage, quoted four times in the Bible, there is not a word about children. ... when the Bible describes the indispensable elements of marriage, it is significant that children are not expressly mentioned."<sup>26</sup> To Trobisch, children are an additional blessing to marriage. This view of marriage is contrary not only to the traditional understanding of marriage but to the understanding of marriage in contemporary Akan society. One cannot talk about marriage without talking about procreation.

### **3.2. Theoretical Presuppositions**

The approach to pastoral care one adopts also depends partly on theoretical presuppositions held about the factors that influence human behaviour. Even though the FLGID does not

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p 28.

claim to operate within the framework of well thought-out theories, it can be argued that it operates on the basis of an eclectic theory, that is, on the basis of a combination of a number of theories. This includes cognitive behavioural theory and systems theory. Religious factors also play an important role in the approach. Ryle has noted that “therapists of all persuasions aim to alter the unhappy experience of the couple, and recognise that this involves modifying their behaviour together.”<sup>27</sup> He argues however that the particular theoretical persuasion of any therapist will determine the focus of intervention. While behaviourists focus on behaviour itself, the analytic therapists focus on the relationship as it is influenced by relationship of the spouses with significant figures in the past, and the systems and communicational therapists focus on the meanings and perceptions conveyed behaviourally.

Behavioural work with marital problems has the goal of providing couples with behaviour-change operations based on positive control procedures.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis is on operations that lead to behaviour-change, which may include positive reinforcement and the teaching of communication skills. There is also the emphasis on the present situation as against influences from the past. Such emphasis on the present situational determinants to marital problems can be said to be true of the approach to pastoral care by the FLGID. The assumption is that interpersonal difficulties may be understood by identifying those factors in the present situation that perpetuate the difficulties. Changing the factors helps in ameliorating the difficulties. Adadjawah identified some of the factors that create tensions in marriage as finance, infidelity, interference by in-laws, and sexual problems. To resolve marital tensions couples are helped to change their behaviour in relation to these factors, which may be

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<sup>27</sup> A. Ryle, “Couple Therapy” in S. Walrond-Skinner (Ed.) *Family and Marital Psychotherapy: A Critical Approach* (London/Henley/ Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979), p. 137.

<sup>28</sup> A. L. James and K. Wilson, *Couples, Conflict and Change*, p. 81.

identified as having a role to play in the incidence of the marital tension.

For example if it is identified that the cause of a particular marital tension is financial, the counsellor seeks to help the couple change their behaviour concerning their finances. In this case, it may include helping the couple to change their attitude to work and their spending patterns. The therapist may teach the couple issues concerning work in the light of the socio-economic situation in the country and how to manage their finances in the midst of the general economic problems in the country. In this way, the couple is helped to cushion the problem they face in marriage as well as the stresses that social changes bring along. It is to equip the counsellor to effectively perform this function that all areas of life, such as economics, health, ageing and environmental issues are covered in the training programmes.

Systems theory is also an underlying factor in the approach to the pastoral care of marriage by the FLGID. This is made clear in the recognition of the fact that marriage is not only a union between individuals but between families. The interconnectedness between the couple and the members of their families of origin are acknowledged. It is for this reason that Adadjawah values greatly the contribution of the family. “When I’m not clear about certain things, if it is possible, I invite family members. ... I find a nice way of finding out what the person knows about the would be in-law, what are the feelings?”<sup>29</sup>

Dartey points out that “the training of marriage and family counsellors centres on the interaction between husband and wife and seeks to promote understanding of the links between patterns of early childhood relationships and their later restatement in the

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<sup>29</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

heterosexual relationship of marriage."<sup>30</sup> This seems to suggest an analytic orientation to the approach to care. However, in practice, it can be argued that it is a religious understanding rather than analytic explanation based on object relations, transference and counter-transference that influence the approach. Adadjawah cites the example of a girl who had found a suitor but was scared of getting into the marriage because nobody seemed to be properly married in her house. Adadjawah talks about her interaction with the girl:

I had to ask her so many questions, getting to know the background of she herself, the family background, and the family background of the man too, where he comes from. I had to know the character he has. We found out that there was something in the man's family too. He is from a family in which if you're married to a man from that particular house and excuse me, if you flirt, you go crazy. ...anybody who comes to marry in the family is aware of it. He told me, "we tell them from the beginning." So you come in if you like it. ... the ritual that was causing that problem had been performed long ago but it is still working. ...Now that they are from different backgrounds with problems and they wanted the marriage to work they needed to know all that.<sup>31</sup>

This description seems to suggest that some religious rituals performed generations ago continues to have an influence on spouses. It seems to indicate a religious explanation to marital issues and not an analytic explanation.

The FLGID also has an interactive approach in its counselling services.<sup>32</sup> This is a departure from both the non-directive form of counselling associated with the human potential movement that arose in the wake of modernity as well as the directive form of counselling characteristic of traditional society. It seeks to bring into their counselling the strengths in both forms. As Dartey puts it:

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<sup>30</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001

<sup>32</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, p. 20.

We adopt the interactive approach, that is a blend of the directive approach and the non-directive approach. This is in recognition of the cultural background of the people we are dealing with. We feel that being totally directive as it happens in the traditional set-up is not very helpful but at the same time, the non-directive approach is not going to be helpful because people expect to receive concrete advice from the counsellor.<sup>33</sup>

In the traditional approach, the counsellor is viewed as one who knows and is therefore able to help his client through what he regards as the way forward.<sup>34</sup> Such an approach is however regarded as inadequate in dealing with the complex issues of modern society. The non-directive approach is also regarded as inappropriate in Ghanaian society because irrespective of their innate capabilities, people still seek advice from the counsellor in times of stress. In my view this interactive approach of the FLGID is creative because it seeks to be relevant to the contemporary context.

### **3.3 Resources for Pastoral Care**

Basic resources used by the FLGID in their pastoral practice include the Bible, prayer, trained counsellors and the Christian community. It is taught that everything about marriage, which has been instituted by God, can be found in the Bible. Whether it is counselling with individuals or couples or having seminars and discussions on various issues related to marriage and family life, the Bible is appealed to. In 1989 for example, the theme for the Christian Home Week was "Walking Together." One of the issues discussed was divorce. Apart from the sociological and psychological facts about divorce, the material prepared for use in the discussions by the churches was basically a biblical exposition on divorce.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> David Dartey, Interview with author, Accra, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Dartey, *Nurturing the Skills of Counselling*, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> See CCG and NCS, *Walking Together: Christian Home Week 1989* (Accra: CCG & NCS, 1989), pp.16-20. How the Bible is interpreted in their pastoral practice is discussed later.

The practice of prayer is another important resource for pastoral practice in the FLGID. This is in recognition of the fact that marital problems are not regarded as just physical but also spiritual. It is therefore believed that added to whatever physical steps one needs to take to resolve ones conflicts, prayer has the efficacy to turn very disturbing situations around. In the counselling services therefore, prayers are said before and/or after counselling. This takes place irrespective of the religious background of the client. It is acknowledged that the services are Christian services and when a client decides to benefit from a Christian service, the client should be prepared to go through Christian rituals.

Trained counsellors constitute another important resource in the pastoral practice of the FLGID. It is believed that not everyone can effectively help those who are hurting because they may lack the skills needed to be able to offer such help. That is the reason for the emphasis on training for both clergy and laity so that they may serve as marriage and family counsellors. It is advised that when people have problems, they should approach such trained counsellors. The counsellors are regarded as people who are trustworthy and who have the skills to offer help to hurting people. The advice to people to approach counsellors when they have problems can be said to originate from the traditional practice of advising people not to send their problems to anyone but to the elders. The idea behind this advice is that not all people have the interest of the person at heart and even though some people may seem to be concerned, they may aggravate the problems. The elders are respected people and are believed to have the interests of the person who is hurting at heart.

It is also believed that the whole Christian community can offer various forms of support to hurting people. Congregations or groups in the congregations are regarded as important

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resources that may be available to help people in times of stress. Such support comes mainly through visits to people who have problems and are hurting.

#### **4. CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE BY THE FLGID**

##### **4.1. Theology of Marriage**

The FLGID holds certain theological positions on marriage, which gives direction to their pastoral practice. Such theologies are questionable, and the following questions may be raised on them. What makes a marriage a Christian marriage? Can marriage be truly traditional and at the same time Christian? Is there the need for an additional Christian rite when a couple has had the customary marriage? Who are the proper people to administer the marriage contract?

To the FLGID, when two people are married customarily they are perfectly married. According to Lydia Adadjawah, “we make people aware that traditional marriage is not engagement.” However, the FLGID operates with a theology that seems to suggest that for marriage to be Christian, it must be church marriage. Church marriage is therefore exalted and couples are required, even when they have had the customary marriage, to have the marriage blessed in church. Adadjawah asserts that all Christian organisations including the orthodox churches insist that people should bring their marriage before God.<sup>36</sup> The phrase, “bring their marriage before God” means that the marriage should be blessed in church. If customary marriage is taken as complete, why do the FLGID continue to insist on a church wedding or blessing? It is such insistence that continues to create the impression that customary marriage

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<sup>36</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

is just an engagement,<sup>37</sup> which to me is very unfortunate. It has grave consequences. The logical conclusion is that the couple is not really married. As a result of this, when such a couple who are customarily married separates, it doesn't amount to divorce, since they are not really married. Considerable confusion is thus created here. It seems to me that the FLGID has not addressed itself to this confusion that has been created.

In addition to this confusion, the general tenor of Akan (Ghanaian) society is that sexual union should only take place within marriage. Sexual union outside of marriage is taken as fornication and it is frowned upon. This is in accord with the morality of both traditional and contemporary Akan (Ghanaian) society. If customary marriage is taken as engagement with the conclusion that the couple is not really married, it implies that such a couple engaging in sexual union is fornicating. In many instances, people do have the customary marriage several months before the church wedding. The question is, can such people consummate the marriage through sexual union? This to me is another issue that arises out of the insistence of the FLGID on a church wedding and which they have failed to address adequately. It gives credence to the point that the FLGID believes that customary marriage cannot be Christian.

For customary marriage to be Christian there should be an additional "Christian rite." Most often, these rites are nothing more than liturgies, which have been inherited from the Western Church. These liturgies have nothing to do with the Akan context. Issues of the relationship between Christianity and culture are relevant in this respect. The FLGID seems to have a translational model of contextual theology. In this model it is assumed that there is an essential element of the gospel which must be applied to the new culture. In this context the

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<sup>37</sup> The term engagement has become the popular parlance for customary marriage. It is clearly borrowed from the West. Its parallel in the Akan (Ghanaian) context might be the *abow mu bo* (knocking) but even here there is a

essential element is the church wedding which must be applied to the Akan context. The problem with this, as noted in Chapter Four, is that what is regarded as the essential element in the gospel, in this respect the church wedding, is given with another culture's celebration of marriage. Just as it was observed that the translational model is not a suitable model, it is my thinking that the theology underlying the compartmentalisation of Christian marriage on the one hand and customary marriage on the other hand, and the enforcement of church marriage on Akans is inappropriate.

Is it the celebration of a marriage in church, which makes it Christian? Is being Christian just a question of going through rituals or it is abiding by the principles of Christ. Following from the arguments, I think that the whole understanding of what it means to be a Christian, and by implication what a Christian marriage is, in the FLGID is quite inadequate. There are many marriages, which have been celebrated in church, which are far from being Christian marriages because Christian principles of marriage are not followed. However, there are marriages which have not been celebrated in church, but in which the couple diligently live by Christian principles of marriage. Is the marriage of such a couple less Christian? I think that that is not the case. It can be argued that customary marriage can at the same time be Christian without an additional 'Christian' rite.

It is also assumed that a clergy person should bless a marriage to make it Christian. This means that the clergy are the only persons in the position to administer the marriage contract. It is usual to hear the minister at a marriage ceremony in church say that "I as an ordained

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difference in the sense that the knocking is not a private affair as it is with the Western engagement.

Minister in the Church of Christ pronounce that they are husband and wife from today ... »<sup>38</sup>

And often this happens after the elders of the couple have met to contract the marriage. This raises certain questions. Does that mean that when the elders sit to see to the marriage celebration, the couple does not become husband and wife? The view of marriage as instituted by God hallows the institution. One may ask, is it God who brings the couple together or it is the minister? If it is God, could God use anyone as an instrument apart from the minister? In the Bible, there are numerous examples of God using people who did not know Him to fulfil His purpose.<sup>39</sup> It is often argued that the clergy have the legal backing of the state to administer the marriage. But the question is, what about the legal rights parents have to contract marriages under customary law? Furthermore, if the minister who is often not related to the couple can be given the legal right to administer the marriage ceremony, why can't the parents of the couple have the legal right to do it? I see this situation as undermining the basic biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God and also undermining the already shaken role and authority of the elders.

From the above, it can be argued that the FLGID has adopted the translational model of contextual theology as they seek to make marriage meaningful in the Akan context. They have regarded 'church marriage' as Christian marriage without recognising that the 'church marriage' is a product of socio-cultural formulations. They have transferred certain 'Christian traditions' (In this case marriage) to the Akan context without critically examining the 'Christian traditions' and also without examining the Akan context to which they have made the transfer. Thus they have transferred a theology of marriage based on the one-flesh model,

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted from Methodist Church, Ghana, *Methodist Liturgy and Book of Worship* (Unpublished), p.22. This is a book of services being used on a trial basis in the Methodist Church, Ghana since 2000.

<sup>39</sup> For example, God used Cyrus, a Persian King, for God's purposes, even though Cyrus did not acknowledge God. See Isaiah 45, 1-5.

which is individualistic, to a context that is basically communal in nature. Furthermore they have failed to fully appreciate that God has been at work among the Akan even before the missionaries arrived and that there are aspects of traditional Akan culture that are good. The FLGID has failed to use the synthetic model of contextualisation, which was established in the last chapter as the appropriate model for contextualisation in the contemporary Akan context. They therefore operate on a theology of marriage that is far from appropriate to the contemporary Akan.

#### **4.2. Communalism or Individualism**

On one hand, the FLGID seems to operate with a philosophy of communalism. The importance of the relationships between couples and their extended families is appreciated. It is held that marriage is a union between two families and the situation where a couple feels that parental consent is not necessary is not accepted. Sometimes there are even attempts to involve, to an extent, family members in counselling. Local churches may also play the role of extended families. In times of stress, a local church may offer support to the hurting person just as it would happen with the extended family in traditional society. People are able to find new extended families in the church.

On the other hand, the FLGID seems to operate with the philosophy of individualism. Emphasis is laid on the fact that marriage is between individuals. In fact, the involvement of the extended family is more often than not regarded as unhealthy and the source of problems in marriage. Konadu puts this across in a very subtle manner, “when we come to our tradition, almost everybody is involved and we need to be mindful of that involvement, otherwise we

create problems.”<sup>40</sup> Sometimes, people are made to feel that nothing good can come from their extended families. The reason for this attitude towards the extended family may be the notion that the extended family today, “has little financial power to support their members ... The industrialised society fosters the nuclear family.”<sup>41</sup>

This view of the extended family creates conflicts in individuals with regards to their relationships with members of their extended families. They are connected to the extended families by some strong ties and the extended family is seen as existing to help them to be successful in their marriage. At the same time, they are made to feel that members of the extended families are evil and they only exist to create problems for them in their marriage. It is therefore very easy to hear people who have been connected with such counselling say that they would not want to have anything to do with the extended family.

The situation seems to point to the appreciation of the bicultural nature of the contemporary context. As Konadu aptly points out, “people are struggling to find how to marry the two, how they will respect the extended family and at the same time maintain the nuclear family ... We cannot discard the traditional extended family, and we need to respect the formation of the new union.”<sup>42</sup> In my view, it is this difficulty: the delineation of the boundaries of the new union in the midst of the larger extended family, which the FLGID has not been able to resolve.

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<sup>40</sup> C. K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.

<sup>41</sup> CCG & NCS, *Women's Empowerment: Christian Home Week 1996* (Accra: CCG & NCS, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> C. K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.

In my assessment even though the FLGID seems to take into account the bicultural nature of contemporary Akan society, how to apply this systematically into pastoral practice is a problem. For example even though the FLGID to an extent recognises how the extended family can influence marriages, extended family members are only involved occasionally when dealing with marital issues. In pre-marital counselling, a couple may be informed about the need to relate well with extended family members for a successful marriage, or the dangers the extended family can pose. However, the counsellors fail to invite extended family members for a discussion of their role in the marriage. Sometimes, a counsellor may approach a parent on behalf of the client when there is a deadlock in terms of the acceptance of the proposed partner, and the discussion ends there. The long-term involvement of the extended family in the marriage is not discussed.

#### **4.3. The View of the Human Person**

There is the recognition that marriage is a union between families and that the contribution of the families are very much valued. Based on this assumption, family members are sometimes involved in counselling where practicable. This is to ensure that relationships remain cordial between the couple and their in-laws, because if relationships are not cordial it will have an adverse effect on the marriage. Adadjawah<sup>43</sup> recounts that on one occasion a would-be mother-in-law told her she was not interested in the man the daughter intended to marry. In the course of their discussion, she found out that the woman had baseless fears. She felt that the young man was not trustworthy. She was actually ignorant about the background of the man and such ignorance had led to her dislike for the man. After the mother-in-law had been

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<sup>43</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

helped to find out more about the man and his background, she recognised that the fears were baseless and she was prepared to accept the man as a son-in-law.

Such a view of marriage as a union between families indicates that the human person exists in relationships. The individual is related to families of both the father and the mother. This has led Adadjawah to condemn in no uncertain terms the teaching in some new independent churches that parental consent to marriage is not necessary and that what is important is for the couple to be in love.<sup>44</sup> To Adadjawah, that is wrong teaching and the mission churches do not subscribe to it. Before the mission churches will solemnise any marriage they require that the customary rites be performed first. This is in recognition of the fact that marriage is not just between individuals but between families. The customary rites are performed at a ceremony in which the heads of the families or their representatives are present and there is exchange of gifts indicating the coming together of the families.

It is also assumed that when humans face problems, they will share the problems with others when they can be sure that the people with whom they are sharing the problem will understand them, they can be trusted, and that their concerns will remain confidential. This also indicates that the human person is a person in relationships. Because they exist in relationship it is believed that humans readily seek help and accept help from others. Individuals know that if they are to receive help, they need to share their problems. Problems may be shared with parents, friends, clergy, or counsellors. The church community may be involved in caring for couples. All of this goes to show that the human person exists in relationships. Thus it can be argued that the FLGID takes into account the person-in-relation

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<sup>44</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

aspect of the contemporary Akan context.

#### **4.4. Theological or Scientific Interpretation of Reality**

In the FLGID, it is accepted that marital problems are not only physical but they also have spiritual elements to their causes. There is the underlying assumption of both material (physical) and spiritual aspects to human existence. The spiritual nature of human existence includes connections with ancestors and other deities. It is believed that certain covenants established between relations of former generations and deities can have an influence on people and their marital relationships, or that curses pronounced on families long ago can have an impact on the present generation. The example cited earlier about a girl who had found a suitor but was scared of getting into the marriage because of the belief that marriages do not work well in her family is typical of many marriages plagued with spiritual problems.

Adadjawah notes:

It's like a cycle. You may go to a house and see that there is a broken marriage. Father and mother are not together, that is, the spouses are not together. Then you see the girls are all back to the house. Maybe, they've been married before or they have had children with one or two men and they are back. And the men are also there with the same problem. So, it's like a chain. You trace it back and you observe that the father had had the same problem and so had the children, the daughters and the sons are all having the same problem. Nobody is actually successful in marriage. ... such a situation indicates a curse in the house and that no marriage will be solid in that particular house.<sup>45</sup>

She again says, "For the African, it is buried in us that demonic forces abound and they can operate in the marriage. They can operate in our lives. One doesn't rule that out."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

It is as a result of such a religious worldview that prayer is an important element in the approach to pastoral care by the FLGID. For counsellors to be equipped to deal with spiritual problems in the course of their work, prayers constitute part of the training programmes.

The element of prayer is brought in to take care of those issues. That is why at the training, every morning, we have morning devotions, which is more or less a spiritual build-up. It is not mere preaching. It is for spiritual building and we even have moments of retreat and prayer sessions. Sometimes, we have half-night prayer sessions to build ourselves up spiritually. We arm ourselves towards any eventuality. We are Africans....<sup>47</sup>

This recognition of the spiritual nature of problems is vital for any pragmatic pastoral practice in the Akan context. It takes into consideration an important element of traditional Akan (African) culture, which modernisation has not been able to erode. In modern Akan society, as in traditional society, the perception is that there is no problem that has no spiritual significance. There is no separation between the sacred and the secular. For effective pastoral practice therefore, such spiritual elements to life need to be acknowledged, which the FLGID does. It is believed that ultimately God is in control of life and its experiences so God must be approached when life's experiences become problematic. However, the FLGID takes care not to overemphasise the spiritual aspects over other causes to marital problems such as the economy. It could be said that, to an extent, issues are considered in a holistic manner. It can thus be concluded that the FLGID takes into account the aspect of the contemporary Akan context that interprets reality theologically.

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<sup>47</sup> Lydia Adadjawah, Interview with author, Accra, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

#### 4.5. The Matrilineal System: The Issue of Patriarchy

This study, though it applies to other ethnic groups, is basically concerned with the Akan of Ghana. The major distinction between the Akan and other ethnic groups is the fact that the Akan are matrilineal. Does the FLGID take into account this fact of the Akan and the implications it has for pastoral practice?

The strength of the matrilineal system is that it has the potential to engender equality between men and women in marriage. Even though the FLGID does not focus on the matrilineal system in their pastoral practice it is clear that equality in marriage is hoped for. They seem to affirm traditional gender roles, as an extract from the 1996 Christian Home Week Handbook explains:

Women are endowed with special sensitivities that most men possess to a lesser degree. God gave these unique qualities for a woman to become a woman. And it is important that women bring these qualities into every fabric of their societal life. Over the years, and particularly in the last two decades, there have been rigorous feminine movements diverting their unique women qualities into an arena of competition with men on equality. This is the work of the enemy who deceived the first woman. He is telling women that men were doing all the important work. Consequently, child raising and homemaking began to be viewed as lesser occupations. The devil has been able to convince many women to strive and attain abilities of men. Eventually many women are abandoning their own womanhood; (though manhood cannot be achieved) leaving most of them confused and frustrated.<sup>48</sup>

It is argued that “society and the families need the traditional role of the woman more than ever before.”<sup>49</sup> However by affirming gender roles they do not seem to suggest that the woman is inferior. As suggested by Dickson, it is more correct to speak of complementary

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<sup>48</sup> CCG & NCS, *Women's Empowerment: Christian Home Week 1996*, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

roles.<sup>50</sup> The FLGID recognises that in the light of the changes in modern society, there has been a redefinition in the woman's role in the family.<sup>51</sup> Many women are involved in wage labour just like men and are independent again. What the FLGID does is to help men to appreciate the added responsibility taken over by the woman and encourage them to share in this burden. In terms of decision-making, the FLGID argues that important decisions should be a joint venture between the man and the woman. Thus the FLGID advocates the equality of the woman and the man. Indirectly then, they take into account the matrilineal system and its potential in affirming the autonomy and power position of women and engendering the equality of women and men.

#### **4.6. The Support/ Care of Marriages**

##### **4.6.1. *The Use of the Bible***

It was mentioned earlier that the Bible is one of the basic resources used in the pastoral care of marriages by the FLGID. In the use of the Bible a propositional interpretation dominates its pastoral work. For example, in the discussion of who the head of the affinal home is, Ephesians 5: 23 is immediately quoted to assert that it is the man. However, the explanation of the term head is far from being a boss or lord. Also, as mentioned earlier, a propositional interpretation of Genesis 2:24, emphasising the ideas of leaving, cleaving and one flesh has become the standard of teaching among counsellors. Such propositional interpretation of scripture does not take the sensibilities of others into consideration. Furthermore, it is difficult to use such a method of interpretation consistently with every scripture. For example there is evidence of the practice of polygyny, which counsellors don't accept, in the Bible. As

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<sup>50</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 64.

<sup>51</sup> CCG & NCS, *Women's Empowerment*, p. 21.

observed in Chapter Four, narrative is a better approach to interpretation. The propositional use of the Bible is thus a setback in the pastoral practice of the FLGID.

#### ***4.6.2. The Issue of Childlessness***

One of the criteria set for assessing the pastoral practice of the organisations is how far they are able to help people cope in situations of childlessness. There is an implicit assumption in the FLGID that childlessness is not a problem. Childless couples may be told not to worry because marriage is not intended for procreation. Such an attitude towards the issue of childlessness does not help the couple to cope. Almost every Akan person knows that irrespective of whatever people have to say, marriage is for procreation. Friends, in-laws and the community all expect the married couple to have a child not long after the marriage. A few months after the marriage of my brother-in-law, my seven-year-old son, who was the pageboy at the wedding, asked the woman when she was going to have a child. Thus even children know that marriage is intended for procreation.

The assumption that childlessness is not a problem has led to a situation in which no serious attempts are made to help childless couples to cope with their situation. In the contemporary Akan context to dismiss childlessness as not being a problem is to be unrealistic and does not help the couple to cope with the situation.

### **4.6.3. Stability**

In its pastoral practice, the FLGID seeks to achieve stability. Education is an important tool employed to achieve such a goal. The popular notion about marriage is that it is a necessary evil. In addition, social changes create stressful situations for couples such that this negative notion about marriage is reinforced. Such a situation leads to negative relationships and hurtful marital experiences. In the FLGID it is believed that when people are equipped with the right information about marriage, and they are helped to cope with the pressures of social life, the negative perceptions about marriage will change to positive ones. People will begin to view marriage as an enjoyable and a worthwhile experience. The annual Christian Home Week celebrations are educational programmes. They are aimed at providing people with the opportunity, through seminars and discussions, to reflect on various issues related to marriage and family life in order to gain a better understanding of those issues. Such understanding eventually leads to positive attitudes towards marriage and family life and enables couples to have fruitful marriages.

An important element of the education is to help people to understand that individuals and marriages go through developmental stages. It is believed that knowledge of the various risk factors of each stage of marriage will help to prevent unnecessary conflict between couples. Adadjawah argues, for example, that when people lack the knowledge that their spouses' promotion at the workplace can make an increased demand on their time, they begin to speculate about the longer period of time the spouse claims to spend at work. This may be the basis of conflict. With adequate knowledge, such conflict may be avoided. The curricula for their counselling training programme includes human development to help the counsellors understand how the different stages in the individual's life and in the life of the couple make

different demands, which may create tension if not understood. Another important element of education is the attention that is drawn to women's issues. All of these help to avoid unnecessary conflicts and to achieve stability in marriage.

Stability is also achieved through counselling activities and community support. In counselling, people are hardly ever encouraged to separate. It is clear that divorce is hardly recommended. Rather the counsellor helps couples to make efforts at reconciliation when there is a problem in the marriage. In terms of community support Konadu points out that the importance of the extended family is due to the fact that parental approval makes for the stability of marriage.<sup>52</sup> This is as a result of the responsibility the family assumes towards the success of the marriage once they are recognised as part and parcel of the marriage.

#### ***4.6.4. Attitude Towards Polygyny***

Anyone involved in the pastoral care of marriages in Africa cannot overlook the issue of polygyny. Different organisations involved in the care of marriages have different attitudes concerning polygyny. It is clear that polygyny is not accepted as the ideal for the Christian by the FLGID. As mentioned earlier, a propositional interpretation of the Bible is used as evidence against polygyny. Furthermore, it is argued that the bitter conflicts between co-wives do not augur well for stability of marriages. It is for this reason that the member churches of the CCG still do not accept polygynists as full members of the church. In many of these churches, polygynists are excluded from participating in the Eucharist. Some of the churches have exceptions to this rule in their mission areas. For example in the Northern

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<sup>52</sup> C. K. Konadu, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.

Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, new members who come into the fellowship of the Church when they are already polygynists are accepted for full membership and are allowed to participate in the Eucharist. But those who decide to become polygynists after being accepted into the fellowship of the Church are refused full membership of the Church and are consequently refused participation in the Eucharist.

Even though polygyny is not accepted as the norm in traditional society, as discussed in Chapter Two, it is allowed. The attitude towards polygynists is influenced not by the inherent problems with the practice but by the policies of the Western church, which established the mission churches in Ghana. Even though these mission churches are now autonomous and the leadership as well as the clergy are mainly Africans, the policies have not changed much irrespective of many discussions on the issue. Prevention from the Eucharist continues to be a punishment against polygynists. This, I think is due to the interpretation given to Genesis 2:24. The ideas of leaving, cleaving and one flesh which has somehow become the standard teaching of the FLGID have no place for polygyny. According to Trobisch, “to cleave ... being glued together, is, of course, only possible between two persons. Our Bible verse is an uncompromising attack on all polygamy.”<sup>53</sup>

In terms of the status of polygynists in their churches, the FLGID have little to say about it, since each of the member churches has its own policy. However, the attitude towards polygynists is not one of condemnation. Adadjawah argues, “somebody comes to you with a problem about the husband who is polygamous. Certainly you know this is Ghana and it is bound to happen because of the culture which we have. So, you cannot just get up and say no!

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<sup>53</sup> Trobisch, *I Married You*, p. 24.

He is wrong. He is supposed to be monogamous and all that.” What counsellors try to do is to be sympathetic to polygynists.

#### **4.7. Training Programme**

As mentioned earlier, the training programme of the FLGID is intended to offer a holistic approach to family and marital counselling and this takes place two weeks in a year for three years. It can be argued that even though they seem to be working with an eclectic theoretical framework, trainees are not helped to adequately understand the theories involved. One may question how adequately trainees may be able to learn such a holistic approach involving a number of psychological theories and an understanding of other subject areas in such few hours of training? In my thinking the period of training is too short for participants to adequately understand the underlying ethos as well as the psychological principles involved. At best what happens is just scratching the surface of counselling principles.

Furthermore, there isn't much practical exposure in the training. The training is more theoretical than practical. In such a situation, one can say that the trainees have learned some principles of counselling but not the practice of counselling. Without much practical exposure, I wonder how trainees can be effective in applying the counselling principles they have learned in actual practice. The limited nature of this study did not permit me to investigate the effectiveness or otherwise of the trained counsellors. The FLGID itself has also not organised any systematic investigation to determine the effectiveness of the counsellors they have trained. However it is claimed that the programme is successful because of the “success stories” from some of the counsellors. I think that an in-depth systematic study of the effectiveness of the training programme is necessary.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the approach of the FLGID to the pastoral care of marriage has been discussed and a critical appraisal of the approach is offered. There are claims that the context of the people is taken into consideration in the approach. Upon a critical analysis, one can say that to an extent there is some truth in this claim. The approach to the care of marriages to a large extent takes into account the bicultural nature of the society, the theological understanding of reality and the view of the human person as relational. It also implicitly takes into account the potential authority of women in the Akan context. Furthermore the goal of care is towards the stability of marriages which is recognised as very important.

However, the FLGID operates with a theology of marriage that is far from appropriate. The use of the translational model of contextualisation has led to the transfer of a theology of marriage developed in the West to the Akan context. Such theology of marriage is based on an individualistic view of marriage and fails to address pertinent issues in the Akan context. There is also a propositional interpretation in the use of the Bible and there is a failure to offer adequate support in situations of childlessness. Furthermore, the training programmes lack enough practical exposure.

Even though the FLGID might be offering some help in terms of the support of marriages, it can be concluded that they are lacking in certain areas and there is room for improvement. Suggestions for such an improvement are offered in the concluding chapter of the study. How is marriage cared for in other strands of Christianity in Ghana? That is the focus of the next two chapters. The Family Enrichment Ministry of the International Central Gospel Church is the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE FAMILY ENRICHMENT MINISTRY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRAL GOSPEL CHURCH, GHANA**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses and critiques the manner in which the Family Enrichment Ministry (FEM) of the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) offers pastoral care towards marriages. The choice of this church is due to the fact that the ICGC is one of the African independent or initiated churches, which has an elaborate programme towards the care of marriages. Since the African independent churches constitute a very significant part of Christianity in Ghana, it is important that they are not left out in the discussion of any issue of importance to the Christian church. The choice of the FEM therefore, is to have a perspective from the African independent churches, but it must be said at the outset that even though there might be some similarities, it is not implied that their approach is typical of what happens in other African independent churches.

Data for the chapter has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The director, two counsellors and four individuals (including a couple) who have participated in the counselling programme of the FEM were interviewed. Study materials used by the FEM corroborate the data from the interviews. Other relevant literature especially that which relates to the historical background of the ICGC as well as their theological position has also been

consulted. A brief historical survey of the ICGC and the FEM is offered, and then the approach to the pastoral care of marriages is discussed. The chapter concludes with a critical appraisal of the approach to care.

## **2. BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE FAMILY ENRICHMENT MINISTRY (FEM) OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRAL GOSPEL CHURCH (ICGC), GHANA**

Beginning on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1984,<sup>1</sup> the ICGC is one of a group of African Independent churches popularly designated as Charismatic Ministries.<sup>2</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu argues that these ministries “reflect modern African ingenuity in the appropriation of neo-Pentecostal Christianity enamoured with a repertoire of global, mostly American neo-Pentecostal techniques, style and strategy in organisation and expression.”<sup>3</sup> As argued later, this Western expression is abundantly clear in the FEM.

The founder of ICGC, Mensa Anamuah Otabil, whose family were originally members of the Anglican Church had his conversion experience at age twelve through the ministry of the Scripture Union (SU) at the Tema Community Two Primary School.<sup>4</sup> After some time, he stopped attending the Anglican Church but fellowshipped regularly with the Tema Fellowship.<sup>5</sup> He later became a member of the Assemblies of God Church. Following his

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<sup>1</sup> E. K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> This designation has both historical and theological significance. Historically, these churches are manifestations of the neo-Pentecostal movement institutionalising as independent churches since the late 1970s. Theologically, these churches have an ecclesiology in which every believer is considered a potential recipient of charism(s) or ministry gift(s) of the Holy Spirit. See J. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal Within African Christianity: A Study of some Current Historical and Theology Developments Within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2000), p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 336.

<sup>5</sup> The Fellowships are evangelical interdenominational groups of the Scripture Union. At the schools, the name Scripture Union is used but in the Communities, they are named Town Fellowships.

move to Kanda, the Kanda Christian Fellowship was formed in 1977 during which time he assumed the responsibility for evangelism and eventually became the president between 1981-83. He announced his intention to form a church during the 1983 camp meeting of the Kanda Fellowship leading to the birth of the church in 1984. Asamoah-Gyadu offers an explanation to this development of churches arising out of the fellowships of the SU, which is not peculiar to the ICGC.<sup>6</sup> He argues that in view of the fact that their activities were meant to supplement the efforts of the existing churches, the SU encouraged a policy of 'responsible church membership.' The 'responsible church membership' in some instances became difficult due to tensions between the authorities of the traditional mission churches and the members of the SU, some of whom were lay preachers in the mission churches and whose sermons became a critique to that of the ministers. With the heightening of these tensions, relationships between the SU members and the leadership of their churches were strained leading to the idea of beginning new churches.

The initial vision of the ICGC is spelt out in the following words:

ICGC is a Charismatic Word-based Church whose vision is to establish the House of God, lift up the image of the Blackman so he can be a channel of blessing to all men. The ICGC seeks to establish the largest and the healthiest church on the African continent, being a base for a strong missionary outreach to Africa, the Third World and the unreached areas of the world. The ICGC focuses on ministering to the whole person: to develop spirit, soul and body as it is the will of God for His children to prosper spiritually, physically, intellectually and materially.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal Within African Christianity*, pp. 144-146.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 341. Larbi notes that the original vision of establishing the healthiest and the largest church in Africa was modified somewhere in 1992 because it engendered unnecessary competition and undue pressure on the leadership.

Two issues in this vision are relevant to this study. First is the idea of raising the image of black people. As Gifford observes, Otabil “never misses a chance to instil black pride.”<sup>8</sup> This idea is formulated in what Larbi describes as Otabil’s Evangelical Pentecostal Liberation Theology.<sup>9</sup> Essentially, this theology posits that whenever humans exercise dominion over their fellow humans, it breaks God’s pattern for human interaction. For Otabil, the slave trade and colonialism in the past and massive propaganda and the control of economic and military power in the present, has created a situation in which the thinking of the African continues to be controlled and dominated by the West. Part of the propaganda, he believes, is the way the role of Blacks in God’s redemptive programme has been obscured or ignored by Euro-American Biblical scholars. To Otabil, the time of Freedom has dawned, but this freedom “must of necessity begin from the liberation of the mind, and unless humans are set free from mental slavery, outward manumission will only result in what he has termed bondage in freedom”<sup>10</sup>

The second issue of relevance is the focus of ministering to the whole person. This has led to the setting up of a number of ministries<sup>11</sup> in the church to take care of various aspects of the wellbeing of the person and the church as a whole, a phenomenon that is typical of the Charismatic Ministries.<sup>12</sup> The need to have a separate ministry aimed at enriching families in

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<sup>8</sup> P. Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 82

<sup>9</sup> See Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 349-353.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>11</sup> The use of the term ministry has theological significance. I mentioned earlier that the church operates on an ecclesiology in which every believer is a potential recipient of charism(s) or ministry gift(s). In Pauline thought, charisma is viewed as synonymous to *diakonia*, ministry. All gifts that mediate grace to God’s people are considered as ministry gifts. See Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal Within African Christianity*, p. 139. In the ICGC, an individual who wishes to volunteer to serve in the FEM may make his/her case to the director in the following words, “Pastor, I believe I have the leading.” This implies that he/she recognises that he/she has the ministry gift, which enables one to help in marriage and family issues.

<sup>12</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu argues that “within a single local charismatic church, one may find diverse team ministries such as praise and worship, healing and deliverance, counselling, welcome and ushering, video and tape recording, prayer force, youth and children, publications and other relevant teams and ministries.” *Ibid.*, p. 138. The ministries of the ICGC include “the Covenant Family, children’s ministry, youth and student ministry,

the ICGC became clear in 1986. There was the recognition that “it takes stronger families to build stronger communities, societies, nations and churches.”<sup>13</sup> To this end, the Family Enrichment Ministry was started, basically to help educate young adults who were preparing to marry. However, it was not until 1990, that the ministry became well organised under the directorship of Rev. Daniel Jenkins. For effective functioning, the director of the Family Enrichment Ministry works with three committees: the couples club committee, the destiny club executive committee and the committee of family life facilitators.

The FEM concerns itself with four main areas: ministry to the unmarried, ministry to the married, specialised ministries, and training programmes. There are two main aspects of ministry to the unmarried. The first aspect has to do with the “Destiny Club” where young adults are offered guidance through interactive programmes so that they may be able to build lasting relationships. The programmes are holistic in nature and take care of the social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. The second aspect has to do with premarital counselling, marriage preparation and the organisation and celebration of weddings.

Ministry toward the married takes three main forms. The first is a systematic programme planned for couples, which begins three months after their wedding. The programme deals mainly with issues of adjustment in all areas of marital life, such as finances, sexual life, relationship with extended families etc. In the second aspect, couples are placed in “cell groups” where, interaction with other couples provide learning opportunities and couples are

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family enrichment ministry, prison ministry, tapes and publications, and Winners Club. See Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 341.

<sup>13</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

also supported in their marriage. The third aspect has to do with counselling with couples in times of conflicts.

The specialised ministries include ministry to widows, ministry to single parents, ministry to couples with younger children, and ministry to couples with teenage children. All of these are done by placing the target group in the various categories in support groups where they are able to learn to cope and are also supported by one another.

The final aspect of the FEM's activities is training. Training programmes are organised to equip people to help the director as family life facilitators. Training normally takes place at the weekends when people can make time from their businesses to participate. To take care of the holistic nature of life, resource persons for the training are invited from various specialised fields such as psychiatry, psychology, etc. The basic text for the training is the book, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*,<sup>14</sup> authored by the director. In addition to this text is a manual which sets forth the aims and objectives of every chapter of the book, and how discussions could be done effectively.

### **3. APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE FAMILY ENRICHMENT MINISTRY**

#### **3.1. The View of Marriage**

The view of marriage held by the FEM is clearly explained in *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*. The view is based on Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2: 19-25. Marriage is firstly

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<sup>14</sup> D. Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage* (Accra: Alter Publications Ltd., 1996)

regarded as the means to achieving God's original plan for humans to exist as male and female, and for them to have fellowship with each other comparable to that which exists among the persons of the Trinity.<sup>15</sup> Genesis 1:27 is used to argue that the first human being was created a dual being with both man and woman inside one body. God's intention was "for a man to experience that sort of fellowship with a being of his kind ... a helper comparable in all spheres of his being – spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, socially and materially, and complementing too."<sup>16</sup> The description in Genesis 2:21 about the taking of the rib from the first human being is interpreted as God removing the female spirit that was in the human being. The action of bringing the woman to the man<sup>17</sup> is interpreted as bringing back the female spirit that was taken from the first human being. This is what makes the human being complete. "Woman therefore is the part that absolutely completes man. This should explain why at a stage in life a man feels incomplete without a woman and vice-versa."<sup>18</sup> The implication of this is that one is not a complete person when one is not married. Marriage is thus a means to achieving the state of being in which man and woman exist in one body or, using the Biblical language, the two become one flesh,<sup>19</sup> an idea which strikes a cord with the Western idea of romantic love. To achieve this state of being in which the man and woman live together, the triune law of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh defines marriage. The idea of leaving is emphasised even though Jenkins argues that one continues to play a new role of a matured child of one's parents.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> See Genesis 2:22-23.

<sup>18</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> See Genesis 2: 25.

It is also argued that three obligations must be satisfied for a full marriage to take place, the social, the legal and the spiritual.<sup>20</sup> It is believed that customary rites only satisfy the social obligation. The marriage ordinance satisfies the legal obligation and the church blessing satisfies the spiritual obligation. There is therefore the emphasis that for people to be properly married, they must have the customary rites, the ordinance and the church blessing. But the latter two ceremonies could take place together since the church is given authority by the state to administer the marriage ordinance. Thus it is argued that even though traditional marriage is all right for the non-Christian, for the Christian it is just an engagement. When asked whether the use of the term engagement was appropriate for customary marriage, Jenkins had this to say:

Yeah! If I look at it from the Christian perspective, it will be very, very appropriate ... If people do not have any Christian inclinations, the moment the two families sit together, and the various dowries and exchange of gifts are done, the man literally takes the woman to his home. In the evening, they make sure that her belongings are moved to the man's place and she is the wife, and it is accepted in the society. They do not really need to do anything more ... So I think the term engagement is more Christian.<sup>21</sup>

Marriage is also viewed as a covenant relationship between two people. As a covenant relationship, firstly, it is argued that it is for permanence, and in their counselling, such permanence is emphasised. It is also argued that a covenant must have the words that accompany it and it is in the civil or church wedding that the words that go with the establishment of the marriage covenant are explicit. The words that must be exchanged for the establishment of the covenant are not explicit in customary marriage rites; hence the covenant is not fully ratified. There is therefore the need to ratify the covenant by having a civil or

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<sup>20</sup> Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

church wedding. The fact that in customary marriage, the family elders or their representatives engage in the exchange of words that seek to ratify the marriage, and the girl is called to give her word that she agrees to the marriage or not is ignored.

### 3.2. Theoretical Presuppositions

The FEM basically has a cognitive behavioural approach to dealing with marital issues. Jenkins gives a clue to this orientation when he says: “everybody has the capacity to learn, to want to reform in areas of their lives if they have the desire and they want the relationship to work.” Behaviour-change, according to Jenkins, takes place when couples are guided. Even though he did not explain what he meant by guiding, one could argue that it includes helping spouses to understand each other. “Understanding each other is very important in human relationships generally. It basically means having a perfect knowledge of the possible reasons of any behaviour.”<sup>22</sup> To Jenkins, even though one may not necessarily approve of the spouse’s behaviour, understanding helps to reduce unnecessary tensions and ill feelings within the relationship. Understanding leads to the non-reinforcement of the undesired behaviour and the reinforcement of the desired behaviour. Respondents who have benefited from the services of FEM were quick to mention the importance of positive reinforcements and good communication in their marriage.<sup>23</sup>

Such a cognitive behavioural approach lends itself to a directive form of counselling. Thus the FEM has a clearly directive approach to counselling. Counselling in the FEM is basically helping clients gain an understanding through the analysis of issues, and this is mostly done

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<sup>22</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Caroline Buckles, Interview with author, Accra, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

by way of advice giving. However, unlike traditional elders who advise people based on their experience of life and marriage in terms of the traditional culture, the FEM offers advice based on the biblical message and the socio-economic situation in the country. It is argued that marriage is God's idea. "He laid the foundations, set the principles and made all the provisions to make marriage the happiest of human relationships on earth."<sup>24</sup> The unchanging Word of God is what explains these foundations, principles, and provisions made for the success of marriage. Marriage counsellors have to equip themselves with the word of God and be in the position to give direction to those who need it. This directive approach is appreciated when considered in the context of the strong view of authority in Pentecostal churches and the view of shepherding as involving a considerable amount of influence on the one to be shepherded.

### **3.3. Resources for Pastoral Care**

Resources employed in the pastoral practice of the FEM include the Bible, prayer, trained counsellors and the Christian community. As mentioned earlier, the Bible is viewed as containing all that is necessary for the maintenance of marriage, which has been instituted by God. The Bible is taken as the manual to be consulted whenever marriage issues have to be dealt with. It is no wonder that all the views held about marriage are based on the Bible. The emphasis on the Bible is not strange taken the fact that in the Evangelical Pentecostal Liberation Theology which the ICGC operates on, the liberation of the mind, which Otabil advocates, is not supposed to take place by going back to African Traditional Religion but to the Bible. As he puts it:

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<sup>24</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 2.

When a man is bitten by a snake, it takes an anti-snake bite serum prepared from a snake to bring healing and restoration to that person. (Therefore) ... if the Bible was misused and misapplied to bind our people, we would need an Anti-Oppression Serum prepared from the revealed Truth in God's word to bring healing, liberty and restoration to us.<sup>25</sup>

The practice of prayer constitutes another important resource for pastoral practice. With the recognition of the fact that certain marital problems go beyond human understanding, it is believed that only God can help couples resolve those problems. It is through the practice of prayer that God is invoked to intervene and resolve the marital problems of his people. Prayers may therefore be said before and/or after counselling. A person with a marital problem may approach the prayer pastor, who is in charge of the Solution Centre,<sup>26</sup> who after prayers with the person may refer him/her to the pastor in charge of the FEM. The pastor in charge of the FEM may also refer people to the prayer pastor.

The counsellors or what they call the family life facilitators constitute one group of the human resource in the pastoral practice of the FEM. What qualifies these people to be accepted as counsellors is basically their exemplary marital and family lives. The first people trained were all deacons of the church and to be a deacon of the church one should have an exemplary family life. Their training is intended to help them to have a broad view of life and to understand the human person. Certain practical issues such as communication, the resolution of conflicts and understanding the partner are discussed with reference to the Bible.

The Christian community also constitutes an important resource in the pastoral practice of the FEM. Individuals, couples, and the whole congregation, whether trained or not, are seen as

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 350.

<sup>26</sup> The Solution Centre is a weekly Thursday prayer meeting that seeks to address the healing and other physical needs of the people. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

capable of offering support to couples. The couples' fellowship is a typical example. There is mutual support for couples as they interact with one another. The cell groups, which are basically smaller groupings of the whole congregation, have a similar purpose. In these smaller groupings, individuals are cared for in all aspects of their lives. When members of these smaller groups recognise a problem within a particular family, they may draw the attention of the pastor in charge of the FEM about it so that the pastor will find out ways of helping the couple concerned. It is therefore not always the case that a partner will have to come to the pastor with a problem. There seems to be in this instance, continuity with the traditional Akan manner of dealing with issues. The traditional elder may visit a couple upon a tip off that they have a problem and in his or her own way find out about the problem and help the couple deal with it. The resource of the Christian community is very important in many respects and is appreciated as such but there is always the warning that couples should not send their marital problems to any one except the trained counsellors.

#### **4. *CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE BY THE FEM***

##### **4.1. Theology of Marriage**

In critiquing the theology of marriage in the FEM, one may ask the following questions: What makes marriage a Christian marriage? What does it mean to say that marriage is a covenant? How does the Evangelical Pentecostal liberation theology relate to marriage? And what is the essence of marriage?

#### *4.1.1. What makes Marriage a Christian Marriage?*

It is clear that there is an equation of church marriage and Christian marriage. If a marriage is celebrated in church, it is regarded as a Christian marriage, but if a marriage is not celebrated in church, it is not regarded as a Christian marriage. Counsellors of the FEM as well as those who have gone through the counselling programme all agree that customary marriage on its own is marriage. They however claim that for marriage to be Christian, the couple should have a church wedding. For example, when asked about the type of marriage she is involved in, Caroline<sup>27</sup> answered, "I've done both the customary and wedding or ordinance." When asked why she used the word 'both,' she argued, "we are to respect our traditions. It's considered marriage and I don't want to use the word engagement that is why I said both." Probing further, she said "as a Christian, the wedding is considered as a very important part so though we have done what traditionally is considered right, we still deem it right and fitting to bring it before God." Referring to his wedding, Frank also had this to say: "because we are Christians, we are thinking that every marriage has to be brought before God and that was the time that our marriage was brought before God."<sup>28</sup>

Not only is there a distinction made between church marriage and customary marriage but also by implication, the same distinction is made between Christian marriage and customary marriage. This raises contextual issues. A translation model of contextual theology has been applied in attempts to make marriage meaningful to the Akan. By arguing that for marriage to be Christian it must be church marriage, the implication is that customary marriage cannot be

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<sup>27</sup> Caroline Buckles, Interview with author, Accra, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001. Frank and Sue are members of the ICGC who went through the counselling programme of the FEM.

regarded as Christian. For it to be Christian there must be additional church marriage rites. These rites are the wedding liturgies handed down by Western missionaries that presuppose that marriage is properly between individuals. Thus a wedding liturgy from the Western church is transferred to the Akan context without critically considering the context of the Akan. It follows that a translational model of contextualisation has been applied in attempts to make marriage meaningful in the Akan context.

Furthermore before the church wedding, the FEM requires that the couple should have had the customary marriage. For a couple to have a Christian marriage, therefore, the couple should have two different marriage rites, the customary rites and the church wedding. One might argue, taking that customary marriage is a process, the church wedding could be taken as completing the process. It must be mentioned, however, that each of these rites constitutes a complete marriage ceremony. To have both rites, to me, is for the couple to be married twice, a situation which has no theological justification, and which puts undue economic pressure on the couple.

#### ***4.1.2. Marriage as a Covenant***

The FEM holds the view that Christian marriage is a covenant. In this view it is portrayed that a covenant must of necessity have a verbal element. The claim is that customary marriage cannot be a covenant because the necessary verbal element is not explicit. This is an inadequate view of what a covenant is. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible explains that a covenant is a "solemn promise made binding by an oath, which may be either a verbal formula or a symbolic action. Such an action or formula is recognised by both parties as the

formal act which binds the actor to fulfil his promise.”<sup>29</sup> From this it can be argued that covenants need not have any verbal element. It follows that even if customary marriage rites have no verbal element they still constitute a covenant due to the symbolism of the exchange of gifts. But customary marriage rites also include verbal exchanges between the two families entering into the covenant.

What therefore accounts for the view that customary marriage rites do not constitute covenants? Two explanations may be offered. First, in the church and civil marriage rites, verbal exchange is between the would-be bride and groom, but in the customary marriage rites, verbal exchange is mainly between representatives of families. That the FEM does not recognise the verbal exchange between representatives of families betrays its view of marriage as between individuals and not families. Thus it is clear from the arguments that an individualistic view of marriage is transferred to a context which is bicultural.

Another explanation may be that in the civil and church weddings, the words of the covenant are written but in the customary marriage rites, the words are not written. It could be that the verbal element of the customary marriage rites is regarded as not explicit because it is oral and does not follow any one particular form. One may appreciate this argument when one considers the fact that the worship of African Independent Churches, which scholars have found to reflect African culture, are often oral. Such worship is often regarded as not having a liturgy because they are not written. The issue then has something to do with the acceptance of the validity of the oral nature of Akan culture. The explanation given by Grant and Rowley on the nature of covenants should satisfy us that covenants need not have a written document.

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<sup>29</sup> G. A. Buttrick et al (Eds.) *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia, Vol.1, A-D* (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 714.

They explain that “covenants between men are not a matter of word only, nor are they guaranteed by a written agreement usually, but they have a material expression.”<sup>30</sup>

The view of a marriage covenant as between individuals and not their families and the preference for a written statement as against an oral one to show that a covenant has been established seem to suggest a translational model of contextual theology. In this instance the “naked Gospel” is the vows made between individuals which must be in written form. This “naked Gospel” is applied to the Akan context hence the emphasis that for marriage to be Christian there must be a church wedding.

#### ***4.1.3. The Evangelical-Pentecostal Liberation Theology and Marriage***

As noted earlier the ICGC places a lot of emphasis on the freedom of the black person whose perception, Otabil argues, has been programmed by the slave trade and colonisation.<sup>31</sup> The freedom of the black person therefore includes the removal of the influence of colonialism and it is expected to begin with the liberation of the mind. But it is also expected to manifest in concrete ways. For example, Otabil encourages the use of traditional names and not the supposedly Christian names most of which are nothing more than Western European names.<sup>32</sup>

Often times, traditional names happen to be very meaningful to the people. For example the

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<sup>30</sup> F. C. Grant & H. H. Rowley, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1963), p. 184.

<sup>31</sup> Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 349.

<sup>32</sup> Wakatama cites Ezekial Makunike to illustrate the use of Western names as Christian names: “My own father’s African name was Mangombe, meaning ‘one who owns a large head of cattle.’ When he became a Christian, he was baptised Charles. My mother’s name was Pfumai, meaning ‘may thou be wealthy.’ When she became a Christian she was given the name Helen.” See P. Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church: An African Perspective on Missionary Work* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1976), p. 14.

first born of Frank and Sue Obeng is named *Nyamekye*, a traditional Akan name which means the gift of God.<sup>33</sup>

Otabil also encourages the use of traditional clothing by ministers. He himself, as well as most of his ministers, often put on *bubu*<sup>34</sup> and not the suit and dog collar. The irony is that in terms of marriage, it looks like the colonial mentality still determines what clothing must be used. Using traditional clothing means that one is uncivilised. Oduyoye argues that the colonial authorities taught the people that for one to show that one was civilised or one was a true Christian, one needed to put on the Western gown and not the traditional clothing. She writes in reference to Ephriam Amu, a former music teacher:

An incident in his life has become a classic example of the lack of sensitivity to African culture on the part of the early carriers of the Christian message. ... Owura Amu was once refused the pulpit of the Presbyterians (then Basel Mission) because he went to his appointment wearing the Ghanaian toga. I hasten to add that this contempt for African traditional clothing, even when modified by European fashions, was found not only in the church but also among the anglicised Ghanaians, especially those on the coast. My mother remembers a lawyer who, seeing his daughter wearing African traditional dress, exploded: "off you go and get dressed. I thought you were one of these *adesefo* (villagers) who come here to sell *dokon* (A wrapped dumpling of corn dough)."<sup>35</sup>

In fact the term *furatam nyi*, (One who puts on the traditional clothing) has come to be used for the uneducated and uncivilised. I also grew up to learn that the educated had to put on suit and the white wedding gown for their wedding, but the uneducated had to use the traditional kente cloth. It is in a similar vein that Sue Obeng suggests that "when you put on the white

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<sup>33</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001. I know other members of the church, some of whom are currently working here in Britain, whose children have been given traditional names such as *Dromo*, the Ga word for grace. The Gas are an Ethnic group in Ghana.

<sup>34</sup> *Bubu* is a traditional clothing people may use for special occasions.

<sup>35</sup> M. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll/ New York: Orbis Books, 1986, 5th Printing, 1995), p. 71.

[gown] with the veil and all those things, that is when you say that you're having a wedding. ... You know, everybody who has had a wedding want to have a picture like this one which is there (pointing to her wedding picture in her white gown)."<sup>36</sup> She goes on to substantiate her point thus "when you find somebody at the beach wearing swimsuit, you don't find anything wrong because that is the dressing for the beach. ... [The white gown] is the dressing for weddings." This argument seems to be unwarranted. Who stipulates that a particular type of clothing is the appropriate dressing for the beach? Outings to the beach are not a recent development. It is important to ask what clothing the traditional people used before the introduction of the swimsuit. Has not the swimsuit, just like the wedding gown, been introduced from the West? The emphasis on the use of suits and white gowns as the only appropriate clothing for weddings seems to suggest, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the mentality that everything Western is good and everything traditional is not good enough. The white gown and suit also seem to be part of the "naked gospel" in terms of marriage that must be transferred to the new context, an indication of a translational model of contextualisation.

One may argue that the use of the wedding gown has more to do with the whole idea of contact between cultures. It is however interesting to note that during services on Sundays, when Ghanaians appear in their best clothing there has been a considerable shift from Western types of clothing. You will find most members of ICGC, and in fact most Ghanaian Christians, putting on traditional clothing. The use of the white gown and suit thus stands out as something of the colonial era that still persists.

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<sup>36</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

#### 4.1.4. *Companionship: The Essence of Marriage*

Even though the FEM recognises the importance of procreation in marriage, procreation is not regarded as the essence of marriage. The interpretation given to Genesis 1:27 indicates that marriage is basically intended to make man complete and for fellowship between the man and the woman comparable to the fellowship that exists among the persons of the Trinity. In his discussion of the purpose of marriage, Jenkins emphasises intimate relationship, mutual support between the spouses and the reflection of the relationship between Jesus and His Church in the world. Even though he also mentions procreation, it seems to me that the place he gives procreation in marriage is not prominent.<sup>37</sup> Procreation is mentioned last on his list. That he mentioned procreation last may seem not to be significant since he did not propose to discuss the purpose of marriage in any order of importance. However, one will appreciate this argument when one considers the fact that in the interview with him, he never mentioned the importance of procreation in marriage. Even when he said that marriage is supposed to meet a social obligation, he explained that as meaning that society should have approved of the two people marrying.

In a discussion on the major problems that people present for counselling, Jenkins never mentions procreation. What he mentions includes finance, ineffective adjustment, extramarital affairs and lack of sexual fulfilment. "People are looking for more excitement and fulfilment" he argues.<sup>38</sup> It is clear that these issues that are presented as problems are related to the intimate relationship and fellowship between spouses which he envisages in marriage. In the thinking of Jenkins, fulfilment has to do with romance and the satisfaction of the individual

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<sup>37</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

and not the family group. This is clearly based on the modern individualistic notion of marriage. Applying such a notion to the Akan context seems to suggest a translational model of contextualisation. But as pointed out in Chapter Four the appropriate model for the contemporary Akan society is not a translational model but a synthetic model.

#### 4.2. Communalism or Individualism

In fact, I think we're using this book<sup>39</sup> because it is written by a Ghanaian from the traditional background. Though we have learnt a lot from the West, we have tried to make it relevant to our culture. So, we are looking at the Ghanaian and his culture and trying to handle him from that level. ... Definitely, his traditional background is going to contribute either to the health or the destruction of it [marriage] and so we try to make whatever one reads from the West relevant to the situation.<sup>40</sup>

These were the words of Jenkins responding to the issue of how far the traditional worldview has been appropriated in the work of the FEM. To some degree, it could be argued that in the FEM, marriage is seen in communal terms. Distinguishing between traditional and Western marriage processes, Jenkins asserts:

We believe that when you saw the lady, the lady didn't just drop from heaven. She had been brought up in a family and therefore, you can't just slide a ring on her finger and call her engaged. You necessarily have to follow certain traditional processes. ... You want to send your elders, you don't even go in person. You send your elders to go and find out if there is the possibility of you taking the hand of the lady in question.<sup>41</sup>

The FEM has also adapted the traditional support system of the extended family. This is realised in, for example, the "Destiny club," which has been established first and foremost to guide young adults to make the right choice of partners. Gifford's observation in this respect

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<sup>39</sup> The book is Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*.

<sup>40</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

clearly demonstrates this: “Where traditional ways of arranging marriages are breaking down, the Church [ICGC] fulfils an important role. It oversees this whole procedure. Youth must register for ‘singles activities’... they must take courses on courtship and relationships. Once friendships are formed, the pastors must be notified so that appropriate advice can be given.”<sup>42</sup> The church therefore acts just like the extended family in the traditional set-up whose duty it is to guide the young adult to get a suitable spouse.

On the other hand, one gets the impression that individualism underlies the approach to care. This is made evident in references made concerning leaving and also the influence of the extended family in marriage. The idea of leaving is stretched to the extent that people are supposed to disentangle themselves from all that has made them what they are. Jenkins puts it this way:

When you leave your parents’ home, whatever comforts, whatever joys, whatever was peculiar which made your family what it was, are not to be transferred, demanded or expected in your new home. ...It just means you forget all that and think of creating a new environment with all its peculiarities from the standpoint of you and your spouse. You cannot leave and continue to dream of the “onions and garlics” of Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

This way of describing the idea of leaving seems to reflect the modern philosophy of individualism and a departure from Akan marriage, which is essentially a union between two families. One wonders how people can practically leave, in an instant, those formative factors that have culminated to make them who they are, thus in their approach to counselling, there isn’t the inculcation of what Wimberly calls critical realism.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ed Wimberly uses the term critical realism to refer to couples being both critical about themselves and their partners and also being realistic about the limits of the capacity to change. See Ed Wimberly, *Relational*

It seems that in the FEM, families of couples are only needed in the process of contracting the marriage, to satisfy the social obligation of marriage. After the couple is married, the families should have no role to play in the marriage, and their involvement is seen as infiltration. This is due to the belief that the basis of the advice families give to couples is not Christian.<sup>45</sup> In fact the content of both their premarital and marital counselling includes an item on the emancipation from family.<sup>46</sup> Talking about the three-month post-marital counselling for couples after their honeymoon, Jenkins mentioned that issues discussed include the infiltration of their extended families in their relationships. The mention of infiltration of families and not the support of the families reveals the underlying view of the extended families as troublemakers in marriages. Thus there is a clear attempt to make couples totally independent of their extended families. The irony is that with 60% of Ghanaians claiming to be Christian,<sup>47</sup> it is likely that a number of the elders in the extended family are Christians themselves and are likely to offer advice based on their faith.

There seems to be the suggestion that prosperity in marriage takes place when a couple does not look back.<sup>48</sup> But this idea of never looking back is frowned upon by the Akan, since the woman belongs, essentially, to the family of her mother's people and not her father's or her husband's. Also, never looking back leads to what Wimberly<sup>49</sup> calls emotional cut-off among young couples. Emotional cut-offs occur when there is a break in the emotional connectedness with one's parents and previous generations. Wimberly argues that the family

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*Refugees: Alienation and Reincorporation in African American Churches and Communities* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Frank Obeng claimed that his elders have a different understanding of marriage so he will not send his marital problems to them. Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 61.

<sup>48</sup> Oduyoye talks about an Akan story in which a woman, Abena, marries a foreigner, goes away and prospers in her husband's house, and never looks back. See Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> E. Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families*, p. 41.

that remains in healthy emotional contact with past generations is emotionally healthier than the family that does not maintain this contact.

The opposing views about the extended family communicated by the FEM create confusion in the minds of people. This confusion is clear in the following words of one lady member of the ICGC: “Yes, my marriage is more important to me than my relationship with my family. I don’t even know how to put it. They are both important, but if it comes to choosing between the two, of course my marriage is more important.”<sup>50</sup> It came out that while this lady is much more involved with her extended family, visiting and calling them on phone for very long chats, the husband is not as much involved with his extended family and is very apprehensive of the wife’s involvement with hers. He made his apprehension clear in these words, “This closeness with the external relations, I think that sometimes, I’ve been a bit cautious to avoid any conflict arising out of it. But sometimes, it worries me.”<sup>51</sup> Caroline also reports that the main source of conflict she had when she first married was the fact that she has a closely-knit extended family and the several family reunions were a bother to her husband. She however claims that the husband has grown to like those reunions and feels part of it.<sup>52</sup>

The interesting thing is that even though negative perceptions about in-laws and the extended family are communicated to clients, most of the counsellors and church members interviewed have very positive perceptions of their in-laws and extended families. Jenkins claims that his in-laws are very helpful and that his wife sees his parents as hers and vice versa. How then do

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<sup>50</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Caroline Buckles, Interview with author, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

we explain this ambivalent attitude towards the extended families? As noted earlier, I think that underlying all of this ambivalence is the notion that marriage is properly between individuals and not families. This emphasis on the personal aspect of marriage could also be a reflection of the evangelical and Pentecostal movements in Ghana where emphasis is placed on individual religious experience. As Asamoah-Gyadu puts it, religious allegiance in the Charismatic movements is “a matter of personal conscious choice and not just an automatic part of inherited traditions.”<sup>53</sup> Since marriage constitute part of people’s spirituality; the emphasis on personal conscious choice could not be left out.

From the above, one can say that the FEM takes the bicultural nature of the society into consideration but they are more inclined towards individualism than communalism. No attempt is made to help people maintain a balance between the two worldviews. This may not be very helpful in contemporary Akan society in which a balance between the communal nature of the society and the individuality of people is necessary for healthy relationships.

#### **4.3. The View of the Human Person**

The stress on individuality of persons may seem to suggest that in the FEM the human person is viewed as an isolate. However, one recognises that while people are encouraged to dissociate from their extended families, they are encouraged to be part of new communities. That people are encouraged to belong to the Destiny club, Couples club and cell groups are all supposed to show that the human person does not exist as an individual but in relationships. In these groups much interaction is supposed to take place. When someone recognises that a member of a cell group has a problem, they are not supposed to take it as that member’s

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<sup>53</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal Within African Christianity*, p. 167.

problem but they are encouraged to report to a counsellor for appropriate action to be taken. The person who has the problem does not take it that their individuality has been encroached upon. There is the recognition that when one has a problem one needs others to help in solving the problem. Thus the human person is not regarded as an isolate but one who exists in relationships and needs others to cope with the stresses of this life.

It is also assumed that there is a basic difference between men and women in terms of their attitude towards seeking help in their marriages. Jenkins argues that women have the willingness to accept help. When they are unhappy, they would look out for where they can get help. Men on the other hand tend to keep problems to themselves. This does not suggest that in the FEM women are seen as existing in relationships but men as not. A different reason is given for the failure of men to seek help. According to Jenkins men have some pride in them, which makes them feel intimidated when people get to know that they are having problems. This attitude of men can be understood from the traditional view of how a man should behave. Men are supposed to be strong, firm, resolute and able to handle stressful situations in a calm manner. It is even said that *beema nnsu*, meaning men should not cry. However, this attitude doesn't negate the view that men, as well as women, are regarded as existing in relationships. Thus it can be argued that the FEM takes into account a very important aspect of the contemporary Akan context.

#### 4.4. Theological or Scientific Interpretation of Reality

In the FEM, it is recognised that marital problems do have physical causes but “some problems go beyond the human eye.”<sup>54</sup> Unholy covenants made on behalf of a person while young may have an influence on the person’s later life, especially in marriage. In some cases, it is believed that people have been married spiritually to a deity and hence such people have problems in their physical marriage. Some women, no matter how beautiful they are, may find it difficult to find husbands and sometimes, even in marriage, such women have difficulty in bringing forth children. Thus in the FEM there is a theological or religious interpretation of reality. This is consistent with both traditional and contemporary Akan worldviews in which there is a popular saying that *se rotwe adze fir sor na omba a, nna biribi dze mu*. This saying literally means that if efforts towards an endeavour continually prove elusive, it probably means forces beyond one’s control are hampering the venture. The saying has become the theme of a popular song.<sup>55</sup>

This appreciation of the spiritual nature of marital problems derives from two sets of influences. First, there is the idea of the demonic which is very much prominent in the worldview of the Akan (African).<sup>56</sup> The diagnosis of a counsellor may reveal that the continuous conflict between a couple is due to a spiritual marriage between the woman and a deity who doesn’t agree to the marriage of the couple. It may also reveal the influence of witchcraft activities. In this situation therapy will not be mere counselling in terms of helping the couple to deal with the physical causes of the conflict. Therapy will of necessity include

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<sup>54</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2000.

<sup>55</sup> Song by Ghanaian composer and singer A. B. Crentsil. See Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal Within African Christianity*, p. 235.

<sup>56</sup> See Brigit Meyer, *Translating the Devil*.

deliverance<sup>57</sup> to break the original covenant between the woman and the deity or to break the influence of witchcraft so that the present marriage of the woman will be liberated to flourish.

Second, even though the demonic is very prominent in the worldview of the Akan, the mission churches tend to ignore it. The Pentecostal and charismatic churches, which includes the ICGC, however, lay a strong emphasis on the demonic and deliverance. Cheryl Bridges Johns notes that salvific transformation in Pentecostal spirituality embodies among other things 'healing from sickness and deliverance from the demonic.'<sup>58</sup> The notion of spiritual causality of marital problems prevalent in Akan worldview is consistent with the theology of the FEM and other Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. Their growth in Ghana mainly results from their interest and concern with meeting the spiritual needs of the people. Such a concern struck a cord with the worldview of the people.

Viewing marital problems as having spiritual causative factors takes into account an important element of traditional Akan (African) worldview, which modernity has not been able to erode. Modernity presupposes the philosophy of positivism. This philosophy led to attempts to remove all theological interpretations to events. Contemporary Akans however, do not separate the sacred from the secular. Every problem is regarded as having spiritual aspects to it. For effective pastoral practice therefore, the spiritual aspects need to be acknowledged and dealt with. This is evident in the pastoral practice of the FEM.

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<sup>57</sup> Deliverance is a major spiritual activity in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. For example part of the activity of the Solution Centre of the ICGC, which has been mentioned earlier, is to engage in deliverance of the oppressed.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal within African Christianity*, p. 234.

#### 4.5. The Matrilineal System: The Issue of Patriarchy

In the FEM, it is argued that changes in society call for corresponding changes in affinal relations. Changes in work patterns call for adjustments in how the home is run and young people preparing to marry are impressed upon to make the necessary adjustments. Jenkins gives an example to the effect that bankers and nurses have a lot of demand on their time and often come back home very late. If women are in such jobs, their husbands are expected to understand the situation and together sort out what should be done with respect to cooking and other household chores. Marriage is thus considered as a partnership between the man and the woman who continuously discuss issues to find how best to manage things at home.

However, there seems to be agreement that certain tasks such as cooking are for the woman.

This response from Caroline, who is herself a family life facilitator with the FEM, makes the point clear:

My husband is a very difficult man. I don't think that he is not modern. He will tell you that even as a child, his mother did her best to get him to do household chores but it didn't really work. ... I had to accept him for what he is. If I was going to insist that he should help me with household chores, I think that I would have been dismantled very early. I'd have had a lot of problems. Fortunately, I didn't have many problems with household chores as a young girl, and so I always managed. But when it has been necessary, we've had household helps.<sup>59</sup>

What is clear from Caroline's statement is that modernisation, and the teaching about the need to make necessary adjustments has not changed the prescribed roles of partners even though women have taken over additional roles. It is argued that prescribed gender roles have nothing

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<sup>59</sup> Caroline Buckles, Interview with author, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001. Other women who have been involved in counselling with the FEM expressed similar sentiments, but some of them said their husbands are involved to an extent in household chores.

to do with the equality of the partners. In God's order the woman's role is a supportive one but that doesn't mean she is unequal to the man. Jenkins explains this supportive role in the following words:

In the battle between Israel and the Amalekites in the Book of Exodus, it took men of the calibre of Aaron and Hur to hold and keep Moses' hands up. No matter the abilities these two men possessed, no matter their social standing, they were to support. We are talking about roles and not who is greater than the other. God was not looking at the hands of Aaron and Hur for Israel's victory. He was looking at Moses. Support is a whole ministry in itself. ... There is nothing like the so much talked-about equality [between husbands and wives] because the whole issue is that of roles and not competitive comparison.<sup>60</sup>

It is also argued that decision-making is properly the prerogative of the husband. Wives can only be involved to make suggestions about an issue but the last word must be left with the husband. "I've never had a problem with my husband taking the decision," says Caroline.<sup>61</sup> It is a similar position held by Sue Obeng. She claims, "We discuss a lot of things, try to bring out the pros and cons, and then, most times, I leave it with Frank to make the final decision."<sup>62</sup> This position can be explained with Jenkin's teaching on God's first order for marriage, which is the headship of the man. Jenkins quotes Ephesians 5:23, "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is saviour," to support the view of the headship of man. He uses the following analogy to explain:

All five senses of a person originate from the head. God assigning the headship to the man means the husband becomes the embodiment of the five senses of the woman. ... Someone must be ultimately responsible. When man fell in the garden it was obvious that it came through the woman. Nevertheless, God called man and asked him what went wrong.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Caroline Buckles, Interview with author, Accra, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001

<sup>62</sup> Frank and Sue Obeng, Interview with author, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

<sup>63</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, pp. 7-8.

Since the man has the ultimate responsibility, he is “expected to think through all the possibilities of every issue and rationally satisfy his mind and conscience, that the decision is right, before he makes it. He may receive a lot of input by way of suggestions from his wife but he makes the final decision. This is God’s order.”<sup>64</sup> Jenkins makes it clear that this is consistent with cultural practice. In fact he argues that in traditional culture, “the man is held accountable for everything that goes wrong, including the woman’s obvious mistakes.”<sup>65</sup>

There seems to be gross misunderstanding of Akan culture. The view that the wife’s role in marriage is a supportive one falls short of both traditional and contemporary Akan understanding of marriage. It seems to suggest that marriage basically is for the benefit of the man and the woman supports him to gain such benefits. This understanding reflects an individualistic understanding of marriage, which is an influence from modernisation. To the Akan, marriage is for the benefit of the whole community. Husbands and wives have roles that seek to benefit the whole community. It would be more appropriate therefore to talk about complementary roles than a supportive role of the wife. Furthermore, the biblical teaching about the headship of the man seems to apply to the nuclear family, which is not entirely applicable to Akan marriages because marriage properly is a union between families and not individuals. The wife does not actually belong to the man’s family but to her own *ebusua* which has its own head.

It could be argued that the FEM does not actually take the matrilineal nature of the Akan into account in their pastoral practice. Therefore the potential of matri-lineage in engendering an

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

egalitarian view of marriage is missed. A patriarchal view of marriage is therefore what obtains in its approach to care.

#### **4.6. The Support/ Care of Marriages**

##### ***4.6.1. The Use of the Bible***

It has been pointed out that the Bible is one of the basic resources used by the FEM in the pastoral care of marriages. Counselling in the FEM is directive just like in traditional society. But whereas in traditional society the elders offer advice based on their experience of life, it is not so in the FEM. It was mentioned earlier that there is some wariness about the advice from the elders that such advice may not be based on Christian principles. In the FEM advice is offered based on a propositional interpretation of the Bible. It seems that the Bible is taken in a very literal sense. The analogy cited above about the headship of the man meaning that the man embodies the five senses of the woman is a typical example. It is a similar approach to the use of the Bible that leads to the view of the woman's role in marriage as a supportive one. The idea of leaving is also interpreted as meaning almost a total cut-off from the extended family. In fact, the book *How to Have an Enjoyable Marriage*, which is the basic text for the counselling training is essentially a couple of principles based on a propositional interpretation of the Bible.

The FEM does not recognise that one cannot consistently interpret the Bible in such a manner. In the ICGC the issue of, for example, the wearing of a headscarf is regarded as a cultural issue so they don't require that every woman should put on a headscarf for worship. In this case care is taken not to interpret the Bible in a propositional manner but to consider the

context of the recipients. But a different approach is used when it comes to the issue of marriage. A propositional approach is used. But as pointed out in Chapter Four, a propositional interpretation of the Bible is not helpful. A narrative may rather be more helpful for the Akan context but the FEM fails to use narrative in their interpretation. In terms of the use of the Bible then, my argument is that the approach used by the FEM is far from appropriate.

#### ***4.6.2. The Issue of Childlessness***

The FEM has the view that the essence of marriage is not procreation. Procreation therefore does not feature prominently in the approach to the care of marriages. Companionship is rather regarded as the essence of marriage, therefore romantic love and sexual fulfilment seem to be the major concern. It was mentioned that the FEM have specialised ministries to various categories of married people. This includes ministry to single parents, ministry to couples with younger children and ministry to couples with teenagers. There is no specialised ministry to childless couples. This is because they do not see childlessness as a problem.

The reality however is that in contemporary Akan society fulfilment in marriage is connected to procreation. Every married couple desires to have children so childlessness is a serious problem. There seems to be an indication that childlessness is not one of the marital problems that comes up in counselling. Could it be that people fail to present the problem of childlessness because they are taught that the inability to give birth is no problem in marriage? Taking the number of people who marry in the ICGC, one cannot help but believe that one or two of the couples may have problems with procreation. If they are not voicing them out, then it could be that the problems are suppressed. This I think leads to more serious psychological

problems. In the approach to the care of marriages by the FEM, it is my contention that there is a lapse since a basic problem, childlessness, is ignored and no serious effort is made to help childless couples.

#### **4.6.3. Stability**

Apart from the issue of childlessness, the nature of the care of marriages by the FEM seems to be quite exhaustive in the sense that care begins even before marriage is formed and continues during the life span of the marriage. The main goal of the care of marriages is the prevention of marital crisis. As Jenkins puts it, “we want to forestall the incidence where before a matter comes to us, it has got to such stages where very little can be done about it.”<sup>66</sup> That is why they seek to deal with marital problems before they become serious. It is believed that very disturbing cases can even turn around. This goal can be understood in the light of the view of marriage as a covenant. As a covenant marriage must be permanent. Divorce is not encouraged. Thus stability is the ultimate goal of care in the FEM.

The programmes of support are intended to help achieve the goal of stability. For example the three months counselling just after a couple have had their wedding is intended to help them in the area of adjustment which is a potential source of marital crisis. The specialised ministries, for example ministry to couples with young children and ministry to couples with teenagers, are also intended to help couples negotiate successfully important developmental stages in married life. The successful negotiation of these stages is important for the stability of marriage. Almost the whole of the Christian community is involved in the care of

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<sup>66</sup> D. Jenkins, Interview with author, Accra, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

marriages and this is also intended to help in the stability of marriages. The extensiveness of the support makes the approach to care very helpful in terms of the stability of marriages

#### 4.6.4. *Attitude Towards Polygyny*

Jenkins clearly spells out that polygyny is not God's idea. This is how he explains it: "God took one rib out of Adam to create one woman. This was to present only one woman to Adam thus making it clear to him that all he needed for companionship was one woman."<sup>67</sup> He continues to argue that for marriage to culminate in God's original vision for humanity, the existence of the male and female together in one body, only one man and one woman are needed. No matter the reasons people give for the incidence of polygyny, it is regarded as wrong in God's sight. It is taken that the incidences of polygyny in the Bible took place in days of ignorance.

This critique of polygyny derives from the view of marriage as basically instituted for companionship. If marriage were regarded as mainly for procreation then, the idea of polygyny may be considered as legitimate.<sup>68</sup> But even in traditional society where procreation is regarded as the essence of marriage, polygyny is accepted with mixed feelings. This is made evident in folktales and proverbs.<sup>69</sup> Also the emotional problems attending polygynous relations and the rivalry between co-wives have been well documented.<sup>70</sup> It seems that the attempt to avoid such emotional pain which hinders the realisation of "romantic fulfilment,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Oduyoye mentions that it is the importance of having children, more than anything else, that keeps both men and women from abandoning polygyny. See Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 52.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 52. and I. A. Phiri, "Doing Theology as African Women" in John Parratt (Ed.) *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, p. 50.

<sup>70</sup> For example see Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 52.

intimate relationship, friendship and sexual delights”<sup>71</sup> between couples has led to the categorical condemnation of polygyny by the FEM. I wouldn't be far from right to argue that the attitude towards polygyny is largely influenced by a view of marriage which is individualistic since the idea of romantic fulfilment and other qualities stated above can only be achieved in a monogamous relationship. With the categorical rejection of polygyny, it is to be expected that they will not be sympathetic to polygynists. Polygynists have to repent and seek God's face to help them do away with all the wives but one.

#### 4.7. Training Programme

The activities of the FEM include a training programme that seeks to equip individuals to take up the work of family life facilitators. The training takes place only at the weekends for a few weeks. As mentioned earlier, the main material used for the training is Jenkins book, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*. This book has six chapters, which discuss issues such as the Biblical foundation of marriage, understanding love, the practice of love in marriage, keys to a happy marriage, sex in marriage and building a Christian home. When critically examined, it could be argued that adequately using the material makes one informed about certain general issues in marriage. However important these issues may be, the orientation towards an individualistic view of marriage makes the training inadequate for the contemporary Ghanaian situation.

Secondly, even though it is claimed that other professionals are called upon to help in the training since the training is intended to offer a holistic view of life, it may be argued that what actually happens is just scratching the surface of the various subject areas. Within such

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<sup>71</sup> Jenkins, *How to have an Enjoyable Marriage*, p. 6.

few weeks of training, only pieces of information about the different subject areas can be adequately learned. Furthermore, the lack of practical training casts doubts on the effectiveness of the training and its applicability to real life situations. Learning some pieces of information in a subject area does not equip trainees to practically apply what has been learned. No systematic study has been conducted to examine the adequacy of the training but from the above it could be argued that the adequacy of the training is questionable.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Certain aspects of the approach to the care of marriages by the FEM are commendable and appropriate for the Akan context. Clearly, the religious nature of the context is taken into consideration in the approach and the view of the human person held is that a person exists in relationships. Furthermore, the approach to care is quite exhaustive involving a number of support networks and it helps to achieve the goal of the stability of marriages.

However, the bicultural nature of the Akan context is not well appreciated because of the leaning towards individualism. This can be explained as being an influence from modernity. Asamoah-Gyadu notes that there may be an undeniable foreign, mainly North American inspiration behind the efforts of African Pentecostals in general. He argues that “In Ghanaian eyes, North America, with its technological superiority and material abundance epitomises modernity”<sup>72</sup> and that for the Charismatic movements which seek to be modern, what comes from America is a great source of enchantment and inspiration. The potential of the Akan context to foster equality between spouses is also not appreciated, so the view of marriage

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<sup>72</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal within African Christianity*, p. 140.

seems to be quite patriarchal. There is moreover failure to address the issue of childlessness. Above all, the theology of marriage is quite inadequate because a translational model of contextualisation is applied. Also a propositional use of the Bible is employed. The training programme may further be said to be quite inadequate since it lacks practical aspects and the duration for the training is quite short. The FEM may be doing well but these areas need to be considered if the approach to care is to meet the needs of the contemporary Akan.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE CENTRE FOR COUNSELLING AND FAMILY RENEWAL, KUMASI

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the approach to the care of marriages by the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal (CCFR), Kumasi. This centre is one of the many non-denominational Christian organisations involved in the caring ministry. These organisations have played and continue to play an important role in the life of Christians in Ghana. Many Christians, especially those from the mission churches, use their services as a supplement to the care they receive from their own denominations. This is due to the feeling that their needs are not met in the mission churches but they also want to remain in the mission churches and not leave to join the Pentecostal churches. Therefore they make use of such organisations.

This particular organisation is chosen not because its approach to care is typical of what happens in other such organisations but to offer a perspective from that important aspect of Christianity in Ghana. Data for this case study was collected mainly through interviews with the Director, one counsellor and five individuals who have benefited from the services of the organisation. Counselling sessions and prayer meetings of the organisation were also observed. These were the only sources of information available to me about the organisation. After a brief historical survey of the organisation, the approach to the care of marriages is discussed and a critique of the approach is offered.

## **2. *BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE CENTRE FOR COUNSELLING AND FAMILY RENEWAL (CCFR), KUMASI***

Isaac and Charlotte Ampah started the CCFR. Isaac is a pharmacist by profession but both of them were, at the inception of the organisation, also lay evangelists in the Methodist Church. The beginnings of the CCFR can be traced to a prayer fellowship, which was led by the couple in the Wesley Methodist Church in Kumasi. The prayer fellowship had the primary function of interceding for people with various problems. These prayer fellowships sprang up simultaneously in many Methodist and Presbyterian congregations in the late 1970's and early 1980's. At the time, it was felt that mission churches were not meeting the needs of the people because they ignored their worldview in ministry. The Presbyterian Synod accepted the existence of these fellowships as organisations in the local churches and today, the Bible Study and Prayer Group (BSPG) is the evangelistic arm of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). The Conference of the Methodist Church however, did not accept the existence of these fellowships as organisations in the local churches. It was argued that prayer should be the duty of every member of the Church so there wasn't the need for another organisation in the church whose main focus was prayer. The church rather recommended a programme, the Methodist Prayer and Renewal Programme (MPRP), for the church. This programme was not supposed to be a fellowship involving some members within the church but a programme of activity for the whole church. The success of the programme therefore depended to some extent on the interest of the leadership of the local churches. However, the leadership mostly lacked interest in the programme hence its relatively little success. The Bible Study and Prayer Group may be argued to account for the growth of 17% in the PCG between 1986-7 to

1991-2, when other mission churches experienced decline.<sup>1</sup> The Methodist Church recorded a modest growth of 2% during the same period.

In 1983, individual members who had been participating in the Prayer Fellowship of the Wesley Methodist Church, Kumasi, asked Mr. and Mrs Ampah if they could meet with them to discuss their private problems. It was such consultations after the prayer meetings that led to the founding of the counselling centre with the idea of counselling with hurting people in addition to the prayers been offered for them. So, in 1984, the centre began, first as an affiliated organisation of the church and later as an independent non-denominational organisation. The separation of the CCFR from the Wesley Methodist Church may be due to a number of factors. Isaac Ampah attributes it to the failure of the church to shoulder financial responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> However, I think that the separation may have roots in the Conference decision not to accept such prayer groups as organisations in the church. This led to the separation of some of the prayer fellowships from the Church. From my own observation, it could also be argued that in certain places, the separation of the prayer fellowships from the Church was due to the unwillingness of the leaders of the fellowships to submit to the Church's authority. Whatever the reason may be, such separation prevented the prayer fellowships from having the desired impact in the Methodist Church as it did in the Presbyterian Church as the figures above indicate.

The centre was first named Centre for Counselling and Faith Development. As a result of its origins in the prayer fellowship faith was the emphasis, but the name was changed from faith development since the term 'development' seemed to be associated with religious cults,

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<sup>1</sup> Survey Conducted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) See Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

especially from the East, with which the centre did not want to be identified.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of the terminology 'family renewal' is in recognition of the fact that "all the people who come here have a family background"<sup>4</sup> and almost everything done is connected to the family.

The centre has a staff of five including Isaac and Charlotte Ampah, their son Fred and two others. Isaac and Fred have been trained in family counselling through the Family Life programme of the Christian Council of Ghana, and Isaac had further training in Singapore at the Haggai Institute, and in Atlanta in Georgia. Charlotte and one of the others on the staff have had basic training in counselling at Bible School and the last person on the staff has had on-the-job training.

Activities of the Centre include premarital counselling, post-marital counselling with couples who are faced with conflict situations, and marriage education through seminars with various congregations and groups as well as through the electronic media. There is also what they call "group counselling," which are actually acts of worship that take place twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays. Isaac also helps the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) with their activities. In their plan of work, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are scheduled for individual counselling sessions.

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<sup>3</sup> A number of eastern religious cults had been gaining roots in Ghana at the time. A number of their activities were couched in the term development. Thus 'spirit development', 'developing the sixth sense', 'soul development,' etc. became associated with these religious cults. Since their doctrines and practices were not in accord with main line Christianity, many Christians became wary of using the word development.

<sup>4</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001

### 3. *APPROACH TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF MARRIAGES BY THE CENTRE FOR COUNSELLING AND FAMILY RENEWAL*

#### 3.1. **The View of Marriage**

When asked about his view of marriage, Ampah explained that marriage is:

A heterosexual union between two people ... It is a partnership agreement between a man and a woman and they must be of age. They must not be of any blood relation, and they must love each other and must agree to stay together in the fear of the Lord for their mutual benefit and for the happiness of both of them in prosperity and in adversity. The partnership agreement must be sanctioned by the parents. There must be four parents involved, the man's mother's and father's family and the woman's mother's and father's family.<sup>5</sup>

Various ideas about how marriage is viewed can be recognised in this statement. First, marriage is viewed as a heterosexual union. Ampah argues that among the Akan, one cannot perceive of marriage as a union between people of the same sex. The couple must of necessity be of different sexes. Taking that marriage is essentially for procreation, this idea of marriage is understandable since naturally, procreation takes place through the mating of a man and a woman. The second idea is that the couple must not be blood relations. This has to do with the issue of exogamy in traditional Akan culture where one cannot marry another belonging to the same lineage. The third idea is that parents must sanction marriage. Here it is made clear that marriage is not a question of individuals but it is a family affair involving a number of extended relations.

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<sup>5</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

On the other hand, one recognises from the statement that marriage is viewed as a partnership agreement between a man and a woman. Marriage is also viewed as existing for the purpose of mutual benefit and happiness of the couple. Furthermore Ampah argues that customary marriage is considered a full marriage. Yet for marriage to be considered a Christian marriage there must have been three steps: the performance of the customary rites, the legal rites and the Christian rites.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2. Theoretical Presuppositions

The CCFR does not claim to be working within a particular theoretical framework, but from observation it could be argued that cognitive behavioural theory and systems theory underlie its approach to counselling. It could also be argued that the approach to counselling is interactive. Worthington has observed that “the fundamental premise of behavioural marriage counselling is that in happy marriages, the rewards (reinforcers) outweigh the cost (punishers). It follows that for troubled couples, the balance has shifted to where the costs are greater or nearly greater than the rewards. The counsellor, then, should increase the rewards and decrease the costs of the relationship.”<sup>7</sup> She further argues that since the major source of both rewards and costs for each spouse is the behaviour of the other spouse, it behoves counsellors to use their influence to promote behaviour change that will increase the couple’s marital happiness.

To a large extent, the promotion of such behaviour change that increases couples marital happiness is what goes on in the CCFR. Marital problems are seen basically as deriving from

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> E. L. Worthington, *Marriage Counselling: A Christian Approach to Counselling Couples* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1989), p. 347.

negative reinforcements and they are dealt with by helping clients to change their behaviours. The new behaviours serve as positive reinforcement, which eventually leads to changes in the marital relationship. This example cited by Isaac Ampah illustrates the point:

For about two weeks, there had not been any communication between her and her husband. We told her that it is easy for her to break the deadlock than the man. So, we agreed with this lady, “today, when he returns from work and you hear the sound of the horn, go and open the gate for him and welcome him home.” Then she said, “but there is a watchman there. Why should it be my responsibility to go and open the gate when there is a watchman?” And then we said, “because you want a better relationship. This man is coming home and expecting the watchman to open the gate, but then he sees you open the gate and then you rush to open the door for him. And then you give him a warm reception, welcome him home with nice words, darling, you are welcome home. Give me your bag.” This is something, which is not done everyday, but because you want to break the deadlock you do that. And when he comes home you give him some ‘iced water’ or you can prepare some drink for him and welcome him. If possible, take off the shoes and make him comfortable. Somebody will do that, but other people will find it difficult to do it. But there is a lady who did that and after the first, second, and third attempts the man said Adjoa, it looks like you have changed. I will also change. And there was a nice result.<sup>8</sup>

This example has to do with a wife changing her behaviour so as to provide positive reinforcement for her husband to change his behaviour. It is a similar advice that would be given to the man if it was the man who first presented the problem. Often times, Ampah argues that it is possible to get the woman also into counselling when the man first reports a problem so both of the them are helped to change their behaviours. Unfortunately when the woman first reports a problem, it is often not easy to get the man into counselling. In such a situation, Ampah works with the woman alone with the belief that the change of behaviour in the woman can lead to a corresponding change in the man.

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<sup>8</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001

The need for one to change the behaviour however is recognised through cognitive treatments, which are aimed at three targets: the couple's unrealistic expectations, faulty attributions of causality and self-instructions within destructive interactions between spouses.<sup>9</sup> Such cognitive treatments that help people to have a different perspective on their problems abound in the work of the CCFR. For example, Ampah tries to help couples to appreciate the role of the extended family in their marriages. He argues: "People need to understand certain things and if they do understand and the mindset is good, then it makes it easier. For example, if a couple knows that at whatever cost, the parents have the right to visit, and they make their minds about it, then, they'll find that things will go well. Most often the mindset is not right."<sup>10</sup> Thus the approach to care involves helping couples to make cognitive changes about certain situations. Such cognitive changes become the basis for behavioural change, which serves as positive reinforcement to the other partner.

A behavioural approach to counselling also presupposes a focus on the presenting problem. In the CCFR the focus of counselling is more on the presenting problem and not the underlying personal problems of the spouses or their families of origin. For example when a hairdresser had a problem with her marriage, the presenting problem was her getting home late and therefore not having the time to care for the husband. In counselling, it was this problem that became the focus and not the underlying personal dependant attitude of the husband. This orientation towards problem solving has also been observed by a number of black family therapists who work with African American families. They observe that African American families are more likely to respond to therapeutic approaches that are problem-solving

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Worthington, *Marriage Counselling*, p. 352.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001

oriented.<sup>11</sup> Wimberly however points out that even though it is hard to move some African American families beyond the presenting problem focus, problem-solving should be the initial mode but there is the need to deal with deeper interpersonal and personal dynamics.<sup>12</sup> This movement to deal with deeper interpersonal and personal dynamics is lacking in the CCFR. The care they offer mainly aims at the resolution of the presenting problem.

Also underlying the approach to the pastoral practice of the CCFR is systems theory.<sup>13</sup> One has to determine the interrelationship of the elements of a system to understand the interaction that takes place in the system. Systems can therefore not be understood once their separate parts have been broken down. In its approach to pastoral practice, the CCFR does not only concern itself with the individual but also with the family of the individual. When a boy is counselled with regard to his schoolwork and his life as an individual, the family has a part to play. As Isaac Ampah puts it, “almost everything that we do is connected with the family.” By family is meant not only the nuclear family but also the extended family. The extended family is seen as a system with interrelationships between the individual members. The nature of the interrelationships is very vital for the proper functioning of the individual members. For example, Ampah stresses the importance of cordial relationships between spouses and their in-laws. In a counselling session with a client,<sup>14</sup> he quoted a proverb to put this point across. He said *se Nsuta fo didi mee a Mampong fo ho tɔ hɔn*. The Mampong and Nsuta people are neighbours and the Nsuta people always attack the Mampong people for their food, water and everything. The Mampong people thought that if they satisfied the Nsuta people by providing

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<sup>11</sup> See Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families*, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> A system is a complex set of elements existing in some consistent relationship with each other. See James & Wilson, *Couples, Conflicts and Change: Social Work and Marital Relationships*, p. 74.

<sup>14</sup> Observation of counselling session at CCFR offices on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

their needs, they wouldn't be disturbing them. The proverb thus means that when the Nsuta people get satisfied, the Mampong people will live in peace. The implication of the proverb to the client, who was complaining about the in-laws, is that if her in-laws get satisfied, she will also have peace in her marriage.

It could also be said that the approach to counselling by the CCFR is neither totally directive nor non-directive, but interactive. Ampah makes clear the important part the clients play in arriving at decisions on actions to be taken once the issue creating the conflict has been analysed. As he puts it, "we move to and fro and at the end of it, we want them to help us to get a solution. Very often when we suggest a solution, they'll not want to take it. But when they help us to come up with a solution, it's useful to them."<sup>15</sup> However, there is quite a lot of direct advice given to clients in terms of what should be done to solve their problems. This was made evident in interviews with some of the clients who patronise the centre. For example one man talked about the advice given to him and his wife which has been useful in their marriage.<sup>16</sup> It could thus be said that sometimes clients are helped to decide on the course of action to take but other times, the counsellors are more directive in that they offer advice, which they and the clients also think, will be helpful in solving their problems.

### **3.3. Resources for Pastoral Care**

Resources used by the CCFR for its pastoral practice include the Bible, prayer, worship, human resources and rituals. The Bible is used as the basis for offering another perspective from which clients can view their problems. For example the Bible may be used to help

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<sup>15</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

<sup>16</sup> George Asante, Interview with author, Kumasi, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001.

clients realise that their problems are not unique and that solutions to their problems are possible. To do this much use is made of narratives. People are made to identify with characters in Bible stories.

One important means by which such narratives are recounted is through the medium of music. Sometimes, instead of just referring to a Bible story, a counsellor may draw attention to a popular song that narrates that story or its parallel from traditional culture. This medium of music helps clients to get emotionally attached to the character in question. Not only does it bring relief in the short term, but also there are countless stories of people receiving what they have patiently waited for. It is not always that the Bible is used as narrative. Sometimes, the CCFR uses the Bible in a propositional manner. For example, a propositional interpretation of the Bible is used to sanction prescribed gender roles.

Prayer seems to be the most important resource in the pastoral practice of the CCFR. This is understandable when one considers the fact that the CCFR has its beginnings in a prayer fellowship. What mainly draws clients to the CCFR is the knowledge that prayers will be offered for them concerning their problems. Thus the approach to care has a strong religious connotation to it. In addition to prayers offered before and after counselling sessions, two days are set aside in the week for worship when intercessions are made for individuals with various needs.<sup>17</sup> During these acts of worship, individuals may be called forward for prayers to be offered for them on their specific needs. People openly put their problems across for the

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<sup>17</sup> This researcher participated in one of these prayer sessions on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001 after which he had the opportunity to interact with some of the participants.

whole group to pray concerning them. Sometimes, prayers may be accompanied with the “laying on of hands” and anointing with oil, a practice claimed to have a Biblical mandate.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of prayer in pastoral practice is also appreciated as one observes the emphasis placed on faith. Prayer and faith go together. Prayer is efficacious when the one being prayed for has the faith that the prayer will yield the expected results. Carers help people to develop faith in God and God’s ability to solve their problems. Such faith is regarded as the basis for answer to their prayers. It is not surprising therefore to note that the centre was first called Centre for Counselling and Faith Development.<sup>19</sup>

One may question how people respond when they seem to be waiting for too long for answers to their prayers. The idea of theodicy does not come in for among the Akan it is believed that God is in control of all things and responds as and when God deems appropriate. It has been pointed out that in Africa and Afro-America, the most reassured word trusted about life here on earth is that God is in charge.<sup>20</sup> This is especially true of the Akan, and generally of Africans, who believe that humans have a destiny and this destiny is received from God,<sup>21</sup> that is, it is God who determines what will happen and is in charge of whatever situation one finds oneself in. In pastoral counselling people are made to know that God may not answer a particular prayer the way they desire but God gives us the grace to cope with the problem.

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<sup>18</sup> See James 5: 13-15.

<sup>19</sup> Even though the terminology “Faith Development” was removed from the name, it wasn’t the case that they no more recognised the importance of faith but as noted earlier, it was due to other connotations attached to the term development that led to the change in name.

<sup>20</sup> Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> See K. A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, p. 100

That was the case in the example of Freda who had been having problems with her husband for a long time but had always coped with the support of the Ampahs.<sup>22</sup>

Worship, though not a traditional means of counselling, proves to be a very important resource employed by the CCFR. Willimon observes that the first and foremost purpose of our worship is to respond to God. However, he points out that “worship is a major, if recently neglected aspect of pastoral care.”<sup>23</sup> He argues that in the New Testament, worship is a comprehensive category that describes a Christian’s total existence and that liturgy is literally the ‘work of the people,’ whether that work occurs inside or outside the temple. In recent times, distinction has been created between work and worship. Pastoral care has often neglected the corporate context and liturgical studies have also forgotten the pastoral, people dimension in divine worship. Willimon criticises this distinction and argues that pastoral care can be “enriched by more attention to the priestly dimensions of so-called pastoral functions”<sup>24</sup>

In worship, the religious worldview of the Akan is catered for. Wimberly has noted that pastoral care takes place in small groups gathered for Bible reading, exhortation, and prayer, and song services to heal physical ills, emotional wounds, and relational hurts.<sup>25</sup> For the Akan, the physical ills, emotional wounds and relational hurts all have spiritual elements and it is acts of worship that can truly deal with these spiritual elements. It is in worship also that the role of the Christian community in pastoral care is discerned. In worship, people are

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<sup>22</sup> Freda Adjapong, Interview with author, Kumasi, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001.

<sup>23</sup> W. H. Willimon, *Worship as Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), pp. 47-48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>25</sup> Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, p. 23.

drawn deeper into the unfolding story of God, which further shapes them. Their vision and character are transformed because of this increased participation in God's story and their attitudes, behaviours, intentions, and dispositions take on more of the character of God's story.<sup>26</sup> Testimonies play an important role in these acts of worship. They show the commitment of the group to God's unfolding story not only by way of drawing others into that story but also helping them to envision the working of God's story in the midst of their own lives. It is usual for some of the clients who have had answers to prayers or have been able to cope with a difficulty to share their stories with the others. The idea is to encourage others to have the faith that what they have also been praying for will be provided for them by God. Those who participate in these acts of worship tell of the benefits they receive from them in terms of addressing their problems.

One group of the human resources used in the approach to pastoral practice is the extended family. A lot of emphasis is placed on the support that the extended family can and does offer. Even though clients are advised not to send their marital problems to family members for resolution, the support the extended family offers to couples is very much appreciated. Contrasting marriages in traditional culture and that of the West, Ampah has this to say: "Take someone in London, as soon as you get married, you get out of the home, whether you have a job or you've been sacked. Whatever it is you have to be independent. But here, if you cannot go on with life, if the couple cannot cope, there is always someone in the family who will help you."<sup>27</sup> He further argues that the support of the family can be in the form of prayers, financial help and other material resources. Through visits, they support people who have problems and are hurting. Pastoral care therefore, involves encouraging clients to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001

reconnect to the family if any strain in relationships between a couple and members of their extended family are recognised.

The other group of the human resources is the counsellors, some of whom have had recognised training and others who are trained on the job. Clients are encouraged not to send their marital problems to people outside because it is believed that the problems may be aggravated or those they report the problems to may take advantage of them. Counsellors are available to help people deal with their marital problems. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are set aside at the centre for counselling with individuals with problems. Some clients who for the sake of business cannot make it on those days do sometimes visit the home of the Ampahs at weekends for counselling.

In addition to the above, the CCFR uses quite a lot of rituals. For example, there is a picture of Jesus in the counselling room. Whatever decision is arrived at in terms of action to be taken by the client, he or she makes a promise to Jesus, represented by the picture, to be committed to the necessary action plan. The idea behind this is for clients to be reminded of the promise they had made anytime they see the picture of Jesus. Secondly, a symbolic representation of the blood of Jesus may be used as aid to prayer. Small amounts of Potassium permanganate are placed in water, which turns red. This is said to signify the blood of Jesus and clients may be asked to pray for Christ's protection in the sight of the blood.<sup>28</sup> Another symbol used is the symbol of the ash. On Ash Wednesday, a priest is invited to the Prayer meeting to put ashes on the foreheads of the people. These symbols are aimed at helping address the context of the

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<sup>28</sup> The use of this symbol may be due to popular religiosity of Ghanaians in which it is believed that the blood of Jesus has the power to protect, heal and provide one's needs. A cursory observation of prayers offered by the ordinary Ghanaian Christian shows how much mention is made of the blood of Jesus.

people in the approach to care. As Ampah puts it, “in our culture, we would want the eyes to see and register, we want the ears to hear and register, and we want the mouth also to speak.”<sup>29</sup>

The use of symbols and rituals by the CCFR is of great significance when considered in relation to the Akan context. The Akan worldview lends itself to a sacramental understanding of the universe. Everything in the universe is seen as a potential vehicle for divine revelation and mediation.<sup>30</sup> It is for this reason that in traditional culture, people use charms and amulets, which are believed to possess spiritual power capable of protecting them from evil spirits. With the identification of these symbols with the fetish, many Christians decide not to use them anymore, but the worldview of the sacramental understanding of the universe persists. New symbols then are needed. In a number of the Older African Independent churches, which are more in touch with the traditional culture, it is common to find the symbol of the cross at the prayer grounds of the church to which people will always go and kneel to pray. Finger-rings, waistbands, armbands and blessed water are also very common symbols in these churches.

The use of a solution of potassium permanganate in water to signify the blood of Jesus, in a sense, takes the sacramental context of the Akan into consideration. It also takes into consideration the significance of blood among the Akan. First, as mentioned above, as a symbol, it is expected to mediate divine grace. Second, blood is very important in traditional culture. It is efficacious in effecting reconciliation with spiritual beings and solidarity in the

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<sup>29</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001

<sup>30</sup> Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology*, p. 77.

human community.<sup>31</sup> Reconciliation with spiritual beings is always effected through blood sacrifice. When a calamity befalls a village as a result of disobeying a god, the priest sacrifices an animal to appease the god and bring about reconciliation. Solidarity with the human community has to do with the fact that every individual belongs to a group defined by blood relations. Christians have appropriated the importance of blood in traditional culture and the blood of Jesus is an important symbol in Ghanaian Christianity today. The symbol of the solution of potassium permanganate in water used by the CCFR indicates an appreciation of the significance of blood in traditional culture.

#### ***4. CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE BY THE CENTRE FOR COUNSELLING AND FAMILY RENEWAL***

##### **4.1. Theology of Marriage**

Here the basic question is asked whether in the CCFR, customary marriage can also be regarded as Christian. There seems to be no doubt in the mind of Ampah and those who make use of the services of the CCFR that customary rites constitute a complete marriage. It is interesting to note that in my interviews with people involved with the other organisations under study, the word engagement was frequently used to describe customary marriage rites even when they claimed that the customary rites were complete. However in the CCFR, not a single person used the word engagement to describe the customary rites. Thus in the CCFR, the customary rites are considered as constituting a complete marriage. 'Engagement' is only an aspect of the process of customary marriage. Kwame Opoku points out that:

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

An engagement is an agreement between a woman and her family on the one hand, and a man and his family on the other, by which they promise to give her in marriage to the man who, alone or with his family, agrees to take her as spouse and to pay the necessary dowry and to fulfil the normal obligations arising from such an agreement.<sup>32</sup>

Thus 'engagement' is a promise to marry and not marriage itself. Because the 'engagement' is not the marriage itself, its termination does not call for any damages to be paid to the disappointed fiancée for the breach of promise of marriage. Opoku quotes Sarbah in this respect: "If a man fails to marry a woman for whose hand he had applied, or if such woman refuse to marry him, or her family withdraw their consent, no action arises, and no damages are incurred by the person in default."<sup>33</sup> To refer to customary marriage as engagement is an error. The CCFR does not fall into this error due to the appreciation of customary marriage.

Irrespective of this appreciation however, there seems to be the indication that for marriage to be Christian there must be an additional Christian rite. As Ampah puts it, "Christians must have three steps in marriage, number one, the customary rites must be performed. Number two, the legal rites must be performed if you want the marriage to be strong and number three, the spiritual aspect, the Christian rites must also be performed."<sup>34</sup> Customary marriage is legal in terms of customary law in Ghana. What then constitutes the additional legal step, which Ampah thinks will help the stability of marriage? He mentions the PNDC Law 111<sup>35</sup> but this law has nothing to do with marriage rites.

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<sup>32</sup> Kwame Opoku, *The Law of Marriage in Ghana*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

<sup>35</sup> The PNDC government promulgated this law upon the recognition of the fact that the nuclear family was gaining an importance, which was not reflected in the current laws of succession. As a result tensions were breeding between couples and their extended families. The law stipulates what part of a deceased person who dies intestate's property should be given to the wife, the children and the extended family. See *Intestate Succession Law*, 1985.

There seems to be the indication that the legal step Ampah talks about has more to do with the Colonial legal system that was inherited by the people of Ghana. Specifically, he mentions the law on marriage ordinance, CAP127. He thinks that this law is what is suitable for church members because it makes the marriage strong. But considering the argument closely, one recognises that by strength of marriage, he has in mind what happens when a man dies. His concern is how his wife and children will be protected from the attempt of the extended relations of the man to take his property. This concern derives from the fact that the traditional cultural demands that the relations of a man should be responsible for the welfare of his wife and children in the event of his death has been grossly violated. This is a genuine concern but one may ask how this concern for the future affects the health of a marriage in the present. It may be argued that the woman's security in the future has an effect on how she relates to the man in the present in the sense that she attempts to put in all her energies to make the man happy.

In a sense the law on marriage ordinance has an underlying ethos of individualism since it implies that marriage is a union between individuals and not between families. Such a marriage leads to a situation in which couples are emotionally cut-off from their families of origin. It is the fear of such emotional cut-off that makes some men decide to do away with ordinance marriage just because it puts restrictions on their relationship with their extended families, which to them makes them who they are. Such emotional cut-offs lead to what Boyd-Franklin calls psychological suicide.<sup>36</sup> Hence the legal step in Ampah's three steps of marriage does not necessarily lead to strong marriages if marriage is really considered as a union of families. Rather it has the potential of creating psychological problems for couples.

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<sup>36</sup> N. Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy: A Multisystems Approach* (New York/ London: The Guilford Press, 1989), p. 126.

Even when marriage is considered as a union between individuals, the rate of divorce in Western societies where ordinance marriage is the norm gives an indication that ordinance marriage has no inherent quality of ensuring stable marriages.

The Christian rite, which constitutes the third step in the marriage contract, is nothing more than having a blessing in church. Thus the CCFR operates on a theology that seems to suggest that for marriage to be Christian, it must be church marriage. The implication of this is that customary marriage does not constitute Christian marriage. Such a theology raises questions about theology in the Akan context. Is it just by celebrating a marriage in church, which makes the marriage Christian? Is being Christian just a question of going through rituals or it is abiding by the principles of Christ? Following from the arguments, I think that the whole understanding of what it means to be a Christian, and by implication what is a Christian marriage is quite inadequate when considered in the Akan context. Clearly, it is based on a translational model of contextualisation that seeks to transfer a theology of marriage formulated in the West to the Akan context. In this theology of marriage, emphasis is put on ritual and not meaning.

One can understand the whole idea of Christian marriage being portrayed here when considered together with other Christian rites such as baptism and confirmation. In these rites, Western missionaries placed a lot of emphasis on the ritual aspect of the rites and not what the rites really mean. The emphasis on ritual leads to the concern for its right performance. Thus issues such as what baptismal formula to use have been the concern of the church and not the meaning of baptism. It is a similar emphasis that is placed on the particular form of marriage rite and not the meaning of Christian marriage, which has led to the refusal to accept customary marriage rites as Christian. The emphasis on ritual rather than meaning led to the

situation in which the church failed to instruct young people preparing to marry on what Christian marriage is. As a result, as observed in relation to the FLGID, many marriages that have been celebrated in church may be far from being Christian marriages because Christian principles of marriage are not followed. However, there may be marriages that have not been celebrated in church, but in which the couples diligently obey Christian principles of marriage. I think that such marriages are Christian marriages.

The view of the CCFR about what Christian marriage is can, I think, be attributed to Ampah's strong commitment to the Methodist Church. Isaac has been an evangelist of the Church for several years and still participates in the life of the Church. Charlotte is now an ordained minister of the Church. To be faithful to the Church, they need to go along with the traditions of the Church, which follows a translational model of contextualisation in terms of marriage.

#### **4.2. Communalism or Individualism**

Ampah's definition of marriage indicates that the bicultural nature of the contemporary Akan context is taken into account in their approach to the care of marriages. The appreciation of the individual and personal aspect of marriage is noted in the view of marriage as being a partnership between a man and a woman. The man and woman must also love each other. Furthermore marriage is regarded as intended for the mutual benefit and happiness of the man and the woman. The emphasis is thus on individual spouses indicating that marriage has personal and individual aspects.

Ampah however does not end the definition at this stage. If he had done that one would have thought that his view of marriage is purely individualistic. He rather asserted that the extended

family is involved in the marriage and he clarified their role as one of sanctioning the partnership agreement. He later emphasised that one takes an individual stance to marriage at his or her own risk. Thus one may think that all is well with one's marriage when there is no problem. But when there is a problem, there will be no one to approach for help because one is cut off from the family. Since there is no marriage without a problem, it means that one cannot do away with the extended family's support and cope with very difficult and stressful moments. He considers the elders chosen to be the backbone of a marriage and the whole of the extended family as playing very important roles in terms of support. "These are the people who are the pillars behind the marriage and it is a good thing because when there is a problem, you bring in these two people to help solve the problem. ... So, when there is a problem any support that you need, financial, material, spiritual support, because you are in the family, they will provide that support."<sup>37</sup>

Even though it is appreciated that sometimes in-laws do interfere in marriage unnecessarily, it is regarded that it is one's mindset that will make one consider the activities of the extended family as interference or not. People who have good mindset about the extended family often see their involvement as genuine concern and support. Visits from members of the extended family are interpreted, as having good intentions. It is the negative mindset about the extended family, especially about mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law that lead to accusations of witchcraft against one another. In pastoral practice, people are encouraged to have a positive mindset about their extended families, especially in-laws. Ampah relates an incident involving his wife and his mother-in-law to illustrate the issue of having a good mindset towards the extended family.

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<sup>37</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

My mother had visited us and was staying with us. One day, she found out that our wall was dirty so she decided to clean it. But she cannot clean it when my wife is around. So she decided to clean it late in the night when we were asleep. Then she started doing it. Unfortunately, my wife woke up that night and found the mother-in-law cleaning the wall late in the night. If the mind-set were wrong, she would say that the mother-in-law was a witch and she was planting something there. But because the mindset of my wife was right, she asked, mama, what are you doing. Oh! There is dirt here and I want to clean it. Mama, why are you cleaning with small water and in the night when it is cold? Let me warm water for you and give you Omo (Washing powder) and give you better cleaning materials so that you can use it. Relationship is kept clean and happy, but it is the mindset.<sup>38</sup>

The necessity for couples to have good mindsets about their extended families is impressed upon clients. Accusations of witchcraft against people are not always taken as superstitious, but it is argued that whatever be the case, the power of God supersedes the power of witches and when one has a good mindset one cannot be harmed by witches.

One main factor may account for this appreciation of the communal nature of marriage. It may derive from the very location of the CCFR. Though a cosmopolitan city, the inhabitants of Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, have retained a lot of traditional customs. For example, the Ashanti Kingdom, a traditional political institution is still a very powerful institution existing side by side with modern political institutions. The Ashanti king is, if not more powerful, equal in power to the central government's appointee to Kumasi. The following extract from a vignette, which describes the Ashanti people, gives credence to the argument that the Ashanti people are closely in touch with their tradition:

There are things Ashanti man does not do. He does not swim, does not like wedding and the wife does not care not having one and won't call His kids by non-Ashanti names. He does not cook or wash; the wife does both. The things he does: have about a dozen funeral cloths, goes to funeral every weekend, build or aspire to build his own house if he can afford or uncle does not have any to inherit. Even the educated

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid..

ones are likely to have a farm somewhere: a cocoa farm, cassava farm or citrus plantation. He takes care of his parents, sister's children and the extended family.<sup>39</sup>

This clearly describes the general character of the modern Ashanti/Akan man or woman and explains the extent to which the Ashanti/Akan value traditional culture, especially the communal nature of the culture. Neglecting this aspect of the culture of such a society will prevent the CCFR from making any impact.

The appreciation of the communal nature of marriage, while stressing the individual and personal aspects is in the right direction because it takes into account the bicultural nature of the contemporary Akan society. Such consideration of the bicultural nature is necessary for any successful approach to the care of marriages among the Akan today.

#### **4.3. The View of the Human Person**

One basic assumption about the human person is that humans are relational beings. This assumption is taken very seriously in the work of the CCFR. Humans exist in relationships and anything that seeks to destroy the cordial relations with significant others should be addressed with all the urgency that it requires. Every effort is made to help people reconnect with significant others when anything threatens the relationships between them. In fact while not disputing the reality of the practice of witchcraft, Ampah believes that accusations of witchcraft against in-laws, for example, may at times arise out of strained relationships and he sees his duty as a counsellor to help people heal broken relationships. As he puts it, "in our counselling, we find relationships as very important. We try to build better relationships

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<sup>39</sup> This extract is part of vignette forwarded to the author by e-mail.

between you and the other party whom you think is the cause of your problem.”<sup>40</sup> Cordial relationships between spouses and between couples and in-laws are considered very important for marital success.

The irony however is that even though the CCFR recognises that humans exist in relationships and that the extended family can influence marriages, they do not involve members of the extended family when dealing with marital issues. For example, in premarital counselling, a couple may be informed about the need to relate well with members of the extended family for a successful marriage. However, they do not invite members of the extended family for a discussion of their role in the marriage. Sometimes, a counsellor may approach a parent on behalf of the client when there is a deadlock in terms of the acceptance of the proposed partner, but the discussion ends there. The long-term involvement of the extended family in the marriage is not discussed. This situation, to me, seems to be a basic flaw in the pastoral practice of the CCFR. The reason for this flaw may be that the counselling training Ampah and his colleagues had was mainly client-centred which is basically concerned with the person as an individual. This training, to me, has not been adapted well to respond to the view of the person as a relational being, which the CCFR holds.

Related to the idea of humans existing in relationships is the assumption that humans are communal beings. As noted earlier, even the choice of the word ‘family’ in looking for an appropriate name for the organisation is in recognition of the fact that people do not live by themselves. They belong to families. Ampah agrees that such a view of the human person as

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<sup>40</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

existing in a community can limit the individual with respect to the freedom of the individual to make certain choices. However, he argues that this view of the human person is more helpful due to the support the individual receives from the community. Comparing this view of the person with the modern individualistic view, he asserts, "if I weigh the two, I will say that the traditional one is more helpful and Ghanaians must maintain it."<sup>41</sup> The appreciation of the relational view of the person is important in the sense that it takes into account an important aspect of contemporary Akan society.

#### **4.4. Theological or Scientific Interpretation of Reality**

In the CCFR, it is recognised that marital problems are not only physical but they also have spiritual dimensions to their causes. It is believed that curses are potent and can affect a couple negatively. For example, Ampah argues that if the couple's parents disagree with a marriage and the couple goes ahead with it, their prayers and everything will go against the couple and it will have a negative effect on their marriage. He further argues that generally, the Christian believer is protected against the activities of witches and evil spirits. However, infidelity on the part of the Christian believer can lead to the removal of the protection they enjoy from God and thus leave them at the mercy of evil spirits. This belief leads to emphasis on moral behaviour in their counselling and when it is believed that evil spirits are the cause of ones marital problems, counselling necessarily involves prayers to exorcise the spirits. It is no wonder that prayer and exorcism (popularly termed deliverance) feature prominently in the approach to pastoral care by the CCFR.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> As noted earlier, two days in the week are set aside for acts of worship during which corporate prayers are offered for clients.

Because of the religious worldview of the people, they feel comfortable going to the pastor or a counsellor who has a religious inclination and not the secular counsellor. I recognised this in my own ministry when I worked at Cape Coast for eleven months as a minister in a local church. Some university students, hearing about my interest in counselling would rather come to see me to discuss their problems even though the university employs trained secular counsellors. When I asked why they failed to see the counsellors at the university, they explained that those counsellors sometimes say things contrary to their religious beliefs. Thomas Pugh made a similar observation among African Americans. He studied carefully the caregivers that African Americans turned to for help and found that family members ranked high on the list followed by the clergy.<sup>43</sup> The other reason why Africans feel comfortable with pastoral caregivers and not secular therapists may also be due to the feeling among many Africans that only crazy people need therapeutic help.<sup>44</sup>

Underlying the recognition of the spiritual nature of problems is an important element of contemporary Akan society. In contemporary Akan society reality is interpreted theologically and not just scientifically. Approaches to the solution of spiritual problems today may differ from those used in the past, but the fact remains that no distinction is made between the sacred and the secular and every problem is thought to have a spiritual dimension to it. In the past, it was common to turn to the witch doctor to deal with spiritual problems caused by the Devil, but today, it is common to find people seeking solace in the church, which sometimes

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas J. Pugh, "Attitudes of Black Women and Men Toward Using Community Services," *Journal of Religion and Health*, July 1971, pp. 256-77.

<sup>44</sup> This observation was made by Boyd-Franklin among African Americans. See N. Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, p. 19.

sees the witch doctor as an agent of the Devil. As Meyer observes, “by referring to the image of the Devil, a boundary is drawn between Christianity and Ewe Religion.”<sup>45</sup>

The fact that African Americans living in the US, indicating that they have a much greater influence from modernisation, still order their lives around religion indicates how much religious values are entrenched among Africans.<sup>46</sup> To deny the spiritual element to life is to reject the humanity of the Akan. It is as a result of this that even though modern Protestant theology regards the devil and evil powers as outmoded ‘superstitions,’ these powers are regarded as very real to Africans.<sup>47</sup> Even though a Protestant (a Methodist), the modern Protestant theology has not influenced the thinking of Ampah with regards to the ability of evil powers operating to disturb marital relationships. It can be concluded that the CCFR takes into account another important aspect of contemporary Akan society, the theological interpretation of reality. This is very important if pastoral practice is to be relevant among the Akan.

#### **4.5. The Matrilineal System: The Issue of Patriarchy**

In the CCFR, it is considered that the roles of the man and the woman in marital relationships are well defined and there is no need to change anything. Appeal is made to the Bible and to traditional culture to substantiate this view. The argument is that it is important for people to accept their roles but then, partners are expected to help each other in the performance of duties that go with the roles. However, such help should be acknowledged and appreciated.

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<sup>45</sup> B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, p. xviii.

<sup>46</sup> Wimberly, *Counselling African American Marriages and Families*, pp. 32-37.

<sup>47</sup> Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, p. xvii.

In the account of the hairdresser mentioned earlier, whose work made her unavailable to cook and 'take care' of the husband, she was counselled to choose between her husband and her work. It was her role to prepare meals for the man so she needed to arrange for someone to look after the hairdressing saloon while she went home to cook for the husband. In this particular instance the woman could easily make such arrangements because the saloon belonged to her. It is not clear what counsel would have been given if she was employed by someone else, and whether she would be allowed to leave the workplace at the peak period when her services were needed most.

In terms of decision-making, the CCFR recognises that even though wives may make some input, final decisions are the prerogative of the man. This is because it is taken for granted that the man is the head of the home. There is therefore some scepticism with regards to the idea of woman's empowerment. As Ampah puts it:

Now in Ghana, the women empowerment is coming in so they say we also have the right to do this and do that. But the rights have been misplaced. If even you have the right to become a medical officer, which is very good, every husband would want to have a wife who is a medical officer, but that right is only at the hospital. But sometimes, they extend it to the home, and they fail to realise that they are wives and not doctors.<sup>48</sup>

To Ampah, when wives recognise that they are under their husbands in the home the marriage will go well. "In our culture it is the responsibility of the lady to work in the home, like cooking, sweeping, like washing of plates. If because we are both working, I come home to cook, I will want you to appreciate that the cooking was your duty but I've done it as a darling."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Isaac Ampah, Interview with author, Kumasi, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

As noted earlier, the strong emphasis on traditional gender roles may be due to the fact of the extreme value placed on traditional culture. But as noted in chapter four, we are dealing with a context that is bi-cultural so to emphasise traditional culture and leave out the contemporary social context may not be helpful. Ampah does not tell us how practicable it will be for a wife who works as a medical doctor to combine it effectively with the household chores. In terms of decision-making, he also forgets that even in traditional society, the word of a woman is sometimes the final word. For example, when in a discussion, elders have a difficulty in making a decision; they go to “consult the old woman.”

Ampah seems not to take into consideration the potential power of the woman in traditional Akan society, which is consistent with the contemporary social context. To say that gender roles are complementary is all right but the view that wives are under their husbands seems to portray a tendency towards patriarchy. The tendency is not sustainable in Akan society today. It creates conflicts between couples because it is clear that women are asserting their rights today and we cannot ignore their cry. Furthermore the view of gender roles seems to indicate that current social changes in which both husband and wife have to be involved in wage labour has not been taken into consideration in the approach to the care of marriages.

#### **4.6. The Support/Care of Marriages**

##### **4.6.1. *Use of the Bible***

Narrative is the main approach to the use of the Bible in the CCFR. For example, when people are faced with problems of childbirth, they may be helped by calling to mind and

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identifying with the Bible character of Hannah, who persevered for a long time before having the child Samuel. Pastoral carers of the CCFR also make use of other stories, either from their own experience or popular stories in addition to Bible stories as resources for pastoral practice. Ampah relates a case in which he used the Bible and a popular story to help someone in difficulty:

We used Romans 8:28 to say that all things work together for good to them that love Jesus. This man had apparently been disappointed in a job he wanted. And we used the story of a certain man who had some horses. One of the horses got lost and he was so much disappointed and almost everybody in the village came round to sympathise. His statement was that "whether the loss of the horse is important to me or not, I don't know." Then few days later, the horse came back with two other horses. Then almost everybody in the village came back to rejoice with him for the return of his favourite horse with other horses. And the man said, "I'm not sure whether the coming in of more horses is good or bad. I don't know." Then, about two weeks later, one of the children, a teenager, was playing with one of the new horses. The horse kicked this gentleman and he fell down and broke his hand. People came to sympathise again. This is a very bad omen, a new horse coming to destroy the home. And the boy had a POP on his hand. When they came to sympathise, the man said, "I don't know whether what has happened is good or bad. I don't know." About a month later, there was a fight between two villages, their village and another village. The child could not go because of the injured hand. But the other kids went and they were killed. And they all came to say, "ei, you are fortunate, your child is still alive because of this POP." And then the gentleman said, "I don't know whether it is good or bad."<sup>50</sup>

According to Ampah, with this story, he was able to help the client to calm down and the client "was perfectly satisfied." In fact, he introduced me to the client and from my interaction with him, I realised that he seemed to be happy with his life.

The use of narratives in the pastoral practice of the CCFR is, to me, very appropriate considering the Akan. Even though Wimberly<sup>51</sup> acknowledges certain dangers in the use of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> E. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 9-10.

narratives, he recognises the importance of narrative among black people. "Narratives suggest ways to motivate people to action, help them to see themselves in a new light, help them recognise new resources, enable them to channel behaviour in constructive ways, sustain them in crisis, bring healing and reconciliation in relationships, heal the scars of memories, and provide guidance when direction is needed."<sup>52</sup> In all of this one goal of narrative is to link persons in need to the unfolding of God's story in the midst of life.<sup>53</sup> Since the people believe that ultimately God is in control, this link becomes important in assuring them of God's continued sustenance.

But the CCFR does not only use narrative in the interpretation of the Bible. They also interpret the Bible in a propositional manner sometimes. Such an interpretation is not particularly helpful for contemporary Akan society. It was noted that such propositional interpretation to the Bible cannot be applied to all aspects of scripture and lead to inconsistencies, which create a lot of confusion.

#### ***4.6.2. The Issue of Childlessness***

When questioned about the main problems presented for counselling, Ampah did not say anything about childlessness. However in one counselling session, the issue presented was childlessness. The session revealed that childlessness is taken as a serious problem. From the interviews with the people who patronise the centre, one discovers the implicit assumption that a main purpose of marriage is procreation. Procreation was a high priority for George Asante<sup>54</sup> before he married. As mentioned earlier, Kumasi, where the CCFR is situated, is a

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> George Asante, Interview with author, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

city still in touch with traditional culture. In traditional culture procreation is the essence of marriage.

For pastoral practice in such a place to be relevant, issues of childlessness must of necessity be a great concern. It can be argued that the CCRF is concerned with the issue of childlessness and it tries to help childless couples to cope. First, couples are helped through advice to seek medical intervention, through prayers and through the use of narratives to comfort and help them to cope. The methods may not be exhaustive but at least, childless couples are catered for in the approach to the care of marriages.

#### *4.6.3. Stability*

Stability is the main goal of the pastoral care of marriages by the FLGID. The story of Freda Adjapong<sup>55</sup> gives credence to this point. Freda has been in a polygynous marriage since 1966. Everything seemed to be going well until the co-wife died in 1987. She was accused of killing the co-wife and the husband has treated her very badly until now. At the time of interview she even claimed that though they live in the same house, the husband sleeps with his son and she sleeps alone. Irrespective of such treatment, she does not want to divorce and she claims that counselling with Mr and Mrs. Ampah has helped her a lot to cope in the midst of difficulties. It can be assumed that the counselling Freda had was intended to achieve stability in the marriage irrespective of the problems.

Clearly counselling and care in the CCFR is intended to help people to cope even in situations of discomfort. When Ampah explained his view of marriage he made it clear that the man and

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<sup>55</sup> Freda Adjapong, Interview with author, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001.

the woman must stay together in prosperity and adversity. Thus for Ampah, whether problems arise in marriage or not the couple must stay together. It is believed the extended family has an important role to play with regard to the stability of marriages. They provide support in various forms that helps the couple in times of problems. The group therapy (the acts of worship) also has the prevention of marital crisis as a focus. Quite a lot of education goes on during these acts of worship all aimed at strengthening and making marriages stable. The testimonies, prayers and songs are all supposed to help encourage people to know that no matter what they may be going through, something good can come out of their marriages. In all, it can be argued that stability is the main goal of the approach to the care of marriages by the CCFR.

#### *4.6.4. Attitude towards Polygyny*

Ampah's definition of marriage as consisting of a partnership agreement between a man and a woman seems to suggest that the CCFR does not accept polygyny as an acceptable form of marriage for the Christian. However, some of the clients who use the services of the CCFR are in polygynous marriages. They claim that when they entered into the marriages they were not committed Christians. They entered into it out of ignorance. This seems to support the idea that polygyny is not an acceptable form of marriage for the Christian.

This negative attitude to polygyny may derive from the experience of dealing with individuals involved in such unions and getting to know the emotional pain it engenders. For example, the problem of Freda cited earlier, was related to a polygynous marriage. She was happy in her marriage until the co-wife died and the death was attributed to her. Since then, she has not had her peace in the marriage. That such people in polygynous marriages do come to the

CCFR for counselling while they still remain in the marriage seems to suggest that even though the practice is not accepted as the ideal for the Christian, the CCFR does not condemn those in it. They are not advised to leave the marriage but they are admonished to allow their marriages reflect the Christian principles they hold.

## 5. *CONCLUSION*

In this chapter I have evaluated the approach to the pastoral care of marriages by the CCFR. To an extent, the approach is quite relevant to contemporary Akan society. It takes into account certain important aspects of the society. For example, there is appreciation of the bicultural nature of the society and attempts are made to create a balance between the personal and public aspects of marriage. The human person is also viewed as a relational being. In fact cordial relationships are argued to be what makes for a successful marriage. Furthermore, reality is interpreted theologically and marital problems are considered as having both physical and spiritual causes. Narrative mainly characterises the use of the Bible though propositional interpretations are also made. Furthermore, pastoral practice seeks to ensure the stability of marriages and childless couples are given the needed attention.

However, there are some weaknesses in the approach. The CCFR subscribes to a theology of marriage that is quite inadequate. It is held that Christian marriage must be church marriage, thus they make use of a translational model of contextualisation. Furthermore the appreciation of the bicultural nature of the society has not been translated well into pastoral practice. Moreover there seems to be a trend towards patriarchy which indicates that they do not appreciate fully the changing nature of the society. Thus even though the CCFR can be argued to be doing well, there are still areas which need to be attended to if its approach to care is to

be totally relevant to contemporary Akan society. In the next chapter an appropriate theology of marriage and approaches to care and counselling that may be relevant to the Akan society of today are suggested.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A QUEST FOR RELEVANT THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL APPROACHES TO THE CARE OF MARRIAGES

#### 1. *INTRODUCTION*

Thus far attempts have been made to evaluate the theology and the approach to the pastoral care of marriages by the FLGID, the FEM and the CCFR. It was observed that all three organisations operate on the basis of theological or religious interpretation of reality and not just a scientific one. They also view the human person as a person-in-relations and stability is the goal of their pastoral practice. Thus certain aspects of the contemporary Akan context are taken into account in the approach to care.

However, the organisations operate with a theology of marriage that is far from being appropriate for the context. It seems to me that a translational model of contextualisation has led to the equation of church marriage with Christian marriage and hence the view that customary marriage cannot be Christian marriage. Also, it is only the CCFR that uses narrative in the interpretation of the Bible. The other two organisations mainly interpret the Bible in a propositional manner. It was noted in Chapter Four that both the translational model of contextualisation and the propositional use of the Bible may not be helpful in the Akan context. Furthermore while there is a general appreciation of the bicultural nature of the society, the FEM seems to be more inclined towards individualism and both the FLGID and CCFR fail to take the bicultural nature of the context seriously in their approach to

counselling. The focus of care and counselling is the individual partners and not the partners together with their extended families. This may be due to the fact that they have not identified appropriate models of care and counselling for the context, but as Masamba ma Mpolo observes, diagnosis and therapy, which have heavily depended upon Western interpretations, need to be freed from Western cultural control.<sup>1</sup>

Again, apart from the CCFR, there seems not to be an adequate care for childless couples since the FLGID and the FEM seem to have the notion that marriage is not necessarily for procreation. Moreover, it is only the FLGID that seems to appropriate the potential of the power of women in Akan culture to seek an egalitarian form of marriage. The view of marriage in the FEM and the CCFR seems to be patriarchal.

There is therefore the need for a Christian theology of marriage and approaches to the care of marriages that takes the contemporary Akan context in its totality into consideration. To that end, I suggest in this chapter what the main elements of an Akan Christian theology of marriage should be. I also propose approaches to pastoral care and counselling that may be suitable for the contemporary Akan context.

## **2. *AN AKAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE***

In establishing some criteria for evaluating the theology and approach to the care of marriages, certain elements were noted to be very important. These include the bicultural nature of the contemporary Akan society, the relational view of the person, the theological interpretation of reality and the potential of the matrilineal system to engender equality in

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<sup>1</sup> Masamba ma Mpolo, "Perspectives on African Pastoral Counselling," p. 4.

marriage. Others are how such an approach helps in the stability of marriage and helps couples to cope in situations of childlessness. It was also noted that a synthetic model of contextualisation and narrative interpretation of the Bible is more helpful in the contemporary Akan context. How do all of these inform a theology of marriage among the Akan? This section discusses this question by considering the nature, purpose and process of marriage.

## 2.1. The Nature of Marriage

### 2.1.1. *Marriage: An Egalitarian Institution*

The fact that Akan society is matrilineal gives women a sense of worth because one's position in the society depends on women. Oduyoye argues that a woman's status in marriage can be evaluated to a great extent by the degree of independence she enjoys in her marital relations.<sup>2</sup> While in traditional society the wife is engaged in her personal work which makes her independent, colonialism and Western missions encouraged wives to be "housewives" and in so doing deprived them of their independence since they had to depend on their husbands for almost everything. It has been noted that while African women are productive in agriculture, (a situation in traditional society that leads to their relative independence), women living in the towns have only limited access to modern professional and economic structures,<sup>3</sup> leading to their dependence on their husbands. Furthermore, a propositional interpretation of the Bible by the missionaries also led to the emphasis that the man is the head of the marital home. This influenced the subordination of women and engendered a patriarchal understanding of

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<sup>2</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> G. Zdunek, "Research on Gender Relations with Reference to Ghana and Nigeria" in M. Reh and G. Ludwar-Ene (Eds.) *Gender and Identity in Africa* (Munster/ Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1994), p. 138.

marriage. Thus colonialism and Western missions engendered a patriarchal view of marriage.<sup>4</sup> The question is whether such a view of marriage is sustainable in contemporary Akan society? Such a view of marriage affects the stability of marriages, especially in contemporary society where the worth of woman is being reasserted. Thus using the criteria of ensuring the stability of marriage, a patriarchal view of marriage is not helpful. There is therefore a need for a Christian theology of marriage that is egalitarian

Thatcher points out that all traditions of marriage (except perhaps very early Christian ones) assume the domination of men and the subjugation of women and that the history of marriage is that of patriarchy and inequality. He then asks, "Are there theological resources for re-visioning marriage as a sacrament of partnership and mutuality?"<sup>5</sup> He argues that an adequate theology of marriage will nurture the hope that non-patriarchal marriage is possible and that if achieved it will be a reclamation of God's gift in creation and will recognise that marriage is both a public and a private institution, both personal and social.<sup>6</sup> Recognising marriage not only as a private and personal institution but also a public and social one, which Thatcher sees as the result of non-patriarchal marriage, is already present among the Akan of Ghana. It follows then that among the Akan, not only is a non-patriarchal marriage possible but the culture itself also engenders it. Akan society has a lot to offer in terms of an egalitarian Christian theology of marriage. But is there theological evidence for such an egalitarian marriage?

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<sup>4</sup> See Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Blu Greenberg, writing on the Jewish perspective of marriage agrees that there are inequalities and clear-cut role distinctions.<sup>7</sup> De Vaux makes similar observations: “Just as the unmarried woman was under the authority of her father, so the married woman was under the authority of her husband.”<sup>8</sup> Thatcher discusses some biblical models of marriage.<sup>9</sup> He identifies five models of marriage in the Bible: covenant, a ‘one-flesh’ union, dubious necessity, worldly concession and passionate mutual love. In his discussion of marriage as a worldly concession, he argues that even though this has been the position of the Western church over a thousand years, a feature of it is often overlooked. This feature is the substantial equality of partners within it.

He (Paul) acknowledged that the desire to marry to satisfy sexual desire moves women as well as men (1Cor. 7:2). Once married they are under mutual obligation to meet each other’s sexual needs. ‘The husband must give to his wife what is due to her, and equally the wife must give the husband his due’ (7:3) ... The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband’s. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife’s (7:4) ... Paul takes for granted that the ‘aim’ of married man is ‘to please his wife’ (7:33) and the aim of the married woman is ‘to please her husband’ (7:34).<sup>10</sup>

Discussing the ‘passionate mutual love’ model, which is based on the Song of Songs, Thatcher quotes Gledhill to bring out the idea of equality between the partners. “The Song subtly undermines the common type-casting of the male/female roles as dominant/submissive, active/passive, leader/follower, protector/protected and so on. In the Song, we have complete mutuality of desire, boy towards girl, girl towards boy.”<sup>11</sup> These two models, even though

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<sup>7</sup> B. Greenberg, “Marriage: A Jewish Perspective” in H, Anderson et. al. (Eds.) *The Family Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> R. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> Imp., 1968, trans. J. McHugh), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, chapter three.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

they do not capture a complete understanding of marriage, do point to an egalitarian nature of marriage.

The other three models point to marriage as patriarchal. However, Thatcher argues that the covenant and 'one-flesh' union models can be reclaimed to show their egalitarian nature. He argues that from at least the eighth century BCE marriage was regarded as a covenant modelled on the divine-human covenant between Yahweh and the Jewish people.<sup>12</sup> The relationship between covenanters in the ancient world was originally that between kings and their subjects, between lords and their vassals. Later the relationship between God and his people was expressed as a covenant relationship. Thus covenants are seen as always between a superior and one under him. Applied to the marriage covenant this entails patriarchy. So Thatcher notes that the survey of the covenant model quickly uncovers simmering issues of gender and power in the texts themselves.<sup>13</sup>

However, based on Ephesians 5, he argues that Christian marriage is a covenant between husband and wife ratified by Jesus Christ and that the author of Ephesians seeks to relate everything to what God has done in Christ. Thus there is a Christocentric approach to marriage and the injunction to 'be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Ephesians 5:21) is very important. This subjection is to be understood in the light of the broader context of the theme of subjection in the whole letter. It follows that Ephesians 5: 22-28 is to be interpreted in the light of this context. Thus the text may read "wives must be subject to husbands and husbands must be subject to wives as the church is subject to Christ."

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<sup>12</sup> A strong covenantal implication can be found in Genesis 2:24. A man who leaves (Hebrew *asav*) his father and mother is said to sever a covenant with them and when he cleaves (Hebrew *davaq*) to the wife, he creates a covenant with her.

<sup>13</sup> Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, p. 87.

And “as Christ loved the church so husbands must love their wives and wives must love their husbands.”<sup>14</sup> Thus it is possible to remove the patriarchal nature of marriage from this text.

With respect to the ‘one-flesh union’ model, Thatcher observes that “the new flesh created by marriage has often been his. ... Wives exist through their husbands and subordinate their interests to those of men,” and shows that such a relationship is unjust. With individualistic notions of the human person characteristic of modernity, this is the understanding one gets of the one-flesh model. But talking about the Akan context, it was noted that the view of the person is relational, a view which is also present in the creation account. The Genesis text should thus be understood in terms of humans made in the image of God, which is relational. Don Browning points out that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all depended on the Genesis accounts of creation that portrayed both male and female as made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), which presupposes marital mutuality.<sup>15</sup> The ‘one-flesh’ union should thus be understood as a “‘form’ of relationship, potentially the paradigmatic form for beings who are persons-in-relation.”<sup>16</sup> One-flesh union does not necessary need to be patriarchal, meaning the wife’s person being lost in the husband’s. One flesh can mean equal partners in relationship, based on the understanding of the human person existing in relationships. Thus a Christian theology of marriage which is egalitarian is possible. It is not only possible but also what is needed in the Akan context because such a view of marriage is consistent with the Akan context of communality and persons as relational beings.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> D. Browning, “What is Marriage? An Exploration” in D. Mack & D. Blankenhorn (Eds.) *The Book of Marriage: The Wisest Answers to the Toughest Questions* (Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, p. 98.

### 2.1.2. *The Issue of Prescribed Gender Roles*

That marriage is egalitarian raises the issue of prescribed gender roles. Ruether has called for “a redefinition of the relationship between home and work which would allow women to participate in the educational, cultural, political, and job opportunities of the public world, while integrating males into co-responsibility for parenting and homemaking.”<sup>17</sup> To an extent, what Ruether envisions is existent in traditional Akan culture. Traditional gender roles in Africa operate in such a way as to make both women and men economically productive. As noted earlier, women in Africa have always worked. But Oduyoye observes: “The question is what kind of work and how has it been valued by society?”<sup>18</sup> The role of women was further threatened with colonialism and missionary enterprise because women were taught that their proper role was homemaking. The question is whether the idea of gender roles can be sustained in the egalitarian marriage envisaged.

It is undeniable that some form of role allocation is necessary for the effective functioning of any institution. Marriage cannot be left out in any discussion on the issue of roles since duties have to be performed if a marriage is to progress. But the question is whether such roles should be based on gender. Again if roles are based on gender, is it possible to have roles which engender the equality of both the man and the woman and which help in the stability of the marriage? Traditional Akan culture emphasises prescribed gender roles. One may ask whether this engenders the equality of both partners and also leads to the stability of the

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<sup>17</sup> R. R. Ruether. Cited in Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity*, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> She argues that women make pots that are sold cheaply while men make ritual objects and carvings that are highly priced. Women have to be content with the planting of cassava while men plant yams. See M, Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, p. 123.

marriage. Even though other aspects of marriage seem to suggest inequalities between the partners, prescribed roles do not point to inequalities. As Dickson explains:

Such words of comparison as inferior and superior are out of place in the African context; they represent the importation of Western attitudes into a context to which they do not belong. It may be confidently asserted that it is more correct to speak of complementary roles which African societies expect of the sexes in order to serve the greater purpose of enhancing society's effectiveness.<sup>19</sup>

Mathema also points out that even though equality of genders is a fundamental Christian and non-negotiable truth, it is vital not to confuse equality with roles.<sup>20</sup> Thus prescribed roles do not have to do with inequality between the man and the woman.

The other question is whether prescribed roles help in the stability of marriages. This is where I think there might be a problem. Prescribed roles point to more work for the woman and less work for the man. The woman has to be engaged in wage labour and also do the household chores while the man only concentrates on wage labour. The extra burden on the wife may make her frustrated and that will affect her relationship with the husband, which eventually can lead to instability. What needs to be done in this situation? Do we still have to retain the prescribed gender roles? All the married women interviewed in the field research, some of whom are involved in very honourable jobs like architecture, didn't see anything wrong with prescribed roles, accepting that they have to do the cooking and laundry in addition to their wage labour. Their concern was that they needed the help of their husbands to fulfil these roles effectively. It seems to me that holding on to prescribed roles with some modification can be workable in the egalitarian marriage envisioned. Here prescribed roles do not imply

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<sup>19</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> Z. A. Mathema, "Counselling an African Family Today: Challenges, Issues, Trends, Procedures and Goals" in D. W. Waratu, *Caring and Sharing: Pastoral Counselling in the African Perspective* (Nairobi: ATIEA, 1995), p. 53.

that women do 'inferior' jobs, for that will mean they are being prevented from reaching their full potential. Men must not see themselves as the sole providers for the household. They need the input of women, something, which is actually happening today. Also women should not be considered as the only people responsible for parenting and homemaking. They need the input of men. This input is often lacking and an Akan Christian theology of marriage must emphasise this need.

### 2.1.3. *The Issue of Polygyny*

An egalitarian view of marriage seriously challenges the idea of polygyny, which has often been wrongly assumed to be the African form of marriage and has been used as a touchstone of genuine indiginisation.<sup>21</sup> It is no wonder therefore that Hillman and Mugaviri, among others, have sought to find scriptural justification for the institution of polygyny in Africa.<sup>22</sup> Bediako, an Akan, questions the validity of the view of polygyny as the African form of marriage and raises some critical questions about polygyny: "What significance should be given in discussing polygamy, to the insight that 'the other African tradition' relates to the views of the sensibilities of women? Is this not equally important, if not more so? Is it of any significance, for instance, that the 'modern proponents' of polygamy are 'mostly men'?"<sup>23</sup> It is as a result of questions such as these that Sanneh warns that we need to avoid the danger of describing it in such a way that it is made to embody all the ideals of the African past. He

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<sup>21</sup> Sanneh criticises this view and argues that there is nothing inherently African about the institution of plural marriages. See L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1983), p. 248.

<sup>22</sup> Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, pp. 139-145. & Mugaviri, *A Critique of the Wesleyan Methodist Church's*, pp. 248-255.

<sup>23</sup> Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 184.

points out that there was much abuse in the system and its benefits were not always the unmitigated boon claimed.<sup>24</sup>

In fact as pointed out in Chapter Two William Abraham, a Ghanaian philosopher, claimed that African marriage was 'polygamous in definition' and sought to defend it as not immoral. However, he saw monogamy as the ideal. With the recognition by a strong 'defender of polygyny' that monogamy is always an ideal, is it wrong for the church to encourage her members to seek this ideal? Sanneh is right in asserting that "to say that the rule of monogamy is unacceptable to the church in Africa on the grounds mainly that it is a western-imported institution is to misunderstand both monogamy and the west's painful inconsistency on the subject."<sup>25</sup>

Polygyny is inherently patriarchal and cannot be sustained in the egalitarian view of marriage envisaged in the construction of an Akan Christian Theology of marriage. Some argue that polygyny helps deal with the problem of childlessness. But who is helped to deal with the problem of childlessness, is it the man, the woman, or both? Even though men are also worried if they do not have a child, in the Akan context it is mostly women who face the most criticisms and emotional problems. Polygyny may help the man but not the woman. It also threatens the stability of the marriage, for the bitter conflicts between co-wives are well known. For these reasons, polygyny may therefore not be helpful in the present Akan context. To draw people's attention to these dangers is in the right direction, but using certain biblical verses to argue against polygyny may not be helpful since other passages give evidence to the existence of polygyny in the Bible.

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<sup>24</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, p. 248.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

It therefore follows that African Christianity must courageously recognise polygyny as not a peculiarly African form of marriage, but as a theologically false way, which is incapable of fostering the righteousness of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.<sup>26</sup> This does not imply that polygyny did not and does not exist in Akan society, but the fact that it exists does not mean that it was and is helpful. As noted in Chapter One, it does not help anyone to romanticise traditional culture. Upon critical analysis, certain aspects of the culture needs transformation and there is the need for the courage to do that not because of any prodding from the West but because African Christians themselves have recognised the unhelpful nature of those aspects of the culture.

This does not mean that the churches' attitude towards polygynists in the past should be endorsed. The church, I believe, needs to have a sympathetic pastoral approach to polygynists. Preventing them from full membership of the church with the resultant attitude of refusing them to participate in the means of grace such as the Eucharist is not in the right direction. What the church needs to do is to have a constructive dialogue with people on the effects of polygyny.

## **2.2. Marriage: The Purpose Defined**

When one listens carefully to the Akan, one becomes worried about the inner conflict many are going through as a result of the conflicting messages they continue to receive with regard to the purpose of marriage. It was mentioned in Chapter Two that in traditional Akan society, even though there is an element of companionship in the whole idea of marriage, the main purpose of marriage is procreation. That marriage is mainly for the purpose of procreation is

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<sup>26</sup> Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 185.

not unique to Akans or Africans. Mbiti observes that human society throughout the world recognises that procreation of children is a supreme purpose in marriage.<sup>27</sup> The conflict in individuals has arisen due to the fact that carers have begun to emphasise companionship and not procreation as the main purpose of marriage. This, I think is an aspect of the confusion surrounding the view of marriage as an individualistic affair on the one hand and as a communal affair on the other hand. One may argue that in terms of pastoral care helping people to see marriage as basically for companionship helps them cope with the situation of childlessness. I wonder how this can help people to cope because no matter how much the companionship aspect of marriage is emphasised, every Akan knows that marriage is basically for procreation. The number of women who make requests for prayer on the issue of children attests to this fact which no one can deny. The question is, in our theology of marriage, what do we say about the purpose of marriage in the Akan context?

Adams strongly repudiates the view that marriage is basically for procreation.<sup>28</sup> To him, the essence of marriage is companionship. He bases his argument mainly on the Genesis stories, especially Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper who approximates him." Thus it is argued that marriage was established because Adam was alone. This propositional interpretation of the Bible, I have argued, is not helpful. I am not sure whether Adams will also agree that women must be subject to men which is also a proposition from the Bible. It is very clear, as I have argued, that one's interpretation of scripture depends on one's own socio-cultural background. The view that companionship is the essence of

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<sup>27</sup> Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> J. E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 11-12.

marriage is the generally held view of marriage in the West. Waddell, from a Catholic perspective, asserts that “marriage really is for the sake of love inasmuch as its primary aim is for a husband and wife to learn what it means to love God and neighbour by learning what it means to love one another completely and faithfully.”<sup>29</sup> Everett also, points out that among Protestants, marriage is understood as vocation, covenant and communion. He argues that the understanding of marriage as communion has received much emphasis, for example, in the works of John Milton. “Milton and others lifted up this friendship of mutual aid as the primary purpose of marriage making procreation a secondary aim.”<sup>30</sup> In the West, this view of marriage is understandable taking into consideration the individualistic nature of the society.

The Akan context is however different from that of the West. Akan society is communal and the type of loneliness that people face in the West, which calls for emphasis on companionship, is not felt in Akan society. Other issues are more important to the Akan. To view marriage as existing basically for companionship is to misunderstand the Akan context in which marriage functions. Dickson refers to the British Methodist Order as authorised for use in the Methodist Church by the conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne in July 1936.<sup>31</sup> He observes that the reasons for which matrimony was ordained as stipulated in this order, is the mutual comfort of the two in all situations and the bringing up of children in the knowledge and love of God. He argues that these causes emphasise the fact of the two being the principal actors. But he observes that in African societies, marriage has the primary aim of procreation and perpetuating the family, for which reason it is a communal affair.<sup>32</sup> African marriage

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<sup>29</sup> P. J. Waddell, “Marriage: A Catholic Perspective” in H. Anderson et al (Eds.) *The Family Handbook*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> W. J. Everett, “Marriage: A Protestant Perspective” in H. Anderson et al (Eds.) *The Family Handbook*, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> This is the marriage liturgy which has been in use by the Methodist Church, Ghana until the current one referred to in page 170 above.

<sup>32</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 104.

cannot be understood outside its social and community context.<sup>33</sup> Taken that marriage is primarily communal and secondly individual as we noted earlier, the view that companionship is the essence of marriage cannot be upheld in the Akan context because it presupposes an individualistic view of marriage.

It was noted in Chapter Two that marriage functions to ensure the continued existence of the *ebusua* through procreation and the continued existence of the man's *sunsum* which he gives to the child at birth. It was even noted that that is the main reason for the existence of polygyny, thus it helps transmit the life force. To place this function in a second place in marriage is to misunderstand marriage in the Akan (African) context. But the question is; are there any theological warrants for this view of marriage?

In his discussion of childlessness, Mathema argues that traditional understanding of marriage may conflict with the Christian one.<sup>34</sup> In this argument he makes a distinction between traditional marriage and Christian marriage and a further point that procreation is not the main purpose of marriage. However, there is theological warrant for procreation as the main purpose of marriage. While discussing the Jewish perspective, Greenberg<sup>35</sup> refers to Genesis 1:28 and points out that procreation is a primary function of marriage, though there are other secondary functions such as companionship. He argues that this fact is worked out in Jewish rituals. The monthly twelve days of *niddah*, the period of sexual separation during menses and the week following, are timed to end at the peak moment of fertility. He claims that Genesis 1:28, 'be fruitful and multiply,' is the very first commandment and the Talmud even requests

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<sup>33</sup> Mugaviri, *A Critique of Wesleyan Methodist Church's Approach*, p. 242.

<sup>34</sup> Mathema, "Counselling an African Family Today ...," p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Greenberg, "Marriage: A Jewish Perspective," p. 3.

that the minimum number of children by which one can fulfil this commandment is two. Lack of children after ten years of marriage is even cause for divorce.

Everett also makes reference to marriage as covenant. He argues that “marriage as covenant could then imply a wider obligation to build up a new community ... that would include obligations among generations, stewardship of land and resources, education for the common good, and philanthropic care of the needy.”<sup>36</sup> This description of marriage as covenant fits very well the communal nature of Akan marriage with its emphasis on procreation. It is through procreation that the new community that Everett talks about can be built, because without procreation, we cannot have the different generations. Thus there is theological justification for marriage as covenant, which in turn becomes justification for procreation as the main purpose of marriage.

An Akan Christian theology of marriage, then, should recognise that even though companionship has an important role in marriage, procreation is the main purpose of marriage. Mintah asserts that, “*Siantsir tsirtsir a Okannyi war nye de ama woawo mba amma santsen ambo adze.*”<sup>37</sup> (The most important reason for marriage among the Akan is to give birth to children in order that the generations may not become extinct.) This recognition brings to the fore the problem of childlessness. I think that in terms of pastoral care, denying that one of the main purposes of marriage is procreation does not help the couple. Couples who have a problem of childlessness should be helped to accept it and to cope with the problem rather than making them suppress it for that creates more psychological problems for

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<sup>36</sup> Everett, “Marriage: A Protestant Perspective,” p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> J. K. Mintah, *Akan Amambra Mu Bi* (Accra: Ghana Bureau of Languages, N. D.), p. 13.

them. One way of helping couples cope is to encourage them to adopt.<sup>38</sup> This helps them to have a sense of generativity. As Knox points out, for adults without children, generativity may be reflected in “concern about the next generation as manifested in nieces and nephews, students, friends’ children, and in support for community services such as education and child care.”<sup>39</sup> Such adoption should not be difficult for as Mathema observes, in the African setting, there are always relatives’ children who need care and every adult is considered either a mother or a father even if he or she does not have children.<sup>40</sup> By helping couples to cope carers will be performing the sustaining function of pastoral care.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.3. Marriage: The Process Defined

I pointed out in Chapter Two that contracting marriage in traditional Akan society is not a single act but it is rather a long process with several stages, each of which involves the extended families of the couple. The introduction of ordinance and church marriage did not only add to the process, but created a situation in which the couple is married twice. This has led to the wrong view of the traditional wedding ceremony as engagement. If traditional wedding is just an engagement, the logical conclusion is that curtailing it doesn’t constitute divorce, a conclusion that is not acceptable to the extended families of the couple. How do we, in the construction of an Akan Christian theology of marriage, address this problem?

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<sup>38</sup> Mathema, “Counselling an African Family Today ...,” p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> A. B. Knox, *Adult Development and Learning: A Handbook on Individual Growth and Competence in the Adult Years for Education and the Helping Professions* (San Francisco/ Washington/ London: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1977), p. 334.

<sup>40</sup> Mathema, “Counselling an African Family Today ...,” p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Sustaining has been recognised over the years as an important function in pastoral counselling. Clebsch and Jaekle provided a definition of pastoral care more than three decades ago based on which four activities were identified as the main functions of pastoral care. These are healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciliation. See W. A. Clebsch & C. R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 4. During the past three decades, others have added to these functions, thus Clinebell talks about the nurturing function. See H. Clinebell, *Growth Counselling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), pp.17-18. Lartey has also added the

The issue has to do with what constitutes a Christian marriage and whether traditional marriage can be Christian marriage or not. In my view Christian marriage can and must be contextualised, otherwise Christianity would continue to remain foreign to the Akan. Thus traditional marriage can and must be Christian at the same time. Christian marriage and customary marriage in Africa should not exclude one another, still less be opposed to one another.<sup>42</sup> If this is accepted, then, is there the need for two completely separate rites of marriage as happens today? Some try to go around the problem by having the traditional wedding ceremony in the morning at the family house and later going to the chapel for the church wedding. That does not solve the problem because essentially, the two constitute separate and completely different rites of marriage. In fact Mbiti argues that the insistence by some churches that converts who have been previously married according to traditional marriage custom should have church wedding is unnecessary.<sup>43</sup>

The observation made by T. B. Freeman, Methodist missionary in Ghana in 1844 is very important for our consideration on this question. He was criticised in the *London Times* on the grounds that he was encouraging concubinage by his accommodating attitude to indigenous marriage customs. In his rebuttal, he wrote, "... wherever marriage is celebrated according to the law and usage of the country, even though the country be heathen, it is in substance a valid marriage."<sup>44</sup> If traditional customary marriage is a valid marriage, then what do we say about the insistence on church marriage after the traditional marriage rites have been performed? Is it not necessary for Akan Christians to have a single wedding ceremony to

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liberating and empowering functions. See Lartey, *In Living Colour, An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling* (London: Cassell, 1997), pp. 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> Kisembo et al, *African Christian Marriage*, p. 201.

<sup>43</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, p. 95. He argues: "I do not think that this is necessary since marriage is valid in the sight of God whether the wedding ceremony is conducted by the church or according to other accepted and legal practice."

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p. 106.

conclude the already long process of marriage? What rite then should be adopted if one is to integrate traditional and church wedding ceremonies?

Church wedding cannot be the choice. Those who argue for it do so on the assumption that it engenders greater protection for the woman and ensures the stability of the marriage. The argument that it engenders greater protection for women is unwarranted because its basis has nothing to do with marriage but with inheritance of property should the man die intestate. Also church wedding does not ensure marital stability. If it did, divorce rates in the West, where many marry in the church, would not be so high. Some may also argue that in the church wedding, we consciously seek the blessing of God on the marriage and also witness, support and share in the joy of the couple.<sup>45</sup> The question however is whether it is only in the church wedding ceremony that we can do these activities or whether we could do so in the customary marriage too? I think that the blessing of God could be sought at any ceremony. In fact in traditional society marriage does not take place without asking for the blessing of children and other benefits from God and the ancestors.

In the light of the contemporary Akan context a church wedding, as we have it today, cannot be taken to be the proper rite for Akan Christian marriage because essentially it presupposes that marriage is properly between individuals. The Methodist Church, Ghana has tried in a woefully unsuccessful attempt to draw attention to the fact that marriage unites families in her new Liturgy Book. After the vows between the man and the woman have been made, the minister makes the pronouncement of the marriage that the two are man and wife. He then

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<sup>45</sup> This is noted in the declaration in the Order for the Blessing of Marriage previously solemnised or Customarily Contracted. See Methodist Church, Ghana, *Methodist Liturgy and Book of Worship*, p. 112. The declaration of purpose in the Order for the Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony, in the same book (p.117) reads, "Brothers and Sisters, we are gathered together here in the presence of God, and in the presence of this

asks the families to promise that in view of marriage uniting their families, they would uphold the couple with right counsel and godly prayers.<sup>46</sup> In the first place, this recognition that marriage unites families is just incidental and is not given a proper place in the liturgy. It comes after the pronouncement of the marriage between the man and the woman, showing that the families are properly not part of the marriage. Secondly asking for their counsel and prayers does not in any way indicate that they are in essence part of the marriage. Furthermore, before the vows, the father of the girl has to present the girl to the officiating minister, after declaring that he does so on behalf of the families. It is after this that the woman is presented by the minister to the man. Symbolically, then, there is no proper exchange between the families, since a 'stranger' gives the woman to the man. Dickson makes similar observations about the British Methodist Order referred to earlier.<sup>47</sup>

The families have no problem with this because before coming to the chapel, the 'real' wedding would have taken place where there was proper exchange between the families.<sup>48</sup> But marrying the same person twice does not help anyone. It has no theological significance, and the financial burden it places on people eventually prevents many from marrying and living together instead.<sup>49</sup> The quest is for a ceremony that is truly Christian and also truly Akan (African).

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congregation, to witness the marriage of this man (his name) and this woman (her name), to support them with our prayers and to share their joy."

<sup>46</sup> Methodist Church, Ghana, *Methodist Liturgy and Book of Worship*, p. 123.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 3, section 3.1.3.

<sup>48</sup> Kisembo et al. record an incident at a wedding of a Nigerian couple in Britain. "After the church ceremony, the uncle of the bride, who had travelled from West Africa to be present at the ceremony, declared at the reception that the church ceremony was valid because the couple had previously gone through a customary ceremony in his hotel room, and all the traditional requirements have been fulfilled. See Kisembo et al., *African Christian Marriage*, p. 193.

<sup>49</sup> This situation in which people live together is different from what happens in the west. In the west, people make a choice to live together, but in this situation, they do so mainly because they do not have the finances to go through all the ceremonies.

The church wedding liturgy presupposes a union between two individuals and therefore doesn't help to capture the proper nature of marriage among the Akan. This is noted also in the giving of rings as a symbol of the marriage covenant. Mugaviri notes of the Zimbabwean context that marriage has no community recognition without the giving and receiving of *lobola* and that the reality has to be reflected in the Christian rite of marriage.<sup>50</sup> He argues that "as in many other parts of Africa, it is *lobola*, not the marriage ring, that is a symbol of the marriage covenant; a bond that not only binds two individuals, but two family communities."<sup>51</sup> In the Akan context, the *tsir nsa* and *tsir adze* will be the proper symbol of a marriage covenant because it reflects the communal nature of marriage. But I must add that the traditional marriage rite acknowledges that the union is also between individuals and the giving and receiving of gifts from the bridegroom to the bride demonstrate this.

There seems to be no serious problem with regards to the other stages of the process of marriage. The problematic issue has to do with the final stage. In the light of the contemporary context, it is my thinking that the final stage of an Akan Christian marriage should include, among other things, an aspect that signifies the marriage covenant as a union between families. It must also include aspects that bind the two individuals together, that indicate the active involvement of the family in the ceremony, and in which exhortations on the nature and practice of Christian marriage are given and the blessing of God is sought. The venue for the ceremony should not necessarily be the chapel. It could also be the family house. In this respect my thinking is that the *tsir nsa* and *tsir sika* in whatever forms they take should be the proper symbol signifying the union of the families and the rings the proper symbol indicating the union between the two individuals. But is there any biblical or

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<sup>50</sup> *Lobola* is the term used for the gifts that are presented to signify the formation of marriage among the Shona of Zimbabwe. See Mugaviri, *A Critique of Wesleyan Methodist Church's*, p. 247.

theological justification for the *tsir nsa* and *tsir sika*, which have been wrongly given the connotation of buying the woman?<sup>52</sup>

In the Old Testament a symbolic exchange was present. The *mohar* was a sum of money, which the man paid to the girl's father.<sup>53</sup> De Vaux observes that the payment of *mohar* "obviously gives the Israelite marriage the outward appearance of a purchase. But the *mohar* seems to be not so much the price paid for the woman as a compensation given to the family, and, in spite of the apparent resemblance, in law this is a different consideration."<sup>54</sup> He argues that the fact that the girl is not bought becomes clear if we compare the *mohar* marriage with another type of union in which a girl could be sold by her father to another man who intended her to be his own, or his son's, concubine. Such a girl was a slave, and could be re-sold, though not to an alien (Exodus 21: 7-11). Taken that the *tsir nsa* and *tsir sika* constitute a symbolic exchange, that it does not imply a patriarchal union, and that it has biblical parallels I think that it would not be wrong to use it as a symbol of marriage in the Christian sense.

### 3. ***PROPOSED APPROACH TO THE CARE OF MARRIAGES: RE-VILLAGING***

In the light of the discussions so far, what approach will be appropriate for the pastoral care of marriages in the Akan context? Stephen Pattison observes and criticises modern pastoral care theory and practice in that it focuses arbitrarily and narrowly on the individual and that it

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>52</sup> The idea that *tsir nsa* and *tsir sika* connotes the selling of the woman appears in the 'garden concept of marriage' in the writings of Walter Trobisch. See Walter Trobisch, *I Married You*. However, as pointed out in the second chapter, *tsir nsa* and *tsir sika* have nothing to do with the sale of the woman but rather constitute a symbolic exchange.

<sup>53</sup> De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

recognises the causes of problems to be essentially psychological, and so individual.<sup>55</sup> Taking the bicultural nature of Akan society, especially the communal nature, and the view of the human person as existing in relationships, such an approach to pastoral care that focuses on the individual may not be appropriate for the Akan context. The idea of re-villaging seems to me a fruitful avenue to explore: it may be able to serve as a useful model for the care of marriages in the Akan context.

Re-villaging is a term used by Edward Wimberly and Tapiwa Mucherera to refer to “the attempts of pastoral care and counselling to re-establish selective village functions such as symbolising, support/maintenance, ritualising, and mentoring.”<sup>56</sup> Wimberly and Mucherera argue that colonisation, Westernisation, urbanisation and Christianity changed and continues to change cultural and religious values of the African context, most of which were centred on the village system.<sup>57</sup> “It was in the village that one got their psychological, mental, physical and spiritual support, upbringing and identity” through a sense of community. They argue that this sense of community can be re-established in today’s urban context where people live next door to each other but are not related and may even not know much about each other. They argue that the church can provide the best place to attempt re-villaging.

The symbolising function has to do with the organisation of the life of the village around a particular story and sub-stories that provide an overarching system that gives meaning to every aspect of life. It is my thinking that stories that have to do with the abundance of life

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology* (London: SPCK, 1<sup>st</sup> Paperback ed. 1997), pp. 5-6; See also Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM, 1988), chs. 1,2, &5

<sup>56</sup> E. P. Wimberly & T. Mucherera, “Re-villaging, Crisis Theory, and the African Context” (Unpublished Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling, Yaounde, Cameroon, 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2001), p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> The village is not just a collection of huts and houses. What made a village were the people – usually related through blood or marriage.

will adequately give meaning to every aspect of life in the Akan context. It is of no small account that Magesa took the title *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* for his book. Masamba argues that one of the personality traits the African presents is a “positive affirmation of life in its human interactions,”<sup>58</sup> and Nxumalo affirms that among the Zulu, as among other African peoples, life, health and wholeness is of great concern.<sup>59</sup> Thus in the pastoral care of marriages, there should be narratives, both personal and Biblical, which emphasise the abundance of life for all members of the family, including the extended family. This is consistent with the proposed criteria of the stability of marriage. Stable marriages foster the abundance of life, such abundance of life seen both as a communal and individual goal. It is also consistent with the idea of procreation as a main purpose of marriage. Abundant life for the Akan (African) includes giving birth to children and this is not an individual goal but a communal goal. That is the reason for communal celebrations when a child is born.

The fact that these stories will reveal the tensions that have to do with childlessness is very important, but then the stories will also reveal how people can cope if they find themselves in such a situation. By so doing, there will be a conscious attempt to help people cope instead of evading the problem, which leads to suppression of emotional pain and other psychological problems for couples. Wimberly and Mucherera observe that, “the African community is a storytelling community ... Africans believe that healing cannot be achieved until personal

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<sup>58</sup> Masamba, “Perspectives on African Pastoral Counselling,” p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> See J. A. Nxumalo, “Pastoral Ministry and the African Worldview” in M. Masamba & W. Kalu (Eds.) *Risks of Growth*. He argues that the concern for life, health and wholeness can be revealed in their greeting. “*Ninjani empilweni* ‘How is your health?’ The reply is: *Sisaphila* ‘We are well/ We are still alive.’ The one who does not love life is Umthakathi ‘witch/ wizard’. There is an expression: ‘It is the witch that does not want the increase.’ He is an enemy to life.” p. 35.

stories of both joy and suffering are told and heard.”<sup>60</sup> This is so because as Birinyuu points out, story telling is part of the psychodrama of everyday life in Africa.<sup>61</sup> Pastoral care will necessarily involve encouraging people to tell their stories, which will include personal, marriage and family mythologies. Thus the pastoral carer becomes a “story listener, story stimulator, story interpreter and story prohibitor.”<sup>62</sup> It is the role of the pastoral carer then to help re-author the stories or mythologies; that is, to modify the mythologies, doing away with those which do not enhance growth and stability, and reinforcing the positive ones.<sup>63</sup> There are two important aspects of this role. First, in the process of re-authoring the carer becomes a bearer of the ‘gospel story,’ which interacts with and is interacted with by the mythologies.<sup>64</sup> Second, the carer becomes a story inhibitor, where story telling replaces or serves to avoid present action.<sup>65</sup>

The support/ maintenance function has to do with providing cross-generational ties for people that help them maintain emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing in the face of life transitions and difficulty. Wimberly and Mucherera argue that in addition to parents, the village used to provide the elders; aunts, uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers for emotional, spiritual and mental development. The village used to provide a place for life transition. If pastoral care is ‘being there’ during the times that people are faced with difficulty, then the village provided that type of care. For example, among the Akan, during important life

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<sup>60</sup> Wimberly and Mucherera, “Re-villaging, Crisis Theory. ...” p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> A.A. Birinyuu, *Towards Theory and Practice of Pastoral Counselling in Africa* (Frankfurt/ Berne/ New York/ Paris: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 101.

<sup>62</sup> Pippa Jones, cited by E. Y. Lartey, *In Living Colour*, p. 46.

<sup>63</sup> The pastoral carer does this by going through the following process: “(1) Attending to the presenting problem; (2) attending to the mythology, whether personal, marital or family; (3) identifying the nature of the mythology; (4) mapping the influence of the mythology; (5) attending to the preferred story; (6) setting goals; and (7) re-authoring the mythology.” See Wimberly, *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counselling*, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Idea taken from J. Foskett and D. Lyall, *Helping the Helpers*. Cited by E. Y. Lartey, *In Living Colour*, p. 46.

<sup>65</sup> C. Bohler, “The use of Story Telling in the Practice of Pastoral Counselling”, *Journal of Pastoral Care*, vol. XLI. no. 1, March 1987.

transitions, at birth, puberty, marriage, and death, the community will be there to provide support. As a result of this individuals are helped to negotiate these life transitions with minimum stress and strain. In terms of marriage, not only are the elders and the community around during the process of contracting the marriage but they are also there to provide all the support the couple needs throughout their married life. This support is offered in addition to what is provided by particular individuals appointed to be *awar n'ekyirtafo*.<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that this type of communal support is necessary for marriages in the Akan context. In a study by Daisy Nwachukwu on perceptions of professional family counselling among some Nigerians, she found that 34.78% of respondents had a preference for family counselling while 65.21% had a preference for contacting significant others for help in times of crisis.<sup>67</sup> I am not aware of a similar research among the Akan of Ghana, but it can be argued that based on similarities in the worldviews of the two communities a similar perception can be said to be prevailing among the Akan. If this is right, then the argument for a more broad-based support modelled on the support system of the village will be appropriate. The church community which is cross-generational in nature therefore becomes a support/maintenance community. Already this is happening in some respects.<sup>68</sup> This type of care is consistent with the communal nature of the Akan society. Thus the bicultural nature of the society is taken account of in this type of care.

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<sup>66</sup> *Awar n'ekyirtafo* are the individual elders appointed as the backbone of a couple's marriage who have the task of seeing to the success of the marriage.

<sup>67</sup> D. Nwachukwu, "Perceptions of Family Counselling in Nigeria," in M. Masamba & C. De Sweeney (Eds.) *Families in Transition*.

<sup>68</sup> Lydia Adadjawah gave the example of the support her local church provided for a member at the death of the spouse.

For an effective support/maintenance function, there must be two important considerations. These are what Wimberly and Wimberly refer to as *hospitable knowing* and *time for presence*.<sup>69</sup> *Hospitable knowing* is the quality of a church community ethos in which the members exhibit a deep knowing of all persons as valued creations of God. This kind of deep knowing is necessary if carers are to understand when, what and how support can be offered. *Time for presence* has to do with the creation of time in the hustle and bustle of modern life to be with persons in need. As Wimberly puts it, support/ maintenance or nurture is:

Time created to listen and time to self-disclose; time to simply be with another; time to hold another and time to let go; time to pray, and sing, and cry, and laugh, and shout, and dance together with another; time to raise the pertinent question and rest in the silence of the pregnant pause; time to eat together and to see in one another's eyes a sense of fullness that has come from nourishing food and nourishing closeness.<sup>70</sup>

The mentoring function refers to providing the next generation opportunities to be integrated into the community's meaning system through the internalisation of attitudes, scenes, roles, and story plots. In a mentoring relationship teaching takes place through actions and sometimes through the disclosure of the mentor's vulnerability by the use of testimonies. In the village setting, a lot of mentoring takes place which leads to young people practising their understanding of marriage through mock families.<sup>71</sup> Because among the Akan the younger generation has a great deal of respect for elders they tend to learn a lot from them. Pastoral care of marriages will be effective if individuals and couples can find mentors in the church community who help them to integrate the community's meaning system. As a teenage

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<sup>69</sup> E. P. Wimberly & A. S. Wimberly, "Pastoral Theology and Poverty: Privileging Religious Conversation Among Africans and Africans in the Diaspora", (Unpublished Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Africa Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling, Yaounde, Cameroon, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2001).

<sup>70</sup> E. P. Wimberly, "A Practical Theological Perspective on Church and Sacramental Living," (Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Pastoral Theology, Chicago, Illinois, June 19, 2001).

<sup>71</sup> Mugaviri observes that similar mock families take place among the Shona of Zimbabwe. See Mugaviri, *A Critique of the Wesleyan Methodist Church's*, p. 239.

student in a boarding secondary school, I had the greatest impression of marriage. This impression came from a number of teachers whose marriages had a very positive impact on me. Because my father died when I was very young, I didn't form any impression about marriage from home but these teachers were those who through their acts gave me the first impressions about marriage which continues to be with me. Older couples in the church community can provide the younger generation with a meaning system of marriage through mentoring and this will have a lasting effect on the marital lives of the younger generation. This is happening in the FEM but to a very limited extent. I see it as a very healthy way of caring which the Akan can easily accept since culturally, the elders are recognised as having experience in life which the younger generation can tap.

The repetitive patterns for re-enforcing symbolism, support/maintenance and mentoring functions constitute the ritualising function. For example, the mentor/mentee relationship can be reinforced through praying for one's mentee in public worship, visiting the mentee, and sharing time with the mentee. Through the ritualising function, the mentee for example comes to learn so much about marriage and also receives the needed support for the success of their marriage. In this proposal of re-villaging, the idea is that the church community should provide the functions mentioned above. This does not mean that the church should become a rival community to the extended families of the couple. These two communities need to play complementary roles in the idea of re-villaging. But there would also be the need for counselling with couples. I proceed to propose an approach to counselling appropriate for the Akan context.

#### 4. ***PROPOSED APPROACH TO COUNSELLING: FAMILY THERAPY***

Considering the contemporary Akan context in which the human person is viewed as a relational being existing in a community, it is my thinking that the assumptions underlying family therapy may make it an appropriate model for counselling couples in the Akan context. In order to substantiate this view, there is the need to understand family therapy, hence a brief history of family therapy and theoretical concepts underlying it follows.

##### 4.1. **Brief History of Family Therapy**

Family therapy began in the 1940s and 1950s as a result of three separate developments coalescing. First was the shift from locating pathology from individuals to relationships. This shift has a long history including the treatment of 'little Hans' by Freud,<sup>72</sup> and the work of the Child Guidance movement in the United States in the 1920s,<sup>73</sup> in which therapists started to work with the parents in addition to psychotherapy with the child. Ackerman and his colleagues made clinical observations of the effects on the family in the treatment of a disturbed member in the 1940s.<sup>74</sup> D. D. Jackson and Jay Haley in their work with schizophrenics in the early 1950s found out how family members responded to the individual treatment of a member who is delinquent or is labelled as Schizophrenic. They found that other family members interfered with, tried to become part of, or sabotaged the individual treatment of the 'sick' member as though the family had a stake in the sickness. They also

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<sup>72</sup> For a detailed description of this case see S. Freud, *Case Histories I: "Dora" and "Little Hans"*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977, Reprinted 1980, translated by Alix and James Strachey).

<sup>73</sup> Cited in M. P. Nichols, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* (Boston/London/Sydney/Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1984), p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> N. W. Ackerman, *The Psychodynamics of Family Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1958) and N. W. Ackerman, *Treating the Troubled Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1966).

found that the hospitalised member often got worse after a visit from family members and family members got worse as the patient got better.<sup>75</sup> Munichin and his team in the early 1970s made similar observations.<sup>76</sup> The shift was also influenced by the 'group therapy' offered by Bion<sup>77</sup> in the late 1940s at the Tavistock clinic, which was followed by Bowlby<sup>78</sup> at the same clinic and the experimentation of Bell<sup>79</sup> in working with family groups.

The second development had to do with research on communication by Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Weakland.<sup>80</sup> They suggested that schizophrenia resulted from a person being placed in an untenable position in relation to someone who was of primary significance to him. Their research led to the 'double bind theory,' and a rich field of studies in communication theory.<sup>81</sup> The third development was the growing concern in the U.S. with the break-up of marriage in America.<sup>82</sup> This led to reemphasis on the family, and especially on the nuclear family following the upheavals of the Second World War.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> D. D. Jackson, "The Question of Family Homeostasis", *Psychiatry Quarterly Supplement*, 31, 1957, pp. 79-90.

<sup>76</sup> S. Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974), pp. 8-9.

<sup>77</sup> For his analysis of groups, see W. R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups: And Other Papers* (London/ Sydney/ Toronto/ Wellington: Tavistock Publications, 1961).

<sup>78</sup> J. Bowlby, "The Study and Reduction of Group Tensions in the Family" in S. Walrond-Skinner (Ed.) *Developments in Family Therapy: Theories and Applications Since 1948* (London/Boston/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1981), pp. 9-15. This is adapted from a paper read during a Specialist Meeting of the International Congress on Mental Health.

<sup>79</sup> See J. E. Bell, *Family Therapy* (New York/ London: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1975), pp. 3-4, 392.

<sup>80</sup> For a detailed report of their findings, see G. Bateson, D. D. Jackson, J. Haley and J. H. Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia", *Behavioral Science*, no. 1, 1956, pp. 251-264.

<sup>81</sup> P. Watzlawick, J. B. Bavelas, and D. D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York/ London: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1967); D. Breunlin, "Nonverbal Communication in Family Therapy" in S. Walrond-Skinner (Ed.) *Family and Marital Psychotherapy: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979), p. 106-13.; P. Noller, *Nonverbal Communication and Marital Interaction* (Oxford/New York/ Toronto/Sydney/Paris/Frankfort: Pergamon Press, 1984).

<sup>82</sup> A. Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (London/ Sydney/ Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p. 10. In 1920, the divorce rate in the U.S. was one in seven. In 1940, it increased to one in six and in 1960, to one in four. In 1972, the divorce rate was one in three and by 1977, it had escalated to one in two.

<sup>83</sup> See S. Zawada, "An Outline of the History and Current Status of Family Therapy" in S. Box, B. Copley, J. Magagna and E Moustaki (Eds.) *Psychotherapy With families: An Analytic Approach* (London/ Boston/ Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 25.

Philip Barker offers a definition of family therapy:

Family therapy may be described as the treatment of family systems; that is, it is treatment designed to alter the way in which families function - how the members relate to and communicate with each other, the roles the different members play and how rules are set and controls exerted. In other words, it is concerned with the functioning of the family group as a whole.<sup>84</sup>

This definition may seem to suggest that family therapy is concerned with families and not couples, but as Hooper and Dryden<sup>85</sup> as well as Nichols<sup>86</sup> argue, family therapy traces part of its roots in the work with couples by Don Jackson. They argue however that the marital pair seen as a subsystem of the family system is in fact separate from the couple seen as a self contained dyad, thus there is a distinction between couple therapy and family therapy. Street, on the other hand, places couple therapy within the context of family therapy.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4.2. Theoretical Concepts Underlying Family Therapy

I am aware of the many schools of family therapy, each with its own emphasis and theoretical underpinnings. My interest, however, is generally in family therapy as a new way of thinking about human behaviour. Two main theoretical concepts are therefore of interest to me. These are systems theory, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy,<sup>88</sup> and communication theory.

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<sup>84</sup> P. Barker, *Basic Family Therapy* (London/ Toronto/ Sydney/ New York: Granada publishing Limited, 1981), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> D. Hooper and W. Dryden, "Why Couple Therapy" in D. Hooper and W. Dryden (Eds.) *Couple Therapy: A Handbook* (Milton Keynes/ Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 1-11

<sup>86</sup> Nichols, *Family Therapy*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>87</sup> E. Street, "Couple Therapy in the Family Context" in D. Hooper and W. Dryden (Eds.) *Couple Therapy: A Handbook*, pp. 90-109.

<sup>88</sup> See Nichols, *Family Therapy*, p. 51.

There are five main characteristics of systems theory as related to families. First is the concept of wholeness or non-summativity, that is, the whole is more than the sum of the parts hence it is impossible to understand the whole simply by understanding its individual parts. It implies that change in any one part will cause a change in the entire system. When applied to families, it implies that the behaviour of every member in the family is related to and dependent upon the behaviour of all the others.<sup>89</sup>

Second is the idea of system boundaries, which essentially has to do with the fact that living organisms are open systems and they maintain themselves with continuous input and output from the environment. There are transactions between parts of the systems (subsystems) and between the system and the environment (supra-system). When the boundaries are so diffused such that it offers little security in terms of stable membership, the system is known as enmeshed. If the boundaries are so rigid and impermeable, it is known as disengaged. The functional family is one in which the system's boundary is sufficiently permeable to allow a free and dynamic exchange with the outside world, but sufficiently clear that the family's identity over time is safeguarded. A similar balance is necessary with respect to the boundaries of the sub-systems of the family.

Third is the idea that causality of events in the family system is not linear, because the system operates as a whole and the activities between its parts are transactional. According to Nichols:

Any delineation of before and after, or cause and effect, is purely arbitrary. Instead, behaviour is seen as a series of moves and countermoves in a repeating cycle. A husband may be convinced that his wife's nagging (cause) makes him withdraw (effect). She is equally likely to believe that his withdrawal causes her to nag. A system theorists would instead see their behaviour as part of a circular pattern: the more she nags the more he withdraws, and the more he withdraws, the more she

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

nags. Who started the sequence is not considered relevant to resolving it, because once underway these sequences seem to be self-perpetuating.<sup>90</sup>

This view of causality eliminates the preoccupation with a 'blame game' version of events which hinders resolution of family's difficulties.

The fourth characteristic of the family as a system is the idea of homeostatis or morphostasis, the "quality which enables a system to remain stable and in a 'ready state' through time."<sup>91</sup> Within the family system, there are always two contrary pulls operating - the pull towards maintaining stability (morphostasis) and the pull towards change (morphogenesis). There is a constant tension between these two tendencies, which is held in balance by a regulator and governed by a process known as feedback, which may be either positive or negative. Negative feedback<sup>92</sup> characterises homeostatis or morphostatis and plays an important role in maintaining the stability of relationships. It means that when information comes into the system, it is counteracted in a way that maintains stability. Positive feedback, on the other hand, leads to change. Information received by the system is used to amplify the output deviation, which acts as a positive influence on the trend towards change. This is referred to as morphogenesis. Walrond-Skinner points out that the healthy functioning system requires a measure of homeostasis to maintain stability and security within its physical and social environment, but their 'overfunction' leads to dysfunction in the system. She writes of the concepts of homeostasis and morphogenesis that "the extent to which the family system is able

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>91</sup> Walrond-Skinner, *Family Therapy: The Treatment of Natural Systems* (London/ Boston/ Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 14

<sup>92</sup> It is negative because it operates to reduce any tendency towards deviation. See Nichols, *Family Therapy*, pp. 130-131.

to empty both types of mechanisms appropriately, to further its own unique goals, is the extent to which it can be described as healthy and functional.”<sup>93</sup>

There is finally the concept of triangulation, detouring conflict through a third person and the creation of coalition. Triangulation may occur when there is stress between spouses and one of them draws one of the children into a close relationship in order to exclude the other parent. One may also triangulate in a thing, for example, by drinking. Triangulation relieves tension but impedes resolution of the problem between the pair.

Communication has been recognised as the single most important factor affecting a person’s health and his relationship to others.<sup>94</sup> It is often assumed to be limited to words, but it has been pointed out that communication has to do with “all the external behaviour of a person, both verbal and non-verbal.”<sup>95</sup> Among other things, Watzlawick and his colleagues made it clear that every communication has two levels: it first conveys content and a message about the meaning of the content and it secondly conveys the relationship between the communicators such that the second always classifies and interprets the first. This second level offers a meta-communication both about the content and the relationship. The two levels of communication may be congruent or discrepant. In family therapy, use is made of these ideas about communication. Therapists not only listen to the family’s description of their problems but also observe the manner in which family members interact in the light of the various levels of communication. Munichin asserts that “the therapist’s data and his diagnosis are achieved experientially in the process of joining the family. He hears what the family members tell him

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<sup>93</sup> Walrond-Skinner, *Family Therapy: The Treatment of Natural Systems*, p.17.

<sup>94</sup> V. Satir, *Peoplemaking* ( Palo Alto/California: Science and Behavior Books, 1972), p. 58.

<sup>95</sup> P. Noller, *Nonverbal Communication and Marital Interaction* (Oxford/New York/ Toronto/Sydney/Paris/Frankfort: Pergamon Press, 1984), p. 1., D. Breunlin, “Nonverbal Communication in Family Therapy,” p. 106.

about the way that they experience reality. But he also observes the way the family members relate to him and to each other.”<sup>96</sup> With this background of family therapy, I propose that it may be an adequate model towards counselling couples in the Akan context.

#### 4.3. Family Therapy and Marriage Counselling among the Akan

I have mentioned that among the important elements of the contemporary Akan context is the view of humans as persons in relationship.<sup>97</sup> Friedman observes that in the West there is the attenuation of extended family connections.<sup>98</sup> Among the Akan however, extended family connections are very strong. Swailem Sidhon’s observation is true that:

Existence-in-relation sums up the pattern of the African way of life. And this encompasses within it a great deal, practically the whole universe. The African maintains a vital link with nature, God, the deities, ancestors, the tribes, the clan, the extended family and himself. Into each avenue the African enters with his/her whole being, without essentially distinguishing the existence of any boundaries dividing one from the other.<sup>99</sup>

However, as pointed out in Chapter Two, the fact of communality does not eliminate the individuality of persons.

It is this view of human personality, among other things, that has led me to propose that the underlying assumptions of family therapy may make it a good basis for counselling in the Akan context. The affirmation of both communality and individuality among the Akan is shared with family therapy. The whole idea of systems theory presupposes the view of

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<sup>96</sup> Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy*, p. 89.

<sup>97</sup> See J. Ghunney, “Ghana”, p. 82; S. A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*; P. A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*; Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*; J. S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology*, p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> E. H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York/ London: The Guilford Press, 1988).

<sup>99</sup> Swailem Sidhon. Quoted in Dan Antwi (1996) “A Sense of Community. ...” p. 6.

humans as persons in relationships. For this reason, the family becomes the focus of counselling. In the course of the field research, I found out that counsellors are influenced to a large extent by client-centred counselling. This is based essentially on an individualistic view of the human person. Counsellors do not involve members of the family in counselling. The couple subsystem is thus disengaged from the wider external family. With the idea of the person in relationship, it is my view that this is a basic flaw in the approach to counselling because it fails to appreciate the worldview of the Akan.

The case of Sally and George, though not a perfect example, gives an indication of how the non-involvement of the family in counselling may not be helpful in the Akan context. Sally and George planned to marry in December 2000. George's parents had reservations about the marriage since they didn't know Sally. When George introduced her to his parents and she interacted with them for some time, the parents gave them their blessing. Sally on the other hand spoke to a counsellor in her church about her marriage plans. The counsellor told her about the need for her and her fiancée to have premarital counselling and told her not to inform her parents about her plans until a later date. Sally's class leader in the church rather felt that Sally needed to inform her parents but Sally decided to go by the counsellor's advice.

Before premarital counselling could begin, George had to be introduced to the leaders of Sally's church since he wasn't a member of that church. Sally, who had then moved to another town, asked her sister to go with George and introduce him to the Leaders' meeting. Sally's mother happen to be a member of the Leaders' meeting and heard for the first time in the meeting that her daughter was intending to marry without the family knowing about the relationship. When she went home, she told Sally's father who decided that he wasn't going to allow her daughter to enter into that marriage. The father called Sally's class leader and

scolded him for allowing such a thing to happen. The father did not allow Sally to marry until she travelled outside the country. The couple is still not married.

George's mentioning of his marriage plans to his parents was in the right direction, indicating his view of marriage as involving his family. With this early involvement of the family, he was able to deal with their initial rejection and later received their blessing for the marriage. It was a similar approach that Sally's class leader saw appropriate, but the counsellor, working with an individualistic worldview, didn't see the need to involve family members. His approach failed in the end.

The above case makes it clear that individualistic approaches to counselling may achieve little success in the Akan context. Approaches that emphasise the relational and communal view of the person may be more helpful. Masamba observes that for example, family-oriented mental hospitals have proven to be more effective in community-oriented societies.<sup>100</sup> For a community-oriented society like the Akan, family oriented counselling will be more appropriate hence my proposal that family therapy may be a good approach for marital counselling among the Akan. In family therapy the functional family is one in which there is a dynamic exchange between couples, their extended families and the wider community. This, I think, is what is appropriate for the Akan.

The assumption in family therapy that causality is not linear but circular seems to resonate with Akan view of causality, which leads to the avoidance of the blame game. Augsburger discusses third party skills, the first of which has to do with the idea of not apportioning blame. He instructs: "search for solution rather than analysing responsibility. The negotiator

can refuse to allow a debate over assigning a ratio of responsibility (blaming). The third party might state: 'The purpose of this discussion is to uncover possibilities, not to show who is wrong.'"<sup>101</sup>

The avoidance of apportioning blames is a very important aspect of efforts to resolve conflicts among the Akan. Charles Konadu observes about the efforts of elders to resolve conflicts: "when an elder sits on an issue, he is not expected to find who is guilty or not, but he is required to help settle differences and bring social equilibrium."<sup>102</sup> As Assimeng points out, the cardinal principle that underlay the judicial system of traditional Akan social organisation is reconciliation. To achieve such reconciliation and bring about social equilibrium, elders avoid blaming the parties involved in a dispute and help them to settle their differences.

The idea of not apportioning blame is found in Christian teaching. It is true that repentance is a necessary prerequisite to forgiveness in Christian teaching. There are instances however, when Jesus pronounced forgiveness without any outward act of repentance on the part of the offender. For example, when the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, He told her, "neither do I condemn you."<sup>103</sup> Jesus didn't blame her but just forgave her. Paul also exhorted the Colossian Christians to forgive one another.<sup>104</sup> One can assume from the context of this exhortation that such forgiveness is supposed to be spontaneous without waiting for the offenders to apologise. The idea of apportioning blame is therefore excluded. The view of causality in family therapy is consistent with Akan and Christian ideas of conflict resolution.

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<sup>100</sup> Masamba, "Perspectives on African Pastoral Counselling," p. 10

<sup>101</sup> D. W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, p. 160.

<sup>102</sup> C. K. Kunadu, "Pastoral Care and Counselling in Africa: The Case of Ghana," p. 36.

<sup>103</sup> See John 8:11.

<sup>104</sup> See Colossians 3:13.

This underlies my thinking that family therapy may be an appropriate approach to counselling in the Akan context.

The broad view of communication as encompassing both verbal and non-verbal elements is very important in the Akan context. In family therapy it is argued that it is impossible to “not communicate.” Non-verbal communication thus consists not only of body language but also of all behaviour. For the Akan who often express their feelings in non-verbal ways, this view of communication in family therapy is very important. For example, it is often argued that Akans do not express their love to their partners, that there is nothing like romance in the Akan culture, and that sexual issues are a taboo; you don’t talk about sex. People who are familiar with the culture know that all of these views are incorrect. During a traditional marriage ceremony, one of the *akyeame*, (linguists) at the function talked so much about sex, but in a way only the mature could understand.<sup>105</sup> This is consistent with the Akan saying that *obanyansafo wobu no be, na wonnka no asem*, meaning, communication with the wise son/daughter is done through proverbs and not ordinary language. In fact Lartey makes it clear that in the Akan context, a person’s maturity is reckoned in terms of his or her ability to manipulate symbols in the form of proverbs, stories and legends.<sup>106</sup>

Another observation in this respect has to do with the ministry of Opayin Kwadwo Kyere.<sup>107</sup> In his Christian teaching ministry, broadcast on both radio and television, and also held in

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<sup>105</sup> The *okyeame* gave an instance that in traditional culture, people got engaged in the rainy season. The reason is that during the rainy season, it is easy for people to get wet walking in the rain and this gives the opportunity to the men to know the real bodily shape of women based on which they make their choice of wives.

<sup>106</sup> E. Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective*, p. 110; See also Lartey, *In Living Colour*, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> He is a teacher by profession, a Presbyterian, with interest in marital issues. He organises teachings on marriage in churches, at conferences and on the air. The word *Opayin* before his name is the Twi word for elder, thus he is identified with traditional society. All efforts to get in touch with him during the field research proved futile but I have had the opportunity to listen to some of his teachings on air.

churches and at conferences, he communicates mainly in Twi (Akan). He has so much control over the language and talks about sex freely, in a coded language, in churches and on air without any offence. And this is done in a society where sex is supposedly not to be discussed in the open. While in other forms of counselling, non-verbal communication is taken seriously, it is in family therapy that the interaction between people is recognised as a very important part of communication. This view held about communication is consistent with Akan views about communication - hence my proposal that family therapy may be an appropriate approach to counselling for the Akan.

For example, family therapy may be a very important basis for premarital counselling. Young adults getting ready to marry have hitherto been the focus of premarital counselling. Certain ideas are conveyed to them about their extended families. The extended families also have their own ideas about their involvement in the marriage. When these ideas conflict, they affect the marriage adversely. From the point of view of family therapy, bringing the extended family together with the young adults into counselling will be helpful in negotiating the boundaries and hence prevent unnecessary conflict situations between in-laws. This is especially important in the light of the fact that it is noted that most problems brought for counselling have to do with relationships with in-laws.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

What should be the main elements of an Akan Christian theology of marriage, and what approaches to the care and counselling of marriage among the Akan are appropriate? These questions have been the focus of this chapter. I have argued that among other things, an Akan Christian theology of marriage should emphasise that marriage is egalitarian and that

polygyny is not a suitable form of marriage for the Akan, though the church should be sympathetic to polygynists. I have also argued that prescribed gender roles can be maintained with some modification in order that the load of work may not lead to stress in wives. An Akan Christian theology of marriage also needs to emphasise that, perhaps, one of the most important functions of marriage is procreation but that couples who have problems with procreation should be helped to cope with the situation. Furthermore an Akan Christian theology of marriage needs to emphasise one ceremony to mark the end of the process of the formation of marriage but not a church wedding after the traditional customary rites have been performed.

Re-villaging, the attempt to re-establish selective village functions of symbolising, support/maintenance, ritualising and mentoring has been proposed as an appropriate approach to the care of marriages. This proposal derives from the fact that the re-establishment of such village functions will help marriages in terms of stability and coping with the issue of childlessness. The assumptions underlying family therapy are also regarded as consistent with the Akan context and may make family therapy an appropriate approach for counselling. In the next chapter I conclude the study with a summary of the findings and draw some implications for pastoral practice.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL PRACTICE

#### 1. *INTRODUCTION*

This study sought to address the problem of inadequate pastoral care of marriages among the Akan and the inappropriate theology of marriage that underlies such pastoral care by evaluating the approaches to the care of marriages by the FLGID, the FEM and the CCFR. The intention was to investigate what approach to the pastoral care of marriage might be more adequate for the Akan in the light of the close contact of cultures in the present day, and what theology of marriage might be appropriate for the contemporary Akan context. This concluding chapter summarises the findings of the investigation and the proposals made concerning the main elements of an Akan Christian theology of marriage and appropriate approaches to marriage care and counselling. The implications for pastoral practice are discussed.

#### 2. *SUMMARY OF FINDINGS*

The contemporary Akan context is one characterised by tension between tradition and change. Traditional practices, especially with respect to the nature, purpose and process of marriage, continue to be resilient to change. The resilient aspects include the fact that marriage is a communal affair, that a main purpose of marriage is procreation, that religious factors have a role to play in marriages, and that the stages of the process of the formation of marriage still remain intact. However, social changes have affected certain other aspects of marriage. The

relationships between spouses and between couples and their extended families have become a bit more complex leading to quite a lot of confusion. Alongside the view of marriage as a communal affair, there also has arisen an individualistic notion about marriage. There is therefore tension between the view of marriage as an individual affair on one hand and as a communal affair on the other. Furthermore some people have begun to emphasise companionship and not procreation as a main purpose of marriage and there is an elongation of the process of the formation of marriage by the addition of church and civil marriage.

The primary factors that account for the social changes are the influence of modernisation, and relatively recently globalisation. The main agents that introduced modernisation among the Akan were Christian missions and colonisation. Christian missions were mainly directed towards personal conviction and conversion of the individual. This was accomplished partly through education. Both the goal and method of Christian missions then had the underlying philosophy of individualism. With effective colonisation, wage labour was also introduced. This led to urbanisation. Wage labour and urbanisation also engendered individualism as a result of the acquisition of personal wealth and the loosening of ties between individuals and their families. Globalisation with its capitalist tendencies in which there is a focus on personal wealth and achievement also reinforced the tendencies towards individualism. However, irrespective of this tendency towards individualism, the communal nature of the Akan society and of Akan marriage has not been destroyed.

Underlying modernisation is also the philosophy of positivism. With the introduction of Western missions and colonisation, reality was interpreted scientifically and not by the theological interpretation of traditional Akan society. Christian missions for example regarded the issue of witchcraft as superstition. Western medicine, introduced by the missions and the

colonial authorities had no room for theological interpretation of diseases. Diseases and events needed to be interpreted in terms of observable cause and effect relationships. However the philosophy of positivism could not have any lasting influence on the Akan for it is said of all Africans that they are notoriously religious. For example, the adinkra symbol, *Gye Nyame*, which has become a national symbol of Ghana, literally means 'Only God' and it symbolises the greatness and power of God. Only God can see where we have gone and where we are going.<sup>1</sup> Thus God is thought to be ultimately in control of the world and everything must be explained with reference to God.

Globalisation, together with the policies of the IMF and World Bank have further led to economic hardships for the Akan. This has negatively affected relationships between spouses and between couples and their extended families. However the view remains that the human person is a person in relationships. The main elements of contemporary Akan society therefore include the bicultural nature of the society in which the communal and individualistic worldviews exist together, the theological interpretation of reality, matrilineage, and the view that persons exist in relationships. Any approach to the care of marriages must take into account these aspects of the contemporary Akan context.

Theology needs to be contextualised if it is to be relevant to the Akan. However, not all models of contextualisation may be helpful. The choice was made of the synthetic model of contextualisation as a helpful model for the Akan. This model takes pains to keep the integrity of the gospel message while acknowledging the importance of taking the culture and social change seriously. Narrative was also noted to be a more appropriate method for interpreting

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<sup>1</sup> See Aid to Artisans in Ghana, *The Adinkra Story*, <http://www.ontheline.org.uk/schools/adinkra/adinkrah.htm>. This symbol is shown on page xvii of this thesis.

the Bible in the Akan context where the bicultural nature of the society has led to a lack of consensus on many issues.

In an attempt to establish some criteria for judging the pastoral practice of the organisations under study, in addition to what has been mentioned above, it was observed that the usefulness of an approach might be more helpful as a criterion than its truthfulness. This is because in the world today, it is difficult to talk about an absolute truth. Among the Akan, an approach to the care of marriages may be said to be useful if it helps in the stability of marriages and if it is able to deal satisfactorily with the issue of childlessness. Whether the organisations have an egalitarian or patriarchal view of marriage and the attitude towards, and care of, people involved in polygynous marriages are also considered major pastoral concerns.

A critical evaluation of the theology of marriage and approach to the care of marriages in the organisations studied led to some further observations. All three organisations view the human person as existing in relationships and they all operate on the basis of a theological or religious interpretation of reality and not just a scientific one. Stability was noted to be the goal of the pastoral practice in all three organisations. Thus it can be concluded that certain aspects of the contemporary Akan context are taken into account in the approaches to care.

However, the theology of marriage that underlies the pastoral practice of the organisations seems to be far from appropriate for the context. Through the use of a translational model of contextualisation church marriage is taken to be the essence of Christian marriage which must be transferred to the new context. It is therefore taken that customary marriage cannot be Christian marriage without an additional church marriage. In terms of hermeneutics, it is only the CCFR that uses narrative. The other two organisations mainly interpret the Bible in a

propositional manner. But the translational model of contextualisation and the propositional use of the Bible were noted in Chapter Four to be inappropriate for the context. There is general appreciation of the bicultural nature of the society. However, the FEM seems to be more inclined towards individualism and both the FLGID and CCFR have failed to appropriate this appreciation into pastoral practice. Individual partners are the focus of care and counselling. Counselling therefore rarely includes the extended families. This may be due to the fact that no appropriate model of care and counselling that takes the whole family into consideration has been identified.

Furthermore, the FLGID and the FEM seem to have the notion that marriage is not necessarily for procreation. Their care of childless couples are therefore not adequate. While the FEM has a specific ministry towards couples with teenage children, they do not have any ministry towards childless couples. In the CCFR, it is maintained that procreation is a major purpose of marriage and hence childless couples receive the needed care and support. Finally, it is only the FLGID that seems to appropriate the potential of the power of women in the Akan culture to seek an egalitarian form of marriage. The FEM and the CCFR seem to have a patriarchal view of marriage.

The evaluation indicated that even though the organisations may be doing a lot in terms of the care of marriages, there are some few areas that need to be reconsidered. Based on the findings, I have proposed what the main elements of an Akan Christian Theology of marriage should be and what approaches to care and counselling may be appropriate for the contemporary Akan context. Among other things the main elements of an Akan Christian theology of marriage should emphasise that marriage is egalitarian, that polygyny is not helpful and that gender roles could be maintained with some modification. Other elements

include the emphasis on procreation as one of the main purposes of marriage and the need for a single ceremony to complete the process of the formation of marriage but not a church wedding after the customary rites have been performed.

Re-villaging is proposed as an appropriate model for the care of marriages. It has to do with the attempts of pastoral care to re-establish select village functions such as symbolising, support/maintenance, ritualising and mentoring. It is believed that such an approach to care is appropriate for the bicultural nature of the society and may help to achieve stability in marriages. In terms of counselling, family therapy is proposed as appropriate for the Akan context. In making this proposal I have taken into account the relational view of the person and that people exist in communities. In the next section I conclude with a discussion of implications of the above for the pastoral care of Akan marriages.

### **3. CONCLUDING REMARKS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL PRACTICE**

Whoever is concerned with the pastoral care of marriage is confronted with a choice between two options; either to proceed with their pastoral practice the way it has always been done in the past or to attempt to make pastoral practice reflect the contemporary Akan (African) context. In my view the second option must be the choice if pastoral practice is to be relevant. There is the need for a positive response to Nxumalo's call: "There is definitely a cry for an African Christian Pastoral Theology for the African Christian Church."<sup>2</sup> If the second option is the choice, then the following are some implications for pastoral practice.

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<sup>2</sup> Nxumalo, "Pastoral Ministry and the African Worldview," p. 29. The example of patterns of worship gives credence to this view. In the last few decades, many people found the worship patterns of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) to be relevant to their needs and left the mission churches to join these churches. This was because the worship patterns of the AICs reflected the context of the people. When the mission churches started

### **3.1. Implications for Training**

Even though there have been attempts to take the context into consideration in the training of carers, it seems that the training has unduly focussed on client-centred approaches. Training of carers at seminaries and other forums need to focus on models that emphasise families and not individuals. It is only then that carers will be relevant to the Akan. Training should also be more practice oriented and not theory oriented. Practical training is very important if trainees are to gain experience in counselling. In this respect supervision becomes an important aspect of training. There is the need for trainers to liaise with those in the field who are involved in counselling to provide opportunities for practical work and supervision of trainees. Furthermore, much as there is the need to train particular individuals as carers, the whole church community as well as the extended family need to be aware of how everyone is working together to help nurture marriages. Therefore training should not only be offered to individual carers but to the whole church community. This can be done informally as it happens in the village setting.

### **3.2. Implications on the Priority of Care against Counselling**

At present there seems to be emphasis on marriage counselling to the neglect of care of marriages. The concept of re-villaging presupposes a reversal of this trend. Pastoral care – the process of nurturing wholeness throughout the life cycle – should be central in pastoral

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to take the context seriously and modified their worship patterns to reflect the worldview of the people, some who left to join the AICs returned to the mission churches and others who remained began to see the church as relevant.

practice with counselling becoming a secondary restorative or repair function.<sup>3</sup> This means that there should be more extended family and church community nurturing of marriages, through the functions of symbolising, support/ maintenance and mentoring. As Waratu notes, Africans are better able to tackle their emotional and relational problems as a community rather than just depending on individual or couple counselling in small offices.<sup>4</sup> In this respect the families and the churches' support of the childless couple is of utmost importance because childlessness is a big problem in marriage. Childless couples can cope better if the extended families provide support instead of accusing them and such support should be encouraged. There will still be the need for premarital and marriage counselling but these should have a secondary place.

### **3.3. Implications for Marriage Education**

The focus on marriage counselling as against care in the present situation has also led to the lack of education on marriage. It is assumed that young adults entering marriage know how to marry and there is little by way of educating them. This is a wrong assumption. The lack of knowledge about marital issues is the cause of many of the marital problems people face. The church and any organisation interested in the stability of marriages need to have a programme of education on marriage. Such an educational programme should involve both the married and the unmarried. Such education is especially necessary for young people when they reach puberty during which time physical and emotional changes bring a lot of questions about sex to their minds.

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<sup>3</sup> Clinebell, "Growth Counselling," p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Waratu, "Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society..." p. 117.

Education should take place at home, in the church and at school. In this respect, Dominion's<sup>5</sup> suggestion that pastoral care should include support given to spouses as parents so that their children emerge from childhood with the capacity to form stable, loving relationships should be heeded. The church also needs to have a programme of continuous education on marriage for all of her members. If the church fails to educate the youth for instance, their friends and the media would do so, often with values inconsistent with the church's teaching. In the schools, I find the approach of 'Students Exploring Marriage,'<sup>6</sup> sponsored by the Grubb Institute as quite ingenious and one which could easily be adapted to the Akan situation. In this approach, meetings are organised with a number (about 12) of young students for one and half hour sessions for 12 weeks, during which time they meet 3 Christian couples with someone to facilitate the discussions. During these meetings, the students explore the meaning of Christian marriage as they interact with the couples.

Among other things, education should aim at an understanding of what Christian marriage means and the prevention of marital breakdown. To achieve this there is the need to discuss the main elements of an Akan Christian marriage, the importance of communication, the social and psychological factors that can lead to marital breakdown, how these factors affect the couple at different stages of marriage, and how they could be dealt with.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. Dominion, *Marriage, Faith and Love* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981), pp. 219-220.

<sup>6</sup> J. Bazalgette and J. Tomkins, "Does Christian Marriage Matter in our Society Today?," (Paper presented at the International Marriage Conference held at the College of St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth, 26-29<sup>th</sup> June 2000).

<sup>7</sup> See Jack Dominion, *Make or Break: An Introduction to Marriage Counselling* (London: SPCK, 5<sup>th</sup> Imp. 1991).

### **3.4. Implications for Marriage Counselling**

Counselling services still have their place and there is the need for both marital and premarital counselling. However, the situation in which only the couple is counselled needs to change. Counselling should necessarily include significant others from the extended families of the couple. This is because of the role these significant others play in the marriage. If they were left out it would be difficult to understand the nature of interactions going on in the marriage and thus be unable to effectively offer help to couples. Those interactions are necessary to get to the root of issues and deal with them.

I am not suggesting that in each instance, counsellors must bring into counselling all significant individuals. As Boyd Franklin notes, it is not required that the therapist intervenes at all levels of the family system.<sup>8</sup> What is important is that the counsellor must be conscious of the fact that interactions between a couple and significant others has an influence on marital problems and that for a particular problem some other person significant to the couple may have a role to play in it. It will thus be necessary to bring that person into counselling. The counsellor can also intervene at any level of the system and does not necessarily have to begin dealing with the couple.

### **3.5. Implications for the Involvement of Spiritual Elements in Care and Counselling**

Lartey asserts, "a question which therapeutic counsellors might find it useful to respond to is: Are you willing and able to engage with the images of and speech about God with which your

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<sup>8</sup> Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, p. 148.

clients might operate?"<sup>9</sup> Professional counselling practice is often informed by the social sciences and there is the lingering feeling that religious thoughts and feelings are pathogenic (anxiety, guilt or illness producing).<sup>10</sup> However, religion is an important element in contemporary Akan society. It is believed that every physical event has spiritual implications.<sup>11</sup> To satisfactorily deal with a problem, there is the need not only for a physical solution but also a spiritual one. If care and counselling are to be effective in the contemporary Akan context, then Lartey's question needs a positive response. Care and counselling should include aspects that deal with the spiritual nature of problems as perceived by the people. Carers then should not only be willing but also be able to handle spiritual issues.

### **3.6 Implications for a Single Marriage Ceremony for a Couple**

I have pointed out that the situation in which people are made to have a church wedding after the customary marriage rites have been performed is just inappropriate. Apart from the fact that it has no theological basis, it brings financial strain to people who are already struggling to make ends meet. Pastoral care should therefore stress the need for a single marriage ceremony that is consistent with Christian theology and Akan tradition. Such a ceremony should take into consideration the fact that Akan marriage has communal elements much as it has individual elements. It implies that the families of the couple should play an active role in the ceremony. The current marriage liturgies presuppose that marriage is only between individuals but that is not the case in Akan marriages.

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<sup>9</sup> E. Y. Lartey, " 'God' in the Couch? Dare we speak of God in Therapeutic Counselling?" in F. Young (Ed.) *Dare we Speak of God in Public?* (London/ New York: Mowbray, Cassell Imprint, 1995), p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> By spiritual I mean that there is the belief that there are forces, either positive or negative, which may be involved in the occurrence of that event.

The symbols used in the ceremony therefore need to signify that marriage is between families much as it is between individuals. As suggested in Chapter Eight, the *tsir nsa* and *tsir adze* can appropriately symbolise the union between families and the giving of the ring can symbolise the union between the couple. The ceremony should obviously have religious elements but the celebration should not be the monopoly of the clergy. The families must be actively involved in the ceremony especially where the exchange of gifts and the handing over of the bride are concerned. The clergy will also have a role to play in the ceremony. The Akan already have a deep respect for the priest or minister and will be very happy to have the priest officially bless the marriage and commit it to God. Moreover, in Akan tradition there is always the giving of advice during marriage ceremonies. The minister will have an important role in this by attempting to spell out some of the important principles of a Christian marriage. The ceremony need not take place in the chapel. It may take place in the woman's family house. I believe such a ceremony may be a better way of contextualising the process of marriage among the Akan of Ghana.

With the above, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution towards the search for adequate models of pastoral care and counselling of marriages and an appropriate theology of marriage among the Akan of Ghana. It is hoped that this may lead to greater stability in marriage and family life and peaceful relationships, which are cherished values among the Akan.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### GLOSSARY OF AKAN TERMS

<i>Abosom</i>	Deities, gods.
<i>Abow mu bɔ</i>	Literally, 'knocking.' Refers to the first stage of the process of the formation of marriage.
<i>Adinkra</i>	Literally, 'to part.' Adinkra is one of the highly valued hand-printed and hand-embroidered clothes of the Akan people. The cloth was originally used for funerals but is now used for a wide range of social activities. This cloth has different symbols printed on them each relating to an aspect of life of the Akan people.
<i>Adze</i>	An item or object.
<i>Akontan</i>	Brother-in-law
<i>Akontan sekan</i>	Literally, 'brother-in-law's dagger.' Refers to the gift given by the groom to the bride's brothers during the marriage contract.
<i>Akorafo</i>	Co-wives. The term is used especially when there is rivalry between the co-wives. It is also used for rival factions who may not be co-wives.
<i>Anobue nsa</i>	Mouth-opening drink or rum. This refers to the payment made during the knocking stage of the formation of marriage.
<i>Aseda</i>	Thanksgiving.
<i>Asew</i>	Mother-in-law/ Father-in-law.
<i>Awar</i>	Marriage
<i>Awar N'ekyirtafo</i>	Elders chosen to be the backbone of marriages.

<i>Ayeforhyia</i>	Literally, 'the meeting of the new wife.' Refers to the traditional wedding ceremony.
<i>Ayets ew</i>	A form of marriage in which another family member is substituted for a wife who is dead.
<i>Badu guan</i>	Literally, 'the sheep for the tenth child.' It refers to the sheep that a man offers to his wife in appreciation after the wife brings forth the tenth child.
<i>Banku</i>	A type of corn meal which is popular, especially, among the Fante group of the Akans.
<i>Bogya</i>	Blood. It is believed that the blood comes from the mother to her child.
<i>Bowodotoa</i>	Tobacco used for the pipe. Before a girl is married she is usually sent to buy tobacco for the father's pipe. When she is married, the suitor gives the father tobacco so that he will not be worried about looking for someone to send to buy some for him.
<i>Dwetsir</i>	An amount of money offered to begin an independent life or a business.
<i>Ebusua</i>	Family/ Lineage/ Clan
<i>Ebusuapanyin</i>	Family or lineage head
<i>Fofor</i>	New
<i>Funtumfrafo</i>	An adinkra symbol of a crocodile with two heads, one stomach and two tails. It symbolizes individuality within community.
<i>Gye Nyame</i>	Literally, 'Except God.' An adinkra symbol that symbolises the omnipotence, omnipresence and sovereignty of God. It is said that <i>abɔde santen yi firi tete: obi nte ase a onim n'hyɛse, na obi ntena ase nkosi n'wie, Gye Nyame.</i> (This Great paranoma of creation dates back to time immemorial, no one lives who saw its beginning, no one will live to see its end.)

<i>Honam</i>	Flesh/ Body
<i>kunawadi</i> €	A form of marriage in which the heir of a deceased husband marries his wife.
<i>Nkatsenkwan</i>	Peanut soup
<i>Nkyen</i>	Salt
<i>Nsa</i>	Drink/ Rum
<i>Ntoro</i>	An aspect of the human person that is transferred from a man to his child at birth. It has both physiological and spiritual aspects to it.
<i>Nyame/ Onyame</i>	God/ The Supreme Being
<i>Oboyin</i>	A barren woman.
<i>Okra</i>	The essence or soul of a human being, given to each person by God.
<i>Osofo</i>	Priest or minister
<i>Saadwe</i>	A person who cannot bring forth children. This term and not oboyin is used when one wants to deride a barren person. It is the worst insult that can be rained on a person.
<i>Sank=fa</i>	Literally, 'go back and fetch it.' It is an adinkra symbol that refers to the idea of going back to the good things of traditional culture.
<i>Sika</i>	Money
<i>Sunsum</i>	The spirit/ soul of a human being or the personality of a human being.
<i>Tsir adze/ Ho adze</i>	Items given to the bride by the groom's family to seal a marriage contract.
<i>Tsir sika</i>	Literally, 'head money.' Refers to the distinct payment made at the third stage of the process of the formation of marriage.

<i>Tambobaa</i>	Literally, 'stone for the cloth.' This refers to the gift given to the bride's mother as part of the marriage transaction.
<i>Trotro</i>	Local commercial transport for short distances.
<i>Tsir</i>	Head
<i>Wɔfase</i>	Nephew
<i>Yer</i>	Wife

## APPENDIX II

### INTERVIEW WITH MRS. LYDIA ADADJAWAH

**PROFILE:** *Mrs Lydia Adadjawah is a Presbyter in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana. She is the current co-ordinator of the Family Life and Gender Issues Division of the Christian Council of Ghana. She has worked in this position since 1997 to the present day. This interview was conducted in her home in Accra on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I'm doing a research work on the pastoral care of marriages and I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to talk about the work you are doing at the Christian Council. I should be pleased if you could give me some time for that.

**Lydia** Thank you but I would really wish to know your name.

**John** I'm Rev. John Abedu Quashie.

**Lydia** I'm Lydia Aku Adadjawah, family life and general issues co-ordinator of the Christian Council of Ghana. I've been working with the Christian Council from 1996 to date. But before then, my training gives me the chance to do this marriage counselling and family life issues, and a whole lot of things. So I think I'll be able to give you some help.

**John** Fine, can you tell me a bit about the background of the marriage counselling and family life unit of the Christian Council, where you are working?

**Lydia** It started actually as a family counselling unit, basically that. Working mostly on marriage, how to work out smooth marriages. But we have integrated training programmes into it. So each year, we send out invitation letters to the member Churches of the Christian Council of Ghana, to organisations. People come from the universities, from health institutions, from even World Vision, and some other organisations and NGO's that have anything to do with the family. We give them two weeks training for three consecutive years. The first year's training qualifies you as a family life educator. We don't introduce you to real counselling then. We just give you the basics of counselling. After the first year, the family life educator programme, you'll take a small test. If you make it, it qualifies you to come back

and train as a family counsellor. There you train again for two consecutive weeks for the next two years. That brings you out as a family counsellor, where we will teach you real counselling programmes including role play and all that.

Then we expect, as a feedback or a follow-up for the Council, to know whether you are practising or you perform or you give out your best to the community or the church that has sent you. We expect the trainees to go back to their churches or organisations to form counselling units within the churches, within the organisations, within the communities, where they should be able to deliver the goods. We believe that a lot of people are going through stresses due to social changes that we see all over. Spiritual and physical changes that are happening all over are creating a lot of social problems for people, and the Christian Council believes that it should be in a position to help people to cushion this, first of all to understand themselves, their own problems, and to be able to help others who are hurting.

*John* So, basically that is what goes on there. When did that programme begin, did it begin before you went there?

*Lydia* Yes, it was in operation before I went there.

*John* Do you know when it began?

*Lydia* At least, about ten years ago. Four years ago, we even carried out a research on marriage. I think the report is in the office and I'll give you a copy. It's a research on marriage in Ghana. I don't think I have one here but I have copies in the office which I can give you. That may help you.

*John* you mentioned two things. The first is that the Christian Council of Ghana had a counselling unit. That is one aspect of the work and the other aspect is being a sort of a resource centre where people are trained for counselling and educating families. That is the understanding I got.

*Lydia* Yeah. Now, because of the rapid spread of HIV AIDS, we have integrated that into the training, so we have people with HIV AIDS resource background, who we invite as resource persons during the training.

**John** So you are there as the person co-ordinating this programme.

**Lydia** Yes.

**John** Are there others involved in the programme?

**Lydia** Yes, I co-ordinate, but I look for resource persons who I think are experts in their own fields, like Dr. Araba Sefa-Dede, who is a clinical psychologist, and has a whole lot of experience. She is a very good resource person.

**John** Yes, she taught me at the university.

**Lydia** That's great. So, she comes. Rev. Dr. Ghunney who takes Pastoral Care and Counselling at Trinity College is one. Mrs. Emefa Bonzi who works at the Placement and Counselling Centre at the university of Ghana is also one.

**John** She also taught me.

**Lydia** Mrs. Ameguvi, who is a lecturer and a counsellor and a at the Cape Coast University, Rev. C. K. Kunadu, who is also a trained counsellor in also involved. I have people who come and teach on drug and alcohol related problems.

**John** So the resource persons are not from the Christian Council?

**Lydia** No, I'm the only one so I really look round for people who are experts in their fields, who are experts in their fields, who might be able to deliver, not only academically, but who have the experience, both theoretical and practical. So you'll really enjoy being part of the programme. I, though I'm co-ordinating, I often forget about my duties, and sit in the class to listen. It has been so helpful.

**John** I was going to ask about the training. You mentioned some of the people involved. Some of them are trained clinical psychologists, trained counsellors and so on, ...

**Lydia** And nurses, those who come to teach on family planning and HIV AIDS specialists. We have one person from Britain. I think she is from Edinburgh. She is also with the Christian Council. She came last year as a resource person on HIV AIDS, so I have been

using her a lot because she is readily available. For the others, I have to inform them on time so that they make time available for the September programmes.

**John** What about the family counselling unit, do you have someone who mans that unit? And what actually goes on there?

**Lydia** Right now, I'm in charge. It is a one man office, but the same person doing several other things like you see me doing. So, when you come with a problem for which you seek counselling, I manage to put you into my programme for us to have some sessions. We've also tried to group those that have been trained, apart from the family counselling units in their churches, communities, and organisations, we've tried to group them into regional counselling associations. In Accra for example, we have the Greater Accra Regional Counsellors Association. That is very strong and they meet once a month.

**John** Are they people who have gone through your training?

**Lydia** Yes, even before I came. Some of them are older and they have been on the programme actually before i came to join them. I have come to continue with them and we meet once every month and share experiences. They bring out the challenges they have faced on the field for us to resolve them together. Most often too, we invite the resource persons again to come and update us. Either this year or next year, I'll run a special course for them. We have the counsellors association also in the Western Region, based in Sekondi-Takoradi, in the Volta Region, in Ho, and in Koforidua. I'm going this year to Sunyani, to Kumasi, and those places because we have trained people all over the country. We want them to be very effective. We want to see how they are working. We wish they could feed us back, each trained person should begin to give us feedback about what he or she is doing. Again, when we have problems, maybe somebody comes in and I'm too busy to handle it, I just refer to any of the trained counsellors. Sometimes too, I have invitations to come and give talks. Maybe the youth are doing something and they want you to come and talk to them on premarital counselling. If I feel I don't have the time, I just fall on these resource persons or the counsellors to go and deliver. So, that's how we are using them.

**John** May I find out how people get to know about the services you offer, the family counselling unit, or even the other counsellors, how do people get to know about the services they offer so that they can get to them when they have problems?

**Lydia** The letters that we send out to invite people for the training are read in the churches. That is one way. And then, after the training, we organise passing out ceremonies during which we invite people from the churches and the communities. A large number of people come here and the press carries it so it is in the news, it is on television and it's in the written media. So people look at it and at least they know. That is it.

**John** So the public gets to know that there are some people who can take care of their problems?

**Lydia** Yes, yes.

**John** But then, how can they locate them?

**Lydia** People also know. I don't know how, but a large number of people know. I'm sure from their constituencies about the activities of the Christian Council, that there is a counselling unit there, and people just walk in sometimes and say "I want to see the counsellor. If I don't see her I won't go."

**John** Yes, I can understand. People can get to know that the Christian council has a counselling unit, but then, if there is a trained counsellor here in Dansoman, how do people in Dansoman get to know that there is a trained counsellor here?

**Lydia** Most often, it's in the churches.

**John** Okay.

**Lydia** Because the trained people go back to the churches and they organise programmes in the churches, and then from there, I think the rippling effects are there. They are invited to other places, so by the time you are aware, you don't know how you are even marketed. And the invitations are becoming too many for us so we refer. I think those who have been trained are known about from the media and the letters that go out to invite people are read all over

the churches, so people get to know that this is happening. People we train go back to the churches, who are also able to introduce them to their members.

*John* Back to the training, you mentioned some of the resource persons. I know that a number of them had their training outside in the west. How do you find the training since you said you have sat in the lessons yourself? Do you think that they address the Ghanaian cultural situation?

*Lydia* Yes, you know, you notice that you're dealing with problems on the ground. You are dealing with Ghanaian who has political problems. You cannot imagine this Ghanaian woman staying with you, and then with her problems, you try to resolve it in another way. Somebody comes to you with a problem from the husband who is polygamous. Certainly, you know this is in Ghana and it is bound to happen because of the culture which we have. So, you cannot just get up to say "no, he is wrong. He is supposed to be monogamous and all that." We are in a society which is different from the western world, so during the training, we teach on the legal aspects of marriage, we teach on traditional marriage, the different types of marriage that we have. We make people aware that the traditional marriage is not engagement. It is marriage and those who contract it are perfectly married. If you want to go in for a church wedding, yes, you can. If you want to go in for a court wedding, which are all western based, I think you know you can go. Yes, but don't regard the one you have performed customarily as engagement. There is nothing like engagement. It is customary marriage, so you are fully married. The only thing about it is that it is basically polygamous or it can be. The western one binds the man to one wife. One man, one wife. All other problems that are brought up are handled ...

*John* In terms of Ghanaian ...

*Lydia* Culture and tradition.

*John* For example, you know that in our culture and tradition, we do believe in the involvement of spiritual forces in life. Some people might begin to take their marital problems as due to the influence of spiritual powers and so on and so forth. Are all these addressed as part of the training?

*Lydia* No, it's not specifically addressed, but then we introduce a prayer element into it. We believe that when you bring your marriage before God and His blessings are upon it, you'll be able to fight. For the African, it is buried in us that demonic forces abound and they can operate in the marriage, they can operate in our lives. One doesn't rule them out, but it is not a topic that we put down to treat.

*John* But then, the element of prayer is supposed to address it.

*Lydia* Yes, the element of prayer is brought in to take care of those issues. That is why at the training, every morning, we have morning devotions which is more or less a spiritual build-up. It is not mere preaching. It is for spiritual building and we even have moments of retreat or prayer sessions. Sometimes, we have half-night prayer sessions to build ourselves up spiritually. We arm ourselves towards any eventuality. We are Africans, we ...

*John* So there is a recognition of the fact that those spiritual forces are there, so in addition to whatever goes on in counselling, you add prayer to it.

*Lydia* We do seriously, and I for example, when people come and when I look at the situation, and I look at the person, I might not force you to pray with me, but I will pray my own silent prayer before we begin. If I feel that you will readily allow me to pray with you, I will.

*John* You begin the counselling session with prayer?

*Lydia* Yes, I will. People say that Christian Council people, when you come, they think all of us are Christians and they begin to pray with us. There is nothing wrong with prayer. You look at the person who needs help, and the kind of antidote you think he needs is what you start with.

*John* That's fine. You said your own training gives you the opportunity to take this up. Can you tell me more about your own training?

*Lydia* I offered counselling at the university for my first degree and I did social psychology too. But I also attended the Christian Council training.

**John** So, apart from taking counselling generally during your first degree, you have had the training from the Christian council?

**Lydia** Yes

**John** That's fine. What are your views of marriage generally. To you, what is marriage?

**Lydia** Marriage I believe is an institution created by God for a man and a woman to get together and as far as I'm concerned, take care of their basic needs. And that union that has been created by God between Adam and Eve right from the beginning continues. But then, I believe specifically that it is one of the most important institutions created by God that brings people who are in love together to be companions to provide the needed help for each other.

**John** So you're talking about one, it is created by God, two, you are talking about the element of love, and three, those people becoming companions to meet their basic needs.

**Lydia** Yes.

**John** And when do you say that marriage has been contracted? You intimated that what we call engagement is marriage. So, when do you say marriage has been contracted, is it after the customary rites or after the wedding?

**Lydia** to me, it's after the customary rites.

**John** And what is the position of the Christian Council on this? Do you have a position, where you are serving?

**Lydia** Do I say we have a position? At least the orthodox churches accept that customary marriage is marriage. But then all other Christian organisations including the orthodox churches insist that people should bring their marriage before God.

**John** So, since we accept that the traditional marriage is marriage, and we also insist that, the way you put it, that they should bring their marriage before God. But then the way we do it is that to bring our marriage before God is to have a wedding, which is another type of marriage, doesn't it look like the same person is married twice?

*Lydia* It depends on how it is performed. The first one, we've done it, the two families have come together. We have agreed, it's marriage, marriage between the two families. As you know, in Ghana, marriage is between two families, good. But we are looking at it also from the Christian point of view that we still have to invite God. Because it is an institution by God, so we invite the almighty God to put his blessing on it and that does it. So looking at it a the same person being married twice, what I see people do this time, which I think is very good is, the very day the customary marriage takes place, we plan the church service at once. Sometimes, we even bring the minister to the house and after that the marriage is blessed right in the house, and the rings are exchanged, that does it. Or in the morning, the customary one is performed in the house and in two or three hours, they get to the church to receive the blessing.

*John* Why I am asking whether people have been married twice is that they have performed one set of rites and then later, they perform another set of rites, each of which is marriage in its own right. So it looks like there is duplication.

*Lydia* It is duplication because maybe, what you talk about, this western element has entered. Previously, whether you were wedded or not, the moment you went through customary marriage, you were married. But with the introduction of western culture, people think they have to be wedded. And particularly, we the women who want to put on the veil. We want all the bridal songs and hymns and what not. We want the pomp and pageantry that go with it fine. But I think that if we can cut down the expenses and just combine all, it will help. I'm saying this because from my Christian point of view, I still think that God must be present.

*John* Yes, I perfectly agree with you that God must be present. After all, he instituted it. I know that in some of the customary rites, formerly, if customary rites were being performed, maybe, what would happen was that they would pray to the ancestors. They would pour libation. Now, because people have become Christians, instead of praying to the ancestors and pouring libation, they will rather pray to God. Is that not an acknowledgement of the presence of God. Sometimes, ministers are even invited to join in the ceremony.

*Lydia* Yes.

*John* In that case, do they need another ceremony?

*Lydia* Okay, another element that is coming in is the legality of it. Fine, this is my house, so we have the customary rites, the *osofò* is here to bless it, but how legal is it when it comes to legality. Is this place licensed to give a marriage certificate? In case you need a marriage certificate for visas or for whatever we want it for, can the reverend minister issue a certificate?

*John* So, can we say that the wedding per se is not necessarily to bring in the blessings of God, but to secure the marriage in terms of its legal implications?

*Lydia* I'll put the two together, the legal aspect of it which gives the couple, maybe the woman more security in the marriage than anything else. I think these are the two things coming together.

*John* Yes, but now, we are saying that the blessing of God can take place without what we term wedding. The minister can be there and during the performance of the customary rites, everything will be done, so that is there. But then, when you bring it to the church, you know that the two elements are involved. And weddings can be done not in the church but in the courts, where there isn't even a prayer and it deals only with the legal aspect.

*Lydia* That also amounts to double wedding because we go to the court and we still have to do the customary rites. Unless of course the new trend coming up in some places where people just get up and say we don't need the customary rites. We'll go straight to the court to do it. I've seen one or two.

*John* I see. It is happening now. But the church does not subscribe to that. As much as I know, before the church will solemnise any marriage, they will require that you perform the customary rites.

*Lydia* Yes, but about tow or three years ago, a few of the new churches that have sprang up have taught that parental consent is not necessary.

*John* The families?

*Lydia* Yes, the important thing is that you are in love and we the church have agreed to marry you. That was a wrong teaching. I don't want to be judgmental, but that was the teaching that went on and people were condemning but I don't know if it still continues. I

don't know, but it has happened in a few churches that I'm aware of because at a point, somebody just asked me, you Christian Council people, what are you doing about this sort of thing, and I said what? "I was in the house when my daughter came and told me she was getting married. To whom and you didn't inform me. Oh, I saw this minister and he said there's no need." The father was actually trying to prevent it but before he was aware, the daughter was married and he came to report to me and said that we should do something about it. I don't know what we can do about it because many of these churches are not under us and we don't have

*John* The authority to sanction them.

*Lydia* Yes, so few of those interesting things have happened.

*John* Okay, enough of that. If we can talk a bit about marital problems, do you see them as physical, as spiritual or both?

*Lydia* Very interesting, from this part of the world, I will say from both. It is sometimes very physical. Maybe because of economic problems, ends are not able to meet or people are just incompatible so it happens that problems come up. There are in-law problems at times. In-laws have interfered so much that one person is aggrieved and cannot cope any longer with it so the problems crop up. Finance may be a problem. That is why we always talk about getting prepared before the marriage. People raise loans for the wedding we are talking about. Even for the customary rites, people go and raise loans, and after performing it, sometimes people are hopeful that in the course of the wedding, gifts will come and monies will be given, and they will be able to raise enough to clear the debts. Unfortunately, people come and give drinking glasses and some many other things. So in the end, they might have noticed that they are in the red. So right from the beginning, there is hunger in the home. Sometimes it is infidelity. It really rocks many marriages. This is one big problem which rocks most marriages, and the moment the wife for example gets to know that the husband is looking somewhere, things are never the same again. Seriously, things are never the same again. The trust is gone. There was an issue and when I went to inaugurate the Koforidua branch of the counsellors association, this issue came up. The counsellor said that a man came to report to him that he had played an away game and someone had reported to the wife and since then, there has been no peace in the house. Though he had stopped, he had promised, he had done

everything, this lady will still not take it. She's the exact opposite of what she used to be. The counsellor couldn't handle it so she came to report. She brought the issue for the association to give her some pieces of advice.

On the other hand, we know also, at least we have heard of people who really target our marriages. They look at the man, "he is somebody who is well to do. I also want a husband and I cannot get" so we understand they go to medicine men to be able to grasp the man. The man sometimes forgets about the wife in the home, he is carried off by this new fellow, and so this is one of the reasons for which we see women flocking to prayer houses more than the men. Many women really go to all-night prayer sessions. Some of them get breakthroughs. I am very inquisitive and I go to many of these places too myself. I'm interested in listening to testimonies. One of our counsellors had an experience. She said she fasted for two weeks and that was all, that brought the man back. So we can't rule out this spiritual element.

*John* And in terms of the spiritual element, do you at times see some of the problems as having anything to do with the family background of the person?

*Lydia* Of which person?

*John* Of either the man or the woman, maybe the individual's family tree. These days, we hear of people talking about family curses and so on and so forth.

*Lydia* Okay, yes, sometimes it happens. You see, it's like a cycle. You may go to a home and see that there is a broken marriage. Father and mother are not together. The spouses are not together. Then you see the girls are all back to the house. Maybe, they've been married or they have had children with one or two men and they are back. And their men are also there with the same problem, so it's like a chain. You trace it back and you see the father has done the same thing so the children, the daughters and the sons are all having the same problem. Nobody actually is successful in marriage. I remember I was in a prayer camp when I heard that there is a curse in a person's marriage. No marriage will be solid in that particular house. I know the particular house and I heard about the issue at the prayer camp and I pictured the house. It is still fresh in my mind. Actually, nobody ever gets a good marriage there. They all come back. You see, people who were once married, all of them are there, family members are there. Nobody is properly married.

**John** Have you had any such people in your counselling programme?

**Lydia** Yes.

**John** What has been the effect of the counselling sessions with them?

**Lydia** It started well. She was a young lady. She was coming for counselling. She herself brought the issue, that this is an issue in the house. Nobody seems to be properly married in the house so she is afraid of entering into marriage and yet somebody is approaching. She wanted to know whether they had been at fault or that it is a family curse. So I took her through the counselling programme and I invited the man. We went through all and she went ahead. The marriage started well. Everybody thought that was the best in the house. After three years, the man began to withdraw, so we started praying. We prayed and prayed and prayed. We prayed against it. So they are together.

**John** they are doing well?

**Lydia** I think that is one success story.

**John** Thank God for that. Basically, what procedure do you follow in your counselling work?

**Lydia** What do you mean by procedure? You mean the skills?

**John** Not the skills. Let's take the example of this person who came to you. How did things go from the beginning till maybe, they got married?

**Lydia** She came with that issue. I really wanted to know why she felt that there was a curse because she could be affected by the past experience, the issue that there was a family curse on them and that no marriage ever does well. She could be affected so I wanted to know her belief background first of all. Was her belief in that issue so great that it could affect her personally?

**John** Let me ask this. Do you take what the person says as the most important thing to deal with?

*Lydia* Yes, exactly. When you come, we ask you what your problem is. What is the problem you have, and then we talk about it. I had to ask her so many questions, getting to know the background of she herself, the family background, and the family background of the man too, where he comes from, know the character he has. We found that there was something in the man's culture too, which is Anlo culture. He is an Anlo where if you are married to a man in that particular house, excuse me, if you flirt, you go crazy.

*John* So you took all those things serious. You didn't take them as superstitious?

*Lydia* No, no, no, no, because the cousin of the man told me that that is what is in the family. Anybody who comes to marry in the family is aware of it. He told me "we tell them from the beginning." So you come in if you like it. You get to know. The ritual that was causing that had been performed long ago but it is still working. Anybody who comes and goes wayward, involving in extramarital affairs goes mad. He told me about one or two incidents that had occurred. And I will be sad to see my counsellee going that way, having such a problem. That would have been a failure to my profession, so I made her also aware of this, where she was going. She even told me all about it and I also confirmed that that was what I heard from the brother of the man she wanted to marry. So all of us are now aware of where we are going. This is where we are coming from and where we are going. So the issue was interesting. I didn't decide for her. She was to decide for herself how best she felt that she could resolve those issues, the curse from her side and the ritual from the man's side. She herself came out that she ought to be very prayerful and she ought to remain married to that man. Luckily, there was a similar thing in the community. A young lady of her age got married to somebody from that area and she flirted. She became sick and died. So those are few things that we deal with. Eventually, you come out to tell me what you think you'll be able to do to save your marriage. Now that they are from different backgrounds with problems and they wanted the marriage to work, they needed to know all that. I saw that they were really serious. I thought the lady would be scared and I thought the man would be scared. They were people who were coming from two different areas, but with problems.

*John* So do you always meet the two of them or you meet them individually?

*Lydia* Individually, then the two together.

**John** You first meet them individually, then you meet the two, that's always been the case?

**Lydia** If it is possible, certainly yes. Even if the distance makes it that it is not possible for the two of them to come at the same time, at least for three or four sessions, I get the two together. It is very important because there are certain things which must be known by each other and I don't think that you'll get to know the other for a third party. We all three sit down and the other person talks and you hear it right from the horse's own mouth. So it is not the counsellor who is telling you that your partner says so and so. No, you have all heard it, so together what do you do.

**John** Let me ask this too. You mentioned earlier that you know that traditional marriage is a union between families. You know that in our society, the extended family system is at the heart of social life. Does it have any bearing on your counselling work?

**Lydia** As far as I'm concerned, I value the contribution of the family a lot. When I'm not too clear about certain things, if it is possible, I invite family members.

**John** You sometimes invite them?

**Lydia** Yes, if it is possible. If it is possible I invite family members from both sides. I find a nice way of finding out what the person knows about the would-be in-law, what are the feelings. On one occasion, a mother told me she was not interested in the daughter's marriage to the man. She opposed it.

**John** Was it before they married?

**Lydia** Yes, when they came for the premarital counselling. I just felt it was my duty to find out because of the extended family element. So I invited them and we chatted. Well, you know this lady, your daughter, what about her life, so the 'toly' begins. Oh, this guy has been coming to the house and I hate him so much. So you get to know the feelings she has about the man. You want to know why, what she thinks about the marriage and why she hates the man. You find that sometimes, there is actually no basis. It is her own fear that these young people, they are not trustworthy. I have taken very good care of my daughter to this level. He's been coming here and I don't even know his background and that kind of thing. "So are you interested in me finding out for you or would you rather do that", then let us share again.

Sometimes you finish and you see that the fear is baseless and it's actually gone. I do the same to the other family too, find out what the family thinks.

*John* So both in premarital counselling and post-marital counselling, you sometimes find it necessary to involve members of the extended family?

*Lydia* Yes, I really find it important because for all you know, some of these problems can easily be handled.

*John* Do you sometimes involve children in counselling?

*Lydia* Children of the couple?

*John* Yes, children of the couple.

*Lydia* Yes, if need be.

*John* But not always?

*Lydia* Not always. As for children, if you don't know how to handle it, you rather make the situation explosive. There are some couples, certain things happen, the children don't know, they are not aware that there is a problem between dad and mum, so if you bring the child, you destroy the child, you put the child at risk. They will be very, very uneasy, so you just leave them out. But when you think that there are blows and the children are there watching and they are affected, it's good to sometimes put them at ease, because it affects their school work. It affects their emotional life. It affects various aspects of the child's life. It affects them a lot. You have to be tactful. In fact anybody who cannot handle that issue carefully should not do it, otherwise you destroy them.

*John* Sometimes, we might think that children do not know what is going on, but the fact is that they know right from the beginning.

*Lydia* They know

*John* They might even be able to give you more information than the parents themselves.

**Lydia** Yes. So, that is why I'm saying you have to be very, very tactful. I have ever worked with little kids in a day nursery. I was running a resource centre and that centre has a day care centre attached to it. Certain things happen and you call the child and say oh, little boy. He will say that it's daddy and mummy. He will tell you a whole lot of stories about daddy and mummy. So I invite the parents and tell them, this is the situation so I wish you'll be more careful about the life you live at home because the little boy is watching. He may display so many things at school. It is a very good resource centre. I learnt a lot about families while I was there.

**John** Then, how do you see your responsibility to the counsellee or the client. If you take the traditional situation, the elders may see themselves as very responsible for the success of the marriage and they will go all out to see to it that the marriage works. Do you see yourself in the same situation, that the success of people's marriage depends on you and therefore you go all out?

**Lydia** Hmm, yes and no. Yes, most often ... (She gets a telephone call and goes to answer and return) You see, these are people I have trained and I have gone to inaugurate an association. Now they are going to have a big gathering of women from the Koforidua District, about 300 women, and they are asking me to come back and talk to them. This is not on individual basis but the group one. What am I going to do right now? I feel attached to them. I can't say no. So is it with those that you have counselled. You kind of become a family so at anytime that they need you, they just come, it is not like you first have to ask them to come for counselling sessions. If there is an urgent issue on hand and they come, I feel that whatever I'm doing, I have to listen, I have to have time. So, it is a twenty-four hour job, highly sacrificial and yes, you get attached to them. There is no way you can escape it.

But the other reason why I said no is where it is impossible and there is nothing you can do. But where the supervision has been well received, there is some kind of obligation. But you are really not forced. You kind of get attached to the programme and the people and so you are always in. It's like you are not the almighty problem solver, but you help hurting people to help themselves and solve their own problems. We work in partnership if I can say so.

**John** What would you say about the modes of communication you normally use, you know that as Africans, we don't only use words. We use symbols, we use stories, indirect forms of expression. Do you use indirect forms of expression in your counselling in addition to words?

**Lydia** Yes, somebody come to tell you something and you find out that the person is maybe exaggerating the situation.

**John** How do you find out?

**Lydia** If someone comes to tell you my husband went out and he never returned and this and that and she becomes very apprehensive, I just laugh the situation off. Oh, and you are worried.

**John** So you just observe how the person will react?

**Lydia** Just observe and laugh. Sometimes when I finish laughing, the person will say, I'm telling you a very important thing and you are only laughing. And I ask, how serious is it? By the time I finish laughing with you and maybe, given you somebody else's story or some other thing, using something else to colour it, you see the person calms down and say, oh, I think it is not an issue to be worried about.

**John** And then in your counselling, you intimated that you both do premarital counselling and post-marital counselling, what do you favour, education or what I will call therapy, in terms of healing when people are hurting. You emphasised your willingness to help hurting people. But do you also educate people so that they don't even get to the point of hurting?

**Lydia** Yes, it is very, very important. Hosea says, for lack of knowledge my people perish. People are not aware of certain things. Somebody is occupying a high position and therefor he comes home late and the wife doesn't know that because of his he has other things to do. We have to make this woman aware that this is the situation, or you see that your husband is growing cold. How do you behave in the house? You are no longer the clean person that he comes to meet. He comes home and there you are with your unkempt hair, with one piece of cloth on, and things are scattered in the house. This man who has seen you differently come and see you and he wish he doesn't see you. So, yes, we educate a lot. We talk about the

family, even religion. It is another factor in marriage which can cause trouble. So the training covers a large area.

**John** People are sometimes advised that they don't have to send their marital problems out. What is your view of this?

**Lydia** Yes, as much as possible, the couple should try to resolve their problems. It is when you try and you fail that you need to go back to your marriage counsellor and the marriage counsellor can help. We look at the safest people as the marriage counsellor and the minister. These are people we think are trustworthy, and that is one of the qualities of the counsellor, trustworthy. I believe the *osofa* will not just send my issue outside, and the counsellor whom I have trusted so much. I can go back to him. Because people come with very intimate issues, and sometimes, it's like magic, you sit down and discuss, and then the next time, she is smiling. You ask how, and she says, things are fine.

**John** Yes, you mentioned that you bring in various people in your training. Would you want to say that the resources you use for counselling are both theological, in terms of Christianity, psychological, you talked about Dr. Araba Sefa-Dede, who is a clinical psychologist, and social etc. so you try to use a wide range of resources?

**Lydia** A wide range of people from different perspectives. We use the nurses, we use the lecturers, we use the psychologists, we use the Agricultural officers, people who teach on even the environment and those kind of chemical things. We are concerned about environmental degradation so we teach on the family and the environment. There are scientists, there are theologians and food scientists. Food scientists come to teach on nutrition.

**John** On the average, how long do couples stay in counselling?

**Lydia** Six months at least. In fact, we always wish we will be able to do at least six months with them.

**John** That is premarital counselling?

**Lydia** Yes.

**John** But what about if someone comes with a problem in marriage. The person is already married.

**Lydia** That one, most often, I don't think I have a specified time. It goes with the problem. The person can come for one or two sessions and the issue is over, so they just come to tell me it's okay. Otherwise, I'll be dead at the Christian Council. Too many people come.

**John** Apart from the counselling sessions, do you have any other ways through which you support marriages?

**Lydia** Any other support, do I understand the question?

**John** Ways of strengthening marriages generally.

**Lydia** Okay, I run a workshop once a year for women from all the churches. We call it annual inter-church women's conference. It is a conference and here it is for women from all the churches and the men are now demanding that we run one for them also. We discuss issues that are broad. This year, it was on bribery and corruption. By the time we finish discussing in the three or four days, the various aspects, the role of the family, the individual etc. all come out. So married women can also pick from there, for example we have resolved that we should not put pressure on our husbands to do what they cannot do. It will force them into bribery and corruption. We shouldn't put pressure on our children. We shouldn't put pressure on our brothers in order to donate or give us cloth, etc. We run workshops on HIV AIDS. We celebrate the Christian Home week and some of the topics discussed are related to the family. Most of these celebrations are attended by the churches. Sometimes families come together and they tell us that the topics are so interesting that the whole family is involved. They go to church in the evening to be part and the programme is helpful. Yes, that is what we do. I've not thought about that. Maybe something else will come later.

**John** we know that in traditional society, the whole family is there to support the marriage. People especially here in Accra are cut off from their families. Do they have anything to replace what they have lost from their backgrounds?

**Lydia** You mean the families, the nuclear family?

**John** Okay, let me put it this way, people have travelled from the village. They are now living in Accra as a couple. Formerly, if they were in the village, the eyes of the extended family will be on them, so to speak, and once a while, an elder might chip in a piece of advice here and there. If they are in Accra, they don't have those pieces of advice from the extended families. So, is there any way by which you think couples gain from certain things like that ?

**Lydia** Basically, it is the church. Those of them who are Christians, they have found new families in the church and in the community. If you are lucky and you are in a good home, where the landlord or other tenants could be a support to you, fine. Apart from that I see the church as one big community where people really get support. The church I attend, the Dansoman E. P. Church here, somebody has lost the wife, and the whole church for two months continue to contribute every Sunday towards the funeral and through visits to the house. So after the funeral there was another Sunday that we contributed something and different groups of people gave envelopes, for Dr. Nyomi, for the child and a lot. It was a big support. That was what I saw. Then somebody also lost her things through fire. The church came out to support. I don't know the communities in which people are, but I see the church as one big community that is giving good support.

**John** And they don't do it only in terms of funeral and other things but also in terms of marriage and family life?

**Lydia** Yes, I see that there is support everywhere. If it is a wedding, you see them coming around. If it is a naming ceremony, you see them. This little baby (referring to her granddaughter) that we are going to name on Saturday, people are planning to come. We are really not here with the extended family, but we have made new friends. You have seen these ladies pass.

**John** Yeah.

**Lydia** So the support from the extended family is good, but we make new friends.

**John** Do you charge fees when people come for counselling?

**Lydia** No. It is free, basically free.

**John** So the ministry is being supported by the Christian Council?

*Lydia* Which ministry?

*John* The family life ministry.

*Lydia* Yes.

*John* That is a programme of the Christian Council?

*Lydia* But then, sometimes UNFPA, United Nations Fund For Population Activities, they also give something through PPAG, Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, for the training programmes.

*John* Okay.

*Lydia* But what they have been giving is now small so the participants themselves will have to pay now, but we subsidise.

*John* The participants have to pay for the training?

*Lydia* Yeah, they do. They pay about a third of what they should have paid.

*John* What about the participants, the individual counsellors, do they charge fees?

*Lydia* No, they don't.

*John* They all do that as a sacrificial service to ...

*Lydia* Service to mankind, the ministry, to God's work and they take delight in it and the satisfaction comes from seeing someone has been able to resolve his own problem.

*John* And they are satisfied with that?

*Lydia* They are satisfied.

*John* Fine. Let me find about attitudes to such services. We mentioned briefly that people get to know through their churches. Do you think many people are making use of those services which are available?

**Lydia** Yes, at least from what I have heard from many of the counsellors, people are making use of the services. The youth for example, they don't want to go to the counselling centre. Maybe the youth has discovered that she is sick and she is scared that maybe I have STI or STD. They want to get to the counsellor in the house on personal basis.

**John** So, it is a question of confidentiality?

**Lydia** Exactly, confidentiality. They feel they are more comfortable with the person at home. But then, they again organise their programmes and invite the counsellors to come over.

**John** And what do you think make people to go for the counselling services? Is it because they've developed some trust in the counsellors that they are able to ...

**Lydia** Yes, I'm sure of that. First, trust and secondly, you are being tormented, you have a problem, you have a burden on your heart and you want to off load it. But the question comes, why don't you tell your mother or your father. They say, oh, my father, he will not understand so I'm coming to you the counsellor. Yes, the level of confidentiality is there. And also, a lot of people think that the counsellor will be able to find an answer. The other day, somebody came with a lot of issues, and he wanted to see the counsellor, otherwise he would not go. He works with a hotel and they were issues connected with the hotel. Why did he not tell the hotel manager? He said, oh, I told him once and the comments he made, he doesn't think that the hotel manager can help him. Meanwhile, part of it is job related and he wants some help, somebody who will be able to help him better. So he came, and for about two hours, goodness, he wouldn't go.

**John** Is it likely that people seek the services depending on their age, educational background, gender or church affiliation?

**Lydia** The people I have, none of these things matter.

**John** So people come to you from all ages, from all sorts of educational background?

**Lydia** Male or female, no, no, no, no.

**John** But what about the church affiliation?

**Lydia** One of the things that counts is not church, but religious background, because you see, mostly Christians come in, but as for denominations, we have Catholics, Orthodox, all of them.

**John** What about those who don't go to church, or Muslims?

**Lydia** We've not had a Muslim, but I have people who do not go to church. They don't go to church, they don't belong to any Christian denomination.

**John** Some do come?

**Lydia** Yes, and some traditionalists too. And I ask, do you think a Christian will be able to help you? And we joke about that.

**John** Briefly, what are the main issues that people present when they come for counselling?

**Lydia** Marital problems.

**John** The main ones in our society?

**Lydia** Marital, finance, ...

**John** Yeah, I'm talking about marital problems. So finance is one of it, the main problems between couples?

**Lydia** Yes, finance, infidelity, then sexual problems. People are married and the first month or so or the second month, or even sometimes the very first week, they have sexual problems. Last time, a group of people came and so I was forced to ask about the person who counselled them, because it was a problem of sex. The lady said the husband was ejaculating prematurely. I think I have had many of such problems, and some of them are no longer interested in having sex with their partners, so they feel like going out. And in-law issues.

**John** Do you think the problems differ depending on the stage of marriage? Maybe, those who have been married for few years have different problems from those who have been married for many years?

**Lydia** Yeah, those who have been married for longer period, when some of them come, you notice they have menopausal problems and the man will be insisting on sex when the woman is disinterested. But sometimes it is the man who will say, I look at my wife as my sister, so I don't have the sexual urge and I go out. These are people who have been married for many years. Others come, you notice that they have been newly married and they are not able to manage their finances, so there are problems here and there.

**John** Do you think that modernisation has affected marriage in Ghana?

**Lydia** Yes, modernisation has affected it. There are people who insist on wedding, it is part of modernisation. Despite the fact that they can even go for a church blessing and they can do it on a very simple note, they want a big wedding, which most of the men cannot afford because of the financial situation. So there again, you see that the marriage is going on the rocks.

Modernisation, yes, there is drug abuse in many homes by responsible men to the surprise of their wives. Some of them are not even aware. Some get pieces of information and they find out that their husband is smoking 'wee', the husband is smoking cocaine. These were not existent here. If anything at all, it was only tobacco, and tobacco also affected them.

Modernisation, yes, people want to ride in posh cars so if you cannot afford it, I'm quitting. I don't know if I will also call it modernisation, extramarital affairs, particularly. I know it has been there with the men, society had accepted it that the men can marry more than one, but now we hear of married women going after men. I don't know if I should call it part of modernisation or deterioration or immorality. I don't know, but it looks like it.

**John** What about issues of work on the house and decision-making, especially, the role of the man in the work in the house and the role of the woman in decision-making?

**Lydia** Formerly, where the man was the breadwinner and the woman was the housekeeper, society tended to accept women at the low level. But now that we all need to work, both men

and women need to work and in many homes now, the women are really in charge of households.

*John* Apart from the wage labour they are involved in?

*Lydia* Yes, many women now run the homes.

*John* Do you mean financially?

*Lydia* Financially too. Apart from the household chores, financially too. So you see a kind of, I don't know if I should call it imbalance, where sometimes the woman really expects the man to put in a helping hand. I know of a couple, the two of them are lecturers at the University. They run from the lecture hall to the house and the man sits down and expects the woman to get to do the cooking, and she must be fast for them to eat by 1 o'clock for them to get back to lecture. The woman says no, we are both going back so let's join hands together. The man stays out and act like the usual traditional man.

*John* And these are university lecturers?

*Lydia* Yes, according to the woman, the man would not even allow the housemaid to heat the food. Sometimes, she does the cooking and puts it in the freezer. He will say, no, I'm not married to the housemaid, I'm married to you. So it got to a point when the woman said enough is enough. So she took her sabbatical leave and it was only then that the man realised that the woman has been of much help. So the expectation is that, well, I'm not saying that while I cut tomatoes, you should cut the onion, but then once we work together and come home very tired, I expect you to lend a helping hand. Even if while I'm cooking, you put a few things together to lay the table, fine. So modernisation has set in. previously the woman do all that without a question.

*John* But now, the woman will question. How do you deal with it? Do you handle it in your premarital counselling?

*Lydia* and come home very tired, I expect you to lend a helping hand. Even if while I'm cooking, you put a few things together to lay the table, fine. So modernisation has set in. previously the woman do all that without a question.

**John** But now, the woman will question. How do you deal with it? Do you handle it in your premarital counselling?

**Lydia** Yes, let them talk about it, how they will be able to work together. Let them talk about it themselves. Create a situation for them. If they are not aware, make it a role play. So they will talk about it and each one will get to know that I'm not entering into this marriage with this expectation. He is the man, I'll give him the benefit of being the boss of the house, but what you need to do, you need to do. I don't have to work for nothing. We both go to work and come back. What role will you play? You can at least bathe the baby and I will do the food.

**John** Let me come to premarital education. I'm not talking about premarital counselling. Do you have any programme for educating people on marriage, where you make people learn about marriage?

**Lydia** Yes

**John** What sort of programme?

**Lydia** We teach particularly on home care.

**John** To which people?

**Lydia** To the young ones, to the youth.

**John** In the church?

**Lydia** Yes, they themselves even organise the programmes and invite us, "how do I prepare"? Even in Accra, some of the churches do it as evening programmes and invite people to come to talk to them on how to prepare for marriage. There are some books in the bookshops, we direct them to buy. They have youth programmes, and the Christian Council also has youth programmes. We train peer counsellors, we educate them.

**John** Do you always insist that people should have premarital counselling?

**Lydia** it is the ideal. We won't want to force anybody. As a council, we don't have authority over the churches, so that depends on the churches. If the church says that all our people

should go through it, fine. There are some churches which do not lay emphasis on it. Even if they do, they do not go through the six months or so that is required.

**John** You think that premarital counselling should take six months?

**Lydia** If it is possible, yes. Some do it for three months. Two months is too short, they'll not get through well. They will not know each other and they will go in with wrong ideas and wrong impressions. Things can go wrong and for all you know it is the counsellor who hasn't counselled well.

**John** So what do you think has been the effect of the ministry at the Christian Council?

**Lydia** Sometimes, it is difficult to measure, but I have seen and a few people have also said that more of the youth for example are aware of the problems they are likely to face in marriage, the pros and cons of marriage, they are aware. And they are also aware of the need for premarital counselling. Many of them feel also that the premarital counselling has helped them to be able to have a successful marriage so far. Adults have seen the importance of it, and from the evaluations that I get from the various counsellors, even the individuals who come for the training, and who are still working say that their marriages have improved, and not only their marriages, but their total lives have improved. Their outlook to life has improved much more than they were. They had their children at home. Previously they didn't even know that some of them were smoking, but at the counselling, we are taught how to identify a smoking child. They will call and say, madam, thank you very much for bringing that man in. I didn't know that my son was going through all this. Now I'm aware of it. Then the counselling units in the churches are teaching all over on issues that are of importance, like HIV AIDS. Some have made it a programme of the church, and they invite us to go and teach, sometimes, a whole week or quarterly. I have forgotten the name of the church, but they have a quarterly programme. Two weeks in every quarter, there is a teaching on HIV AIDS. Also, the workshops that we run, I have not checked on the divorce rates, but from the verbal evaluations, we are affecting lives, we are affecting couples, we are affecting even those with HIV AIDS, because we train people to go and give care and support. And the counselling unit, the family life unit creates what we call CBD'S, community based distributors of family planning programmes. These are people who go from door to door. They provide door to door services. They give the information and give the services. So we are not only

counselling, but we are also controlling families, the birth rates. People are not ready to go to the store and say I want a condom. In this case I'm talking about married people mostly, they cannot go. Even in the urban centres, they cannot go. But they identify our CBD's in the community. In this house there is a CBD, so nicodemously, they can come and buy. At least, we are checking the spread of STI's and HIV and we are also checking the population explosion.

*John* I think I should be very grateful to you for the time and the insight given me about the work you are doing. I hope to get back to you later on some other issues. Thank you very much.

*Lydia* You're welcome.

### APPENDIX III

#### INTERVIEW WITH REV. DAVID DARTEY

**PROFILE:** *Rev. David Dartey is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. He was the first full time director of the Family Life Committee of the Christian Council of Ghana and worked in this position from 1972 to 1981. He was actively involved in the development of the Family Life programme. He later served as the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana until 1998. This interview was conducted at his office in Accra on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2002.*

**John** I'm researching into the pastoral care of marriages among the Akan of Ghana and I chose the Family Life Programme of the Christian Council as one of my case studies. Since you have been deeply involved with the programme, I decided to find out some information from you.

**David** You're welcome.

**John** When did the Family Life Programme begin?

**David** The AACCC/WCC organised a conference at Kitwe, Zambia. At that conference there was the decision that Christian Councils of the various countries should try to establish family life education and family planning programmes. Mrs. Paton, wife of Rev. Paton, and Mr. Ashie were the delegates from Ghana to the conference. When they returned, they suggested that a family life education programme should be started. In 1961, the Christian Marriage and Family Life Committee was established. There were three main areas of concern, that is, family planning, family counselling and family life education. In 1963, the first Family Life Education Programme was organised at the YWCA. During this programme, seminars were organised for mothers and contraceptive services were offered.

This was followed by Teachers conference on Family Life Education. The idea was to encourage sex education in the schools, but to get to the pupils, the teachers needed to be targeted first. Some schools were visited such as Wesley Girls, Aburi Girls, Aburi Training College, and the teachers were met. With their interest, the programme on sex education began. This involved teachings about the body and its development and the changes that took

place with the development. There was also moral teaching included in the programme. The programme continues until somewhere around 1971/72. By 1972, there were four family clinics. The committee adopted a clear definition of what it was supposed to do.

A distinction was made between the counselling programme and the family life education programme. The family life education was sex education oriented. The counselling programme included the curative and the preventive, that is, premarital counselling.

**John** What was the approach to counselling adopted?

**David** We adopted the interactive approach, that is a blend of the directive approach and the non-directive approach. This is in recognition of the cultural background of the people we are dealing with. We felt that being totally directive as it happens in the traditional set up was not very helpful but at the same time the non-directive approach wasn't going to be helpful because people expect to receive concrete advice from the counsellor. We therefore blended the two, that is, the interactive approach. Our counselling programme is religiously oriented. We try to build up to our relationship with God. some Muslim participants got converted at the end of the training programme.

**John** Who was involved in the counselling programme?

**David** in 1967, the Family Life Education training began. This involved the training of church leaders. Rev. Dr. Douglas was the resource person who conducted the training. The training was held at two places, Accra and Abetifi. From then, there was the annual Family Life Education programme. Churches leaders, nurses, and teachers among others were invited for the training. The content of the programme included family life issues, counselling and sex education. This continues until 1972 when the family counselling Training Programme began. This had three parts. The first part is a two weeks family life education intended to help trainees to be able to give talks and answer questions on marriage and family life. The second part is a week training in techniques of counselling and the third part is also a week which builds on this. It is these trained counsellors who are involved in the counselling programmes. After the training we group them with regional associations for in-service tutorial programmes. In 1972, I was appointed to be in charge of the whole of the Family Life Committee and Rev. Kuffour was appointed to be in charge of the counselling programme. Other persons who have helped as resources are Rev. C. A. Ansah and Rev. Maclean Kumi.

**John** How have you been trained for the task?

**David** In 1972, I was involved in a four months training programme organised by the British Marriage Guidance Council at Rugby. I also took a course at the Birmingham University. Rev. Kuffour went to Canada for a short counselling training programme. In 1984, I went to the US for a Masters degree in Counselling at the School of Theology, Claremont, South California.

**John** How do you assess the training programme you have offered so far?

**David** We have trained roughly 800 counsellors for churches, the Ministry of health, Ghana Education Service and the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana. These counsellors have been actively involved in caring for people who are hurting.

**John** How do the skills learned during the training become available to the general public?

**David** Some congregations which send people for the training set up counselling centres where they offer counselling to the church members as well as the general public.

**John** Is it only member churches of the Christian Council who are involved with the training?

**David** Since 1962, we have been working with the Catholic Church. All our programmes are run with the Catholic Church, for example, the Christian Home week celebrated every year. This programme is celebrated for a week every year. An issue related to marriage family life is raised during the week and discussions, symposia, debates etc. are held to discuss the issue in all the churches throughout the country. It started in 1963. In 1978 we had a seminar on the sexual function in marriage.

**John** How are your training programmes financed?

**David** Churches and organisations sponsor their delegates and sometimes we have support from NGO's.

**John** How has the family life programme imparted the society?

**David** The introduction of family planning was stimulated by the Christian Council programme. Our activities gave birth to the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana established in 1967. When PPAG was formed, a number of their committee members were from the Christian Council. We participated in the setting out of their objectives. We offered

the counselling aspect of the PPAG programmes and trained the nurses in counselling. We were involved in the formulation of the Ghana Population Policy. Rev. C. K. Konadu represented us. We also helped in the development of the family life Education syllabus of the ministry of education. This was supposed to be for basic schools, primary and JSS. We actually made the first draft.

*John* Thank you very much for your time and the information shared with me.

*David* My pleasure.

## APPENDIX IV

### INTERVIEW WITH REV. C. K. KONADU

**PROFILE:** *The Rev. Charles K. Konadu is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church, Ghana. He served as the Director of the Family Life Committee of the Christian Council of Ghana from 1981 to 1997. He was also directly involved in the development of the Family Life programme further. This interview was conducted at his home in Accra on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. John Abedu Quashie and I am doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages. I know that you were once with the family life programme of the Christian Council so I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to share your experiences at the Council and also in your ministry. You can begin by telling me your name and how you got involved with marriage counselling.

**Charles** I was employed by the Christian Council in 1981. I came there from the teaching field. I came to be the counselling secretary on the marriage and family committee of the Council. As the secretary of the counselling committee, I was responsible for, one, the training of family counsellors for the church and other institutions involved in marriage and family issues. I was also involved in promoting family life education in the churches and also promoting Christian Home week, the annual ones, in the churches. Basically, that was what was happening from 1981 to 1997.

**John** Okay, your name?

**Charles** My name is Charles Kunadu and I'm with the Methodist Church, Ghana, handling the parish at La. People used to call it Labadi.

**John** So, basically, the work you were involved in had to do with equipping counsellors in the various churches?

**Charles** Basically, what we were doing was to recruit ministers and church leaders who were interested in marriage and other issues of the family and giving them skills and knowledge to be able to handle issues in the churches.

**John** You mentioned that before you came in, you were in the teaching field. So, you are a trained teacher.

**Charles** Yes.

**John** Did you have any training as a counsellor before you came in?

**Charles** I was trained as a counsellor at the university of Cape Coast, when I did the bachelor of education degree. In my last year, the paper I wrote was on marriage counselling. I did a paper on the need for sex education in Ghanaian secondary schools. And my elective in my final year was counselling. When I went to teach, I was handling child development and educational Psychology. I did that for two years at the Jasikan Training College. Basically, I was trained as a Mathematics teacher at the Specialist Training College at Winneba, so at Cape Coast, I did Maths, Physics and Education in the first year. In the second year, I dropped the Physics and I did Maths and Education. In my final year, I concentrated on Education.

**John** That is where you had the training in counselling?

**Charles** And then when I came to join the Christian Council, I took the opportunity also to go through their training programme, so that equipped me to handle the work there.

**John** I suppose the training you had in Cape Coast and that at the Christian Council had a bearing on our traditional society and traditional marriages, by which you are effectively able to deal with marital issues in the Ghanaian traditional society.

**Charles** Yes, if I may add a bit to my training also, I've had a programme in Christian Education, Masters in Christian Education at Wheaton College, USA and my elective was family ministry. There too, my project work was "The Perception of College and University Students Regarding Marriage and Family". So I did some work on that. In my literature review, I had a lot of reading regarding African marriages and others. So, I think that that equipped me.

**John** So, basically, you were discussing marriage in the African context, and specifically, in the Ghanaian context?

**Charles** Yes.

**John** And you think that you were able to integrate together the principles that you learned in USA with the Ghanaian ideas for your ministry?

**Charles** One thing I tried to do was to look at the Western way of family life and marriage and look at our own, and also look at some of the biblical principles. Sometimes, you see that they agree, but other times, they do not agree. So, that is what I tried to do, where they agree and where they create problems in the family, tried to bring these out, especially in my essay. I saw that in the Ghanaian colleges and the universities, some of the students faced this problem, the traditional pull, the western pull, and also the Biblical mandate.

**John** So they feel torn apart?

**Charles** I saw that and I think that still people are struggling, how to combine the traditional view of marriage with the Biblical view of married life and also what they read from the western world.

**John** That is basically what I'm looking at. I'm trying to find ways by which we can support marriages in the traditional context, but specifically, I'm looking at the Akan of Ghana. In the course of your reading or your work, do you find anything useful in the traditional set up, in the traditional marriage institution, in terms of the ways in which marriage is supported and strengthened in traditional society?

**Charles** Yes, you know, in modern life we have some stress, and we can have so many examples which we can cite. I'm here with my wife and if it were not the church which is a supportive element for the family, it would have been very terrible because we are here alone. That was not so when I was growing up. So if I compare my parents' marriage with mine, I see a vast difference. In the village, I had three houses and I could go to any of them for support. My mother also had the same support. The sisters were there and uncles were also around, so if there was any help needed, you could go to any place. Young people could go to another house to eat cocoyam and plantain. Here, you can't do that. So, the support system at

that time, in my parents' generation was quite close. It is not so now and that is what I'm seeing to be the problem in the churches. People come to the urban area and they don't have any support system apart from the church, and even in the church, people are busy, they have their own programmes. So, when people marry and they are going to have children, the mother has to come and when she comes, she comes for a short period and then goes back. And the people also have got carriers, so if you have got a carrier and the child is three months or six months, what do you do? People will like to fall on maidservants and househelps and that creates problems. In my parents' generation, that support was easily got, but here, people get them, but sometimes at a cost, because the care of the children is not all that easy. So, that is what I'm seeing. There is much to be done for couples now. I know social welfare and other institutions are trying to do the work, but I see that there are problems compared to what we had.

**John** Basically, you are saying that in the traditional set up, because of the way society was closely knit, support was easily available. It's unlike in the urban areas where people find it a bit difficult in receiving such support. You also mentioned that looking at the western view of marriage and family life, the Biblical mandate and the traditional view of marriage, you see some differences. Is there any area of conflict between the western way of life in terms of marriage and family and then traditional marriage and family life.

**Charles** Yeah. You know the western way of marriage is a bit near the Biblical form of marriage, that the man will leave the father and mother and cleave to the wife and they become one flesh. So I see in the western world, a seemingly Biblical pattern of marriage. The man, the wife and the children, they seem to be a unit. when we come to our tradition, almost everybody is involved and we need to be mindful of that involvement, otherwise we create problems. That is why I'm saying that people are struggling now to marry the two, how they will respect the extended family and at the same time maintain their nuclear family. I'm saying that the church has got a role to play here, to help people see and balance the two. We cannot discard the traditional extended family, and we need to respect the formation of the new union. For example, my father did not wholly care for me because he was in the bush making his farm and I stayed with my grandmother. My mother was with my father there. But now, parents are with their children, you can't avoid that. If you avoid it, you create problems. So, what are we doing now in the churches, especially in the area of family life education is to

help people to know that the child they have brought is their responsibility. And another problem is dealing with the Akan system. You know, we have this matrilineal inheritance and that creates problems, though it has got its benefits. The problem is that the uncle is supposed to handle the children. They used to do it, but now the uncle will be struggling with his own family. So, I'm saying that the matrilineal descent system has got some positive side, but if you want to follow it in these modern times, you're going to create problems. The Biblical mandate is that the man and the woman become one flesh, and if they have an issue, they should be responsible for it. I can't give my children to somebody to care for them. So, in the church, we try to let people know that. In fact, was it today or yesterday that somebody was telling me that the son had been given to the mother. And I said, why do you give your son to your mother to care for him. He should be near you so that you struggle to care for him, because where the child is going is a village and education will be limited. So I'm seeing the Biblical mandate as powerful. If we respect it, it will help, but at the same time, the demand of the extended family is also real and we can't avoid that, so we need to manage to see how we can handle the two.

**John** So, in terms of your counselling, the programmes you've been organising, how do you deal with the issue specifically, this sort of tension between the nuclear family and the relationship between the extended family?

**Charles** For example, in churches, if there is any programme on marriage and family, we begin from my perspective, with the foundation of Christian marriage. How God instituted marriage and in fact I dwell very much on Genesis 2:24 and I try to let people know that leaving, cleaving and one flesh, need to be understood if we want our marriage to work. But when we want to handle say, the leaving, we try to share that leaving doesn't mean that you don't look back, you don't care for parents, you don't care for where you are coming from, because it's our responsibility to handle that. And you can do that together with your spouse. You shouldn't do that alone. So we try to encourage people to see that. After we have gone through that, then we will like to have discussions. We break into discussion groups trying to find out some of the problems that will come up if you want to live the Biblical way. And when we find out these problems, we try to discuss how to solve them.

**John** So the resources you use for your counselling and the training are basically Biblically resources?

**Charles** Yeah, Biblical.

**John** Obviously, you also use sociological resources in terms of the nature of the society in which the people are living. But do you also bring in some psychological theories and so on and so forth?

**Charles** What we tried to do in our programmes, especially when we were in the Christian Council, was to package our counselling and family life programmes in such a way that we had as aspect of Biblical teaching. Then we had psychological ones regarding the development of the human being, human development and its associated issues. Then we have the legal issues of marriage and family life. So we have resource people who will handle the psychological aspect, the emotional one, the sociological one and others. It's all packaged in one.

**John** So that these various resources come into play because you take a holistic view of the person and not the theological only?

**Charles** That's right.

**John** Generally, what are your views of marriage? What is marriage to you?

**Charles** If I'm to give a definition, I see that marriage is between a man and a woman. (He laughs) I'm laughing because people say that it could be between the same sex. It should be a man and a woman, and personally, as an African, I see that the marriage should be approved by the parents or those who are responsible for the two people.

**John** Responsible in what sense?

**Charles** That means parental approval. I see it to be important. In fact, I will discourage any marriage if the two young people will like to marry without their parental consent, because I see that in our set up, if you marry that way, you'll court problems. If you are living in the western world and you haven't come here, it may work, but the moment you come without the parental approval, I see that there could be problems. Legally in Ghana, you can do it if you are more that twenty-one years old. Two people can decide and marry without parental consent, but I see that, in the context of the church and families, the way we respect marriage, I encourage people to seek parental approval.

**John** So you see marriage as a union between a man and a woman, then you're talking about parental approval or the approval of whoever is responsible for the couple

**Charles** What I can add is that, they could marry, it will be okay, it will be a marriage, but, I'm saying that if the parental approval is there, it helps the union and its stability.

**John** Then, well, bringing this in the definition you tried to give, what comes out is that the church tries to encourage people to respect the extended family and then to seek their approval. But there is this whole idea of the wedding which is done in addition to the traditional marriage rites or customary rites. What is your view about having the customary rites and then after that the wedding?

**Charles** Okay, I have gone through some evolution regarding this. When I married, the customary rites were performed whilst I was at Tamale and my wife was at Nkawkaw. So my people came to Nkawkaw to do the rites. Then my wife came to Tamale. I had informed my minister that I had married and I wanted the church blessing. So my wife came and we fixed an evening, a Sunday evening and I called some friends to be witnesses. After the evening service, the pastor blessed the marriage for us and we took some pictures and went home. It was after that that we started the union, we started to have sex. For my conscience and so on, I wanted to let that thing be done. And that was all, there was no refreshment, nothing. I've been talking to my wife, if we were to do that again, we would have changed it. I thought it was too simple for me and even my mother was angry that we didn't do it well. If I were to do it again, at least, there will be some refreshment to let people know. But you know that legally in Ghana, there are three forms of marriage here. And the church has got some restrictions which I think is for the betterment of the people who are involved. You have to bring what you have done traditionally to the church for blessing to make sure that you are willing to follow the churches' regulations and the Biblical principles on marriage. I think that the main factor that the church wants what has happened to have the blessing of the church. If you did it civilly, that is civil marriage, bring it to the church, if you did it traditionally, you bring it to the church. Fortunately, the state has agreed that the church could combine the civil and the Christian Blessing together. I think that if we encourage that without much expenses, and that is what we are trying to do, it helps the couple involved. In fact sometimes, I try to encourage those who have even married before to bless their marriage. Some times, they will want to have a big wedding. I think it is not necessary. You go to AMA, formalise the thing which

will cost you about ten thousand cedis, you bring the whole thing to the church and you can inform other friend, and we bless the thing for you in the church. If you want to have a reception, you can do that. And some people do it. Now the state is making things a bit easier for the church. We have got the marriage forms, the banns. We have them in the church. You don't need to go to AMA. We will fill the banns for you, publish them and the ceremony will come on. I know that now the problem people are facing is financing it. I wish that we could have a way of handling the cost of it. But personally, I think that the ring is okay. Some people think that it is not necessary, but I think that it is necessary because it is an identity. Apart from the fact that it reminds you of the union, another thing is that people will not trouble you. So, if we can handle the cost of the ring, I think it will reduce the financial burden. Then the reception is another problem. I don't know how to handle that because everybody will like to do it.

*John* Buy I am looking at it in another sense. You have mentioned basically blessing, for example, your own marriage, you went to the church and after the normal service, there was the blessing. But there is the situation in the country now, where people go through the traditional marriage rites, which is legally accepted in the country. It is marriage in itself, and then after that go in for a wedding, which is another form of marriage in itself. We are calling the traditional one engagement, a term which we have borrowed from the west and I think it's quite inappropriate. Doesn't it look like the same person is being married twice?

*Charles* Which means in some places, it is even three times. ( All Laugh) We have been struggling with that. In fact the counsellors association in Accra here try to handle this issue. They try to have seminars and discussions on that. I don't think they have gone far. Incidentally, they meet every first Tuesday of the month, so this Tuesday, ...

*John* Every first Tuesday, where do they meet?

*Charles* At the Christian Council.

*John* The head office?

*Charles* The head office. So if this Tuesday, you are there, I could introduce you and you may want to have a general discussion. There's going to be a talk on the 'will'. If we able to finish on time or even if we can get some people who have been trained already, you could

discuss with them. Normally, the meeting starts at 2.30 p.m. If you can be there at 2.00 p.m., those who come early, could share with you.

**John** We'll see what to do. If I'm not able, the next month, I'll try to be there.

**Charles** So it has been a bother regarding this issue of being married twice or three times. What some people are trying to do is that they will do the engagement in the morning, by say six or seven, then in the afternoon, they're at the chapel to do the wedding. So that they'll avoid the repetition of say, ...

**John** But you look at the content of both ceremonies, it bothers on the same thing, doing the same thing again, but one is traditional and one is basically foreign. Even though it's done the same day, looking at the content, each of them is complete in itself, especially in a time like this when during the traditional rites, we invite priests to come in and bless the marriage at home. So is it when the marriage is blessed in the chapel that we see it as being blessed or we can say it is blessed when it is done at home, we can still see it as being blessed.

**Charles** You see, what some people try to do is that because the marriage will be taken to the church, priests try to avoid coming there. They ask some of the church leaders to witness what is happening. I know they will pray over there. People are still struggling with what could be done to either minimise the so called engagement and then to do the blessing in the church. Sometimes, I find it difficult to use the word wedding, but we know that the Methodist liturgy has got two ...

**John** Yeah, the wedding and the blessing, but most often, what people opt for is not the blessing but the wedding. And if we take it that after the traditional rites, they go to the church to have the blessing, that's a different issue because the liturgy there is different from that of the wedding.

**Charles** Yeah, in the liturgy there, it is assumed that one is married already.

**John** And then you are being blessed.

**Charles** You see, the issue is that the state has permitted the church to marry people and the combination of the civil and the Christian marriage. I think that is causing this thing, because the state, if you go there, they will do the ordinance for you. So I think it is the

combination of the two that makes it look like it is an elaborate thing. If the state will change what they have, I think the church will not have any problem. But, you see, the state has got the legalised way of bringing people together. Now what the church is doing is that they are using the state ordinance and adding it to the service.

**John** Isn't what is done by the state what has been given to us by the colonial masters which is still in use. That is how the colonial masters married. The insistence of the state on it adds up to the same conclusion that people should marry twice. The person is traditionally marries and he has to go through another marriage ceremony. So, I agree with you that to get the legal backing, you have to go through that ceremony, but that ceremony in itself is a complete marriage. So it looks as if things are duplicated.

**Charles** Yeah, personally, I see that people calling the traditional marriage engagement is wrong. And I don't know where to begin and where to end if we want to make things right, because when the traditional marriage is contracted and people call it engagement, the question is asked, can the two people begin to live together. Now there is a debate ...

**John** Yes, let me come in with this. As I was driving here, ii had opened my radio to Peace FM and there was a discussion on marriage. Someone phoned in and said that if the engagement has been done and I later find that the person is not suitable to me, no compatible, I can decide not to marry the person. If we see the traditional marriage as engagement, we put in this interpretation. What we know as engagement in the west is not binding. It is a period the two people are studying themselves so one can say that I don't think the person is suitable for me. But with our traditional rites, it is marriage and so you can just dissolve it and say that it was just engagement and so I have dissolved it. Somebody was making the contribution that the traditional marriage can just be dissolved which I think has various consequences when we look into it.

**Charles** You see, the problem people face now and I know some Christians face is that if they consider the traditional marriage as engagement, then they feel that they are not yet married therefore they need to be married in the church before they start living together. Therefore they feel that since they are waiting to be married in the church before they live together, if they see anything in the other person's life which they do not like, then they can leave because there is no consummation. So that is the problem, that if there is no

consummation of the relationship, then it's no marriage. But if there is the consummation, then one says that I'm not going to marry, then it becomes a big problem. Therefore the definition of marriage as you were asking is the crucial thing. When is marriage a marriage? In our set-up, I think it is a problem. Personally, my conviction is that if you know that you want to take the marriage to the church for blessing, of whatever it is, then after the traditional ceremony, you shouldn't live together. That is my position. But if you don't intend to take the marriage to the church, you can live together and begin to have children. If later on, you change your mind to bring the marriage to church for blessing, you could do that. But if you're doing that, the AMA could do the ordinance for you. The problem people are facing is that they have lived for 20 years as a married couple, then they want to have their wedding, so they go to AMA for the ordinance. When they have done that it is civil, but the church also demands that you bless it. So they bring it to the church again, so that is the problem we are facing. I don't know the church can resolve it. It's possible in your study, if you come back, you will come out with something.

*John* Thanks very much. What about marital problems, how do you see them, as physical, as spiritual or both?

*Charles* I'll confess that , my wife and myself, we are dealing with an issue. Even today the brother called. The wife is in the US and we perceive that what they are facing is not physical. It is purely spiritual. The gist of the issue is that they have got ... I don't know whether we can tape this. You could put it of.

*John* Okay

*Charles* (After the narration) I'm personally saying that there are some marriages, people are hurting in those marriage for purely physical reasons. There are also some moral issues that are causing some problems in marriages. Sometimes, we have developmental problems as causes of marital problems. But I know that there are some spiritual issues, either some dreams or some visions that is creating the problem. Many a helper needs to know about these. The case that I mentioned, I think that it is purely some pressure on this woman and she needs to know how to handle it.

**John** Do if we take it that marital problems can be both physical and spiritual, do you think that people's historical past has an influence, do you think that the couple's family tree has an influence in terms of the spiritual effect on the couple?

**Charles** You see, the spiritual and the emotional, I think that sometimes they merge, and this particular example I gave, I understand the family has really passed through some stress. The father died very early.

**John** The lady's father?

**Charles** Yes, and the mother had to struggle and they moved from place to place trying to survive and it's possible it has an effect on her. And so people's past, I know, can create problems. The habit people form as they are growing up can create problems. But one fortunate thing about the Christian life is that when somebody becomes a Christian, so many things change. And I think that is a powerful influence on marital issues. I came from a family background in which my father was totally pagan. He worshipped idols. In the bedroom, anytime I was cleaning, I saw this thing there. My mother fortunately became a Christian later on in life when I was growing. My grandmother also became a Christian towards the end of her life. So, when I became a Christian, I was able to do away with some of these things that I thought influenced me. But sometimes, you see that they still follow you and you need to pray to have a breakthrough. So our background has got a powerful influence, habits we form, things we saw at home. I didn't live with my two parents together. That has an influence because I didn't see and a woman living together as a family. So what I am experiencing is my own trial and error and what I have read from books that I'm trying to make sense out of it. This is unlike my daughter, my children. They have lived in a stable family. I think the background has a very powerful influence.

**John** So, the background, the historical past doesn't only have to be spiritual, but even the emotional and the type of social life?

**Charles** Yes

**John** What is the procedure you follow in your counselling, how do you go about it if you are to counsel people?

**Charles** When people come with issues, we try to listen to them and find out what is actually happening. Like what I tried to share with you, the lady in the US. First I went to the man's office one day and he started to talk about the issue. The I asked, is it possible to begin to communicate with this lady? And he said, no problem, so he gave me the e-mail address. So, I started to ask about her welfare. I didn't mention anything about the problem. I posed questions like, how are you finding life in the US and how is the child? Then she started to open up. So, when she writes, then I will pick some of the issues she raises and ask questions. I think she is a very intelligent girl because she's able to answer all the questions I ask. In fact, today I sent an e-mail. My daughter is a secretary and she has access to e-mail so she sends my e-mails for me. I pose questions to find some more. She mentions so many things, but you know, with e-mail, you can't write much, so I pick the pertinent ones. She can talk, sometimes five pages. I will write a page. So, you allow people to talk and as they talk, you see areas you need to explore more. That is what we try to do.

**John** As you do that, basically, do you take what they are saying as very important and deal with it, do you consider their worldview and their ideas about the issue as important, or you bring in your own agenda? For example, if someone comes and then begins narrating the problem and thinks that the problem is spiritual, do you just rule it out as superstitious?

**Charles** From the African background, from what we have, I think if you are a Ghanaian and you know what is happening in Africa, you can't rule out the fact that these things are there. So we need to pray with them. I can confess to you, this friend whose wife is in the US, this morning, early morning, he called that the wife called, She was going to begin the programme today and he was very upset, so he called since I know about the issue. He said that he was praying with the children, so I said that I wanted to join them so that we can all pray on the issue. In fact, it is a spiritual thing so you can't just say that it is not. But one thing that I am also seeing is that as the prophet said that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, it is happening in many marriages. Because they are ignorant about many things, the fundamental principles of scripture even in relationships, they are doing things which if they had known, they won't do. I think that is what the church really needs to look at. What is the knowledge people have, what information do we give to people to help them take decisions regarding marriage. In fact, there's another case of a woman who by circumstances and dreams and visions feels that the man is a helper. But this man is saying that, my friend, I

won't marry you. The lady has written to him and he has told his head teacher that this girl is worrying me. But the girl is persistent because of the way circumstances have worked. And the woman claims that she is a committed Christian, but she is doubtful about the man's Christian commitment. So I told her, you see, scripture talks about being unequally yoked, and you doubt this man's faith, the why are you persisting that by all means this man should marry you? So sometimes, it is difficult but people will like to follow their own inclinations. It depends upon their own dreams or even people's convictions to take decisions on certain important issues.

*John* What about modes of communication? In counselling, is it only verbal communication you use or you do use non-verbal communication as well. You know among Akans, we use a lot of proverbs to convey messages and also stories and so on. So, how do you convey messages or how do you receive messages from clients? Is it always through verbal communication?

*Charles* I don't know whether I can give a specific example in this one, but in our training, as I mentioned, we try to let people know that we can even convey issues on marriage even through poetry, through hymns, through slogans. So what we try to do is that during the training, especially in the last five years, we ask people to choose the areas they want to operate. During the counselling and marriage preparation period, they go into groups and then try to find stories, episodes which they can dramatise to portray issues on marriage and family and also to find slogans which will help enhance marital relationships or warn people on marital issues. And then we even encourage people to create songs which when sang, will teach some aspects of marriage life. So, these are done and I think Lydia has plenty of these things available.

*John* How responsible do you see yourself as a counsellor to the couple or the person who is seeking counselling. We know that the elders in the village see themselves as responsible for the success of the marriage. In you counselling, do you also see yourself as that responsible or maybe, you take it as work you are doing and you are being paid for and if things work well, fine, if it doesn't work out, I don't have a problem.

**Charles** What is happening for example as I have come here is that, we have got a lot of people who have seen us for help or counselling. People also come for premarital preparation and counselling. And all the time we encourage them that we are here, we are available and that is why we have come. Yesterday, the lady I saw, she is not from this church, but we spent quite some time, about one hour, so, when she was leaving, she was saying sorry I have wasted your time. Then I said, no, you have not wasted my time. That is why we are here, that is why I'm paid to be a minister. So, we want to see that people prosper in their relationships and we encourage them to come if there is any problem. When we meet them also, we ask about how things are going. Sometimes we invite people who have gone through our hands in preparation for marriage here so that we can share. When there is a problem, the call and then we try to see them.

**John** Then also, you mentioned premarital counselling and preparation. Basically, what is the focus of your counselling, is it educating people, getting them aware of what is involved in marriage or you rather help people who are hurting, people who are having problems?

**Charles** What we do in the marital counselling is two. It is both education and also helping them in areas they are hurting. For example, when people come for premarital preparation, I have a short assessment. I have to assess where they agree and where they disagree, and I'm able to find that out in some ten minutes. So, I know some of the major areas in marriage where they are agreeing and where they are disagreeing. If they are disagreeing in for example the area of finance, or in the area of the meaning of love or in the area of contraceptive use or what they think about divorce, I'm able to find these out within ten minutes. With that I try to convince them that it is very needful for them to continue with the counselling because if they are disagreeing in these four areas, then it is quite serious. Normally, it is a ten-point assessment and if they disagree in four areas which are very important, then we need to address that before they enter into the marriage. So we try to find out. Then we also have a small programme we use. We discuss the foundation of marriage, finances, sex, and other issues. When they come and we notice the areas where they have divergent views, we try to find out how to resolve them. For example, there are divergent views about the use of contraceptives as Christians. Some people think that as Christians, you shouldn't use contraceptives. So we try to find out why they have such beliefs and see if they will come to consensus. So as much as possible, in our meeting, you'll see that these are some

hedged. Some time in the sessions, we try to handle that. There are some things they will need knowledge about so we teach them. Sometimes, we assign them some materials to read, trying to equip them.

*John* you mentioned briefly the extended family system and its bearing on life today, the tension that is there. In recognition of that, do you at any time in your counselling maybe involve maybe, parents or other members of the extended family?

*Charles* As far as I can remember, I seldom do that. In fact, we encourage them that if there is any issue, they should try to handle it themselves. In fact, there was one last year. A couple asked me to handle their daughter's marriage preparation. There was no issue for which I needed to turn to them for information, because I felt that I could get all the information from them. Sometimes, the parents will ask me how things were going. I'd try to say everything was going well. I didn't meet any problem with them, so there was no need to find anything from the parents. So most of the information I had was from the couple themselves.

*John* What about couples, those who are already married, if there is an issue, do you at times involve others, for example, their children?

*Charles* That one has not been prominent. From my reading these days, especially with the systems theory of marriage and family I see that to be very important because sometimes, the issue is not only with the man and the woman. Sometimes, if you are able to handle the child, it helps. So I have been thinking about that very much, how to involve almost the whole family in handling issues. So that is something I'm reading about now.

*John* You are yet to see how to integrate it into your work?

*Charles* Yes.

*John* People are advised not to send their marriage problems outside. What is your view on it?

*Charles* I try to discourage that. I tell them, you see I'm using a car and if I have a car problem, I have to find somebody. In fact, this morning my wife was saying that I have to learn simple, simple things on the car so that if I have a problem, I don't take everything to

the mechanic. And I'm saying that if you have a mechanical problem, you see a mechanic. If you have a medical problem, you have to see a medical person. So I try to encourage people that if you begin to have problems in your marriage, and seemingly you can not handle it. Immediately, you need to find somebody to help you to look at the issue. Don't wait and cover the issue till it gets worse. And I try to encourage people that it's not shameful to share your problem with somebody, with the right person anyway. That is the issue. The other person can be in a better position to see what is happening. If you are in the issue, emotionally, you are so involved that you may not be able to see things clearly. So personally, I don't buy the idea that when there is a problem, one shouldn't see a counsellor. No, no. if people had done that earlier, that there is this problem cropping up, *osofa, wo dwen ho sen*, or elder, this thing, what do I do? You could save the situation.

**John** Okay, when counselling couples, do you counsel them as individuals or as a couple?

**Charles** Both. What we try to do, for example, if a woman brings an issue, and I listen to her, and we continue with the issue, and I see that there is the need for the man to come in to help the woman, I do invite. If I see that with the issue, the woman herself can take a decision and handle the issue and that will effect a better relationship, I handle the woman alone. So it depends on the situation.

**John** And then, is there any other way, apart from counselling by which you support marriages?

**Charles** You know in the churches, this year my church, we have drawn a programme for retreats, for workshops for lectures and so we are hoping that if people participate in these, it will help them. The problem in the church is that the women will come, the man won't come. So what we try to do is that sometimes, during the divine service where everybody is around, then we have the lecture. Then we ask people to ask questions. For example, last Tuesday, we had leaders meeting and we have agreed that the fourth Tuesday of the month, we're going to have general leadership training, building up one another. The theme we have taken this year is leadership. So every fourth Tuesday, we will invite somebody to come. Rt. Rev. Atto Brown came last Tuesday. It was very encouraging. We invited all the leaders meeting members and the executive members of the organisations and the room was quite full. We are believing that this will help. If we take it to Saturday, we won't get the crowd, so

we put it on Tuesday, which is the normal meeting day. That day is also for choir and Singing band practices. We said that that day we'll not have the normal choir practice and they came. So that is how we are going to use this period where people by all means will be around so that we'll educate them. And then also, when there is opportunity for any other outside seminar, we encourage people to attend, for example, this challenge book conference, I asked one of the church leaders to attend and we bought the books. We have a library so the books are there. So reading is also one of the areas we are encouraging people to do.

*John* Let's talk a bit about attitudes towards support services of marriage. How do couples or those who are yet to marry get to know about the counselling services you offer?

*Charles* With the Christian Council, it's easy because normally, during the Christian Home week celebration, we try to advertise in the booklet produced. We try not to make advertisements in the newspapers, because we felt that we will get many people that we'll not be able to cater for. We are using Trinity College and the rooms and facilities are limited. We think that if we have a larger audience, we'll have problems, so we only advertise with the churches. Now, the programme is held at Abokobi. There too, the facilities are limited. In the church, we let people know that we are available. We also have a family life counselling committee. They know them. The church also has a policy. I will try to let you have a copy and comment on it. When you come on Tuesday, we can discuss it.

*John* Is it a policy of the Methodist Church, Ghana?

*Charles* No.

*John* The local society?

*Charles* Yes. We let people know by announcements, and also during weddings and blessings. We let people know that we are available.

*John* Do you think they are making good use of the facilities?

*Charles* They make, they make.

*John* I wanted to find out about those who come. Do they come depending on their age, educational background, gender or church affiliation? Have you noted any sort of variation?

**Charles** Since I left the Council, what we have been experiencing here is that people who have known that I worked with the council will come or they will invite us to their churches for marriage seminars and so on. Even people from different churches do come. There is this group, Family Life Mission, it was founded by Walter Trobisch. They have an organisation here which is affiliated to the German group. Next week, there is going to be a counselling training programme. There is somebody coming from Germany who is going to be the resource person. I'll check whether the letter is available. I think it will be good for you to talk to Kojo, Hazel, the son of Rev. Hazel.

**John** Where is he?

**Charles** Their office is at the SU premises. Family Life Mission. They have their office in one of the rooms of the Scripture Union building and they have a counselling programme next week.

**John** So I can ask for Family Life Mission at the SU building.

**Charles** Yes. They have majored in training counsellors for churches. They also run seminars for couples and other people. Sometimes they use me as a resource person. I was a member of the core group. But my work at the Christian Council did not permit me to perform. Now that I am out I hope to renew my relationship with them. I have been invited to the counselling programme they are organising as a free participant.

**John** So, irrespective of age and educational background, people make use of the services available?

**Charles** Salvation Army, even as I'm here, they have invited me. The Church of Pentecost has called me. Their youth had a programme at Swedru and I went there to address them. EP Church also invited me.

**John** Do you have others who don't go to church coming to you, for example Muslims?

**Charles** Muslims, I have not had one. But what I do, though I use a car, if I take a taxi, I talk a lot to people asking about their lives, every aspect of life. Sometimes I ask about their Christian commitment or their marriage. I would ask, are you married, are you staying with your wife etc. In fact somebody came here today to help us with the computer and I tried to

find out about his life. If you are not married and you are over thirty, I want to find out why. Normally, it's money, they'll like to have more money before they marry. So I'll try to find out from various people.

*John* What are the main problems in marriage do people present when they come for counselling?

*Charles* Fortunately, we have done a bit of work when I was at the Christian Council. I don't know whether this lady showed it to you.

*John* She mentioned a research that was conducted.

*Charles* You didn't see the report?

*John* In fact, I couldn't get her at the office. I met her at home and she mentioned it and promised that she would later give me a copy.

*Charles* So, we did some work. It was sponsored by the UNFPA and I was the coordinator. We tried to address some of the issues, problems people are facing in Ghana today and we try also to share a possible way out in the document.

*John* Do you think the issues differ depending on the stage of marriage, maybe those who are married for a few years have different problems from those who are married for longer periods?

*Charles* That is true. From experience, and from what people say, we know that somebody who has been married for a year will have a different problem from one who has been married for many years. Somebody with an adolescent child will have different problems. But one of the underlying problems everybody is facing in Ghana is money. For example somebody sent the child to SSS at the beginning of the year and they had to spend about 2.5 million cedis. And we know that financially speaking in Ghana today, it is difficult to get 2.5 million. By all means, you have to borrow, and if you borrow, how do you pay back? So that's quite a problem. I know 2.5 million cedis in terms of Pounds sterling is a peanut but it is big money here. And I also see that one of the major problems in marriage in Ghana is religion. If one is a committed Christian and one is nominal, they face a lot of problems. I know in Ghana, we can say that our women are seemingly religious and if the

man is not understanding the woman, that creates problems. I also see the traditional pull as one of the major factors. People are confused about modern life and they don't know where to stand. Normally, men from my perspective, are the greater offenders. Where it is to their favour, they'll choose whatever is convenient. So when you talk about leadership and it is convenient to the man, they'll say that I'm the head. If it's not so, then they'll like the woman also to contribute their quota and so on. So the church has a problem, how to combine modern life, where we are coming from and the religious demands on couples. The roles we are play for example. In fact, I personally see roles to be one of the major problems especially our women are facing. Women are carrying more than they are supposed to carry because if the woman is a carrier woman, for example I was a teacher and my wife is a teacher and we were in the village, Jasikan. So, what role should I play and what role should my wife play in the home? Many couples are struggling because the man feels that traditionally after work, he will come and sit down and then look at you ...

*John* Let me bring this in, it looks like we have been so much influenced by western society. It is somehow accepted that in modern life, the roles you are talking about, work in the house should be shared, and women have an important part to play in decision-making. Do you think there is still a problem with these?

*Charles* I think there is a problem. I know a couple, one is a banker at the Bank of Ghana. The other is also a banker at the Standard Chartered Bank. They are both bankers. And they are bringing in almost the same money. So, who takes the decision, and in the house, who is doing what? The man can't say that traditionally, I am the boss so you will do everything. And that is where I see that the church will have an important role to play. How do you bring couples together for them to examine such current issues, because traditionally, they were not there? I think that people need to have understanding, how they can support one another at home and let the family run. But there are some people who are not prepared to listen. I know a couple, the woman is a medical doctor and the man is an engineer. The man thinks that the woman has to do every work in the house. So education is very important for them to address the issue, otherwise the woman will overwork and in the long run, it won't help the woman, it won't help the man and the whole family.

*John* So modernisation is having an impact, but then the traditional ideas are still prevalent and therefore there is still tension that needs to be dealt with.

**Charles** For example, in a Ghanaian marriage, if a man marries a woman, the sisters of the man feels that the role they have to play in the marriage is quite vital. Their brothers should listen to them and they would like to influence the marriage, while they have their own marriage. I don't think it is right. And parents will like to influence their children's marriage. Emotionally, it seems that it is right, but once you allow your daughter or your son to marry, not that the children should not care for you, but you have to allow them to marry.

**John** Let me come to this, the idea of premarital education, do you think it is very important?

**Charles** It is very important.

**John** So, do you insist on it in your congregation?

**Charles** In the church, we try to, but sometimes, people wouldn't like to listen to you. It is very, very vital. In my time, we didn't have it and I believe that if people get the chance to have it, it will help them. One thing I regret about as I grew is the care of the children. Because I didn't have any education, and my parents were not there, I didn't have anybody and I didn't know how to care for the children. So it is my own reading and so on that helped me, but before you realise, they are growing and they lacked the emotional attachment because they did not have that experience. So if people are going to marry, you have to let them know that our children are very, very important,. Sometimes I sit back and say that god has been gracious that our children are doing well. I have three. Irrespective of my mistakes and ignorance, they are doing well. But if people are able to know how to handle the children from the beginning, then it should be very helpful.

**John** When do you think that people have to begin learning about marriage and family life?

**Charles** In fact, from the schools. We need to begin there. In the churches also, the subject should be so plain that people can focus on marriage and family.

**John** So they should begin as early as possible?

**Charles** Yes, I think so.

**John** Let me see if we can just conclude it, what do you think has been the effect of the work you have been involved in? do you think that it has been helpful and useful to many people?

**Charles** Ideally, I think that the Christian Council work where I was involved for about fifteen years should help. Theoretically it should help.

**John** But whether it has helped or not?

**Charles** I know it has because of the meetings people attend. It has. So, it's a very helpful programme and has to continue because knowledge is powerful and helping people in difficulty to resolve their issues is very necessary. I know it is very important and so every year, Christian Council will try to train people. They need to continue with it, though yearly, the training becomes expensive, but I think that it is worth it. I think that it is a very important role the church is playing.

**John** Well, I should thank you for the time and the insight you've given. I hope it will be useful for my work. Whatever comes out of it we will share together and see how best we can help people with their marriages and family life.

**Charles** Thank you very much.

## APPENDIX V

### INTERVIEW WITH ISAAC AMPAH

**PROFILE:** *Isaac Ampah is a lay evangelist of the Methodist Church, Ghana. He is the founder and director of the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal in Kumasi. This interview was conducted in his office in Kumasi on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. Abedu Quashie and I'm doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages. I'm looking at Akan Marriages and I chose this centre as one of my case studies. I should be glad if you could offer me some time to find out what goes on here and how your counselling work is doing.

**Isaac** Right.

**John** So, if you can begin with how the whole ministry Began, I will appreciate it.

**Isaac** This counselling centre, the actual date that this counselling centre started was in '83, '84. But before this time, we had a ministry. Because we are part of the church, the church was not happy that we have the ministry outside. We accepted that and we were running the prayer fellowship for Wesley Methodist Church. After the fellowship meetings, so many people would want to talk to us, so we decided to start a counselling centre. So, it started in 1984, not within Wesley but as a private organisation. But it was because of Wesley that it began. My wife and myself were responsible for the prayer meetings and after that the people wanted to speak to us so we decided to find time. At that time I was a pharmacist, so I started it on top of my pharmacy shop, in my office. Within a short time, the numbers coming was so great that we decided to come to our premises here to start the counselling ministry. That was in '83, '84.

**John** And when did you come to this premise?

**Isaac** It was '84, around that time.

**John** So, since '84, you've been working here? What is the name of the centre?

**Isaac** It started as Centre for Counselling and Faith Development, but the terminology Faith development was not suitable to some of the pastors so we changed it to Centre For Counselling and Family Renewal.

**John** Is it in any way affiliated to the church, I mean the Methodist Church here?

**Isaac** Well, it started as an affiliation to the church. In actual fact, when the counselling started, we requested that the church should host us. And the minister decided that we should go to Freeman College to have it there. This was at a time when Freeman College was doing nothing. So, they wanted this counselling ministry to be attached to it, that is Rev. Stephens' time, and he even gave us a room there. What actually happened was that just to furnish the room for us was the biggest problem. Just bringing us chairs and tables for the room they've given us was the problem. So, we decided to go on our own. This was upon the advice of one of the top ministers saying that Methodist Church will never give you a table. So, Freeman College once had a counselling programme attached to it. It was because we were proposing that we should be house there. They were thinking about monetary aspects and the furnishing so we decided to start it private. Even at that time, Rev. Bonney was the chairman and he encouraged us that we should be affiliated to the church. So for a very long time we were giving our report to the church. There was always a report to Synod on this ministry. But we stopped that just recently because some ministers were opposing that.

**John** Fine. By the use of 'we', I suppose that you are not involved in the ministry alone.

**Isaac** No.

**John** Are there others involved?

**Isaac** Yes, there are others involved. All along, it has been myself and my wife, Rev. Mrs. Ampah. At that time, she wasn't a minister. We were all lay evangelists. She later decided to go into the ministry. So, both of us are the directors of this ministry, but almost always, there have been people involved. At the moment, the staff is made up of my self, my wife, my son and two others, five of us.

**John** And how have those who are involved been trained, including yourself for this ministry?

**Isaac** Right. In 1974, Wesley Methodist Church sponsored me for a counselling training with the Christian Council. So, that was my first development. Then from there, I was trained at Haggai, Singapore. I had an advanced training at Singapore, so there was still development. The World Methodist Council also brought another training programme in Ghana and I joined. At one time, there was a counselling training in Atlanta, Georgia, where I represented Ghana. I have had my training from various places.

**John** How about the others?

**Isaac** My wife has had a Bible School training. She's now doing her degree and in the programme, she had a course in pastoral counselling and other principles of counselling at the Christian Service College. My son has also been trained at both Christian Service College and Baptist Seminary, where they have always been involved with Pastoral Counselling. My son has also had the Christian Council training. It's three weeks in a year for three consecutive years. He's passed through that and he's had on the job training. The other chap, we sent him to Church of God Bible School and they had some training in counselling there. He joined us and we sent him there. The other one has also been an evangelist for some time. So they all have a theological background of a sort. But apart from these, a lot of people have passed through this counselling centre and they are now engaged by the Church in full time counselling. There are a lot of them. One of them is the one you met, Nicholas. He had the training here and we sent him to a Christian Counselling course. A host of them have passed through this centre. In fact, we are doing some sort of in-service training and then sponsoring people. This ministry is sponsoring people and then when you are okay, we give you to the church.

**John** So, the ministry, I will say, has two goals or objectives. First, you do counsel people, that is people with problems, and the secondly, you try to develop people to take the ...

**Isaac** The work of counselling in their churches.

**John** In their churches, that is fine. Looking at the name that you are using now, Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal, does it only have to do with families, problems of families and marriage or you deal with other problems too.

*Isaac* We realise that almost all the people that come here have a family background. If even it's a child, like the chap who just came in, he's been very stubborn at home. So it has a relationship, even though we counsel him on his school and his life, it's related to the family. So almost every thing that we do is connected to the family. Apart from people coming here individually, we also give seminars to churches and to organisations, even secular organisations, but we gear towards the family. We talk about AIDS in our programmes and it is still in the family. So what ever we do, we are gearing it toward the family. We are also engaged by the Family Planning?

*John* Is it PPAG?

*Isaac* You're right. What we do is that they will bring together several organisations and they will ask us to come and talk to them about the family.

*John* Then about the training, let me take your training, much of the training that has been in Ghana here has been from the west. Sometimes you realise that some western principles are at variance with our traditional principles. Would you say that the training that you had took the traditional principles into consideration so that it has helped you in dealing with Ghanaians in their traditional setting?

*Isaac* The training per se, I'll say no, but you see, just like university education, you get into whatever training is given to you and it is expected that you'll bring it to the local level. One of the things that we were taught in Singapore is that if you want to let people hear you, you must put them in their cup. In other words, if you are a Ghanaian and you want the message to go, whatever principle we give you, you must take that message in their cup and then you'll reach them. So, it is true we got the western training, but we bring it to the local situation because we also hear them and deal with them. Most often, some of our talks, we meet chiefs and they say their part and we take part of that and then the part from the west and we bring them together. Let me give you just one example for you to know.

*John* That will be helpful.

*Isaac* You see, in our local marriage, customary marriage, when they are asking the daughter, the would-be wife, would you marry Mr. X, they do it three times. Abena, Mr. X wants to marry you, would you want us to take the drink he is bringing? And then Abena

would say yes. Abena we want to ask you for a second time, Mr. X wants to marry you, should we take the drink? Yes. Abena, we want to ask you finally, Mr. X wants to marry you, should we take the drink and she says yes. In our ministry, when we are saying those things, this is the way we do it, Abena Mr. X wants to marry you, in the name of the father, we are asking you, should we take the drink? Yes. Abena, in the name of the son, should we take the drink? Abena in the name of the Holy Spirit, should we take the drink? So you see how we use culture.

**John** You use the Trinity and apply to the culture of the people?

**Isaac** The trinity in our culture. And so we are doing it in several ways, bringing whatever it is and we explain. When we are taking the dowry and other things, you have to bring a drink, and it is symbolic. The reason is that we want the people who are around to taste something so that they can be witnesses. These days, we are preaching that if you don't want alcoholic drink, why not bring even ordinary Fanta in place of the alcoholic drink. The symbol will still be there. People reluctantly are accepting it.

**John** That's fine. So as much as possible you try to integrate ...

**Isaac** The western principles with the traditional ideas and views.

**John** Traditionally, we had our own way of supporting marriages, especially in terms of the role of the elders in advising and so on. Do you think that the various ways in which marriages were supported traditionally were useful?

**Isaac** Yes and no. Yes and no. You see, in our traditional customary rites, they will ask you who is behind this marriage, from the husband's side and from the wife's side. These are the people who are the pillars behind the marriage and it is a good thing because when there is any problem, you bring in these two people to help solve the problem. The next thing traditionally is that you are married into a family, unlike the western type. So when there is any problem, any support that you need, financial, material, spiritual support, because you are in the family, they will provide that support. So long as you are a member of the family, you cannot be independent. You'll be supported by them with their prayers, with their finances and material resources and this is a very good thing. At the same time, it has got its disadvantages. For example one of the disadvantage is that when you continue to depend on

your family for spiritual, material and every support, then they also have the chance to influence your marriage. You cannot do things independently. Let me give you one example. This is a couple staying in their bigger family's house. Traditionally, it's well accepted. They don't see why you should move out if there is a room there. But because of that they will also influence your marriage. Like in the evening, you want to go out with your spouse, your in-laws will tell you that it is too dark and you cannot go. Maybe you've already planned. They'll influence you. And if your mother-in-law or father-in-law says that you should not go, you should not go despite the preparation. That is one of the influence. Or for example, if your mother-in-law will always come from the market in a *trotro*, and then you come from the market in a chartered taxi, they will be very disturbed, because after all they are sponsoring you financially. They take the less expensive transport home but you come home with the most expensive transport, they'll talk about it. So there are good things about it but at the same time, there are also the negative things. But personally, if I weigh the two, I will say the traditional one is more helpful and Ghanaians must maintain it.

**John** Well, that's very interesting. You do appreciate the fact that there are certain things in the traditional set-up which do not enhance marriages, but you say that if you weigh the two, you see the traditional one as more helpful. What specifically do you see in the traditional marriage for which you say that it is more helpful?

**Isaac** The support they give. Take someone in London, as soon as you get married, you get out of the home, whether you are on the job or you've been sacked. Whatever it is you have to be independent. But here, if you cannot go on with life, if the couple cannot cope, there is always someone in the family who will help you. You feel free to go and discuss your problem with people because of the way we help each other until you can be on your own. And this is very helpful. Again it does not make you feel so lonely. The parents will come and visit you. When there is any problem and one of them is out, it is the responsibility of the family to look after the other person. For example, if your husband is dead, it is the responsibility of the husband's family to look after the widow until such time that she is married. And it could take twenty years. If she decides she'll not marry, the family will take care of her and this is a very good thing.

**John** That's fine, but obviously there are conflicts between the traditional setting and the western setting.

**Isaac** Certainly, yes. Certainly.

**John** And where do you say this conflict is more pronounced. From your counselling, where do you find this conflict between the traditional and western view more pronounced?

**Isaac** I think it is the interference of the in-laws. That is where the most conflict is. It is the interference of the mothers-in-law, the sisters-in-law, the brothers-in-law. You just cannot get your own peace. I told you that you are married into a family and not an individual. So even if you stay somewhere else, they'll visit and they'll visit without announcing. And sometimes it becomes interference. When unfortunately you come in and you are not blessed with children, they'll interfere. They have the right to interfere by our tradition. And when there is a quarrel between the two of you, the extended family will interfere. So this interference is where the conflict is. But you see, people need to understand certain things and if they do understand and the mindset is good, then it makes it easier. For example, if a couple knows that at whatever cost, the parents have the right to visit, and they make their minds about it, then they'll find that things will go well. Most often, the mindset is not right. If you want me to give you an example, my mother had visited us and was staying with us. One day, she found out that our wall was dirty so she decided to clean it. But she cannot clean it when my wife is around. So she decided to clean it late in the night when we were asleep. Then she started doing it. Unfortunately, my wife got up that night and found the mother-in-law cleaning the wall late in the night. If the mindset is wrong, she'll say that the mother is a witch and she was planting something there. But because the mindset of my wife was right, she asked, mama, what are you doing? Oh, there's dirt here and I want to clean it. Mama, why are you cleaning with small water at this night, and the night is cold? Let me warm water for you and give you Omo and give you better cleaning materials so that you can use it. Relationship is kept clean and happy, but it is the mindset. Most often, the mindset of the in-laws, from both sides are suspicious. So whatever you do, there is suspicion.

**John** So, once the mindset is right, then you'll be okay?

**Isaac** Right about the Ghanaian set-up.

**John** Fine, let me come generally to marriage. What is your view of marriage. What would you say marriage is?

**Isaac** Marriage generally and by our culture is a heterosexual relationship between people who are of good age and by people who are of no blood relation. We've written several books and in one of the books, we define marriage. We said, "it is a heterosexual union between two people, between Christians. It is a partnership agreement between a man and a woman and they must be of age. They must not be of any blood relation, and they must love each other and must agree to stay together in the fear of the Lord for their mutual benefit and for the happiness of both of them in prosperity and in adversity. The partnership agreement must be sanctioned by the parents. There must be four parents involved, the man's mother and father's family and the woman's mother and father's family. We don't agree with the type of marriage that is now going on in the western style, homosexuals, lesbianism and those type of things. Ghanaians do not want it. Even in our tradition, we don't agree. But it is coming in gradually under cover. It's coming in and we don't agree.

**John** We'll come to talk about that when we begin to look at how you counselling people who are about to marry and how you bring some of these things in. Talking about marriage and the definition you gave, I realise that some of the phrases are phrases that we use when we are having wedding ceremonies, in prosperity and in adversity and so on, but there is nothing explicitly stated in terms of wedding in the definition. Now, when do you say that marriage is fully contracted, is it after the customary rites had been performed or after maybe a church wedding or a civil wedding.

**Isaac** It depends first and foremost on the person's background. Whether they are Christians from a particular denomination and a particular status. It depends on all these things. In my church, marriage is contracted as soon as the customary rites have been performed. But if you are a leader in that church, then you must go a step forward. Christians must have three steps in marriage. Number one, the customary rites must be performed. Number two, the legal rites must be performed if you want the marriage to be strong and number three, the spiritual aspect, the Christian rites must also be performed. The customary rites, we've already mentioned, you've got to pay the dowry, the knocking fee, etc. etc. When that has been performed, in Ghana now, you must register your marriage. You go to KMA and register your marriage. It is the PNDC law 111 and so on. That must be done. But if you are a church member, then you don't want the PNDC law, but we want the ordinance, CAP 127. We just want that one so that you can have the wedding. In my church, it can be wedding or it can be a

blessing. Which ever way you want to do it, the church will recognise it, but they want you to bring the marriage into the church for the recognition. So far as the church is concerned, customary marriage is marriage. But in the spiritual churches, the marriage will never be accepted until the wedding has been done or a blessing of a sort has been done in the church.

*John* Well. What is your own personal view?

*Isaac* My personal view is that as soon as the customary rites have been performed, you are married. But for the security of that marriage, you must have the legal requirements.

*John* You mentioned that there are three steps, you said processes. I wouldn't have any problem with it then. But it looks like what we do is not just steps or processes, but they are different ceremonies each of which constitute marriage. So it's not like you follow one step and after that you go to another step, because the ceremony that is called customary rites is a full ceremony. On its own, it constitutes marriage. The Church wedding is a full ceremony and it constitutes marriage in its own right.

*Isaac* But would you also agree with me that you cannot have a legal one nor the church service without having the fundamental one, the customary rites. So all of them will still depend on the customary rites, so you cannot have the full ...

*John* Excuse me, as part of this work, I recently interviewed some people and then I also heard on the air. First in the interview, I got to learn that now people are marrying in the church and saying that the customary rites are not even necessary.

*Isaac* In Ghana?

*John* Here in Ghana. I spoke to Mr. Lydia Adadjawah who is now in charge of the Family Life programme of the Christian Council. She said that somebody called her and then put this problem before her that the daughter just came home and said that she was going to marry and her pastor says that the customary rites and everything were not necessary.

*Isaac* This will not be in the main line churches?

*John* Yes, that is the issue. I know the main line churches will not do that.

*Isaac* Because even in the wedding service, they ask you whether all the necessary requirements have been done, both the customary and the legal. They will want to see who gave the woman to the man and he will come and they will ask, has he completed all the rights customarily and legally? And he'll say he's completed it. But you see, with regard to the new churches, anything could do. But you can go scot free when there is no problem in that marriage. As soon as there is a problem, ...

*John* The family will take you to task.

*Isaac* Not the family, you'll find that it doesn't hold. When there is no problem, fine, but as soon as there is a problem, there will be trouble. Even the legal rites require that you finish the customary rites. Let me just give you an example. The example is that in our church, if you are married in the church and you are given the church certificate and you've not done the others, you cannot take the church certificate to court.

*John* Yeah, I agree with you.

*Isaac* So, your minister will always advise you that you must complete all other things. There was a very serious case in our church. This lady had married some 30 years ago in the church and the church certificate was with her. The man dies and this woman wanted to claim the man's property because she is a wedded wife, but the only certificate she had was the church one. All that I'm saying is that even though people will recognise it, you are only safe when there is no problem.

*John* Okay. Enough of that. Let me come to marital problems. How do you see marital problems, do you see them as physical, spiritual or both?

*Isaac* Both. I see some as spiritual and some as physical. I really see them as both. Again, let me just give this simple example. My husband has been going about with other women. This is normally the case that comes. He's been going about with other women. And then instead of handling it in a very nice way, you start to become angry. And sometimes, it is hearsay. So, it begins to bring a problem at home and then you realise that the cordial relationship will be broken from then on. This is purely a physical affair. Again, let us see another one. This young lady is a hairdresser. The husband is a manager. The husband closes from work at 5.00 o'clock and almost always he is at home by 6. The lady is a hairdresser and the earliest she

will come home is at 11.00 o'clock. So the man began to say to himself, what do I come to stay at home to do from 6 till 11. Then he started going out and he makes sure that he comes home just before 11. He starts to get interested outside and he goes beyond 11 o'clock, and you get angry because he is coming home late and sometimes sleeping outside. You have created that and this I believe is physical.

But there are also spiritual aspects. When you are going into marriage and the parents are not interested in the marriage. They have told you that they are not interested. From then on, their anger, their prayers and everything will go against you and that one becomes a spiritual affair. Or you are a fine Christian, you are married in a fine way and you cheat somebody, like going out to someone other than your wife. You've gone astray, you've conceived with somebody and then you deny it. If this lady starts praying against you, it will affect you because your coverage has been removed and you've been thrown into the hands of the enemy. That could be a spiritual affair. Everything will start going wrong and I'm saying it will be spiritual. If you want me to give several examples, I could do so.

*John* I think this should be enough. But in terms of both, either physical or spiritual, do you see any of the problems as having anything to do with the historical occurrences of any of the partners?

*Isaac* It could be. So this is one of the things that we teach in the premarital counselling. You must first of all look at the family line of your spouse. If they are drunkards, the father was a drunkard, the brothers are drunkards and every one in the house is a drunkard. Even though your partner may have accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and saviour, there could be that element possible. If he gets into any problem, he'll go that way. So there you have the historical. Or if they are litigants, you find that it is just the same thing.

*John* Now, do you think this is in line with traditional thinking. You know, in traditional marriage, if maybe a man sees a woman he wants to marry and then they go and do the knocking, the woman's parents will find out about the background of the man's family, whether they are litigants there, whether they are people there with certain diseases.

*Isaac* I think it is not always the traditional. Sometimes it is the spiritual aspect too.

*John* Yeah, but traditionally it is taken as spiritual.

**Isaac** Well, it comes true. Say, this home is a very poor home. Sometimes the poverty is by a curse. The great grand father has brought in certain things into that village and has put all of them under the curse so that poverty comes through. In our counselling apart from counselling you about that, we also have to pray for deliverance for you.

**John** So you try to deal both with the physical and the spiritual in terms of praying with the people and then ...

**Isaac** Advising them to be strong in the Lord. For example if your husband comes from a home where all the people are drunkards, and you find him going that line, we will counsel you to be stronger in prayer because there is an attack.

**John** Generally, what procedure do you follow when counselling people who have come with problems?

**Isaac** We always start with the introduction. In the introductory arrangements, we introduce ourselves. As much as possible we will want to be very warm with the person at the start. We try to make the person settle. That's the way we start. Sometimes, when they come, they've just heard your name and they are frightened. They don't know the person they are going to meet so we will always start with a conversation. And when we realise that you are settled, we will pray with you. This is a Christian counselling centre. People say that you should not pray with everybody, but here, you come in because you know you're coming to a Christian counselling centre. We'll pray with you. We've had few problems with some people, some Jehovah's witnesses and some Muslims. But they agree this is our formula. We pray with you and then we start to ask you questions and as we have listening ears, we try to find out what type of person you are.

**John** Where the problem is?

**Isaac** No, not where the problem is. Some of the people that come to us are the repressive type or the expressive type. They talk too much. As we build the relationship, we are able to see who they are. Just last Wednesday, somebody with a suicidal tendency came here and she would not want to express herself. So we had to build a stronger relationship. That's what we do and we'll come out with the listening and determining what to do. As we listen to them we want to stimulate them to talk. Sometimes we would go back and forward and try to bring out

certain issues that they have left out. And sometimes too, they want to dodge us. When they are giving their report, they'll jump over certain salient aspects which will affect them, so we try to bring them back. So we move to and fro and at the end of it, we want them to help us to get a solution. Very often when we suggest a solution, they'll not want to take it. But when they help us to come up with a solution, it's useful to them. We then give them an assignment for them to go and do and then they'll come back and report and from then onwards, we see how it progresses.

**John** So, you always take what the client says as very important.

**Isaac** Right.

**John** You take them serious and you move them from that point.

**Isaac** And then if their view is not right, we try to bring them back to start thinking about it. Yesterday, a gentleman came, and right from the word go, he started by saying that all the financial burden in the home is on me. I've been married for about 8 years. We've got two kids and the lady is not helping. All the financial burden in the home is on me and because of that I have decide to leave the marriage. This is not a good premise for leaving the marriage. If the burden is on you and you know that the lady is making every effort to help, then you cannot leave the marriage on just that one premise. So we had to bring his mind back. And then he was telling me that he was a good Christian, an elder in his church. How can an elder in the church just divorce the wife on one problem. So we will bring you back to thin aright.

**John** That's fine. In the course of counselling, how do you communicate? Do you at times use proverbs and stories that will send the message across very well?

**Isaac** Sometimes, we use, but it depends on the person. If he does not understand the proverb, then we use the normal language.

**John** Do you also use bodily expressions and so on and so forth?

**Isaac** Sometimes we use that, sometimes.

**John** In the session you had with the lady, I heard you use the proverb about Mampong and Nsuta. Can you say it again and tell me the meaning.

**Isaac** What I said is this. Mampong and Nsuta are neighbours and the Nsuta people are always attacking Mampong for their food and for their water and everything. So the Mampong people realised that if we are able to satisfy the Nsuta people, they will not bring us problems. So they'll always want to help the Nsuta people and then there will be peace between the two of them. So the Mampong people are saying "*se Nsuta fo edidi mee a*, when the Nsuta people are satisfied, we would have our peace.

**John** And you used such a proverb ...

**Isaac** To tell this woman that if your in-laws have their peace, then you will also have your peace. But if your in-laws do not have their peace, then you'll also not have your peace.

**John** Apart from proverbs, do you use other indirect forms of communication?

**Isaac** Yes we do. We use Biblical passages and then we explain it in the context. For example, there was a case of somebody who was so much disturbed about what has happened in his life. And we used Romans 8:28 to say that all things work together for good to them that love the Jesus. This man had apparently been disappointed in a job he wanted. And we used the story of a certain man who has some horses. One of the horses got lost and he was so much disappointed and almost everybody in the village came round to sympathise. And his statement was that whether the loss of the horse is important to me or not, I don't know. Then about few days later, the horse came back with two other horses. Then almost everybody in the village came round to rejoice with him for the return of his favourite horse with other horses. And then the man said, I'm not sure whether the coming in of more horses is good or bad, I don't know. Then about two weeks later, one of the children, a teenager was playing with one of the new horses, and the horse kicked this gentleman and he fell down and broke his hand. People came to sympathise again. This is a very bad omen. A new horse coming to destroy the home, and this boy was having a POP on his hand. When they came to sympathise, the man said I don't know whether what has happened is good or bad. I don't know. About a month later, there was a fight between two villages, their village and another village. The child could not go because of the injured hand. But the other kids went and they were killed. And they all came to say, ei, you are fortunate, your child is still alive because of this POP. And then the gentleman said, I don't know whether it is good or bad. What we used to calm down this gentleman is that for us as Christians, we know that all things will work

together for good for us. He was perfectly satisfied. In fact, it is the gentleman who was with us yesterday. So, we do use stories, proverbs and other things.

**John** What about symbols. I realised yesterday that you tell the client to pray to Christ. There was a picture of Christ there. What is the significance of that?

**Isaac** We use Christ very often and what we tell the client is that whatever you are telling us, this is our witness, so when you go home and you see Christ's picture, remember you have made a promise to him. We will not be there but he will be there. But we want him to be in your mind that you did this in his presence.

**John** Now, let me ask, we could tell people that we are talking and Christ is present, but then you decide to put the picture there for the person to see and as it were feel that Christ is present. Why don't you just tell them that in our talking, Christ is present but you want to use the picture?

**Isaac** In our culture, we would want the mind to see and register, we want the ears to hear and register and we want the mouth also to speak. Another symbol we use is the blood of Jesus. We use that symbol very often in our counselling. And the way we make them remember the blood of Jesus as a protection is to make them to buy potassium permanganate. This is a drug which when put in water turns red and we will turn them that we want the blood of Jesus to be your protective cover. So, in order to be able to pray, we will want you to see small amount of this potassium permanganate in water. And when you see the red, it symbolises the blood of Jesus. And then you pray and use the blood of Jesus for whatever we want you to use it for, and it works so marvellously.

**John** So in communication, you try to use, apart from verbal, symbols? You use for example, the picture of Jesus and potassium permanganate to symbolise the blood of Jesus.

**Isaac** We sometimes also use the oil. We also use it very often. It also has a very nice implication. When the Bible says when you are anointed, you get your healing and you are forgiven. We use it very much. We also have this Anglican priest. On Ash Wednesday, he will bring the ash to our centre and we will make everyone who comes there to have a mark on the forehead. We tell them the significance of that. So we use symbols.

**John** In your counselling, what do you favour, is it mainly teaching people or sometimes you favour what I will call healing or therapy. Is it education or therapy?

**Isaac** Both. I'm a pharmacist by profession and I'm only a counsellor by calling. When I started my real counselling, at that time I had just move from the pharmacy into counselling and we were using so much of drugs. After I had taught you, I will use drugs because of my pharmacy background. I felt that people were not seeing the miracle of Jesus Christ. They go out and say, when I went to him, he gave me thi drug and I was healed. And a certain lady just cautioned me. I had to choose one, leave the drug and let people see the miracle. I started using a lot of therapy. Occasionally, I will use drugs. But we use the healing process of our Lord Jesus Christ very often. That's why I'm saying that sometimes we use the oil to signify the process. So we speak the word. You heard that initially, we called it the Centre for Faith Development. We were developing the faith of the people and then it brings healing. So, we're using both. We want you to know that it is not just like other spiritual churches where they just shout for you to get your healing, but we will give you the foundation. Again let me give you another example, we were called to the hospital, that is the University hospital and there was a matron who had had an issue of blood for four years. The matron of that hospital happened to be our church member, Wesley Methodist. She called us in and when we went there, we gave her the fundamentals. This lady who touched Jesus' garment first believed in him so if you can also believe in him, then he can work on you. This lady had never accepted Jesus Christ as her personal saviour. Then we asked her to have faith and to trust what we were doing. We prayed and anointed her and the issue of blood stopped and she was discharged that very week. It wasn't the medicine but it was the faith she had in Jesus Christ. So we use both.

**John** Fine. There is this thorny issue about people refusing to take responsibility for their problems. It is easy for people to attribute the causes of their problems to other things. In the process of your counselling, do you see personal responsibility as important?

**Isaac** Clarify a bit, personal responsibility on whose part?

**John** On the part of the client.

**Isaac** In other words, what you are saying is that, I am sick, I can't bring forth children, and it is because I caused an abortion and that sort of thing.

**John** Yes, someone might say that it is my mother-in-law who is the cause of the problem.

**Isaac** We are having much of that in our counselling and the way we do counselling is that, in our counselling, we find relationships as very important. We try to build better relationships between you and the other party whom you think is the cause of your problem. If you are able to build a good relationship with the person, then we would have solved part of the problem, because most of the problems are baseless. Whatever they think is the cause is baseless. So we must be able to build in you a better faith to counteract what you think. Supposing somebody comes and say, each time my mother-in-law visits me, then my pregnancy drops. We know that you are thinking about your mother-in-law all the time and we try to build a better relationship between you and your mother-in-law. What we say is that even if it is true that she is the cause, greater is the Jesus in you than the adverse things that this mother-in-law is doing. So, if we are able to build that faith in you, you'll not fear the mother-in-law again and you'll find that that baseless fear is off. So, we see people accepting their personal responsibility and again we will ask you to have courage. Like I was saying, someone might say that I'm not bringing forth because of an abortion. Fine, Jesus has already forgiven you. Because you have that fear in you, even when you are having sex, you think that nothing will happen and indeed nothing will happen. What you say and what you do has a repercussion on the happenings. So if we are able to build a better faith on you, even your personal responsibility could be shifted to something else and you'll be able to achieve what God wants you to achieve.

**John** So you emphasise a lot on faith. Coming to marital problems, in traditional society, we know that the elders who are appointed as the backbone of the marriage see themselves as responsible for the success of the marriage and to them, the marriage depends on them. In many cases some of them will go all out to offer the necessary advise to see to it that the marriage becomes strong and the marriage is supported. How do you see yourself as responsible to the client?

**Isaac** We are happy when we get the results, very, very happy. But when we do not get the results, we don't take ourselves to be blamed. We are only there to help you achieve your

objective. We just help, but the final responsibility for failure or success is yours. We give you an advice, go and do this. Sometimes it is so difficult for them to go and do that. So if you go and you don't succeed, you can't blame us. You are not in a good relationship with your husband, we have been able to identify why the relationship is not improving. You have helped us to identify how you can improve the relationship. Then you have even prayed before God that I'm going to do this. And you go and find it difficult and you don't do what you promised, you'll not get the results. And it will not be our responsibility. But when you come and tell us that I did what you told me to do and I have achieved my aim, then we have been very successful and we add it to our wealth, our knowledge so that we can use that same method to help another person. There was a case, maybe I just want to cite cases.

**John** That'll be very helpful.

**Isaac** She came for about two weeks. There had not been any communication between her and her husband. We told her that it is easy for her to break the deadlock than the man. So we agreed with this lady, today when he returns from work and you hear the sound of the horn, go and open the gate for him and welcome him home. Then she said, but there is a watchman there, why should it be my responsibility to go and open the gate when there is a watchman. And then we said, because you want a better relationship. This man is coming home and expecting the watchman to open the gate, but then he sees you open the gate and then you rush to open the door for him. And then you give a warm reception, welcome him home with nice words, darling you're welcome home. Give me your bag. This is something which is not done everyday but because you want to break the deadlock, you do that and when he comes home you give him some iced water or you can prepare some drink for him and welcome him. If possible, take off the shoes and make him comfortable. Somebody will do that, other people will find it so difficult to do that. But there's a lady who did that and after the first, second and third treat, the man said, Adjoa, it looks like you have changed. I will also change and there was a very nice result. So we are very much looking out for people going with our advice, what the two of us have decided.

**John** They go and take the action they need to take.

**Isaac** We tell them that faith is positive thinking, positive statement and positive action. With me you have thought that the right thing to do, so it is in your mind. You did say the right thing to do in front of me and Jesus. So what is left is the action. And it works.

**John** The extended family system is at the heart of Ghanaian social life. Does it have any bearing on your counselling in terms of marriage?

**Isaac** Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Yes in the sense that they will bring problem pertaining to the extended family. We tackle the individual who is with us and we try to tell him how to relate with them well and then get their freedom.

**John** What about this, relationship is a two way direction, so if one person is doing his or her best and the other person isn't, still the relationship might not improve.

**Isaac** Dr. Aggrey says that do it once, do it twice, do it thrice and you'll find that you'll get a breakthrough. So, yes, he has decided that he will never relate with you but keep on and you'll get a breakthrough. Again let me give another example, here is a young couple. They have decided to get married. They are not married yet. They have now decided. But unfortunately, the mother-in-law of the wife to be has decided never, never, never to permit the marriage to come on. And we used the Biblical basis here. When she goes to greet her, she will not respond and it was painful. Then we said, go and do it again. Next time, Proverbs 18:16 says that do you want to meet an important person, give him a gift and you'll have a breakthrough. So we said, the next time you're going, go with bread, milk, sugar and etc. Everything that you take must be such that she'll not think that you're going to poison her. Taker sardine, few things, not very expensive things and go and give to this lady. The wife to be was obedient. She took these things and one day she went to greet her and said that, I'm just coming from the market, and there was no response. Mummy, I brought you this from the market, then mummy, who first of all, wouldn't even want to see this girl opened it and saw these items and said, ei *asew pa* Naomi and that was the end of the deadlock. So yes, some of them might be persistent, but you do your part as if you are doing it to Jesus and not to her and keep on praying, binding and loosing. It is something we also believe.

**John** So you don't involve members of the extended family in your counselling?

**Isaac** No, no.

**John** What about children of the couple you are counselling?

**Isaac** If the problem is with children, then we bring the children. We talk to the children and let them know what they should do. We bring the children, yes.

**John** People are advised not to send their marriage problems outside. What is your view on this?

**Isaac** I perfectly believe in that. If it is not a trained counsellor, then be careful. Be careful never to send your marriage problem to even the best friend of your husband or your wife. May I give two examples? Here is a man who could not give about 20, 000 cedis to the wife. The wife went to a very good friend who has got money and told him.

**John** The man's friend?

**Isaac** The man's friend. And this gentleman said. Oh, as for your husband, I don't understand him. Only 20,000, you can't just give it to your wife? But you have more and you're spending it outside. Straight away, he's created a problem. You've got more and you're spending it outside. You are a very good friend so you know exactly what is happening. So, by the time she goes back, she's got another word which is ringing in her mind, but you're spending it outside. You just put that even aside, he said, al right come, I'll help you. Come at the time which is not the right time. Come this evening. I'll be going out. You must come at about 8.00 o'clock. And this lady knew that 8.00 o'clock was too dark to be there and possibly, he had some bad intentions and indeed he did have. Indeed he had some bad intentions. He wanted to have sex with her before giving her the 20,000, but he is a very good friend of the husband. So, in fact, he's made your case even worse. May I give another example about a lady? She has a very nice friend, another lady. The husband was a medical doctor. He was not coming home, he was truant. This friend advised the wife of the doctor, well, if he's not coming home on time, you can also go out, so they started going out to public houses. Then all of a sudden, the friend started introducing other men to this lady because this is what your husband is doing. But this lady was a fine Christian, trained from a good Christian home, so she was afraid of that. She said, no, no, no. she said, let us go and see a certain man. In actual fact, he is a juju man. The went to the juju man. The juju man said, when you menstruate, bring your pad so that we can make medicine with it. We'll make some

medicine with it so that you'll put it in the husband's soup. Bring a sheep, we'll take the blood and make medicine with it, so he made some concoction in a pot. Go and put that under the bed of your husband. Then there was a talisman, go and put it in the pillow and make sure that you don't sleep on that pillow because the very day you sleep on the pillow, you'll go mad. So, you see the three stages, the pad business, the blood business and the talisman. And when the thing had been done, this very good friend went back and told the husband, you must be careful with your wife. If on a Sunday you see a palm soup, then there must be something in it, watch it. And so truly, on the Sunday, he found palm soup on the table. He said, could it be true? Then let me go and see under the bed, and there was this pot. Let me cut my pillow, there was this talisman. So the cat is out, and when he confronted the wife, it was true. So there was a divorce. A few months later, this very good friend became the wife, wedded wife of the doctor. So I will say that you must be very careful to take your problem outside. Even sometimes, you must be very careful to take your problem to your pastor. It depends upon the faithfulness of the pastor, because we have also had cases of pastors getting involved with their clients when they complained to them.

*John* That's fine. You mentioned something the other time. Do you counsel couples as a couple or as individuals.

*Isaac* Normally, in our counselling centre and especially in the Ghanaian culture, men do not want to come out for counselling. It's part of the Ghanaian culture. It's always the women who come. You can find that when we have about 100 women, we get one man. So we always want to see the individuals. But when we get good results, then you find that one day, they'll bring the man just to salute you. Then they'll tell you how things are going. But initially, in the premarital counselling, we counsel the two of them together. We start with them as individuals and we bring them together at a point.

*John* I guess that you use theological resources. You referred to the use of the Bible. Do you also use psychological and social resources in your counselling?

*Isaac* Yes, we use psychology in our counselling. In fact that is the more reason why Rev. Mrs. Ampah is doing Psychology now. It is because we realise that it is helpful. Pastor Fred has also done a little bit of Psychology. We intend that he goes to Britain to study some more

Psychology so that he can impart it to us. The reason why we are not using much is that we lack much of the knowledge in that area. So it is simple human Psychology we use.

**John** On the average, how long do couples stay in counselling?

**Isaac** It depends on what is presented, between 15 minutes to 1 hour.

**John** That's for a session?

**Isaac** For a session.

**John** How many sessions do you have?

**Isaac** Here again, we don't restrict them. As many times as they come. Incidentally, what happens is that when they gain confidence in you, then it is not only the first thing that they brought. They will continue to bring almost everything including even normal sicknesses. That's the Ghanaian culture. As soon as they have confidence in you, they'll keep on coming. So you find that everyday, if about 30 people will come, the new comers might be 5. The other 25 will be those who have been coming regularly.

**John** Which of the two do you do, helping people to solve their problems or helping support marriages so that the problems do not arise?

**Isaac** Are you talking about premarital counselling?

**John** Not premarital counselling.

**Isaac** Prevention?

**John** Yes, prevention. Which do you favour in your counselling?

**Isaac** We do the two. Normally, in the one-to-one, they'll bring problems, then in the group therapy, we'll propose some preventive methods.

**John** So that you both deal with problems and also help people with skills so that they do not have the problems in the first place.?

*Isaac* And when we become familiar with them, and they keep on coming, each time we meet them, we want to teach them one skill, in other words, when you've been able to overcome a particular problem, we keep on reminding you that it's your responsibility to keep the track so that you don't get back.

*John* That's fine. Let me ask you this other question, what are some of the ways you support marriages other than counselling?

*Isaac* We support them with prayers. Very few occasions, we support them financially, very few occasions, and then we visit them. We sometimes become friends of the family and visit them regularly. So it's prayer, financial support and etc.

*John* Let me come to this. Traditionally, you know that in the village, once the couple are married, they have support from the extended family. And now, people have moved to the cities. For example if someone has moved from the village to Kumasi where you are, do you find any support system for couples once they are away from their villages and the support they have from the family?

*Isaac* There's still support. For example, if the village is not very far, they will go there every weekend and they will come with foodstuff. Or when the parents are coming to visit, they'll bring foodstuff. And especially when they know very well that they are not financially sound, they'll always want to send something.

*John* Apart from material support, we're talking in terms of advice and those things. If the parents are far away and the people are quite removed from their ties, do they have anything?

*Isaac* Like our family will support you in prayers, because we pray for all the children, wherever they are. In our prayer lives, we do really support them in prayers. And we will always want to put our nose there to see what is happening. For example, if there is a pregnancy and the pregnancy is not going in the right direction, we give advice. There is certainly a good relationship, unlike in the west where there is complete cut off. Here there is no cut off. There is always a relationship. It is both ways, if you go to the city and you get anything, you've got to send some back home. And when they get it, they will use it to pray for you. So there's to and fro support.

**John** Do you charge fees for your counselling?

**Isaac** No, please.

**John** So, who supports the ministry?

**Isaac** This is a big problem. Who supports the ministry? Over the years, what we use to support the ministry is the books that we've written. We've written about ten books, on marriage, on finance and other Christian issues. So, we sell those books to support the ministry. The second way we support the ministry is that when we give lectures to churches and organisations, at the end of it, they give us an honorarium and that also helps us. Then occasionally, somebody has had a counselling with us and has been very successful. He will come and give us a present. These are the means that we use to support the ministry. It is not adequate but it has kept the ministry going and sometimes, they support also materially. Like sometimes somebody comes and brings you provisions and that type of thing. And when we go overseas, there is also much help from that end.

**John** So you are invited there to do some work there?

**Isaac** It looks as if all over the world, we have clients who have been there, and they recommend us to their churches, especially Ghanaian churches. They recommend us to their churches who invite us. I've just returned from the US. When I went, I gave a seminar to the Methodist Church in Bronx, to the Church of Pentecost in Bronx, to the Methodist Church in Brooklyn and to the Church of Pentecost in Brooklyn. Then I went to Washington to a Baptist Church and then to the Methodist Church. I have been invited to go back in May and in May, I'll be travelling to Ohio, New Jersey, Chicago and Atlanta if I go. So these little support help the ministry.

**John** Okay. Now let me come to attitudes towards the counselling service you offer, how do you get couples to work with. Do they come to you an their own?

**Isaac** Well, apart from our church, or may I put it this way, the whole counselling session started by myself and my wife being part of the prayer group in the Methodist Church throughout Ghana. It started at Wesley. People came from all other parts of the country to study what was going on and they went back. So, after every meeting, people will want to see

us and they would go out and tell others when they have had success. The second one is our talks, our seminars. When we go to every church, we give them the address of our office and you find that so many people will come with their problems that week. Then, we are also radio speakers. We speak very much on radio, on almost all the FM stations in Kumasi. We organise certain programmes on radio and so they get to know our name and they come to us. And so there are several areas where we announce ourselves.

**John** And how often do couples bring their problems to you?

**Isaac** I will say that when myself and Rev. Mrs. Ampah were in session, we were having not less than fifty people a day. But she's gone to school, and then I've also been travelling a lot so now it has reduced to twenty people a day. We have counselling sessions on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Wednesday and Friday, we have what we term group therapy. It is actually a prayer meeting where all the people who have come here come and pray.

**John** What do you think make people come to you for help?

**Isaac** Perhaps the results of other people. That is number one. Then perhaps the name. The name is now becoming well known, a household name and people would want to come because of the name. Probably, they've heard it on the radio or somebody recommended or they heard us speak at a gathering, so the name is becoming a household name so far as Kumasi and its environs are concerned.

**John** Is it likely that those who seek your service do so depending on their age, their educational background, their gender or church affiliation?

**Isaac** All sorts of people come to us. All sorts of people, different ages, different religious background, including Muslims. All sorts of people come to us, even including University Lecturers, pastors and others. We'll not stick ourselves to a particular age.

**John** Let me come to problems in marriage, what are the main problems couples present when they come for counselling?

**Isaac** Financial problems, sexual problems, with regard to sexual problems, what I see is that most people do not even know that their spouses must reach their climax. Most people do not know that so you find that it creates a problem from the word go. So, one of the things

that we teach is sex in marriage because it keeps on coming. And that is one of the problems that people cannot talk about. They find it difficult to tell even their pastor or counsellor. On financial problems, many do not know that when you become a couple, you lose your independent judgement on finances. Each one will want to hold back what he has and nobody knows who to do what and then it creates a problem. Then the extended family problem also keeps on coming. Very often it is the woman who complains about the extended family. Step children also lead to several problems in marriage. Again people are not conscious of the fact that if you bring in a bastard child to your family, you create a problem for yourself. Then baseless fear, fear which has no basis keeps on coming in the marriage.

**John** Fear about what?

**Isaac** The unknown, fear about the witch. Yesterday we had a letter from a lady in Israel. She thinks that there are so many witches haunting her since she went there and she is so much scared.

**John** Why do you say it is baseless fear?

**Isaac** Baseless in the sense that it has no basis. Why should I be worried about a witch? If even it is there, don't I have a stronger person to deal with them? That's why I say baseless. If I know the clue, then I wouldn't worry about them. Each individual has got other spiritual forces working against him or her. At whatever level in your life, you have that, but those who know their stand are not afraid.

**John** The issues that couples present for counselling, do they depend on the stage of marriage in which the couple are? Do the problems presented by the recently married differ from that presented by those who have been married for longer periods?

**Isaac** Yes, every stage has its own problem. For newly married couples, the problems might be finance and sex and in-laws but the older couples' might be impotence, frigidity and then from then on, misunderstanding, disobedience and the man going out with other people. So it depends on the stage.

**John** Do you think that underlying the problem people bring are some basic needs which are not being met, the need for autonomy that is not being met?

**Isaac** Well, it is certainly basic needs which are not being met, not only the autonomy but even finance. Let me give an example, when I was in Rotterdam in Germany, I met one of our clients who had just married and gone there. This client was very, very disappointed in the marriage. She works and the husband works and they put their moneys together. St the end of the month, the husband will give her only money for transport to the work place. There is no pocket money for other things. The husband will do all the shopping, purchase food, buy clothes for her and that was the end. The lady was very, very, sad. You don't even tell me how much has come to your account through me. When I ask for a little bit of my money for pocket money, you say I don't need it. This had gone on for three years and it was a big complaint. That is the need, money. Other times, they are not meeting the need because he's not providing for my clothing, he's not providing for my pocket money, not providing for the school fees of the children. So sometimes it is based on the need.

**John** And how do you help couples' to resolve their conflicts?

**Isaac** I think I mentioned earlier that we try to find out from both what part you have played and then we try to find out what part you will play to resolve the conflict. But I have told you that in our counselling, we always have one party. One party will accept the part he has played, but we don't get the other party to come near to accept his part. It is always the ladies who are accepting their parts and not the men. And when you bring in the man to accept his part, it becomes a bigger problem for you the counsellor. I'll give you an example. There was a doctor and the lady. This lady was going to cause suicide and somebody brought her to us. We found that the husband had a part to play. But then, when we told the husband, you have a part to play, this is what you have done that has caused this lady to think of committing suicide, the husband got so annoyed with us and reported us to our bishop. It is the husband who brought the lady to us to counsel but when we found out that he had been part of the problem, he was very angry and he reported us to the bishop that we're interfering in his marriage. So, we get the ladies to accept their role, the part they have played and they go and remedy, but w don't get the man to accept their part. It is always one way so far as Ghana counselling is concerned.

**John** How do you find modernisation and its effect on marriage in Ghana today?

**Isaac** I'll say it's partly helping and partly not helping. It's making people aware of their responsibilities, their rights. Instead of bringing it in a better way, it is rather bringing it in an adverse way. But those who can handle it, it brings real joy in their marriage. Now in Ghana, the women empowerment is coming in so they say we also have the right to do this and do that. But the rights have been misplaced. If even you have the right to become a medical officer, which is very good, every husband would want to have a wife who is a medical officer, but that right is only at the hospital. But sometimes they extend it to the home, and they fail to realise that they are wives and not doctors.

**John** What do you mean by they don't realise that they are wives and not doctors?

**Isaac** They bring their doctorship home. She is a minister of state. You are a minister of state for the country, but you are not the boss of your husband. Because there are so many men under them at the ministry, older, younger and all that of men, they think that their husband is also part of the ministry and they will come home still wanting to boss it on the husband and there is always a conflict. That is what modernisation is doing. But those who realise that even if I am a minister, even if I am Lt. Col. So and so, even if I am Rev. Mrs. So and so, when I come home, I am under my husband, then things will be okay.

**John** So in that sense, let me ask this in terms of modernisation. The roles of partners, I think that has been one of the thorny issues, maybe in terms of household work. The women are saying if we are both engaged in wage labour, then we should do work in the house too together. Again they are saying that we are equal and therefore when it comes to taking important decisions, our views should not be counted as foolishness. We have the right to speak out our minds and what we say might be the best in the interest of the home and family. What do you think about these two areas?

**Isaac** In modernisation, the role of the man and the role of the woman is so well expressed and we don't need to change anything.

**John** Well expressed in what sense?

**Isaac** Well expressed Biblically, and even well expressed culturally and well defined even in our state. There are certain roles which are for you. If I am to come in to do something which is your role, I come in with the understanding that you know it is your role and I'm coming in

to help. May I give one example? In our culture, it is the responsibility of the lady to work in the home, like cooking, sweeping, like washing plates. If because we are both working, and I come home to cook, I will want you to appreciate that the cooking was your duty but I've done it as a darling. If I am to hover the place, I want you to see that it is your responsibility but I'm doing it as a result of the love that I have for you. I was in Germany, again in Rotterdam and then I was in the room when I heard a quarrel between husband and wife. You know it is Saturday and you've got to hover and you're just sitting down and then very soon, you'll just take your coat and go out. And then there was a quarrel. And then I came in and said, it is true that it is a Saturday, but you could have dot this man to do the hovering with better communication, hello, darling, it's Saturday, and you've been doing it for me all the time. I hope today, you'll hover for me. Thank you darling, I love you so much. You've been so supportive. The man will just rise up and do it. You don't just go and ask him as his responsibility. In the same vein, we know that in our culture it is the man who should support the home financially, if the woman is doing that, then you must appreciate it. What is lacking is appreciation. If it is your duty and the other person is doing it, appreciate it.

*John* Let's look at it this way. What you are saying is true in terms of traditional culture, but we know that culture is dynamic. It is always moving and always changing. Traditionally, the woman would be in the house and therefore, they did all that work, that was their role. The man knows that his role is to go and work and bring in the moneys. Now, because culture is changing, we find that both the man and the woman both have to be engaged in wage labour. Eventually that type of roles, that type of arrangement that pertained in traditional culture is not suitable for us now because of the changes that have obviously taken place. That is the argument people are making. And therefore people are saying that the roles were suitable for the culture of yesteryears but we can't say it is suitable for the culture of today. Because of the economy and other factors, things have changed. Women have to go and bring in money. Sometimes, the women even bring in more to help the home than the man.

*Isaac* I agree, but what I'm saying is that the courtesy attached to the cultural changes must not go off. Courtesy costs nothing, but if you don't bring it in your marriage, it can ruin your marriage. I'm saying that you've gone out to work, but remember your role. Let me cite the case of a hairdresser. We both leave home at a particular time. I go and work and come home at about 5.00 o'clock. Because of the nature of your work, you come home at about 10.00

o'clock. Who looks after the kids and the husband? If I will have to accept your coming home at 10 or 11, other things must be done so that your role will not be put off. Food must be ready. I may just have to come and put it in a microwave for the children. Or you have to come and see what is happening and go back, or you have to encourage your husband and children to come and help you in your job. Some sort of arrangement must happen. But we don't leave the courtesy out, the appreciation of the part he is playing. You know your role, it is not the man's role to come and cook because both of us are working. It is not the role of the man. So, even though we are changing, the principles do not change. They are still there and we don't need to let modernisation spoil the fine culture that we have.

**John** Obviously, these are issues that are coming up. In terms of your counselling, how do you deal with such problems?

**Isaac** Again, let me cite this hairdresser and the manager. The hairdresser started coming home at 10.00 p.m. and the husband was coming at 6. There was a big gap, between 6 and 10. And then the husband decided to go out. First he was coming just before 10 and then he started going beyond. When they came to us, there were two options. Either the lady came home and meet her husband and found other people to do the work whilst she is at home. Or she kept quiet and allow the husband to spend the time the way he wanted. She agreed to come home early to meet the husband. That was a fine decision. And when she stopped being away as far as 10.00 o'clock, the husband also stopped going out. That solved the problem.

**John** So, in a sense her job was affected?

**Isaac** Yes, she had to find other people to take care of the job to save her marriage. Another issue came to us. Two lecturers at the University came to us. They were both Catholics. Then the woman felt that the religious experience she was having was not enough, so she joined a spiritual church outside and refused to join the husband to church despite the husband's protest. Then they came to us. She had to solve the issue, she either stayed and enjoyed her spiritual experience at the expense of her marriage or she joined the husband to church as they used to do. She had realised that the husband had started flirting with people on Sundays especially when she was out. So she decided to join the husband and things got solved. Now they are the backbone of their church.

**John** I want us to come to the issue of premarital education and counselling. What is your view of premarital education?

**Isaac** Veer, very important. May I give you an example for us to see the importance of it? There was a teacher who wanted to marry another person. This is a new teacher but he wanted to marry a person who is not a teacher but a trader. Incidentally, this lady had married a very wealthy Ahlaji before, who had pumped money for this lady. This lady had been able to ride in a Mercedes Benz before. The ex-husband was very, very rich. She already had two children and this young teacher who has just come out of training college had met this lady and wanted to marry her. So, when he came to us, we had to educate him on what to expect when he marries such a person. First finance could be his problem. If he is not able to cope with her financial needs and if she is not prepared to understand, there will be a problem, so he needed to know that. Secondly, she already had two children with a wealthy man. If she brings in these children and the ex-husband continues to support them, there could be a problem. And thirdly, she is older than he is and she's had better experience in life than him. These are all issues that he had to look at before he got in. He was happy we pointed out these to him. This is only one example of premarital education. There was another person, a lady who had been in sixth form preparing to go to the university. This lady has got a boyfriend who is a tailor, and this tailor only has elementary education. You see a vast difference. Supposing she is able to go to the university, see the amount of knowledge and experience she will gain and the way this gentleman knows nothing about education. . She'll get disturbed when she's walking with him and she meets the classmates. The type of language he will use, so we need to educate such a person. So normally when they come we teach them on problems to anticipate.

**John** And how do you go about it?

**Isaac** By first of all knowing their background. That is the first thing. Their background could tell us certain things. We get to know their interests, their religious background, their educational background, and their family background. We try to let them know about these things and then we bring certain issues out of it. . like a lady is going to marry a gentleman who comes from a polygamous home. She's got to be careful. It could be possible that this gentleman could also be polygamous. So we bring out certain life issues. There is a gentleman who wants plenty of children and he is going to marry a young lady who comes from a family where the mother of the girl has only two children, the grandmother has only one, the only

daughter and the great grandmother has got only few children. If the gentleman wants about six children, he should know that the best he could have will be two. We will point out that to him. So we use life issues to educate them.

*John* When do you think people should begin premarital education and here, let me distinguish between premarital counselling and premarital education. When should people begin to learn about marriage?

*Isaac* As early as 14. There are certain issues for the teenagers which needs to be discussed. As soon as for example, a lady starts menstruating, she has to be educated about menstrual cycle and the fact that from then on, she is a fully fledged woman. Anything could happen if she made a mistake. So she has to know that. She has to know how she would be able to control herself, her feelings. That's important. So as early as 14 plus, they should start praying for their future partner.

*John* And how do you think such education can go on?

*Isaac* At the schools, not individuals. At school, they should talk about the biological aspect of it, the life issues because it is very important. We were experiencing certain things with boys about masturbation, about wetting. Sometimes, it disturbed them so much. If they have had premarital education, it wouldn't disturb them. Wetting is a normal thing. We will say it is a means God uses to bail us out when the sexual feelings get so high. It is a fine way. But people don't know and they get disturbed, especially the boys who want some sort of decency in life. So we need to teach them and that is 14 plus.

*John* So, apart from the school, where else do you think that such education can take place?

*Isaac* At church, in our youth meetings. The Methodist Church, in the girl's fellowship, in the youth fellowship, you need to tell them how to choose your partner. You need to tell them about a perfect relationship and so on and so forth. So at school and in organisations in the church.

*John* And do you actually distinguish between premarital education and premarital counselling?

**Isaac** Yes, the education is for all of them, the counselling is for those who are getting ready to marry.

**John** Do you insist on premarital counselling for people who are getting ready to marry?

**Isaac** It's very important. And our church insists on it. In fact, not only our church, in Ghana most churches will insist that you must go through premarital counselling.

**John** And how long do you think that is best for premarital counselling?

**Isaac** Three months should be fine and about ten sessions will be fine. The reason why I insist on it is that, so many people, even in the black culture, do not know about the sickle cell anaemia. Out of the premarital counselling, you get to know that. People have very little idea about AIDS and during that time, you can teach on that. You can talk about the need to go to the hospital and check certain things.

**John** As we come to an end let's just have an assessment of this ministry. What do you think has been the effect of this ministry in the lives of couples?

**Isaac** I think it's, I'll call it positive. It's had a positive impact on so many people. At the moment this ministry seems to be the ministry for the age. Few years back, it was the deliverance ministry which was on top. But currently, I think the counselling ministry should be on top. Unfortunately, we do not have many of them. But the few we have are making a great impact in the lives of people.

**John** Have you done any research to find out about the impact it's having on people?

**Isaac** Not formal research. We only rely on the experience as it is brought to our knowledge. That is what we rely on. We've not had any formal research.

**John** Do you document some of those experiences?

**Isaac** Not really.

**John** Finally, how do you hope to improve on your effectiveness in this ministry, knowing that it is very important, and as you put it, it's the ministry of the age. I think there should be room for improvement. Are there any plans?

**Isaac** Certainly, there is room for improvement. Unfortunately, I am 63 now. I had wanted to be out of it by 60, but unfortunately, my wife who should take over is in school. We are training a child who has finished his Bible School training. We want him to go for further training and come and perhaps much of the improvement will be his. All that we want to do is to put up the infrastructure for him to operate well. This centre, we intend to turn it into a retreat centre where people coming here can opt to have counselling or not to. So that is part of the improvement. We also do have so many people coming home and we intend to have offices at home. Those people cannot come during the week because of their work so they would want to come on Saturdays and Sundays when we don't come here.

**John** Well, it's been nice talking with you and knowing about what you are doing here. I must say that I'm very grateful. I have taken a lot of your time but I believe that something good will come out of it and together we can help couples in their marriages.

**Isaac** We also want to wish you success in your endeavour and especially in your training and we hope we'll get another good counsellor. And I hope you're coming back, not staying?

**John** I don't fancy living outside.

**Isaac** Because this is the third parson who has used our counselling centre for a programme like that. Kow Ghunney and Dr. John Bonful also used this centre, quite apart from others from other churches like the Presbyterian Church. So I hope you'll come back.

**John** I will.

## APPENDIX VI

### INTERVIEW WITH REV. DANIEL JENKINS

**PROFILE:** *The Rev. Daniel Jenkins was the first full time director of the Family Enrichment Ministry of the International Central Gospel Church. He served in this position from 1990 to 2001 and was responsible for the organisation and development of the ministry. This interview was conducted at his office in Accra on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.*

**John** Please, can you tell me your name and the nature of your work?

**Rev. Jenkins** I am Pastor Daniel Jenkins, the pastor responsible for our family enrichment ministry. As the name implies, we hope to enrich the family lives of our members. We believe that there must be a ministry to help every member of the Church family. At least, everybody is coming from a family background, therefore this ministry has almost become the nerve centre of the Church. I believe you are very much aware of the fact that it takes stronger families to build stronger communities, societies, nations and Churches. Without strong families, there is no way by which we can develop any strong society, so we are committed very much to build strong families in our Church in order that we might have a Church family that is together.

Under our family enrichment ministry, we have ministry to the unmarried. We call it “the destiny club”. We have ministry also to the married. We try to develop cell groups for couples in our Church. The reason is for offering effective post-marital programme, such that after they’ve been counselled, when they get married, there must be a consistent, progressive, follow-up work that must help sustain the family. So the work of the family enrichment ministry never stops. It begins from when the person has grown to become a young adult. That is when my work begins with them, somewhere along their university education, or for those who decide to defer and because of that they have to work. But it starts from when we identify young adults. These are the people we group together and we call them “the destiny club”. So we help them to be able to assess themselves – their readiness, their spiritual readiness, their mental readiness, psychological readiness, their financial readiness, emotional readiness, and we try to offer guidance through interactive programmes to help them to

identify with each other and be able to build lasting friendships. We believe that when platonic relationships are established among them, it goes a long way to help them make constructive decisions when they have to make decisions as to choice of partners. So we have a very elaborate programme for them. Sometimes, meetings are just spiritual, other times, they are inspirational, educational. We try to have a holistic idea of the total person. We are looking at their spirit, soul and body for them to develop lasting values so that when somebody wants to make a choice, of a life partner, it's not just a matter of looking at the outside, but looking at the character. We spend time also dealing with character-building topics.

As for the post-marital counselling, the moment the person gets married, three months when they are back from their honeymoon, we start the consistent programme for them, trying to find out about the adjustment process, how it is going. We want to look at how they are running their finances, we want to look at their sexual lives, whether there are any infiltration of their families in the relationship and so on and offer guidance, trying to help them make the necessary adjustment. There are some who actually have found it quite helpful because they've been going through problems. Other people were getting along nicely and with such people, we just have to encourage them and let them keep ahead. But we want to forestall the incidence where before a matter comes to us, then it has got to such stages where very little can be done about it.

Apart from post-marital and premarital counselling, we are responsible for all the weddings that take place here, which means that I have a programme that helps us to have an oversight of who has finished premarital counselling, at what time they organised the engagement. We also fix a diary for those who must have their marriages blessed by way of weddings. Here, we are dealing with a congregation that runs between 6000 and 7000, so almost every week, there are weddings that are taking place. We have categories of weddings because we don't expect that everybody will want to have a big type of wedding, the kind that offers pomp and pageantry. We believe there are others who want very simple weddings at the office instead of the Church Auditorium. We have about four different categories of wedding just to help them meet each couple's pocket. We don't want to restrict anybody.

We have ministry to widows, we have ministry to single parents, we have ministry to divorcees, we have ministry to couples with younger children and couples with teenage children. We organise all these at various times to meet specific needs. We have a training department too; committed to training leadership to help the pastor-in-charge to do a more reflective work. In fact at this stage, we have decentralised our marriage counselling. We used to have a system where we had corporate counselling, we keep all the counselees in a group, but as at now the numerical strength has grown so much that we think it is not meeting individual needs. So we have trained a group of family life facilitators to do more of a one-to-one counselling. This means giving the counselees the opportunity to be mentored by their counsellors so that they don't have to come to me all the time. So, the counsellors work never stops. They more or less become friends with the counselees.

I don't know but this is just a bird's eye view of what goes on, apart from the fact that anytime, I am in the office solving problems. Hurting families report their problems to me and in the quietness and privacy of my office, I try to offer the assistance if God helps us to be able to save situations of divorce.

*John* I will come back to that later, but may I find out how and when this ministry began in this Church?

*Rev. Jenkins* I was asked to take up this responsibility in 1990. Before then, somebody was doing it but it was just an auxiliary part of his commitment and he couldn't get time for it until after my Bible School training, I was asked to take it up. From that time up to date, I have been responsible for it.

*John* Do you have records as to when it actually began before you took over?

*Rev. Jenkins* It began around 1986. The Church itself was started in 1984, that is, the International Central Gospel Church. By 1986, it had become necessary for some form of work to be done for especially young people who wanted to marry. So that was when I can say that the marriage enrichment ministry began in the Church but as a well organised programme as we have it today, it began in 1990.

*John* From what you said earlier, I suppose that there are others working together with you in this ministry. About how many are they?

**Rev. Jenkins** Sure! The first people we trained were all deacons in the Church. I suppose that before you become a deacon, we should have assessed your family life. So we started up training from there. So we have this core. They are the people who have become our family life facilitators. But besides, there are individual couples who have shown interest and we have tried to incorporate them. Others themselves come and say, "Pastor, I believe I have the leading. I delight to offer some help to younger couples." We train them. But I have various committees that I work with. For instance, when we come to our couples club, which is the group, the vehicle by which we carry on our posy-marital programme, I have a committee that I work with, "the couples' club" committee. And then we have "the destiny club" executive committee. (These are the bachelors and spinsters who have grouped themselves together. We call them "the destiny club"). We try to look round from amongst them those who have leadership qualities and then put them together to form a committee.

**John** A bit about the training. How are they trained?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah! We have a syllabus to follow towards the training of our counsellors. We use most weekends. I said that the pastors are involved sometimes. We bring in resource persons, people who are into psychology. Let me call them psychologists, people who are offering some therapy to come in because we know that in dealing with human problems, we need people who have specialised backgrounds to come in. So we bring them in and they offer us insight just to help build in the counsellor, a broad view of human personality, why human beings behave the way they behave. We try to look at the temperament and try to effectively understand the human person.

**John** More about the training. We know that much of the training and education here in Ghana has been from the West. The principles and all that has been going on in the training, are they based on Western principles or there are some things that are based on traditional ideas?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah! In fact, most of the materials that we have used apart from my book (I have written a book which we use for marriage counselling). The first thing we try to do is to help them to effectively use the book – "How to have an enjoyable marriage". And we endeavour to help them to understand the book. I have written a manual to it which sets forth the aims and objects of every topic that is treated and how they can effectively handle the discussions in such a way that they interact instead of a lecturing type of scenario. This is how

we actually help them. We think that the book takes care of both the premarital and post-marital, though now I'm developing another strategy. We want to reduce the length of time. We have six months premarital counselling, about 24 counselling sessions. We realise that it is so deep that when they've gone through it, they think they know everything. So we want to reduce the content and pass on a lot to the post-marital counselling so that after marriage, we follow them up steadily for one year before we release you to the cell group.

**John** Back to the question. My interest is in trying to find out trends from our traditional support systems. I don't know if there is anything in the book in that respect?

**Rev. Jenkins** In fact, I think we're using this book because it was written by a Ghanaian from the traditional background. Though we have learnt a lot from the West, we have tried to make it relevant to our culture. So we are looking at the Ghanaian and his culture and trying to handle him from that level, because if he is going to cultivate marriage, definitely, his traditional background is going to contribute either to the health or the destruction of it and so we try to make whatever one reads from the west relevant to the situation.

**John** Can you just mention a few of the things (I hope to get a copy of the book to read myself) that you find in traditional society which is helpful for present day marriages.

**Rev. Jenkins** For instance, when it comes to the way marriage is cultivated right from the beginning, you realise that we go through procedures which are alien to the West. I know very well that in the West, when two young people decide to marry, what is most necessary is that they are of age necessary for the to cultivate a relationship with the intention of marriage. And when they are quite convinced and find that they are compatible, so to speak, it's a matter of, maybe, asking the lady, "will you marry me"? If the lady agrees, he slides a ring on her finger and the lady is engaged. In our setting, it is not so. We believe that when you saw the lady, the lady didn't just drop from heaven. She had been brought up in a family and therefore, you can't just slide a ring on her finger and call her engaged. You necessarily have to follow certain traditional processes. The first you do is, you want to send your elders. You don't even go in person. You send your elders to go and find out if there is the possibility of you taking the hand of the lady in question, and you make various presentations there, and when that is settled, a time is fixed for an engagement. The engagement is our traditional marriage.

**John** I was going to come to that. The idea of engagement is one of the main issues I'm considering. Are you going to say that the term engagement, as we use it here in Ghana today, is appropriate?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah! If I look at it from the Christian perspective, it will be very, very appropriate because in the Christian perspective, we don't want to think that the exchange or the payment of dowry or exchange of gifts at the ceremony should become the total essence of marriage. We think that as the Bible says, God blesses them to complete the cycle or process. We want to see the people present their marriage at the alter before they go to begin living together. In the traditional sense, the term engagement is irrelevant because the exchange of gifts is our traditional marriage. If people do not have any Christian inclinations, the moment the two families sit together, and the various dowries and exchange of gifts are done, the man literally takes the woman to his home. In the evening, they make sure that her belongings are moved to the man's place, and she is the wife, and it is accepted in the society. They do not really need to do anything more if the families accept the fact that we have given our relative to you in marriage, and once that is done, that is it. So I think that the term engagement is more Christian.

**John** Yeah! But the question that has been bothering my mind and the minds of other people is how Christian is the term engagement? This is because, even the weddings and others we have borrowed from the West, it is very interesting to know that those were the traditional marriages of the West. But then when the West was Christian, (I'm using that wisely because the west is no more Christian) they tried to bring their traditions under the purview of God. And I think about the idea of bringing what is traditionally ours under the purview of God. It looks like we got the idea of weddings from the West and it came with Christianity so we take it for granted that weddings per se is Christian such that even after the traditional marriage customary rites have been performed, we still want to see that a wedding has taken place.

**Rev. Jenkins** I think that besides the West, there are specific obligations that every marriage satisfy and this is what actually cuts across our traditional marriages. Marriage must satisfy a spiritual obligation, a legal obligation and a social obligation. These three obligations are necessary and when we are officiating a marriage ceremony, we want to ensure that these three obligations are met. First of all, the society should have approved of the two people

marrying. That is when our two families come together. And you know that before any marriage is solemnised, a licence should have been obtained from the government. So in actual fact, weddings, if they are done properly in our Churches are done in favour of government. It is government who actually authorise it because if an officer came around and realised that you didn't have a licence, there will be a caveat against the marriage and it will be abrogated. So that satisfies the legal aspect of it and that the marriage has come under the ordinance. Spiritually, because the idea of marriage itself is God's idea, ultimately, God must be in the centre of it. He has all the blueprint of marriage. It is not a man's idea even though we can try to write books and try to explain it, but absolutely, it is His idea and everything that makes it work can be found in the Bible. So, yes, the term wedding is borrowed from the West but I think that it is very relevant when we want to look at various obligations of marriage. That is the way I see it.

*John* Thank you very much. So can we say that there are any area of conflict between Western principles and traditional principles? At least you have mentioned one, that in the West, a man can just meet a lady and say that I will marry you, which is at variance with our traditions. Apart from this, do you find any areas where there is conflict?

*Rev. Jenkins* I learn that in the West, even now, they are confronted with a philosophy, coexistence, where two people live together. They are not married and everybody sees them but they decide to coexist and not really get committed to anything. When they are really tired of each other, you go your way and I go my way. After all, we have not committed ourselves to anything, which is completely unacceptable as far as our traditions are concerned. In actual fact, traditionally, if you lived with somebody, be it a man or a woman, the families could come and institute some legal measures against you to pay for. And you put a woman in the family way, having not satisfied the various traditional rites, you will be taken up and you will have to pay very dearly for it. In the West, it is not so. The only criteria is that when you are of age, you take decisions that affect you and you have to accept responsibility for the decisions you take but that can happen here.

*John* May I add this. Traditional society is actually being influenced by the west in various areas. Do you anticipate a time when such things from the West will take place in our society today. For example, talking about people just living together, I know that in some cases, people are just living together and do not go to perform any rites. But still, it is not approved

as it is approved in the West. Do you anticipate a time, when such things will be approved here in our society?

**Rev. Jenkins** I know that society is moving at a very fast rate. As long as young people are travelling to the West and they are coming with a lot of their traditions, I don't think it will be wrong for me to anticipate the time when we will be experiencing this. This is not with the lower class of our society, but with our enlightened people. People who have gone to study and therefore come with degrees and occupy high levels will be caught up with this kind of scenario. But I hope God will do something about it because it is not going to help society at all.

So it becomes imperative upon us to be able to stand up very strongly, educate people from the pulpit to the rank and file and let them know that marriage is for permanence. It calls for the highest level of commitment therefore you cannot cultivate it anyhow. It must be well done, especially, if we want to see the strength of the family coming to bear both on the church and society. So when people are not committed and they just coexist, sometimes, the security of the individuals who are cultivating it is at stake. I believe marriage should provide two people the security of the home where, even, the kids that are brought up there are brought up in an environment where they feel some security. In cases where they just coexist, the children completely feel insecure.

**John** You mentioned your views about marriage, that it must meet some social, legal and spiritual obligations. Does it mean that you are saying that from the Christian point of view, marriage is contracted after the wedding and not after the customary rights?

**Rev. Jenkins** From the Christian point of view, we've tried to displace the essence of the engagement or traditional marriage. We want to see marriage being cultivated when the marriage has been solemnised. That is when it must begin. That is the Christian point of view. But as a Ghanaian, when two people get married customarily, at least the laws of the land recognises that customary marriage. The only problem Christians have found with our customary marriage seating is that it allows for polygamy. There is nothing that makes the people feel really committed to an individual. The marriage does not become monogamy again. The doors are open for the man to want to have much more than one. That is why I think that the Christian ideal of not wanting that to happen is very relevant, to help the people to feel committed to each other for the rest of their lives. That is what we have tried to project.

**John** Those you have married here, is it necessary that they go through the performance of the customary rites?

**Rev. Jenkins** Sure! In fact, it's our prerequisite. We never will allow anybody to have marriage solemnised when he has not performed the traditional rites. I once had a lawyer in my marriage counselling class who was trying to explain that so far as the laws of the land are concerned, (that was the first time I was hearing this) we are actually marrying twice. Traditionally, when people perform the rites, they are married and the law accepts it. For us to let people get married the traditional way get married by way of the wedding, it means that we just make them marry twice.

**John** I was going to say just that. You mentioned that the law accepts the customary marriage even though it doesn't have the legal backing. I appreciate the problem of giving the chance to polygamy and so forth, but then, once people have gone through the customary rites, by law, they are married. So to allow people to go through that, as you have said that it is the prerequisite for people to be customarily married, and then make them have the wedding, in a sense, it looks like one is marrying twice. That's an area I'm looking at and my thinking is that, maybe, as Christians, we can begin looking at it again and try to bring everything into one ceremony. We could still bring the customary rites under the purview of God. As I was saying, the wedding is another culture's way of marriage and they brought that under the purview of God. I think that as Christians, we can advocate for the legal backing to the traditional marriage so that we satisfy all the three areas we are looking at.

**Rev. Jenkins** You see, the problems that we have had with our traditional marriage, so far as I am concerned, concerns the perception that goes along with it. You see marriage is a covenant relationship, and in every covenant, there must be the words of the covenant with which the two people bind themselves. When it comes to a wedding, you see that coming out prominently because there is the exchange of words and people bind themselves together to the covenant by the words they speak to each other. But when it comes to our traditional setting, our tradition proper does not even give room for the two people even to be present at the ceremony. Now it is relaxes a bit. The lady is shown to the in-laws. Sometimes even the man can be around and they allow some kind of funfair. But traditionally, the man must be waiting somewhere, so the element of a covenant does not come in. The people do not

exchange any words. Few people sit together and they say that bring this and bring that, then they sat that they are married and they can go and in the evening, they send the woman there.

**John** Maybe, the only thing, especially among the Akan, that you might find is where the parents of the girl ask her that this man has sent his people to come and ask for your hand, do you want to go? In a sense, seeking the girl's consent. It could be that even though words are not explicitly spoken, there is an element of an agreement between them, because by sending his relatives to the girl's family, the man seeks to enter into an agreement.

**Rev. Jenkins** But you know that it is not wholly true. There are times when our traditional setting also can impose because of interaction and the fact that, I know "so so and so" and I like the family. I think they are well educated. I want you to marry his daughter. Sometimes they just do that without the consent of the man. This is where I think that sometimes, we put people in bondage. Sometimes, people live in marriage, though the trend has changed a lot, but we know that in the old times, many people, especially younger women, were married to people they didn't even know. They just send a picture to the man and they get married and you look at the age difference and you see that there is a generational problem immediately. The lady is a young girl and she wants a young man to be jumping around with and she is thrown into the arena of an older folk and they can't get along. Sometimes, the young woman is compelled to respect him because the man almost looks like her father, but in actual fact, she is there like a servant and is used to bring forth children. Such a thing is very difficult to be seen in the West, because it is the consent of the younger person who wants to marry one he likes, not just anybody pushing him to something he does not like.

**John** Much said on that. How do you view marital problems? Are they physical, spiritual or both?

**Rev. Jenkins** I'm not the type of person who wants to spiritualise things immediately. I believe that marriage is a physical type of relationship. You are not dealing with a spirit. Though my background as a pastor and my encounter with various couples with varying problems sometimes make me think that there are some problems that go beyond the eyes. Others, because of their background, and that probably, they've been subjected in their belief systems, and sometimes contracts that are signed on their behalf by ancestors and so on, and certain family yokes and so on contribute to a large extent, that sometimes marital problems go beyond just the physical. There are elements of spirituality that many times come in but

before I come there, I should have analysed the matter and diagnosed it properly to satisfy myself that the physical elements have been dealt with and I begin to look at the spiritual side. But even then one must be very careful because it has to do with the person's family background. That must be handled carefully expecting that your counsellee will be willing enough to give out the information and must come to the point where he sees that it is true, these things are there and that is what is actually affecting our relationship. Then you can actually deal with the issue spiritually.

*John* So you agree that it's both physical and spiritual, and in terms of spiritual, maybe, the past experiences of the person comes in?

*Rev. Jenkins* Yes.

*John* Are there any theoretical presuppositions that underline your work? Theoretical in the sense that is there any theory, be it psychological theory that underlies your work. If I could explain that further, psychologically, we have theories of psychoanalysis, behavioural theories, etc. So, your method of counselling, are there certain theoretical principles? It may not come out clearly, but underlying it are certain principles. Psychoanalytically, you really look into some background. When we talk of behavioural, we might think that to change somebody, the person must pass through some behaviour therapy, etc.

*Rev. Jenkins* I believe that the Bible introduces us to the principles of life and all life is based on principles. Whatever goes up must come down because of gravitational force. I believe that when people are introduced to the right principles, especially of relationships and they are ready to conform to those principles that marriage work. I believe that not all marriages will work. I almost felt that I needed to change a lot of my notes. I felt that some people really do not have to marry or God must be kind to some people not to make them marry because of their philosophy of life, their perception and concept of marriage. I have almost convinced myself that there are people who are naturally good, who have a wider capacity for effectively adjusting to take hold of things as soon as possible. Whereas we have some other people who might be well trained, (I'm talking of, by way of education) but because somehow, their philosophy of life works against certain divine principles, might have a relationship very, very tough. It's very interesting that I have come across well-educated people who just could not make very simple adjustments to make a relationship work. In that

sense, it makes me believe that for some people, their problem is their philosophy that works against their physical union.

**John** May I just cut in. So, such people, is it possible for them to learn to be different?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yes! You see! The problem I've had or have seen with people is that some people have not even learned to understand themselves, and if you have not learned to understand yourself in order to manage yourself, I'm wondering how you can manage the other person.

**John** Well! There are two things. They have not learned to manage themselves. Is it possible that they have the capacity to learn?

**Rev. Jenkins** Every body has the capacity to learn, to want to reform in areas of their lives if they have the desire and they want the relationship to work. I see that marriage is an effort because I believe that any two people are compatible.

**John** You made a statement that you don't believe that every marriage will work. What happens if you recognise that a particular marriage is not working?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah! The people, I see, endure the marriage instead of enjoying it, maybe, for the reason of the fact that they are Christians and when they divorce, other people will talk against them. So, they learn to endure. Other times, because of children, they still have to agree to disagree and disagree to agree so that the security of the kids is not jeopardised.

**John** Well! That is what you see people doing. Do you think that, for example, I know that in the West, the slightest problem and people decide to out. So, marriages that you have seen that people are just struggling to endure and there is nothing that they are getting. They are not enjoying the marriage. Would you, maybe, in extreme circumstances, counsel such couples to consider breaking up?

**Rev. Jenkins** At all, because I consider the relationship as a covenant. Except where the people go into certain excesses like if the man develops extramarital relationships which become obvious, the other person may want to opt out. Or when assault, which assume very violent dimensions, then probably, a separation may have to be instituted. But as a pastor, I have no moral or spiritual basis to commend divorce. I also believe that some people might today not have the relationship going easy, but I believe that growth is dynamic and growth is so powerful that along the line, they might be relaxed in themselves to want to have things

righted. Tough I believe that certain relationships are difficult to handle, I believe that if they are guided, things can be worked out as they grow in their school of life. I believe that even parenting can change you a lot. When you begin to endure a child that is very troublesome. You may have everything to make the child secure, but do not even want to stay at home, your philosophy will be challenged and you will realise that when it comes to the human person, it is very difficult to determine things. I have seen very healthy people who have had children with various problems and you know that there is nothing they can do about it. So I believe that some people today might experience problems they may not be able to handle and therefore you assume that that marriage can never work. Let's guide them to understand that it is still possible and workable. You have to do that by faith and tell them "it's possible the two of you can make the necessary adjustment to effectively handle your marriage". Offer them your friendship and guidance and prayers and trust God to make a difference.

**John** Deriving out of that, I want to know about the procedure in your counselling and whether you actually take the views of the person who is coming to you for counselling, or you supply the data for your counselling, or you have a combination of both. I'm saying this because in the West specifically, there is so much emphasis on non-directive counselling. It's what the person says which is important, so for example, talking about guidance, many people will say that it's not right for you to guide. The person should actually decide for himself or herself what to do. So, what is your procedure?

**Rev. Jenkins** I have a lot of concepts which guide me into counselling with people, but in this Church, we have various procedures that an individual or a couple who intend getting married are subjected to. First of all, there must be a registration of the relationship with the Church, precisely with my office. Every body in our Church is very much aware that once you are in a relationship with the intention of marriage, you must make the church aware. Therefore you must come to register the relationship. Then I give one appointment for us to interact. First of all, it is more of a verbal interaction, trying to find out when the relationship got started, just trying to know individuals, breaking any barrier between the pastor, and creating friendship. That is the first appointment. The second appointment is when we try to find various elements of acquaintance and compatibility between the two people. We believe that if we can identify them as people who are compatible, then you can be sure that the little counsel that you give them should help them to become better. We have this inventory we call personality inventory. With the personality inventory, it's an exercise we give to the two

people and they have to just fill it out individually, privately. You want to give marks. For instance, the first is the spiritual inventory. We want you to grade his desire for God's word, his prayer life ...

**John** That is for the other person and not yourself?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yes, for the other person and not yourself. Okay, this is spirituality. After that we have mental and intellectual inventory, character trait inventory, emotional inventory, social inventory-that has to do with personal relationships, general performance, and then we summarise and analyse. This part is for the pastor to deal with. After that we sit the two people down. They exchange the sheets and they look at what their friend is saying about them. "Is there anything which you are nit satisfied with?" Then they can bring out their arguments. Sometimes, their real character begins to come out. One person might say that "you don't really know me, because, this one, I do better than what you have given me." You give them the opportunity to interact and you observe. It helps you to identify specific areas where they might need some help.

**John** May I chip in something here. When two people come to you and say they are in love, sometimes, they may want to cover up on issues. How sure are you that in the inventory, they are going to be true? They are going to be objective?

**Rev. Jenkins** Fir instance, this one, it is mighty easy for you to have a fair idea though there are some people who may not give you a very realistic analysis because they think, let me not say anything bad about the person. But before then, we have said here that the aim of this inventory is to assess how much you know each other. You are expected to fill all responses exactly as you see your partner. All traits are positive and they are expected to be liked by all including you. The responses therefore reflect likeability of the other person. Therefore, only one response is expected for each question. After filling in the responses, this document will be discussed with your partner by a marriage counsellor. So at least, it's not a matter of you trying to hide anything from us. You will have to help us. You have to give us the right tools. If you don't give us the right tools, we cannot also help except God gives us a word of knowledge. Which most of the time, God does not do. So we first of all have to let them understand that we are here to help them. We are not in here to destroy their relationship. You must give us opportunity to help you. If you tell a lie, you are not helping us and you are not helping yourself. We do all that so we discuss this with them.

Then we have another inventory, marriage readiness inventory. We also want to assess their general perception of marriage and we critically ask them specific questions here to help us make a proper analysis and assessment. And then we have this one which gives us a personal idea of a lot of things. We want to have personal information, job information, Christian life and service, relationship information, information about previous relationships etc.

**John** That is about the person himself?

**Rev. Jenkins** The person himself is filling this for us. So there are the three. I am revising all these things. In fact, I want to rather tighten the mode of entry. I was just trying to put a few things here to guide me. Reasons for premarital counselling. For instance, I say here that "premarital counselling gives counselees the opportunity to ventilate fears, doubts and wishes regarding marriage in each other so that they recognise the importance of inner feelings in the marital relationship. It helps the couple to build and strengthen a realistic positive philosophy toward marriage by encouraging the couple to discuss their basic values. The minister aids them to realise that no marriage is perfect and that all marriages requires effort, compromise, selflessness and adjustment and so on."

I'm always trying to develop some new strategies to meet the changes because as you get along, you want to revise whatever you have been doing to get the right thing done. Sometimes, people have come here and projected themselves as so spiritual and you expect that they are going to have 'heaven-on-earth' marriage, and in a couple of months after their marriage, they begin to experience problems. Then you ask, "what did I do wrong? What should I have seen which I didn't see?" This is what is coming up now, and I want to revise my structures and ask more questions than ever to find out if some people can be stopped at all.

**John** In the light of that, would you say that communication with the client or counsellee is only verbal, or sometimes you look for other things, other types of communication? Maybe, when the two of them are sitting before you, you try to observe them?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yes. There are some people, you readily even can assess the level of that relationship, how far it has gone. I want to look out for two people who effectively communicate with themselves. In fact, when they come here, the trick, especially in my first

lesson, I want to find out the element of friendship involved between the two of them. I ask them questions which make them talk to each other. Why do you want to marry this man? What have you seen in him? And they begin to say "he's this he's that." So what are your expectations? What do you expect in marriage? You are literally talking to the other person about of what the expectation of the partner is. In fact, when I started, I developed a 77 questionnaire format which I was using. But it took a long time, so with time, I cut it down and asked specific questions that makes us get on. But we take our time and try to see through their eyes to find out whether the element of friendship and communication is strong. Those who are good communicators, sometimes, even when they are talking, they want to touch the other person and you find out that they can look into each other's eyes and communicate. Psychologically, it means that they are friends and they can talk realistically to each other. And I ask "what don't you want about this relationship? What is it about this person that you don't like?" And then some of them are very frank and tell me "he does this, he does that which I don't like. I wish he changed." So I ask "what are you doing about it?"

*John* So you always throw the question to them?

*Rev. Jenkins.* Yes. It is interactive.

*John* So you try to make use of non-verbal communication, trying to observe what is going on?

*Rev. Jenkins* And then also the written inventory. We keep all these things together in the file so that we can follow up at any time there is a problem and ask "what is it? At the time they were registering, everything was right." It's just like a doctor who had an operation and things went wrong and had to go back to the file and find out.

*John* You mentioned that sometimes, after counselling and people get married, and you later find out that there is a problem, you begin to get worried and ask "what did I do wrong?" Does that mean that you try to see yourself the counsellor as being responsible for the success of the marriage in a sense, just like in traditional society, the elders who are at the background see themselves as responsible, that the success of the marriage depend on them. Is that how you also see yourself?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yes. I think that God has placed us here to take responsibility to a certain level though the marriage becomes the individual's private matter and it is their marriage. But you have the responsibility of helping them to make an assessment of where the relationship is, whether it is helpful enough for them to continue or not. If you allow them to continue, then you must take some responsibility when things are not getting on well. I want to see that you had all the opportunity to help the people see their way forward and you allow them to go on.

**John** What are your views about the extended family in our society. In traditional society, marriage is regarded as between families much as it is between the couple. What are your views about the involvement of the extended family?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah, there are some of them that are very, very positive. I have seen families, like my in-laws, who are very, very helpful. My spouse sees my parents as her parents and I see hers as mine and it 's fine. But I have seen that there are others whose involvement have negative tendencies and this is not helpful. I believe it has confused many young people, especially when they want to dictate what should be done in the marriage and they are not given the right to determine what is good for them. They try to offer unhealthy guidance.

**John** You know that the extended family system is at the heart of Ghanaian society. In the light of this, in your daily enrichment of marriages and families, do you involve the extended family in you counselling?

**Rev. Jenkins** Not really, because of the backgrounds of the parents themselves. The only time that we have been involved with them is during the filling of the forms. At a point, the family members will have to consent, fill and sign, make a declaration that "I the father declare that my daughter has my support in this relationship she is entering." And then when it comes to engagement, we send representatives to be part of the occasion. That is when we interact. And when the wedding comes, we also have the chance to interact. But we do not sincerely bring them in to counsel them. The best we can do is that maybe, during the officiating, in the sermon, we help the families to understand what roles they have to play, that their role must be very supportive by way of prayer and giving healthy advice here and there. Not necessarily to put them in a straight jacket to do what they want because their marriage is not going to be like yours, whether you like it or not. They are different people and they must be given the right to come up with their own style.

**John** We can trust the Holy Spirit to use such sermons to speak to them.

**Rev. Jenkins.** Yes.

**John** But don't you also think that, recognising the fact that in-laws can be very positive but they can also be negative, since your idea is to help marriages, you don't want to wait for the marriage to get to a place where you can't do anything fruitful work. Don't you think that it will be a better idea to try to involve them from the word go. It might be difficult logistically because it will depend on where they live and so on and so forth.

**Rev. Jenkins** Sometimes, we have had conflict with people, for instance, those who have other religious backgrounds and think they will never come here, or if the lady's people were Muslims, they don't want to do anything. Even at the wedding, they wouldn't want to be present. Others are Catholic. "We know our daughter is a Catholic and if she is going to marry here, that will never happen.

**John** Do you still go on with such marriages?

**Rev. Jenkins** We try to interact with them and try to create friendship and respectfully appeal to their conscience that it is true, but you must understand that your child is an individual who must develop his own lifestyle as he grows. We do it with a lot of carefulness. In fact there are whole families that have come to Church as a result of that. Their view of Charismatic Church is young people who do not have any direction. They are rascals and all those. Then we approach them and they see wisdom and the way we conduct ourselves, they say, "oh! We thought that you people ..." In extreme cases, where we realise that after all, our appeal will not work, the people will not come here, they will not consent, we have gone ahead.

**John** What about children. Do you attempt to involve them in post-marital problems between couples, when they come for counselling?

**Rev. Jenkins** I have not at any time involved children because I think their emotions are at stake. Already, kids are very sensitive. If things are going on, they can sense it.

**John** Yes. Sometimes, they can tell you more than the parents. They can let you know what actually is going on. What the main issues are.

**Rev. Jenkins** I have never tried it. Maybe, if you want to suggest it, I will have a look at it. But you are dealing with different grades of children.

**John** Even the very little children. Some times their play and those things might give an indication of what is actually going on.. That is something for us to reflect on and think about.

**Rev. Jenkins** I have never tried it before.

**John** I also want to find this out. There are people who are advised not to send their marriage problems outside. By outside, I mean to family members and so on and so forth. What is your view on this?

**Rev. Jenkins** Sometimes, it is true that it will not be helpful for them to send it depending on who they go to, who is going to hear what is really happening. There are some people that we will advise against because their own backgrounds are very coarse, therefor they cannot offer any good counselling. But I believe that at a certain stage, when the two people cannot effectively handle a matter, they might be able to consult. That is when we come in. In fact we try to impress upon them that there is a place where they can come. We try to develop a relationship. If you come to the Church, you find out that I have a lot of friends. Almost everybody I counsel ends up becoming my friend and we think that, premarital counsellors can make good friends with their counsellees.

**John** Do you always counsel couples together or you see them separately at times?

**Rev. Jenkins** It depends on what actually is happening. There are times when you just need to talk to the complainant. Tell the person what he must go and try and find out how things work. After you have done all these and it is not working, then probably, you want to seek their consent. "Do you want me to see your spouse for discussion", because I have had situations where spouses are threatened, especially the men threatening their wives that "look here, this matter, if you tell Pastor Jenkins, let me tell you, it is the beginning of the end of our marriage." They feel intimidated and feel too proud. But I find women always willing to want to find solutions to their problems. When they are unhappy, they will look out for where they can get help. Even then, we've been able to bring some of such men tactfully together. But our stand is that almost every time, get the two people to sit and make a proper assessment because we can't make a right judgement listening to one spouse.

**John** If I got you right, resources you use are both theological, psychological and social. On the average, how long does it take to counsel a couple if there is a problem? On the average, how long or how many sessions do you take to be able to deal with a problem?

**Rev. Jenkins** Oh! It depends on the magnitude of the problem. If the problem is a problem that has gone on for a very long time, they've kept it to themselves, especially the cases where they have divorce threats, that takes very long. You'll have to have many sessions with them. Some times, it's a matter of just praying with them. Some times, encouraging them, but you should actually taken time to deal with the real issues, and then you look at other areas to work on. That can take about two months to do a more deeper and effective work. Then you try to create friendship so that you can be closer to them. Some times. It is not just going to their home to do anything, but just to pass by for them to know that you still care. There are other times when at one sitting, a matter should have been settled, because you still want them to feel that you trust them to be able to handle their issues. Some times, the problem is basically because the two people can't sit down to talk. And we give them the impression that, look, this thing, if you sat down to talk, you can easily deal with it. We don't take any pleasure wanting you to come. Sit down together. We are not magicians. We don't have any supernatural means of solving your problem. It's a matter of two people talking. Some take a long time, for others, at one sitting, we are able to deal with the problem.

**John** So your work is not only helping problematic marriages, trying to solve problems, but also supporting marriages.

**Rev. Jenkins** Oh sure! In fact, we want to use the cell as a means of even preventing marital problems. In fact, from observation, we realise that couples who are very interested in the cell groups do very well. Some of the problems don't even come to us. They solve them among themselves. We think that they must be able to develop some friendship with another couple who should be able to offer help. Our cell groups offer that opportunity.

**John** Apart from the cell groups, are there other areas through which you support marriages?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yes. We are looking at people who happen to share the same philosophy, either work or something for example, professionals. That is my next approach. I want to have

fellowships of , for example, medical doctors couples fellowship, lawyers in our Church will have a fellowship.

*John* If , maybe, the husband is a doctor or the wife is a doctor, that is, if one of them is a doctor, do they qualify to be in the fellowship?

*Rev. Jenkins* Yes. We don't try to superimpose. Those who want to belong will be given the chance.

*John* They have unique problems so coming together will help them.

*Rev. Jenkins* Yes. Incidentally, I didn't bring my diary. Just last night, I tried to categorise these things and try to see whether that will also help, because some of the people will not go to the area cell groups for whatever reason, but we realise that who go really receive some amount of support.

*John* Do you charge fees?

*Rev. Jenkins* Nothing.

*John* So, how is the ministry supported? Is it from the main Church?

*Rev. Jenkins* Yes. From the main Church.

*John* Then, how do you get couples to work with? Do they come themselves or you seek them out? How do you find out that people have problems, or they always come by themselves?

*Rev. Jenkins* We wish we had a way to source where problems are. As at now, we sometimes receive some reports because we have a system. Our cells really work. The couples are supposed to be in our Church cell groups apart from the marriage cell groups. If there is a problem, we depend on the members of the cell groups to let us know. Most times, the couples come. Either of them comes. I've never seen two couples walk in and say that we have a problem. Either of them will come and say, "Pastor Jenkins, we have a serious problem and I think we need some help". There are times that we also receive reports from others, and we call the couple and ask how true is it.

**John** Do you think that they are making very good use of the counselling facilities of the Church?

**Rev. Jenkins** Sure. Though we think there is still room for development. We wish that when the problem got started, they would seek for help a little earlier than when they come, because some times, they come just too late.

**John** So those who come, what do you think make them come on their own/

**Rev. Jenkins** Hmm! It's just because of the fact that most of the time, the women, I realise, they have the desire to see their marriage work than the men. For the men, maybe, it's because of their male ego. It is the male ego that works against them. It shows that they are weak if they report that they are not succeeding. But the women will not see it that way. They want it to work and they will go wherever they will get help. Some times, they even go to other sources, maybe, to go and see the prayer pastor to pray for them. Then the prayer pastor will tell me that these people have a problem, or when they go, the pastor says to them, "go and see Pastor Jenkins for counselling," because our work interlocks. Though I have the office, we work together. There are times when I have said to the couple, "go and see pastor "so so and so". I think that he will help you."

**John** Does one need to be a member of this Church to benefit from your services?

**Rev. Jenkins** No. I have countless people coming from all Churches. "My friend told me that with this problem, it may be helpful if I can talk to Pastor Jenkins." Our doors are open to all.

**John** Some few issues. What are the main problems people present when they come for counselling? I mean couples.

**Rev. Jenkins** Finance, ineffective adjustment, some times, the other partner's services, something fishy, extramarital affairs-few cases. Some times, it's really not true. Other times, we find elements of truth. Sometimes, sexual fulfilment. People are looking for more excitement and fulfilment. Irresponsibility on the part of either couple. If it is expected that what one should be doing, a husband is not forth coming. They scarcely have problems with their spirituality. They still come to Church. Predominantly, these are the areas.

**John** Do the issues differ depending on the age of the marriage? Those who are recently married. Do they have particular problems? What about those who are in the middle stages and those in the later stages?

**Rev. Jenkins** Yeah! I believe that every stage have different problems and it shows the kind of problem that comes to us. We scarcely have problems with couples who are looking for children. There are few times when a newly married couple come reporting that they've been married for one year and nothing has shown. They've gone to the hospital and it's bringing problems because the other person wants to have a child immediately. So the problem can vary depending on the age of the couple. Also, younger couples have problems of adjustment. They argue about how the other person organises the home, that it is not neat. One may say "when I was living at this place alone, it was sharper than when he came in. And, I expect this and that."

**John** underlying all the issues that comes up in marriage, do you think that people have some basic needs that they want satisfied, and when not satisfied, leads to problems?

**Rev. Jenkins** I have said in my book somewhere that marriage is a need-meeting mechanism. Everybody enters marriage to have some needs met. People enter marriage for the reason of companionship, for the reason of friendship, for the reason of having someone who will always be there for you, care for you, for the reason of meeting some emotional needs. For instance, every woman will want to marry a man who is caring, a man who is friendly and a man that is a fun to them. Incidentally, the African man generally thinks that marriage is only about sex. The time that he feels good is when the wife gives in to his sexual demands, that they forget that the woman looks for something much more than sex. She wants a friend, a caring friend for that matter, somebody who gives her the sense of being loved, who likes her. He sees the contributions she makes in his life and complements her, a loyal friend. He is always there. A great ally, dependable and trustworthy. When these things are there, a woman is more excited about marriage and she is happier than the man who is always looking for sex. Many men get crossed with their wives when they can't meet their sexual needs, which is very, very sad. So people's mental ideas, catching the holistic idea of marriage is lacking.

*John* It takes time to teach people to understand. How do you see the effect of modernisation on marriage in Ghana, maybe, in terms of work in the house, at a time like this when women are asserting themselves and etc.?

*Rev. Jenkins* I think that whether you like it or not, the world is changing at a fast rate. Gone were the days when wives would just stay at home and all they did was to bake bread or do something very small. This time round, both partners will have to work. That brings very, very great challenges to them, especially, when they become young parents. Seriously, marriages have been affected. This time, both the man and woman will have to leave home and go to the office. For instance, if the wife happens to be a banker, or a nurse, their work runs deep into the night. As nurses, they are on twenty-four hour call, so it takes a level of understanding and appreciation and a couple who want to complement each other to effectively handle modernisation. Even the concept of marriage as partnership, how couples must work together so that when it comes to finances and etc. are areas which need to be considered because this time round, it is not only the man who contributed financially. The woman must effectively complement the finances of the man. If this is not understood and they just want to use the same old ideas, there is going to be a problem. And I realise that gone were the days when it was only men who were thinking of improving themselves academically. This time round, the ladies also want to bear children and also want to improve themselves academically. And that is also bringing a lot of challenges, where you have women with an ambition. They want to be carrier women. They have the drive in the inside to become something. And sometimes, men probably are satisfied with what they have achieved – complacent with themselves. It doesn't take them very far. They have women who are running, who is travelling outside and coming. You need to be a man who has a certain level of understanding to tolerate these. And when it comes to even helping with household chores, there must be a balance somewhere. Gone were the days when it was only the woman who must do this and do that. There must be complete sharing of some of the responsibilities that we have. Even taking care of the children, who sends them to school, who attends PTA meetings? All these are things that need to be considered. So, this time round, modernisation calls for a constructive effort, a lot of dialogue, communicating effectively. The two people should always be having business meetings to handle the problems that come out. If a couple never do this, they are not going to communicate and they are still going to hold on to the old ideas, then I'm afraid...

**John** So, in your marriage enrichment ministry, how do you tackle this problem of modernisation as part of your ongoing programme?

**Rev. Jenkins** Right from the premarital counselling, we are always looking at modernisation and how it can either positively affect a relationship or negatively affect a relationship, as part of what we offer. For instance, we are challenging couples in the sense that they can't continue to live in people's homes. They have a great challenge to have a financial plan in view of which they can be able to live in their own home, and it is going to be a joint effort. It is not only the man who must buy the car, build the house and all those things. Now, we have women who even earn more than the men.

**John** What is your view on premarital education or preparation?

**Rev. Jenkins** My view of premarital education, can I read this for you?

**John** yes. That's all right.

**Rev. Jenkins** Premarital counselling provides the opportunity for establishing good relationships in a prospective marriage. The content of counselling borders on personality adjustment, personality differences, physical adjustments, money management, emancipation from family, adjustments to new friendships and in-laws and etc. I believe that premarital counselling if it happens very well, should help the people to start well and to be forewarned of possible upheavals that may arise and be prepared to meet those challenges and never think that any supernatural or evil force is working against them. That it is possible that when they realise these problems, they can sit together and effectively communicate and see their way forward. So I believe that it is time the Church introduce them to the principles that has been tested and tried. I believe that premarital counselling must not just be preaching, but rather interactive to know what the people think about what they are just about to enter, and to make sure that they are well prepared to enter and they are not entering by accident.

**John** The way you go about it is through the destiny club?

**Rev. Jenkins** No, we have the premarital counselling department. That is a resource for those who are in relationships and have registered. So we can identify them and after they have gone through the preliminary registration formalities, and they have analysed the

relationship, and filled the forms, and we think that they are ready, they we detail them to premarital counsellors.

*John* So you have the premarital counselling department and the destiny club, which has to do with what others may call premarital education, educating those who are actually not ready to marry, but are being trained on marriage?

*Rev. Jenkins* The idea is to help them to make wise decisions, to build in them sound, moral values and character which they will carry along because I think that when we have people who have character, they will do well.

*John* You said that young adults, from 18 years, can join the destiny club?

*Rev. Jenkins* yes.

*John* So there is an insistence on premarital counselling?

*Rev. Jenkins* Sure! In fact, in this Church, you can never be married until you have gone through the premarital counselling, initially for six months, but we intend to reduce the period to three months.

*John* Let us get to the final part. What do you think has been the effect of this ministry? Do you think it has been helpful to the people?

*Rev. Jenkins* Yeah! I think that if you happen to be in our Church, you will realise that there is very great stability in our homes. The problems that are showing up now are as a result of the present economy. The state of the economy have brought great challenges on people, how to pay children's school fees and how to run the home now requires a lot of discussions to see the way forward. When that is not done and people think that things must go on and the same money must give them the same food and are not ready to make the necessary adjustments, then problems begin to come. But apart from that, I think that we have enjoyed a very serene atmosphere so far as marriages are concerned. We have had our problems with certain individuals who have gone beyond bounds, and then when you consider the ratio, we think that things are better, because in the year, we marry about one hundred and twenty couples. That is a very big number so it is insignificant to have three or four marriages going through trauma.

*John* Yes, that is an insignificant number.

*Rev. Jenkins* But even with that, my boss called me because of the few problems, and we had to write reports. He asked whether there are other things that we should do. And I said that I will revise the programme and see whether it could cater for this or that. I solicit the views of my other colleague pastors to know whether they also have some ideas which they can bring out to help, because when the marriage problems arise, it is not 'me' but 'us'.

*John* So, do you conduct a sort of research in the Church with those who have gone through your programme to find out about its effectiveness?

*Rev. Jenkins* In fact, it is something we do once a while. Sometimes, we just invite them for a dinner and have an interaction with them, and during that time, as we eat, we want to assess how effective the programme has been in the past? How would you want things to become? How has the programme helped you? We try to source what the people feel the Church can do to help their marriages. Some questionnaire is filled and we analyse to see what areas dominate, then we try to organise programmes to meet those needs.

*John* Rev. Jenkins, thank you very much for your time. It has been quite a lengthy discussion and I'm very grateful for the insight.

*Rev. Jenkins* Thank you.

## APPENDIX VII

### INTERVIEW WITH MR. KWEKU SEKUM

**PROFILE:** *Mr. Kweku Sekum is an expert on the Fante Language and tradition. He teaches Fante at a teacher training college, the Komenda Training College. This interview was conducted in his office at the College in Komenda on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I'm engaged in a study on how to support marriages and I'm trying to find out the nature of Akan marriages, so I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to discuss with you the nature of Akan marriages. If, we can begin, in the traditional sense, what is marriage and why do people marry?

**Mr. Sekum** In the traditional sense, marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman and then when they come together through the traditional means, so that they are accepted in the society as a married couple, this is what is referred to as marriage.

**John** And why do people marry?

**Mr. Sekum** In the traditional set up when a woman is about to marry, or in other words, when a young man is old enough to marry, and he has not yet got married, people have a different view about the person. So, as soon as it becomes necessary for the person to marry, he has to marry. The reason is that people marry so that they will be able to get helpers. The woman is to help the man and vice versa. Then, through marriages, we are able to get children, and the number of children you have will determine your status in the society.

**John** So, basically, people marry to help each other, to bring forth children, the number, based on which will determine how people will regard you in the society.

**Mr. Sekum** That is that.

**John** So how is marriage contracted in Akan society? What are the stages involved?

**Mr. Sekum** We have a lot of stages in the Akan traditional set-up. Before one will be able to get married, in fact, if you are a man, you have to seek the approval of your father. It is

the responsibility of the father to get a woman for the son. So the stages are that as soon as you see a woman whom you feel like getting married to, you have to pass the information to your father. And it is your father's responsibility to see to it that you get somebody to marry. The stages are that as soon as you see the person, you can't move to the person on your own. Your father will have to do it. It is even the responsibility of the father to go to seek the approval of the woman's parents and this he does through people. He can't go there on his own so he has to send people to the parents so that he will be able to present his idea about marrying from their side.

**John** How do you call this particular stage?

**Mr. Sekum** We call this abowomubodze. We call it knocking. You go there to knock. Before somebody opens the door for you, you have to knock. So anytime you register a knock at the door, then it means it has to be opened for you.

**John** So I gather the impression that the man himself who has seen someone that he wants to marry cannot approach that person. He has to go through the father and the father will send his elders.

**Mr. Sekum** Yes.

**John** Okay. What are the other stages apart from the first stage, which is knocking?

**Mr. Sekum** Apart from the first stage, normally, before the father will send some messengers to the woman's parents, they will have to go through the status of the girl to be sure whether this girl is fit and proper to be a married woman, because there are so many things that go into making a good wife. In the first place, they will have to make sure that there is no contagious disease in the woman's family. And then they will have to be sure that they are people who are very sober. They are not people who are litigants, because if he should marry from a family where there are a lot of litigants, then it means the marriage is likely to end on a rock. So, there are some of the things that they look into before they declare the woman to be a very good woman who should be married.

**John** How does that go on? How do they find out about the woman's family and so on and so forth?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah. We have a lot of people all over where the person may hail from and therefore they will be able to ask a lot of questions from those people about the lady. What do you say about this lady? Is she all that good? Is she all that industrious? So they will try to seek pieces of information from people who know her very well.

**John** That type of investigation, is it before they go to do the knocking?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah. Before that. You can't actually go in when you don't know the type of person you're going to marry. And then when this thing is done, well, you have to send some messengers to the woman's father. The father wouldn't be able to give you an answer there and then, so you'll be asked to come back later, and here it is said in Akan "*wonngyina nkran mu ntutu nkran*" meaning they wouldn't be able to there and then give the answer. And when this is being done, they also try to look at the background of the man who is coming to marry their daughter.

**John** So, whilst the man's family is trying to investigate about the background of the woman, the woman's family will also try and investigate about the man.

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah. Until they are certain that the man also hasn't got anything that may debar him from marrying their daughter. When everything is set, then they'll have to give their consent to the marriage.

**John** So when the knocking is done, the girl's father doesn't give a straight answer, but then he'll ask them to wait, and whilst they are waiting, he also conducts his investigations. What then happens?

**Mr. Sekum** When they are fully aware that the man will be the right type of husband for their daughter, then they'll have to give in to the marriage. And then what happens is that they will send some messengers to the father of the would-be husband of their daughter. They will say "there was a time you came in, you wanted to come in to seek the hand of this person. Now we are ready to listen to all that you have so come with your people." Then when they come, it means that they have actually got into it. It is then that they are going to give them a favourable reply. And before that there are certain amounts that you have to pay. Formerly, because they were brewing drinks, all those things were done in normal drinks but things have

changed a lot. So what they were paying at first can't be paid now. Now, so many things are coming into being.

**John** But what were they paying, what were the names?

**Mr. Sekum** We had something like *nyew nsa*, that is 'yes rum' meaning we have accepted the proposal so you give us something. And then we have *tsir nsa*, that is 'head rum' and this is the most important aspect of the marriage contract. As soon as the head rum is paid, then it means the woman is for him, and if anybody should come near the woman, you have got the audacity to caution the person. Then, we have *tsir adze*, *tsir sika*. For the *tsir sika*, sometimes they pay enough money. They pay some money that will be sufficient for the woman to use in trading. We call it *tsir sika*.

**John** What is the difference between the *tsir adze* and *tsir sika*?

**Mr. Sekum** The difference is that *tsir sika* is just like an amount of money which is given to the woman so that she should be able to use it to trade. But the *tsir adze* means the person has gone through all the necessary stages. We put all the payments into the *tsir adze*.

**John** Okay. So everything, the *nyew nsa*, *tsir nsa*, and then *tsir sika*, they all come together to constitute the *tsir adze*?

**Mr. Sekum** When you go to some societies, they have a lot of differences. Then when you go to some areas, the *tsir adze* comprises of all that we said.

**John** That is, after the girl's father has invited the man's father and they come, that is when all these are paid. That is the marriage ceremony proper.

**Mr. Sekum** And then with this, the girl's mother is also given an amount referred to as *tambobaa*.

**John** How did that name come about?

**Mr. Sekum** *Bobaa*, as we know is a stone, something that is very heavy. If you throw it away, you will still see it. What it means is that before the girl come of age, she might have actually gone through a lot of obstacles. And all these things, it was the mother who was able

to go through with her. Therefore, if you are coming to take away the girl, then at least you have to put something to replace what you are coming to take from her and that is the *tambobaa*.

**John** So it is a token replacement for the girl?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes.

**John** So in traditional sense, what exactly was presented as the *tambobaa*?

**Mr. Sekum** Now things are changing. Formerly, it was 45 pesewas.

**John** So it has been money traditionally?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, and since things are changing, they have now modified the amount. It depends upon each society.

**John** I heard from somewhere that traditionally, it was just symbolic, a stone that they gave to the woman and then she tied it at the tip of her clothe to remind her of her daughter always. I'm not sure whether you know about that?

**Mr. Sekum** That is what it means. Traditionally, this is what they were doing, but we decided that instead of using the stone, we'll use money to replace the stone. Then after that, you also pay some money to the brothers of the wife. We call it brother-in-law's money, *akontan sikan*. Formerly, it wasn't in the form of any money. You rather gave it in the form of a cutlass as the name implies. And this cutlass is used by the brothers of the wife, so that if you have any farm, they'll come to help you weed it.

**John** They'll use the cutlass to come and help you to weed?

**Mr. Sekum** So that you'll be able to have enough money to look after their sister. But now, because we don't have this farming, they will rather pay it in the form of money. Formerly, they were just paying the money according to the cost of a cutlass, but now, they have changed it. It could be any other amount.

**John** Then apart form the *akontan sekan*, what else?

**Mr. Sekum** We have *bowdotoa*. This *bowdotoa* is now given in the form of money. But formerly, they had to give tobacco. In the olden days, women as well as men were smoking pipes, so they also gave money to be used in buying tobacco, and this is actually shared among the elderly people in the family to signify that a marriage has been contracted. So, that is their portion of the marriage payment. But nowadays, since people have stopped smoking tobacco, we now call it *nkyen sika*. *Nkyen* means salt, so that is the money used in buying salt. They use it in buying the salt and then share the salt among all the elderly to signify that a marriage has been contracted.

**John** So what else is involved?

**Mr. Sekum** Well, we had a lot but since society is changing, a lot of things are also changing. When you go to some societies, they put all these things together and then they ask you to pay it in bulk. For others, they also try to fashion them out so that you know this is what you're going to pay. But since things are changing, they have put everything together, and then when you come, they tell you this is how much you are to pay after which you have the right to take the woman as your wife.

**John** But these are the main things involved, the *nyew nsa*, the ...

**Mr. Sekum** *Abowomubodze, tambobaa, akontan sikan, tsir sika, tsir adze*, etc. etc.

**John** it's good to know about some of these things. So when do you say that the person or the woman is fully married?

**Mr. Sekum** When the would-be suitor has been able to pay all the moneys involved, then we regard the woman as somebody who is fully married to the man. At this time, the woman doesn't come to the man even though we know them as a married couple. They are not living together as a man and the wife. You have to go through the wedding ceremony and the wedding ceremony is the traditional one where the man ...

**John** How do you call it traditionally?

**Mr. Sekum** *Ayeforhyia*. *Ayefor* means a new wife, *yer fofor*.

**John** Okay.

**Mr. Sekum** And then you try to invite the person into your house. *Ayeforhyia* means you go to meet the person. You invite the new wife to your house. This is done by asking the man to buy an airtight, a trunk. I don't know the name they give it today.

**John** Suitcase.

**Mr. Sekum** Suitcase. You buy a suitcase and then you fill this suitcase with all the items that the woman may need in her life. You buy sandals, you buy cloth, perfume. Nowadays, you have to buy watch, a whole lot of things that the woman may use. We call it *ayeforhyia*. Then when all these things are set, you have to send it to the woman's father, the father of the would-be wife, and when this is done, it means that you can now invite the woman to your house. When this is not done, then it means you can't actually invite the woman to your house. We call it *ayeforhyia*, the meeting of the new wife.

**John** Are they separate ceremonies, the payment of what you mentioned before, like the *abowomubodze*, *tsir nsa* and so on, and then this *ayeforhyia*. Traditionally, were they separate ceremonies, or everything happened at the same time?

**Mr. Sekum** No, they were separate ceremonies. We had a separate day for the *ayeforhyia*. We have to sit down and think of a very suitable time for the *ayeforhyia*. We don't have to do it concurrently.

**John** During the *ayeforhyia*, do the two families come together for that ceremony?

**Mr. Sekum** What happens is that the husband will have to, through the parents, send the items we've just mentioned to the girl's parents. So when these things are sent, by all means, because they will like witnesses to be there, they invite a lot of people to come.

**John** So that is the first time when the *abowomubodze* and all those things are paid?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes.

**John** And then during the *ayeforhyia* also, witnesses are involved?

**Mr. Sekum** They send witnesses to come in and look at all these things so that if there is anything, they'll be able to come in as say we saw the man do this.

**John** So in a sense, I'm seeing three main stages. The first is when the man's father goes to do the knocking. The second is the payment of the dowry, and the third is when the ayeforhya takes place. So these are the three main stages?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, the main stages.

**John** So after the payment of the dowry, the woman can't go and live with the man. It's after the ayeforhya that she can go.

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, it is after the ayeforhya. But nowadays, sometimes, some people may not have enough money to perform the ayeforhya, and therefore they ask the lady to be with them for some time while the preparation is in progress, and they are allowed to be together for some time.

**John** So once the ayeforhya has taken place, we take it that the marriage is fully contracted?

**Mr. Sekum** Everything is okay and the man can now take the wife into his house, so that they can begin their marriage life together.

**John** Well. It is said that in traditional Akan society, marriage is a union between two families, not individuals. What do you have to say about this?

**Mr. Sekum** We have matrilineal inheritance, and then patrilineal. With the Akans, we normally deal with the matrilineal. So it means your mother's children, your mother's sister's children will come together to form an ebusua. We have this extended family and it is this extended family, on the side of the man and the extended family on the side of the woman that come together, so it means a union of two families. This is what it entails.

**John** What does it mean to say that it is a union between these two families, or let me put it this way, the two families, what is their role in the marriage?

**Mr. Sekum** What happens is that since they have decided to come together as a man and a wife, it is the responsibility of the two families to make sure that nothing goes contrary to what has been put down. In other words, they don't have to allow them to do certain things out of their own free will. Those who are just coming to the married life are new, so it is the responsibility of the two families to teach them some don'ts and dos in family life. If the other

person goes contrary to the laid down rules, the problem will come straight to the doorstep of the other family. It means that they have not been able to teach either their son or their daughter the right thing to be done. So when there is any disgrace, it affects the whole family. So, they have to be very careful that nothing goes contrary to what they have put down.

**John** That's very interesting. So the idea is that, it is the family's responsibility to teach either their son or their daughter about marriage, so that if maybe, the son doesn't perform well in the marriage, or their daughter doesn't perform well in the marriage, the blame comes to the family, that they have not actually taught the right thing.

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah.

**John** and then if things go on well, the family takes the credit for it?

**Mr. Sekum** That's it.

**John** Fine. So is there any distinction between the union of the couple and the union of the families.

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah. The union of the families must come because of the union of the couple. If they don't come together, the two families cannot come together. So if there is any divorce, it puts all of them apart. So the union of the couple goes a long way to bridge the gap between the union of the families.

**John** Sometimes, people argue that the families, as it were, hamper the union of the couple. Sometimes, they don't allow the couple to go on with their marriage. They negatively influence the marriage. What do you have to say about that situation?

**Mr. Sekum** Well, this happens when they get to know that there are certain things they could not research into. Supposing it happens that the man has not been able to give birth for some time, they think otherwise about the man. They know very well that as a woman, the function of the marriage is bringing up of children, so they have the notion that if the woman is not able to bring forth, then it means all the children will remain within her. Therefore, if it happens that the man is not able to give out issues, they will have to fuse this thing into the mind of the woman so that the marriage will end on the rock. So sometimes the influence comes, not because they are doing it intentionally, but they do it for a purpose.

**John** Okay, the main thing is that when children are not coming, either the man's family may pressurise him to ...

**Mr. Sekum** To go in for another woman

**John** Or the woman's family may ask her to ...

**Mr. Sekum** And vice versa.

**John** Well, I think we've talked a bit about the role of the families. I heard that during the ceremony, some elders are appointed behind the marriage. What is their role?

**Mr. Sekum** Normally, a marriage life is just like friendship. Sometimes, you wouldn't know whether the man has done the right thing that may please the woman and vice versa. But the only thing is that when something goes wrong, all that should be done is that we should get somebody to whom all the reports will be sent so that they'll be able to put things right. If you should tell everybody all that is happening, there are people who will even come about with ill motives about the marriage. If you get this person or that person to be responsible for the marriage, then all complaints should rather go to the person who will be able to settle any dispute amicably instead of sending it to anybody at all. Moreover, when you are marrying, you begin to do certain things in your own way. Outsiders are not supposed to know it, that is why they try to get some people as the backbone so that if there should be any problem, they will be able to settle amicably.

**John** So the couple are not actually expected to send their problem outside. They can send it to only those people who have been appointed.

**Mr. Sekum** That's it.

**John** And how do we call them or there is no special name for them?

**Mr. Sekum** We only say that they are responsible for the marriage. *Hon na wotsena awar ne tsir.*

**John** And how is that appointment made? You mentioned that some people might come with ill motives, which means that obviously, whoever is appointed should be somebody who

wouldn't have those ill motives. So how that appointment made? Who appoints? What are the criteria?

*Mr. Sekum* It's normally the ebusuapayin, the family head who does the appointment because he is an elderly person and knows the background of all the family members. He knows that this man is a very good man or this woman is a very good woman so when we entrust this thing to his or her care, he will be able to handle it with care. So the appointment is done according to the behaviour that has been put up by someone in the family, and someone who is trusted to be able to deliver the goods to the credit of the family.

*John* That's fine. So traditionally, is the family involvement seen as a sort of interference in the marriage?

*Mr. Sekum* It is nowadays that sometimes, the involvement of the family may seem to be interference. But all that we know is that those who are coming in are very, very new. The marriage life seems to be new to them. There are others who have actually gone into it and they have rich experiences, so they'll have to learn from them, and you can only get this from the family. So, it is not interference. They are only trying to give them the ways they can handle every problem with care in the marriage life.

*John* But there has been times when it seems those behind the marriage have actually interfered, maybe, in certain things that the couple could have sorted out by themselves.

*Mr. Sekum* Yeah, and this is why they try to pick people who are knowledgeable ...

*John* Who wouldn't come in with such interference.

*Mr. Sekum* That's right. So that even when they get to know that there are others who are coming in, they'll have to stop them because they don't have the right to move into the marriage. You have not been appointed, why do you come in? so, when all these things are done, the unnecessary interference will be done away with.

*John* okay. You mentioned that when people marry, each family is expected to train or teach their ward about marriage. When does this happen and how does this happen?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, before the marriage is contracted, we have an adage in Akan, “*se obaa roko awar a onye ne na ko*”. It means then that as soon as you go in for marriage life, and you begin to go contrary to what has been put down, then they regard you as somebody who has never been hearing. Or it could even be that your parents have not taught you the right thing. So it means then that it is the responsibility of the parents to teach you the right thing to be done.

**John** When do the parents do that?

**Mr. Sekum** They do this before you even go in. when you are at least of age, they begin to train you from the house, how you have to care for children, how to do this and do that. They will be doing it even though they may not know that they are teaching you. But inwardly, they’ll be teaching you.

**John** So it’s part of the every day life?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, it’s part of the everyday life so that you’ll know that this is what should be done. And what happens is that if you go according to what has been put down for you, then you’ll become a very good wife or a very good husband.

**John** So such training involves things that comes up in marriage?

**Mr. Sekum** Even how to care for your own body, the number of times you have to wash down, ... a whole lot of things concerning the whole person.

**John** Then, let me ask, in traditional society, what is regarded as a successful marriage and what is not a successful marriage? When do we regard a marriage as successful?

**Mr. Sekum** When we have not had any conflicts, or even if there should be any conflict, it is solved amicably without anybody hearing. We call this a successful marriage. And if could stay as a couple, with no interference coming here and there, and then with children in the marriage, we call this a successful marriage.

**John** So basically, nobody will say that there wouldn’t be any conflict, but then when the conflict comes, ...

**Mr. Sekum** When the conflict comes, they are able to resolve it amicably. We call it a very successful marriage when nobody begins to hear anything, they are able to solve their own problem. But when we hear them quarrelling openly, sometimes fighting here and there, then we begin to say that the marriage is not successful. This is what it entails.

**John** the issue of conflict, how do couples resolve their conflicts?

**Mr. Sekum** The resolution depends on the way they understand each other. In fact it is the responsibility of the man to give what is referred to as help money. He gives money to the woman to care for the home. If you the man are not able to do this, then you are not regarded as a man. But if you don't have, the way you will tell your wife, she'll even know that you don't have. But you wouldn't say it, and the little you have will be spent on drinks, then it means you are not being a good husband.

**John** So in such a case what happens?

**Mr. Sekum** What happens is that the woman will be reporting some of these cases to the elder, that this is what my husband is doing and therefore, they'll have to sit down and put things right. Sometimes, they'll have to come and give pieces of advice to the man. But if all these go unheeded, in other words, if all these things fall on deaf ears, then it means this man can never be a good man and therefore, divorce can come in.

**John** So the woman will tell her elder about it?

**Mr. Sekum** The elder of the man.

**John** Can't the woman take it upon herself to discuss the issue with the man?

**Mr. Sekum** It could happen, but it could even happen that the woman has had the occasion to talk to the man on several occasions, but the man will not change. The she'll have to tell a second person to come in if that will bring some sort of a change.

**John** Okay, so couples do talk over their problems on their own and when they see that they are not making a headway, then they invite the elder to come in?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, he comes in and probably try to put things right.

**John** So, apart from conflicts, in what ways are marriages strengthened in traditional society to make sure that the marriage is still moving on and everything is going on well?

**Mr. Sekum** In fact, marriage life is such that if you've not gone into it, you wouldn't know what it is. To get it moving on well, both of them will have to know from each other the dos and don'ts, what the person likes and what the other person does not like. If both of you will be able to know these things, then the marriage can thrive on good soil.

**John** So, basically, it's a question of the two of them coming together and try to understand themselves?

**Mr. Sekum** The understanding.

**John** Apart from that, is there any other way by which marriage is strengthened?

**Mr. Sekum** Normally, we try to strengthen these things with experiences. We just look at the experiences of other people then we use it as a basis. This is what is happening, oh, this man, when he did this, that is what the woman did. And then sometimes, through conversation with friends, they will be able to give you pieces of advice on how you could strengthen yours instead of allowing it to waste away.

**John** That's fine. You mentioned a bit about divorce. Maybe, after people have been advised for so long and they are not heeding to the advice, then divorce may come about. Traditionally, what is the view about divorce, is it something that occurs frequently?

**Mr. Sekum** No, normally, Akans are not very happy with divorce, so when they go in to the marriage life, they don't want anything like that. But human nature as we are, sometimes, so many things may happen which may bring about divorce. But traditionally, divorce as a word is never accepted in the dictionary of the Akans.

**John** But then when things are not working and there are efforts to ...

**Mr. Sekum** We even have specific areas when divorce can come in, very specific ones. Without that there is nothing that you can do. Well, you may even go to heaven and bring an angel, ...

**John** And they wouldn't permit you to divorce?

**Mr. Sekum** At all. Even the Bible states that.

**John** What are the specific areas where divorce can come about?

**Mr. Sekum** Supposing you are a woman and even though you know you are married, you go off your way to another man somewhere. It means you can't be a good wife. As soon as this thing happens you will be divorced.

**John** What about the man, if the man goes ...

**Mr. Sekum** Well, for the man, traditionally, the man can marry two wives at the same time. The woman cannot marry two husbands at the same time so this is where the thing starts.

**John** That brings us to the issue of polygamy. Why do you think that it is the case that the man is able to marry more than one woman. Is that the normal thing in the traditional society?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, in traditional society, the number of children you have make people regard you, and to get as many children as possible, it means you have to get as many wives as possible. Since one wife cannot give you as many children as possible, so you have to go in for another woman, just like a hen. You may see a hen trying it out here and there, so is it that the man has got the audacity to marry many women. So polygamy in our society is accepted.

**John** Is it basically, in an attempt to boost one's status?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, you get as many children as possible, and the children will only come in to help in the farm work etc.

**John** Then, what is the role of women in traditional marriages?

**Mr. Sekum** A woman is supposed to doing the washing for the man, care for the children, take the greater care of the family. When the man is not in, it is the wife who is supposed to take care of the household until the man returns. So when all these things are not being done, then it means you are not a good housewife.

**John** Do women have any part in making very important decisions in the home?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, and this depends on how you'll stay with the woman. Normally, in our traditional set-up, we don't regard women as people who can give pieces of advice. Even though when we come to chieftancy, we have the *obaahemaa* who tries to come in, but that apart, people think that women have very little intelligence and therefore when there is any gathering, they don't even invite them. But they also are intelligent, only that we don't regard them. Really, they have the intelligence with which they can also contribute to the welfare of the family.

**John** So if a woman will be able to contribute something by way of bringing her point of view, it depends on how she behaves at home.

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, and in the society.

**John** What in your view are the strengths of traditional marriage if you compare it with marriage today?

**Mr. Sekum** Even though a lot of things are happening, if we were to go according to traditional marriage, a lot of things that we experience will not happen. In the traditional set-up, even before somebody goes into marriage, we have to be sure that the person is a virgin, but nowadays, anything at all can happen before a woman comes in. The woman might have married on several occasions and this is why we are experiencing some diseases like HIV AIDS and all those things. So with the traditional set-up, people know for sure that as soon as you commit any offensive crime in the marriage, it goes a long way to tarnish your reputation.

**John** And the reputation of the whole family.

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, so they want to be sure that the woman does the right thing at the right time and anybody can come in to give pieces of advise. It is unlike today. They do things on their own and if you say it, you become an enemy number one. So with the traditional one, if we were to go back to it, I'm sure things would have been better.

**John** But people actually think that it is a restriction on the freedom of the individual. For example, the way the family censor the person, they think that it is a infringement on the individual's right.

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, we will take it so as at now, but formerly, our elders knew the right thing for us to do so they will have to sit down and decide, this is what you have to do. And if you go by all that they are saying, it goes a long way to help you. Unlike today, when we try to do things on our own, we don't even think deeply about it. We go to it and later on, we regret. So, these are some of the things.

**John** You mentioned some strengths, do you find any weaknesses in traditional marriage, anything that you think is not helpful?

**Mr. Sekum** Yes, something like the ayeforhyia. It was too much and it involved so much money. Nowadays if you are able to come up with something, the family will accept the little the man will bring, and then in due course, all these things will be performed and it will be accepted. It is unlike the olden days, when all these things will have to be done before. And then the traditional one, let me go back to the Northern part of Ghana.

**John** No, I'm talking about Akan marriages so if we can restrict ourselves to it.

**Mr. Sekum** Then we come back to it. For Akan marriages, this is all that it entails.

**John** Even, with the whole idea of dowry, I know that among the matrilineal societies, it is not as much as it is in the patrilineal societies, such as the north that you were talking about. Among the Akan, it is like everything that was given is symbolic. In the north, you would have to pay a number of cows etc. Do you still think that what was paid among the Akan was on the high side?

**Mr. Sekum** Yeah, it was on the high side, if you compare it with today. People didn't have that much money so they found it very difficult to make the payments. Traditionally, we were forced to do certain things before going into marriage. But this time, everyone knows that there are problems as far as the economy is concerned, so they try to reason with the man, and what the man brings is accepted unlike in the olden days.

**John** I should thank you very much for the time and the insights that I've gained from this discussion. I hope it will be of very good use to my work.

**Mr. Sekum** Sure, God be our helper.

**John** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Sekum** Thank you.

## APPENDIX VIII

### INTERVIEW WITH OPAYIN KOW AMOAH

**PROFILE:** *Opayin Kow Amoah is a traditional elder of one of the Anona ebusua in Kormantse. His involvement in the affairs of the ebusua and the village makes him quite knowledgeable in Fante (Akan) traditional culture. This interview was conducted in his home at Kormantse on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2001.*

**John** Please, I'm involved in a study on how to care for marriages and I should like to know how Akan traditional marriage looks like.

**Kow** Are you only interested in how traditional marriage looks like?

**John** Yes, I'll ask you some few questions about traditional marriage. So, what is marriage in the Akan tradition and why do people marry?

**Kow** People marry because I believe the creator himself arranged that the man should not live alone so he made the woman for the man. So it is like, marriage began ages ago. For us Akans or Fantes, what we believe is that one marries in order to get children, one marries in order to have a helper for his work. So basically, people marry to bring forth children and to get help.

**John** So, in Akan tradition, how do people marry? What things are done to signify that two people are married?

**Kow** Always, it is the man who takes the initiative. But before he takes the step in marriage, he tells his father that it is time he gets someone to live with. Or when the father observes that the son has passed the age of marriage but he is not coming forward, he tells that son that I will look for some one for you to marry. But before your father takes that step, you would have started work and began to earn something which you save with your father. In a sense, it is the father himself who goes to ask about the girl. He looks for a peaceful kin group, a kin group in which the people have a good history without any troubles. When he sees a maiden who is good, he comes to tell the son that he has seen the daughter of Mr X and he wants to

go to ask for her hand in marriage for you. The son may say, father, I've heard you, you can go ahead. In going ahead, the father does not go himself. He sends two elders, maybe one woman and one man who do not belong to his own kin group and sends them for the sake of them being witnesses. These elders go to the father of the maiden and tell him that Mr. Y has asked them to come and ask for the hand of his daughter A for his son B. Before he opens his mouth to respond, he asks for something to eat before he talks. This normally happens if he will agree to the request.

*John* What term is used for that?

*Kow* *Abowomubodze* (knocking fee). You go to knock on his door. But *the anobue nsa* (mouth-opening rum) comes before the *abowomubodze*. The *abowomubodze* should have been taken immediately the elders come in, but because one does not know the purpose for one's knocking; it is taken later after he gets to know the purpose for the visit of the elders. So he takes the *anobue nsa* and the *abowomubodze*. When he is taking all of these, then he has in mind to respond favourably to the request. Later, *tsir nsa*, (head rum) and *tsir adze* (head items) are paid. So you may hear one say, I have given the *tsir nsa*, but I have not paid the *tsir adze*. When these three items go, then the father informs the maiden's kin group, that is the mother's lineage about the transaction. The father is there but the maiden belongs to another lineage so he need to inform them. When he informs them, all they do is to give their consent. They don't have the right to say no, unless they have some information about the man's family that prevents the marriage of the two people that the father does not know. However, even in that case, they just suggest to the father because it is only the father who has the right to give the maiden for marriage. But before he can also give the daughter in marriage, he must inform the maiden's lineage. This is the first stage.

It is then that they tell them to go and prepare to come and perform the rites. So the man's people go to prepare themselves. They know what is needed for the customary rites. I will mention what is involved later, but I forgot. When the elders first go to the maiden's father, he tells them to go and that he would speak to the daughter. So he speaks to the daughter. It is later that he sends a message for the man's family to come to perform the rites. It is during the rites that you come to give the *tsir adze* and *ho adze*. These two are different. *Tsir adze* consists mainly of a rum, schnapps or whisky and money. You then have to get some pieces of clothe for the maiden, three or four, and headgear, *tantsia* (traditional form of panties),

sandals and some few cooking utensils. All of these will be in a metal trunk and you send them as the *hoadze*. The messenger who send the items is given part of the money to be a testimony.

**John** That's good.

**Kow** it is when these things have been sent that a date is set for the maiden to go to the man. Before she goes to the man, there is something referred to as *oresi no nkwansan*, the first dish she prepares. It is a special food she brings. And when she brings it, the man also has some money he gives the maiden herself, not the parents. When that is done, then the maiden is sent to the man and they become man and wife.

**John** So, the preparation of the first dish, is it something between only the man and the maiden or in that also others are involved just like the time when the main rites are performed?

**Kow** It is mainly the maiden and her family but it does not concern the family of the man. As for the man, he knows that by all means, the dish will be prepared for him. It is part of the custom. If it delays, he or his parents have the right to ask why the delay. If she has not brought the food, she herself would not go to the man's house.

**John** So she prepares the food and send it to the man ...

**Kow** Then she follows to join you and she becomes your wife whom you live with.

**John** Let me ask, what is the difference between the *tsir adze* and *tsir nsa*?

**Kow** the difference is that one can give the *tsir nsa* more than two years and over when the woman has not gone to live with the man. So , with time, the woman's kin can come and ask that the man's people are delaying, while the other things have not been paid, can we give her to another person?

**John** So, when the *tsir nsa* is paid, it doesn't mean that the marriage is complete?

**Kow** Yes, it is not complete, but you have rather committed the woman that you will marry her. It is like what is called today as engagement, when they put the ring on you.

**John** So, the *tsir nsa* becomes like what is referred to as engagement?

**Kow** Yes, the engagement ring put on you signifies that you have been committed.

**John** But what we call today as engagement is the marriage proper?

**Kow** Those days, there wasn't anything as the engagement. If we will compare, then what we will say is that our engagement is when you have gone to pay the *tsir nsa*. That is what shows that you have committed the woman to marry her.

**John** You have done *esiwa*?

**Kow** *Esiwa* is different. Will you like me to talk about that? Take it that I have seen a girl who has shown an appreciable character. She may be very young, but I have a desire to marry in that house but I have not found any woman of my liking there. So I will say that if the girl grows, I will marry her. Then I give something in that respect. That is *esiwa*, it is different from the *tsir nsa*.

**John** So, what constitutes the *tsir nsa*?

**Kow** It is real drink. But some pay it in money. Formerly, they used *akpeteshie* (locally made wine).

**John** And the *tsir adze* is the ...

**Kow** The *tsir adze* also include drinks. For the *tsir adze*, let me say that you will buy clothe and the other things I mentioned earlier. Anything which a woman uses to dress. In addition to this, you add a drink. Here, let me explain further, we have the drink that is given to the father of the girl.

**John** What term is used for it?

**Kow** It is the man's *ebua sika* (smoking pipe money). Some call it *toa sika* (tobacco money).

**John** Why these terms?

**Kow** What it means is that I am there with my daughter and you are coming for her. I have been sending the girl always to run errands for me. The main things an elder will need after his meal is to smoke his pipe. I have been sending my daughter to buy the tobacco for my pipe. So if you are coming for her you have to give something for him to be satisfied that even if the girl is not there, he has been compensated.

**John** That's fine.

**Kow** Then, there is something given to the girl's mother. It is called tambobaa. Today, the Fantes hardly do it, but among the Ashantis, you will see that the women have the ends of their cloth tied up. T times, nothing is put in it but they used to put a stone in it. It implies that they have given birth and if the girl is not there, it is because she has been taken in marriage.

**John** So, anytime she sees the stone, she remembers that ...

**Kow** Her daughter has gone into marriage. So it is not because of old age that they put the stone in the clothe but that they have children who have been married and sent away.

**John** What else is involved?

**Kow** The brothers-in-law also collect the *Akontansikan* (brother-in-law's knife). It also stands for the same thing. The brothers have been protecting their sister. They seek for her welfare. So if someone calls her in the town, they have the right to protect her, even fight with the person. If you have therefore come to marry her, they take something so that apart from you, if they see anyone trying to woo her, they can intervene.

**John** When do we say that the marriage is complete in Akan tradition?

**Kow** When all the things I have mentioned have been done and the girl has been brought to your house, it is taken that the marriage is complete. When the girl is being brought, they make sure that she comes with a maid to serve her for a while because she is new in marriage and she would need help. The maiden may decide to live with the maid until she also gets ready to marry. She may also decide after some time that I can manage on my own so she will send the maid back.

**John** We hear that in Akan traditional marriage, marriage is considered as a union of families and not the individuals. What can you say about this?

**Kow** When it is said that marriage is between families, it means that it is the man's father who goes to the woman's father with the proposal. The girl's father also informs her mother's relatives and investigations begin to find out about the family of the prospective husband. When they are satisfied, they inform the boy's family to come and perform the rites. The girl's family and the boy's family enter into a kind of relationship which may even be stronger than the relationship between the couple hence the saying that marriage is between families.

**John** So, it implies that the two families have become one?

**Kow** They have become one in the marriage.

**John** What happens between them for which we say that they are one?

**Kow** For example, if there is a problem and the man is not happy with the behaviour of the wife, he himself cannot go to the mother or the father of the girl. He has to inform his own father or mother what has happened. His parents' respect that the girl belongs to a family so they inform her mother that this is what your daughter has done. The mother will then say. Be patient. Will talk to her.

**John** we are coming to how conflicts are resolved in traditional marriage, but before then, apart from this what else is the role of the families in the marriage?

**Kow** The most important role of the family is that in the past, it is the father's duty to see to it that the couple are established. He gives the man a capital to begin life with. The Ashantis call this *dwetsir*. The mother also provides some basic household items like cooking pots. The newly married man cannot provide all of them, so whatever she thinks is needful for the marriage the mother of the girl provides for daughter to enter into marriage. After that the basic requirement of the relationship is to see to it that the marriage becomes stable. The girl's mother may ask, Ama, how are things? How is the relationship between you and your husband? I came to visit how is the home? Fine. I hope there is nothing wrong.

**John** So they only see to it to support the marriage? We hear that some elders are appointed to be the backbone of the marriage>

**Kow** They are the backbone. Maybe the parents of the girl are dead or they don't live in the village. When there is a problem, the man's father or mother would have to see the girl's parents but they are not there, so they have to get some one from the girl's family to confer with that is why someone is appointed. The person stands in for the girl's parents and informs them about everything later.

**John** So, it is important that those who are appointed are people living in the same town with the couple?

**Kow** Yes, by all means, they should be living in the town. If one is travelling, he or she will get someone to stand in for him or her.

**John** Don't the couple see the involvement of the families, their visits etc. as interference?

**Kow** It is not a bother, apart from maybe in the case of frequent demands for money. But normally, they say, we are going to see how they are faring. Sometimes, they might need something but they feel shy to ask. A woman may ask the daughter, how is your husband's work. It is then that the daughter will come out that he is in financial crisis. The mother may ask the husband to come home in the evening and take some money. So, the involvement of the family is a help to the couple. There are no elders who would want to bother the couple especially when they have just begun. Maybe because character changes, attitudes might change but mainly, they are there to see to it that the marriage works.

**John** May I find out whether in traditional society, people going to marry have any type of education before they marry?

**Kow** There is no formal education, but they are advised when they are getting married. However, while staying with the mother or with your father, you learn from the life they are living. Take a fisherman for instance, they do not intentionally teach someone to become a fisherman like one trains to be a carpenter by becoming an apprentice to an experienced carpenter. While you walk with your father, as they go fishing and come, you observe they way they go about things. You might hear an elderly woman telling her daughter, Ama, what you are doing, you may send it into your marriage. That implies that you are doing something wrong. So in living together, you learn about marriage.

**John** In that way people learn about marriage in their day to day activities, but not that there is any formal education on marriage?

**Kow** White people have something they say that Mr. X is a model for me. So, your parents become models for you. Sometimes, the mother's attitude towards the father is not very good. The girl may ask "the treatment you are meting out to my father, will you be happy if I do the same in my marriage?". Or she might ask the father, " the treatment you are meting out to my mother, if someone does the same to me, will you be happy?" so. People learn from their parents. They do not learn intentionally but they learn.

**John** What marriage will we regard as successful in traditional marriage?

**Kow** A successful marriage depends on the individual. It is because marriage is good that our elders instituted it. Among the Ashantis, the Fantes and the Akyems, it is because marriage is good that they instituted it. It is the same in the whole of Africa. But it all depends on the individual because character changes. Sometimes, people fail to follow the laid down instructions or because of poverty, people fail to take good care of their children. Money is the cause of many problems in marriage.

**John** So, can we say that because of differences in character, some people's marriage do better than others?

**Kow** Yes, it depends on the individuals.

**John** What is it that takes place on the part of the individuals for which we say that their marriage is successful or not successful?

**Kow** If I am to use myself as an example, there are times when I see that I am in need, but because I discuss issues with my wife, she knows the situation that I am in need. So, whatever I say, she believes me and I also believe her. If my wife has, I know she will not hide it from me. So if we are all in need, I as the head of the house must make sure that there is peace in the house. So when those around see us, they assume that we don't even have problems and quarrel. They then say that our marriage is successful. I myself believe that that is how it should be. But in some marriages, the man wants his welfare only. He insists that the woman will perform all her responsibilities in the marriage without thinking about his own

responsibilities in the marriage. Sometimes also, the woman may be working and be earning more than the husband, but because it is said that it is the man's responsibility to take care of her, she does what is improper. This brings about quarrels in the home and people say such marriage is not successful, yet they would be living together.

**John** In traditional society, how are couples support in their marriages?

**Kow** Are you talking about the parents?

**John** Parents or whatever means by which they are supported.

**Kow** What I will say is that if you are living in a society, and you find someone in need, the one may be your relative of the child of a friend, many call the person to offer help to him or her. It may be a small issue, but because they are inexperienced they do not know how to go about it. So you call the one to talk to the one. You may either call the man or the woman and ask about the problem and then when you know what the problem is, ...

**John** Who are you saying will call them?

**Kow** Any elder who feels that he is old and living in the society. All you have to do is to see to it that there is peace. So you may call one, "on Eku", she may not even be a relative, but you recognise that there is a problem so you call and ask, "what is the matter?" If she is able to tell you, you advise her accordingly. You may ask her to call her husband for you, "do tell your next door neighbour to call your husband for me. You do not want the husband to know that the woman has talked to you about the problem. When the husband comes, you tell him, I see a change in your wife and I am not happy about it. What is happening? From what the husband says, you will tell him, oh if you go call your wife for me. Since the woman knows about it already, it is all right for the man to call him. So they come together and you counsel them. If there is any other help, it may be money, you may give them a loan. People do help in this way. Some of us do that always.

**John** What often brings conflicts in marriage?

**Kow** I think I said earlier that each one has a responsibility in the marriage. Failure to fulfil ones responsibility leads to conflict. Sometimes the woman may be fulfilling her responsibility but the man may be demanding more from her than she can provide. It is not right for the man to make such a demand but when she points it out then the man will insist that she does more because maybe, he sees the woman performing some tasks for another person. If she is doing it for an outsider, why not me? This can lead to conflict. Sexual problems may also lead to conflict. Maybe, the woman may want to rest for a week or two but the man will be demanding sex from her. This can lead to conflict. It may even be that the woman has given birth. According to the Fante tradition, she can have sexual relations with her husband after three months. These days the young women may say that they are not coming near the man for six months. This can lead to conflict. The refusal of the man to provide money for food, take care of the education of the children, and make general provisions for the family can lead to conflict. It is expected of the woman also to work to support the husband. If she misuses any money given to her for trading, it can lead to conflict.

**John** How are such conflicts resolved when they arise?

**Kow** The woman who feels hurt may have to talk about the issue with the husband. My father-in-law advised when I married that he doesn't want a third person to come and sit on an issue between my wife and me. So when there is a problem, the one who feels hurt should at dawn call the other person and settle it. If after that attempt, we are unable to settle it then I inform my father and mother. The one I inform will go to the wife's parents and make a formal report and they will come to talk to my wife. Maybe, my wife would have informed her parents already. If they are unhappy about the report it may aggravate the issue, which may be referred to a traditional court of elders.

**John** What happens when your parents go to talk to the girl's parents?

**Kow** They take a step to call their daughter and talk to her and then come back to inform my parents about the action they had taken and request that we observe her for some time. Meanwhile if there is another issue, we should inform them.

**John** Don't they call the two of you together to sit and discuss the issue?

**Kow** That happens when they do not agree to your complaints and they continue to support their daughter. In that case a neutral elder would be called into intervene.

**John** When things happen that way, are you able to resolve the conflict?

**Kow** In most cases the issue is resolved.

**John** What about divorce in traditional society? Is it a frequent occurrence?

**Kow** It is allowed in traditional society but there is a saying that *mpanyinfo nngu awar* (elders do not dissolve marriage). However, they may agree to it. After bringing in a neutral person to help resolve the problem if one partner still insists that he wants to leave the marriage, the one is advised. They say that in marriage one should be wise and the other should be a fool but if both of them want to be wise and no one wants to compromise irrespective of the advice from their parents, it can create a problem. The individuals are asked to go and consider their position again and report in a week or two. They go and think about it. Sometimes they heed the advice of their parents and decide to forget about everything. Other times they decide to leave the marriage. The elders are called again and they agree to dissolve the marriage. In that case, if it is the man who had decided to leave the marriage, he demands the *tsir nsa* and *tsir adze* from the woman's relations. The woman may also ask for the money she used to prepare the first meal, *nkwansan no a osi no*. When all such payments have been made and the marriage has been dissolved, they put powder on the man if he is the one asking for the divorce. This signifies that he has taken himself out of trouble. If it is the woman who initiated the divorce, she does likewise. Sometimes, the man may not demand any money back. He tells the relations of the woman that he is 'pushing her off' and he forgives her and will not demand anything from her. In that case there should be something to signify that that is what has happened so the man gives some money to signify that. The idea behind the giving of that money is that the woman would use it as feeding money for some days as she looks for a new husband. When the man comes to 'push' the woman off and sends the money, the woman sends a thank you message to him with a drink. So long as the woman has not sent the message of thanks, then it means she doesn't accept what he has done. Once the woman has not agreed, if there is a problem with the woman, she can still go to the man's people with that problem. They would not have any proof that the woman has been 'pushed' away.

**John** What is the view of polygamy in traditional Fante society?

**Kow** Polygamy is allowed in Fante tradition. A man can marry even four wives. However, the man must be in the financial position to take care of the number of wives. He has to make proper arrangements concerning which of the wives is cooking at what time and with whom he will spend the night. In that case, none of the wives live with you in your house. You have to get a place for each of them and they will come to stay with you in turns, for example, for a month at a time. Even in that case a wife does not come to live with you always. She only comes to sleep with you in the night and returns the next morning since the other wives have the right to bring their problems to the man during the day.

**John** Why do you think that people marry more than one?

**Kow** This is my personal view and not what I have studied anywhere. In times past, people liked to have many children to help them on their farm or in their fishing business. For some others, they feel they cannot wait for three months when the wife gives birth and they do not want to sleep with someone outside marriage so they will marry another woman so that they can always satisfy their sexual desires.

**John** Fine. In traditional society are women involved in decision making in their marriages? If important decisions have to be taken are the wives involved?

**Kow** They are not only involved but they discuss issues thoroughly with their husbands. At times, an action needs to be taken. The woman may object to that and the man will agree not to take the action. The man may say that the action is intended for the welfare of both of us but if you will not agree I will stop it for the sake of peace. Other times if the man strongly feels that that action must be taken, he might go to the wife's parents to inform them about their daughter's refusal to consent to the action.

**John** What do you think is the difference between traditional marriage and modern marriage? Which of them do you think is more helpful?

**Kow** Time changes. Each period of time has its happenings. That is why I often say that for those in former times, the marriage arrangements were good for them. The marriage arrangements today are good for us. What I think is not helpful today is that people just marry

anyone they meet on the streets without knowing about their background. When there is a problem then they become helpless. You also do not know whether the person comes from a family with contagious diseases. That is what I am worried about concerning marriage in our day.

**John** That means that young adults marry without their parents making the choice for them?

**Kow** In the past no one will marry without the family knowing but that happens today. It may even happen that the person may die on you without knowing what to do. I think that it is a shortcoming in today's marriage.

**John** What else would you say when you compare the two?

**Kow** What I think is good about today's marriage is that there is more understanding between the spouses in terms of doing things together. In the past, the woman would be told, "as you enter into marriage take good care of yourself. If you gain any good thing, bring it home. If you fall into a debt, let your husband pay." That arrangement wasn't good. It is not like that today. If there is a debt, they both plan to pay it. In the past the man also had the mind that if the children succeed, they will go to their *ebusua* so even though their welfare was his responsibility, he was reluctant to take good care of them. Only a few godly ones took good care of their children. So in marriages in both periods, there are good sides and bad sides.

**John** Thank you very much for the time and insight.

**Kow** When I talked about the man who wants to divorce the wife coming to 'push' her away, I forgot this. A woman who is proud of herself may say that she is not to be treated that way so she will add the money you have come with to 'push' her away together with the money paid for the marriage and send it to you. She adds that she is not a person to be trampled upon. She however agrees that the marriage is dissolved. In that case the elders become disturbed so they meet to dissolve the marriage.

**John** That means that she will not wait for you to 'push' her off but she is rather asking for a divorce.

**Kow** She agrees to the divorce but she is not desperate. If you don't bring the money she will still survive.

**John** Thank you very much.

**Kow** My pleasure.

## APPENDIX IX

### INTERVIEW WITH VERY REV. EMMANUEL EBO WALTERS

**PROFILE:** *The Very Rev. Emmanuel Ebo Walters is an ordained minister in the Methodist Church, Ghana. He is an expert on the Fante Language and tradition. He has an MPhil degree in Fante Language. He is currently the administrator of the Cape Coast Diocese of the Methodist Church, Ghana. This interview was conducted at his office in Cape Coast on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2001.*

**John** I am doing a research on the pastoral care of Akan marriages and I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to find out more about Akan marriages. We may begin by telling me your name?

**Ebo** I'm Very Rev. Emmanuel Ebo Walters, currently, the diocesan administrator of the Cape Coast Diocese of the Methodist Church, Ghana.

**John** In the traditional sense, what is marriage and why do people marry?

**Ebo** In the traditional sense, when we talk about tradition, we mean the way people do things as Africans, and marriage particularly is an institution which is part of our tradition. People marry when they reach the marriageable age. Especially women from about 18 years, if they do not go to formal school, after 18 years, they are matured enough to marry. And then from 20-25 years, the men, as long as they are working and they are able to support a family, they are able to marry. So marriage in the traditional sense is the union between two people of opposite sexes, a male and a female who are of marriageable ages and who can support a family especially when they have some work that earns them some income.

**John** Okay.

**Ebo** And why people marry? We marry in order to continue God's creation. This time I'm talking as a Christian and in the traditional sense, it is almost the same, to continue with the work of our ancestors, so that is the reason why people marry.

**John** Apart from procreation, traditionally, are there other reasons why people marry?

**Ebo** Yeah. Marriage is also for companionship because a man cannot stay alone all through his life. He needs the company of the opposite sex.

**John** Can we talk a bit about how marriage is contracted in the Akan traditional society and the stages involved?

**Ebo** Marriage is contracted in the Akan traditional society when as I have said already, a man reaches a marriageable age. He informs his father about his desire to have a partner. And especially, when he has spotted a young woman who is also of marriageable age. By this time, the young man might have had some savings from the work that he has been doing. So, when he contacts his father, the father will also contact his sisters, the father's own sisters so that they will start doing a search, finding out about the background of the woman. So, they will make a move to the young woman's house and inquire her hand in marriage. When they go, what they do traditionally is that the father of the girl will listen to them and then say that they have to give them some time. This time the father of the young lady and his family will also be looking at the background of the man. So, whilst the man's family will be looking at the background of the young lady, the young lady's family will also be looking at the background of the man so that she may marry the right person.

What they look for, for instance, they look for whether there has been some diseases like tuberculosis, leprosy and other contagious diseases in the family, both sides. Then also morally, they want to find out whether the family has some bad morals? Are they thieves, are they violent, has anyone in the family been imprisoned before? All these things are looked for so that they select the best. Now when this search has been done, then the way is now open. In fact, the father initially will say, "we do not stand among ants to remove ants". So, that is will tell them that they want to do a search and they will understand it.

**John** Okay

**Ebo** So that when it has been done, then the next stage will be the knocking. Traditionally, the family of the young man goes knocking at the door of the young lady. It is signified by rum, or sometimes, it is paid in money. Specifically, I cannot mention the amount involved. When that is accepted, then the others follow. The others will be the head money, which is

also sizeable. If the girl has been to school, they charge differently, or in other words, if they have invested something in the girl, they will have to charge higher.

**John** What is the significance of the rum in all of these things?

**Ebo** The rum is to, as it were, be a witness, a sort of a testimony to the fact that the girl's hand is being asked in marriage. And it is to be shared among the family elders. Everybody should have a sip to show that ...

**John** A transaction has taken place. So, when they go to do the knocking and the girl's family agree, is it then that they provide this head rum?

**Ebo** Yes.

**John** Apart from the head money, what else is provided?

**Ebo** The family of the young man should provide a trunk. This time, it is a suitcase of some sort in which he has to provide six pieces of cloth to be sown for the young lady. He also provides a pair of sandals, about six panties, six brassier, a hand watch and sometimes, a Bible and a ring, especially when she has been to school and she is able read. And then there are other petty things that are added for the full dressing of the young lady.

**John** So, the idea in the presentation of the items is that the man is proving that he can actually take care of the woman and the woman is not going to go round naked or in tattered clothing?

**Ebo** Yes.

**John** Apart from what is provided for the young lady herself, are there other things which are provided?

**Ebo** Yes, the parents of the girl have to be, as it were compensated. So traditionally, they have what they call tobacco money for the father and the mother's cloth for the mother. The significance is that when this lady was young, all through her life, the mother had spent a lot of money caring for her. In other to compensate her, they give her a piece of cloth. Sometimes it is done in money. Then apart from that, the brothers of the young lady also have to be

compensated. They are given what is termed *akontan sikan*, brother in law's knife or cutlass. In other words, the young man who is coming into the home has to make sure that he has compensated the young lady's brothers so that in case of any conflicts, they can help him in solving them.

**John** When do we say that one is fully married in Akan tradition?

**Ebo** One is fully married when the young lady is given tout o the man, she moves from her father's premises or house and goes to stay with the young man, and they sleep on the same bed. In other words the marriage is consummated. Sometimes, actually, it is when the woman gives birth that it is taken that the marriage is complete.

**John** Yeah, I know about this sort of idea, that sometimes, the marriage is not taken as complete until there is an offspring. Is it the case in all Akan societies?

**Ebo** Sometimes, it is the case, but with the Christian ideas that have come, do we call it inculturation or sort of, many people are educated especially in the churches that marriage is not based on the issue of children alone. It is companionship first and foremost, helping each other, but traditionally, many people without an issue will not consider the marriage as being complete.

**John** And when does the young woman get to the young man's house? At what point in the process?

**Ebo** Traditionally, when the young man's people have presented all the items mentioned, they allow the young lady to move to his house.

**John** You are a minister and we know that in the church, or in the country now, after performing all those rites, we still talk about church weddings or going to the civil courts for weddings. What is your view about it? Don't you think that there is a duplication in our marriages?

**Ebo** Yes, in fact, the traditional marriages as it were, do not have a legal basis. The weddings that are held in the church are a sort of solemnisation as well as seeking the legal backing for the marriage.. it is a one to one marriage and it is lifelong. It is a monogamous marriage, therefore, when one gets into that kind of church wedding, he is kind of solidifying

the marriage and giving it a legal background. So, maybe, we will not say that it is a repetition or what did you say?

**John** Yeah. I said it is a repetition because traditionally, once a man has paid all the things that he has to pay, and the woman has gone to the man's house, it is taken that they are married. But then, sometimes, the church doesn't take it that their marriage is complete until they have had the wedding. And if you consider the process, traditionally, everything that needs to be done for the marriage to be complete has been done.

**Ebo** In actual fact, when the couple are going through the premarital counselling for the wedding, the minister makes sure that all the traditional marriage obligations or demands have been met. That is the first stage. If it hasn't been done, the church marriage or wedding will not proceed.

**John** That is why I am saying this. For example, we took this wedding from the colonial masters who came to us. In their wedding, they don't have type of traditional custom. Well I see the term engagement being used for the traditional marriage as an improper term.

**Ebo** So, what do you think it should be?

**John** It is marriage because when those who brought the wedding to us talk about engagement, a young man meets a young lady and tells her, I'll marry you and puts a ring on her finger.

**Ebo** Without any reference to parents?

**John** No, nothing at all. For them that is their engagement, but here, two families have sat down to contract the marriage and we call it engagement. I think it is quite inappropriate.

**Ebo** Well, in our sort of engagement, immediately both families agree, she is your wife.

**John** Yes, and that is marriage.

**Ebo** It is marriage.

**John** Okay. It is said that in traditional Akan society, marriage is a union not just between individuals but between two families. What is your view about this?

**Ebo** I perfectly agree because when a young man is married to a woman, I would even think that it is rather four families that come together. The man's father's family is there, his mother's family is there. The woman's mother's family is there and her father's family is there. So, four families actually come together. When any disagreements or conflicts arise, it will take these families to come together to resolve the issues. And moreover, in our system of marriage, the young lady has to see to the welfare of her in-laws and the young man also has to see the welfare of his in-laws for a perfect kind of co-operation.

**John** But is there a clear distinction between the union of the couple and the union of the families?

**Ebo** Yes. The distinction is that the couple are those who are marrying, but the families are supporting. They are playing the supportive role. In fact, in most of the traditional marriages, the girl's family one person as somebody who should be consulted in case of conflict, and the man's family will also nominate somebody to stand in so that if there is a problem, it is referred to them. If any conflicts arise, it is expected that the couple will try to settle it. If they are not able and it is an allegation against the man, the woman will refer it to the man's elder to try to solve it. If he is not able to solve it, then a larger group will come in.

**John** So, basically, we can say that the main role of the family is supportive, resolving conflicts etc.

**Ebo** Yes.

**John** You talked about those who are nominated to be the backbone of the marriage.

**Ebo** These people should be some people who are experienced in marriage themselves and people who have a positive attitude towards conflict resolution. There are some people, when the woman reports being maltreated or there being conflict in the marriage, will put fire as it were, and worsen the situation. They will even call for dissolution. So, they want a calm person, someone, who is not very violent, who is experienced in marriage and so on and so forth.

**John** So, those elders in a sense serve as sort of counsellors to the couple?

**Ebo** Exactly.

**John** Don't you see the involvement of the families as a sort of interference in the couple's marriage?

**Ebo** Well, at what we are calling the engagement, some pieces of advice are offered, especially in modern times, people are actually told not to interfere. They are allowed to marry on their own, try to resolve their problems so that the interference is minimised. But some people actually do interfere. They will dictate to the woman what to do or dictate to the man what to do, but if the counsellors or elders who are chosen are experienced people, they'll give positive advice..

**John** Is there any way by which young people are trained to marry in traditional society?

**Ebo** There isn't any formal training but there is informal. There is a proverb that a woman goes into marriage with her mother. In other words, what her mother has taught her, how to prepare food or cook, how to wash, how to keep the home clean, ...

**John** Generally, home management.

**Ebo** Home management and so on. If she does it well, then her marriage will be good. On the other hand, if she doesn't take these lessons serious, then the marriage will not work. The same thing happens to the man. So, there is no formal training.

**John** But there is informal training?

**Ebo** Exactly.

**John** In terms of the woman, you mentioned what is involved in this training, home management generally. What is involved in the man's informal training? How does the man learn?

**Ebo** The man learns through observation, observing what the father does. But he father has to make sure that he is really working so that he can support his family, the young man's own family. As long as he is working and has been observing what his father has been doing in support of the family, it is taken that he is learning.

**John** In the traditional sense, what marriage is regarded as a successful marriage and which one is not?

**Ebo** A successful marriage in the traditional sense is one in which there are children. Gone were the days when the number of children you had showed how successful your marriage was. But these days, because of economic hardships, people are actually being counselled to bring down the number of children they bring forth. So, that is one. Secondly, a marriage in which the couple don't quarrel very often because they are able to solve their problems will be regarded as a successful marriage.

**John** So, it means that the problems are there but they are able to resolve them peacefully?

**Ebo** Exactly. Then also, when they acquire some property like a house of their own. For some time past, it was the man who was the breadwinner of the house and must struggle to put up a building although with the support of the wife indirectly. But the man claims to have put up the building. If in a marriage, the couple have a building of their own, where do not go to rent a house somewhere, it is also regarded as a successful marriage. At least, these three immediately come to mind.

**John** And how are marriages strengthened in traditional society?

**Ebo** Marriage is strengthened in traditional society by the families that are behind the couple. They may be given capital by the family to start something. Either to start trading or something else to support them. Apart from the pieces of advice they are given, sometimes, they are give financial support.

**John** And such support mainly comes from the family?

**Ebo** Yes.

**John** Apart from the family, is there any way in which couples receive support.

**Ebo** Yeah. Traditionally, couples may receive support from neighbours, especially when they are farmers. For instance, we have gangs who help each other by wedding each other's farms. So, when the neighbours go into one person's farm for a day, the next time, they will go to another person's farm. It is a form of support because they say, one man cannot fight a

dozen. You may have a big land for farming but you may not be able to do it alone. So, they give support in this sense.

**John** Let me come back to the issue of conflicts in marriage. What are the main sources of conflict in traditional marriage?

**Ebo** First and foremost, we mentioned the upkeep money, what is popular known as chop money. If a man is not able to support the family and all the burdens come on the woman, there is likely to be conflict. Secondly, there are sexual issues. If the man demands so much from the woman sexually, there is bound to be conflict. Then thirdly, extramarital affairs or relations also bring conflicts.

**John** Is it on the part of the man or the woman?

**Ebo** Both.

**John** But traditionally, it is allowed that the man can marry more than one?

**Ebo** Yes, but if he has not married the person but takes her as a girlfriend, it may bring a conflict, especially on the part of the legal wife. Then also, in-laws can create conflicts, especially when the couple is not able to bring forth. The man may go to bring a nephew or niece to the house and may think that the wife is not mistreating them and this can lead to conflict. Apart from this, if there is any interference from the in-laws, it will also lead to conflict.

**John** When conflicts arise, how are they resolved?

**Ebo** The best is that the couple solves their own problem. Especially in the mornings, they may solve their problems by getting up to talk about the problem. When they are not able to sort out the problems, the elders are approached. When the elders meet and listen to them, they go and consult in camera and then find out where the problem lies and then they come back to advise the couple.

**John** Is it always the case that the couple take the advice of the elders?

**Ebo** Sometimes, they take it but at other times, they do not. When they do not take the advice, the conflict continues and worsen and eventually, it might end up in the breaking of the marriage.

**John** Two families met together for the marriage to be contracted. Do they easily allow the marriage to break down just like that? What is the whole view of divorce in traditional society?

**Ebo** In fact, traditionally, divorce is not allowed. As much as possible, they want the marriage couple to stay together for life. But when say, one partner gets so aggrieved and he has a hardened heart and he does not want to forgive and forget, then it will lead to the dissolution of the marriage. But traditionally, it is not allowed. They think that people should marry, care for their children or their families until death.

**John** So the elders try very hard to reconcile the couple?

**Ebo** As much as possible, they try to put them together, to resolve their problems for them to stay as husband and wife.

**John** What do you think, when you talk of someone being so aggrieved, what can cause someone to be that aggrieved that he may want a divorce?

**Ebo** For instance, yesterday, I just went on a case that took about three hours. We sat down, I listened to the man and I listened to the woman. This problem is one is which the man is not working now. But there was a time when the man had money and he opened a store where he sold few things, provisions and other things. Now, the man is no longer working and the woman is not helping him. In other words, when he is financially incapacitated, she doesn't want to help. Basically, they have a daughter who is so carefree. She doesn't want to do anything and most of the time, the woman encourages her. The man wants to discipline the daughter and he is facing opposition from the wife so the daughter is not giving herself to discipline. The man does not want the woman to stay with him again. So, sometimes, it is hard-heartedness. When one does not want to support the other in a common cause. Someone will say, agree to disagree agreeably. When they want to find a middle way to resolve issues and one proves difficult, it is most likely to end in divorce.

**John** Then the whole idea of polygamy, traditionally, why do people go in for polygamy?

**Ebo** Traditionally, when our people were agriculturally inclined, the man needed so many hands to help in weeding his farm so he married more than one and apportion some piece of land to every woman. As they help him to weed the farm, he also helps to maintain them from the farm proceeds. Basically, it would have been only one to one, but I will say that sometimes, it is also due to lust. All said and done, in traditional society, historically, the number of wives and children you have put you in a certain status in the society. That is why many people went in for polygamy.

**John** What is the role of the woman in traditional marriage?

**Ebo** The role of the woman in traditional marriage first and foremost is to help the husband in maintaining the household. They do all the household chores like cooking, washing cleaning the house and so on and so forth. They also care for the children, especially when they are young.

**John** Do they have any role to play when it comes to making important decisions for the family?

**Ebo** In fact, some traditional African women think that since the man is the head of the house, every major decision is to be taken by the man. So, sometimes, even when the woman is being encouraged to contribute to decision making, they will say, let me wait for my husband. Even when the husband is present and he asks the view of the woman, she'll say, ah, you are the head of the family so what do you say, what do you think? So, most women actually do not accept the fact that they can also make very vital decisions. They always want to look up to the man.

**John** In the light of this and in the light of current women's issues, it is claimed that traditionally, women have been subjected to oppression and so on and so forth. Women have not been allowed to come out. But you are saying that the women themselves will say that it is the man who is supposed to make important decisions. Traditionally, doesn't the woman take this as oppression that it is the man who always takes the decisions?

**Ebo** You see, some do. Some men are actually bullies and they want to say that if I am not around, don't take any decision. Wait for me. But some, in the light of current issues about women do encourage women who give thought-provoking contributions. But basically, some will take it as oppression sort of. But someone has said that women are their own enemies, because when sometimes, they are going into marriage, they tell the woman, when you go, look up to your husband. In looking up to her husband, she will always want to know what the husband says before she acts.

**John** In your view, what are the strengths of traditional marriage?

**Ebo** I will say that first and foremost, both families of the man and the wife are behind them. I think it is a great advantage in the sense that when they are financially handicapped, the families are supposed to support them. The families are supposed to support them when things are not going well or when there is conflict. It is the families' duty to help them have a smooth livelihood. Another support is that when the woman gives birth, her mother is supposed to help her with the initial stages of caring for the baby, especially the first born. Some women either travels back to where their mothers are to deliver or sometimes, their mothers come to live with them for sometime to offer a helping hand. I think that is a great support. When you are a novice, you don't know anything about it, you are likely to be helped. And also with regards to the man, the strength is that, especially if he has brothers in law who is co-operative, they will make the marriage work. I think it is also a positive aspect of traditional marriage.

**John** What do you also think are the weaknesses of traditional marriage?

**Ebo** The weaknesses first and foremost is about its polygamous nature. One may marry so many women and may not be able to support them, hence they become a burden to the society. This is especially the case when you bring up children and you are unable to support them and give them good education. Then also, sometimes, interference from in laws, especially when one person seeks the ill advice of the family is a weakness. The couple is not left to live their lives as they want to but to consult at every stage. An extramarital relationship with others, which lead to quarrels and eventually divorce is also a weakness.

**John** But that is also in modern marriages?

**Ebo** Well, it is. So, it runs through both traditional and modern marriages.

**John** How do you compare traditional and modern marriages?

**Ebo** I think there is some aspect of help in the traditional marriage that the families give to the couple by way of the strengths, which we have mentioned earlier. In that sense, I'll say that sometimes, the traditional marriage is better. But in the sense of the legality of modern marriages, when vows are taken, for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death separates the couple. I think it makes it more solid. One cannot easily get a divorce. It makes it a bit better than the traditional one where one can divorce the woman for flimsy excuses.

**John** Thank you very much for the time and the insights that you have shared concerning traditional marriage. I'm hopeful that it will be helpful for my study.

**Ebo** You're welcome.

## APPENDIX X

### INTERVIEW WITH FRANK AND SUE OBENG

**PROFILE:** *Frank and Sue Obeng are members of the International Central Gospel Church. They are beneficiaries of the Family Enrichment Ministry of the ICGC. They participated in the premarital programmes of the ministry and continue to participate in the support programmes since they married. This interview was conducted at their home in Accra on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I am looking at how we can support marriages and help marriages in conflict and I should be grateful if you could spare some few minutes for us to have a discussion as to how your marriage is going. So if we can begin by knowing your name and then how long you have been married? Since we are talking together, any of you can begin.

**Frank** I'm Frank Obeng. My wife is Sue. We have been married for a little over two years.

**John** What type of marriage? Is it customary, Muslim or ordinance, which is either civil or Church wedding?

**Frank** Well, we can say it is Church wedding. But the way I see and understand it, we also had to go through the customary marriage because we had what we call the engagement, that is, the Ghanaian traditional engagement.

**John** That brings a very interesting point. When did you have the customary marriage rites? Was it on the same day that you had the wedding?

**Frank** It wasn't on the same day.

**Sue** We had it in August.

**Frank** And then we had the wedding in October.

**John** So when will you say you were fully married? Was it after the customary rites had been performed?

**Frank** For us being Christians, we take it that it is October, after the Church wedding.

**John** Why do you say that you were married after the Church wedding and not after the customary rites had been performed?

**Frank** Basically, I will say, like I said earlier, that because we are Christians, we are thinking that every marriage has to be brought before God and that was the time that our marriage was brought before God.

**John** Maybe, let me see if we can draw our attention to this. What we are calling engagement here ...

**Frank** Yeah! The first time I witnessed an engagement, it was for a friend of mine. I have lived in a village setting so I knew how marriage was conducted, the customary ones. And I have been away for some time. I remember just before I went, I heard about this wedding, wedding. But I didn't actually know what it entailed. But when I came back and I had to witness this engagement, at the end of the day, I thought that that was the marriage, because it was just in line with what I knew about in the village.

**John** Yes. It's an issue that I have been thinking about. Personally, I don't want to call it engagement, because it is not engagement. That is the traditional marriage and so I do not want to call it engagement. But it looks like it's become the parlance of the day now in Ghana that we call the customary rites engagement. But if we look at it in the traditional sense and see that it is our marriage, and then see that as Christians, we also have to have a Church wedding, then it's like we are marrying the person twice. What do you say about that.

**Sue** This issue has been on the discussion table for a long time or for some time now. Now what people are doing is, they have the traditional marriage in the house, early in the morning, and then in the afternoon, they take it to the Church to be blessed. Some others bring the pastors home so that after the traditional exchanges and all those things, the pastor will bless the marriage, put on a second ring, and they consider it as being blessed. But if you will look at it closely, you know we have been borrowing from the west. That is why we have all this engagement and all that. What they call engagement is what we call knocking here. ...

**John** Fine, and even then, there is a slight difference. But that is the closest the engagement will come to, because with the engagement, you don't need any other person, but with the knocking, you have to send your elders to go with a bottle of drink.

**Sue** It is because of how our family set-up is. You know, a white man or woman can get up, go and marry in Church and come, "you know, we married yesterday." That kind of things, but we cannot do that.

**John** So what do you think about that, people who have the customary rites, and maybe, the pastor will come and bless the marriage at home. Do they have the legal backing in those particular marriages, or before then, they will have gone to the court to ...

**Sue** Yes. They would have gone to register in the court.

**Frank** Even in our Church, that is the situation. For weddings in our Church, (I don't know of what pertains in other churches) but in our Church, before the wedding comes on, you are told to go to , shall we call them declarations?

**John** Yes, that is there, but you can have a single wedding, not in the Church but in the court. You had your wedding in the Church, but then, you register and they gave you the permission to declare the banns of marriage and so on and so forth, before you had the wedding in the Church. The truth is that the Church acts on behalf of the State, so even the register which is signed, it doesn't belong to the Church. It belongs to the State and the Church acts for the State. The only thing is that when it's done in the Church, you've brought it before God, so it is like bringing the blessing of God and the legal requirements together. And it might interest you to know that there is nothing Christian about wedding, because what happen in the civil courts, they don't even say a prayer, but then when you bring it to the Church, then it's like you bring it before God. The wedding as it is was the traditional marriage of the British and then they brought it to God for God to be in the marriage. So, will it not be all right for us also to bring God in our own traditional marriage as we are talking about? That is like, when the customary rites are being performed, pastors come and they bless the marriage.

**Sue** It's the signing of the register. There are specific places ...

**John** Exactly. The place must be registered, so in the home, that could not be done?

**Sue** otherwise, every home must be registered.

**Frank** Then, there could be this suggestion, that instead of registering places, it's like people can be given the responsibility to do it in the homes, so that it will not be mere places but people.

**John** Before anybody can celebrate a wedding, the person should have been an ordained minister. Ordained ministers are licensed, so the personalities involve are licensed to do it because if you're an ordained minister, there should be a gazetting that you are ordained, so in the country, they know that they have given you the license that you can perform. Properly, that is what should happen, so the personalities are there. But I think that if Christians agree that it's not a question of bringing the marriage to the Church that makes any difference, then we could also advocate for a change in the law or whatever to suit whatever thing we want to do.

**Sue** That will be good but the other problem or the other question is the dressing, especially for the women. We believe that when you put on the white with the veil and all those things, that is when you say that you're having a wedding.. Now, people are trying to use "anago" and all those things. I witnessed one wedding. The gentleman wore this three-piece "bubu". The lady wore something similar to the bubu, but it still had the trail, that kind of thing. So the dressing also counts. Even if we try to bring the Rev. minister and all those things in the house, the dressing may also be a problem. You know, everybody who has had a wedding would want to have a picture like this one which is there. (pointing to the wedding picture) You have your crown, your veil, and that kind of thing.

**John** Can we look at it this way? What benefit or what do we gain from the wedding in terms of the wedding?

**Frank** That is what I was going to say. It's a matter of people being made to understand that the clothing per se doesn't have anything to do ...

**Sue** The clothing doesn't, but just as you wear swimsuit, you know when you find somebody in the beach wearing swimsuit, you don't find anything wrong because that is the

dressing for the beach. Those who go to the discos and things, you find them wearing those tight dresses, you don't see anything wrong with it. When you see anybody in the street wearing those things, the question you will ask is that, does this person think that we are in the disco? So this kind of dressing has come to be associated with weddings. That is the dressing for weddings.

*John* It's an interesting subject. Let me bring up this argument and see if we can get something out of it. For example, the wedding dress, the suit and the gown are foreign. They are not part of us. We borrowed them from the whites. Christians today are talking about inculturation and even in terms of our dressing, I know that in some Churches, some ministers will not want to put on the collar and suit. They want to be in traditional dresses. It does not make them less ministers. It doesn't as it were cut down their spirituality, whatever. In the same way, can't we also use what is ours and accept it as it is?

*Sue* We can. That is after some time, when people's minds have been changed.

*John* it should begin from somewhere.

*Sue* There should be some education. People must be made to understand that the dressing and all those things, for instance, when you witness a Nigerian wedding, they have their traditional dress. Only that, at that time, maybe, the types dress they wear may be more expensive than what they normally wear, but it is still the "anago" and those things.

*John* But even in terms of being expensive, I think that those are ancillaries. Once the marriage has been brought before God, once it satisfies the requirements of both families and it satisfies the legal requirements, I should think that that should be all. All the other things are ancillaries and depending on our social standing, one may decide what to do. I have this friend who had his wedding at the Holy Spirit Cathedral, the Anglican Church. No, that's not the Holy Spirit Cathedral. The one on the High Street. That's not the Holy Spirit Cathedral.

*Sue* Holy Spirit Cathedral is at Adabraka.

*John* I've forgotten the name of that Cathedral. He said he was going to give the wife a treat. And the treat was that they used "kente" for the wedding. It was beautiful. Both the man and the wife used kente for the wedding and it was very, very beautiful. I have pictures of that

wedding, in traditional Ghanaian clothing. When I was a child, what I was thought was that it was those who were illiterates who used kente for their wedding and the literate will use the coats and those things. You look at it closely and you recognise the way in which the colonial masters have influenced us. The literate people wanted to dress like the colonial masters and so they will use the suits and the wedding gown, but the illiterates who wanted to be traditional used kente. But this man, he had finished his studies at the Ghana films and is in the films industry. The wife is also literate. He said, "I'm going to give you a treat", and the treat was that they were going to use kente. And it was beautiful. It didn't make the wedding less.

**Sue** That's true, but we will have to disabuse our minds about some of those things.

**John** Anyway, that's my intention. We need to look at some of these things critically. Enough of that. Let's look at this. Would you say that your marriage is a successful one or not, and what reasons will you give for your answer?

**Frank** Yes, it's a successful marriage. If marriage is not going to be successful, you see that the couple is not able to resolve when they get into conflict situation, and I don't think there is any marriage that doesn't have any conflicts.

**John** So, by successful, you don't want to imply that it is problem free.

**Frank** Yeah! But in as much as we are able to resolve the problems, I think that so far it's been quite good. My hope is that we will continue ...

**John** Let me then ask this question. Do you always attempt to resolve to resolve the conflict on your own or you see somebody else for help?

**Frank** I will say to some extent, the counselling that we had have been so helpful. And I also think that if two people have a conflict, I think the best solution ever reached is when the two people, when the two parties themselves resolve it. So much as I appreciate people coming to offer assistance, I think that as a first hand attempt, we ourselves should be able to work out something.

**John** What you are saying is that the training you have had before the marriage, at least, gives you the tools to be able to sit together to try to resolve conflicts when they arise. Who

normally takes the initiative? Who takes the first step in bringing up issues for resolution. Is it always the man or the woman? Sitting down to talk will help solve the problem, but sometimes, who to bring the issues up is where the problem is. You understand the point I'm making?

**Frank** I've understood you.

**John** Sometimes, you'll all be very quiet. One of you should come up with the issue before you begin talking about it. What actually happens?

**Frank** On a few occasions, I'll say that I start it, even when I know that, for this one, I was right. (All laugh) I will start, "just forgive me. I'm sorry." In the end, she also comes to say that she was the one who was at fault.

**John** What actually prompts you to initiate the process?

**Frank** I think she said that she has entered into marriage with the aim of making it work. I also mentioned that the premarital training or counselling we had. It made us aware of our differences. We have agreed to be one and that, conflict shouldn't just split us. We seek every opportunity to try to work things out. So, it is the desire to make our marriage work.

**John** And how successful have those attempts being when there is an issue and you sit down to talk about it? Are you always successful?

**Sue** Yeah! I will say that on all occasions that we had sit down to talk about some of these things, we've been able to resolve the issues. And as I said earlier on before this interview, I for instance have made up my mind not to bring such issue which we have talked about up again. So, we let sleeping dogs lie. You know, we will talk until both of us are satisfied. Some times, Paul will do something, I will be angry, be quiet, then he comes to say sorry. Then whilst I'm telling him how hurt I am, he'll try to justify himself and then at that point it'll bring a whole lot of issues out. So one little misunderstanding will open up so many other things. We are able to talk about all those things. I believe that when you have offended someone, no matter how right you think you are, at that point the person is not happy with you, so you should be able to accept it and say sorry and not try to justify yourself. But at another time, you know, when we are all happy and everything is past, then you might want to

give the rationale for the way you acted. And then at that time, the anger will not be there and understanding will work better. That solves everything and life goes on.

**John** So the timing for things is also very important. What we say and at what time we say it.

**Sue** Yes.

**John** So I get the impression that you've not approached anyone on marital problems.

**Sue** No. Since we got married, we haven't seen anybody.

**John** But if it should happen that you have to see someone about an issue that you have not been able to resolve, then who would you prefer to see? A family elder, parent, pastor, friend or who?

**Sue** maybe, we would first of all go to our marriage counsellor, that is Pastor Jenkins. Well, we were told at our counselling session that, as Paul said in the beginning, the best people to resolve any marital problem is the two people themselves. We haven't had the opportunity to see any other person, but when things happen which you will want to tell somebody about, I think it will have to be Pastor Jenkins.

**John** Why would you prefer the pastor to maybe, an elder in the family or a friend.

**Frank** I think the simple reason is that they have a different understanding of marriage. When you go to them, then they are going to handle the problem according to their understanding and that may not even go down very well with us.

For me, I don't think of any family member that I should go to. Is it my mother? My mother and my father have been married for almost fifty years or so now. They've had their problems. They've resolved them. Sometimes, you wake up in the night and you find the two of them and my elder sister sitting down talking about something. We were young. They have managed all this while, so as for my mother, when you go, she would advise you, fine. But she wouldn't want to interfere in our marriage. All of us are married and she hasn't interfered in anybody's marriage. I think Pastor Jenkins ...

**John** Okay! Let's come back to your expectations before you married. What were the things you were thinking about? Maybe, I will listen to Stella, and then listen to Paul what you expected marriage would hold for you.

**Sue** My expectations of marriage, you know, hmm. We are both architects. And I saw marriage as marriage and architecture as architecture. When we are in the office, well, we can talk about architecture from A to Z. When we come home, we are married. So when we got married, I wasn't expecting another studio in the house. And I still discourage that up to date. I don't want to see another studio in the house. When I go out to work and he goes out to work, fine, we are in our studios, but home is home. That is very important for me, because I told myself that I will never marry an architect because I didn't know how we could dissociate the profession from the home. But some way, somehow, God brought us together, and I've told God that I don't want another studio in the house. I remember when we got married, we had just got the computer and he was learning "ackuker". He thought I should be interested, but we had just been married. We had so much to talk about, so many plans to put in place and all that. Sometimes, I will wake up to find Paul sitting in that room, sitting behind the computer. I wished even to just lift up the whole machine and smashed it to the ground.

**John** Can you give me a clarification about you wanting work to be work and marriage to be marriage. What do you actually mean by marriage to be marriage. So, what were you expecting?

**Sue** I was expecting that, for instance, when we close from work, fine, architects never sleep, I understand, but we shouldn't make that happen all the time. When it is necessary that we sit up to work, when it is very important that we sit up to work, fine, we will sit up and then we will work. But not that everyday, we should be sitting behind the computer, designing and talking about work. I expected that, you know, we have to make plans, the first year, what do we expect to achieve? When are we going to start our family? When are we going to start our building project? Make plans and then try to work towards those plans. If you are always working, you'll never have time to sit down to talk about these things.

**John** So from what you are saying, talking about having time for each other, to discuss your lives together ...

**Sue** yes, go out together, maybe, visit people together, watch television together.

**John** Cooking together or doing architectural work together sometimes?

**Sue** Some times, yes, but not all the time. If you want to work, you'll work everyday. You'll have to make time for other things. I expected a balance, time for everything.

**John** let me add this, maybe, before I come to Paul. What were those expectations based on? Is it something that you had observed from other people's marriage? How did you come about with that perspective about marriage? How did you form your perspective about marriage?

**Sue** I've always planned ahead. Even when I was single, I don't even know how I got that. I can't say that this person told me or that person told me, but I have been praying about my marriage for a long time.

**John** Even before you began praying, maybe, somebody mentioned something somewhere. Something may have attracted you, maybe, your own parent's marriage, other people's marriage and so on and so forth. Something you may have read, a seminar you may have attended. You can't actually put your hand on anything.

**Sue** I can't actually put my hand on anything but I guess some way, somehow, I just have this idea that when you have a young set of children ... You know, the economy was going bad, the amount of resources you needed to look after children increased as the days went by, so to be able to live well, I believe that you should plan and set certain goals and work towards them so that by the time your children are older, (now we are paring at the universities and all that) by then, for instance, you would have finished building your house, you wouldn't have rent and other things to pay and all that. So that is it, but I can't pinpoint any person. Maybe, God gave it to me because I started praying about marriage way back, from five or so. But I don't know what Paul has in mind.

**John** He's going to talk about his own perspective of marriage.

**Frank** It was your friends.

**Sue** My friends, which friends?

*Frank* Christie

*Sue* No

*John* Was she married before you?

*Frank* No, you said you used to dream that...

*Sue* Aaaa. Okay, okay, okay. I used to picture how my home would be like. I used to dream about my future home, even the colours for the kitchen, the colours for the living room, that kind of thing. We used to talk about them. We used to daydream about those things. So, forming the desire, that was it, a long time.

*John* So, Paul, your perspectives on marriage and expectation, how did you come about those expectations?

*Frank* I don't know. My wife, one of the reasons she wanted to object to my proposal was that I was an architect.

*John* Yes, she's actually mentioned that.

*Frank* I had to convince her, but before I met her, I never knew I was going to be married to an architect. And all the work all the time, even in the house, I never thought that that was going to be the case. But when we got married and lo and behold, we are two architects, then I thought that even in the house, we can work. I think I have had a shock of my life to some extent. All that she mentioned, to the extent of even coming to destroy the computer, is a shock to me. Sometimes, I'll be working and I want to have a short nap and then go and continue so because of that I wouldn't go to sleep in the bedroom. I will like to just have a ten minutes nap. By the time I realise, I'm off. When she sees these things, she becomes sorrowful. But now I think I'm getting to understand. But I thought that, you see, my aspirations actually changed because I wasn't expecting to marry an architect. But as a matter of fact, I thought that I would have so much time for my wife, I will have so much time for my children. But as she rightly mentioned, day in and day out, the pressure, not just the pressure of work, but the pressure of the things that we meet goes up. Because of that, even though there is that desire to spend so much time, to discuss, have fun and all that, you realise that there isn't that much time. But like she was saying, if you want to work, you'll work your

whole life out. So we have to make time. Sometimes, we plan and we are not able to follow it. But that doesn't mean it is the end. We should still make time. I think that now our expectations are converging.

*John* So you have had to change some of your expectations. But you've not told me how you came about those expectations, how you formed your perspectives about marriage. Was it from books you read, seminars or what?

*Frank* I will say some of these things are from my background. My parents got divorced when I was young. In fact, I wasn't that old even to see the time they got divorced. It was too difficult and it wasn't a pleasant experience for me. So, because of that and couple with becoming a Christian, I said "my marriage must be the best." Most of the time, I try to contrast it with my parents.

*John* Well, if we can progress, let's come to another issue. Do you think that modernisation has had any adverse effects on your marriage? Well, you have been married for just over two years and so by the time you married, modernisation was having an effect. But generally, do you think that modernisation has had an effect on your marriage?

*Frank* Yes, modernisation has an effect. Modernisation brings along with it new views and new understanding so it has an effect. The Bible says that the two shall be one. But these two people who are becoming one, they are not one in an island. Because we have relatives, you see, if it were for the two of us, we would all move along with the same pace with this modernisation, then it will be smooth sailing for all of us. But much as I may understand the modernisation, or I may appreciate it, and then try to move along with it, I have my relatives, even my parents who might not understand. And modernisation also, like I said, brings some pressures. Because of modernisation, you have increase in cost. Modernisation is good but it is not cheap and the cost that it brings along, all those bills must be paid for. We've come to a point in time, I don't think it is even only modernisation. Like having to get a house, in the former times, you could have people from among your relations giving you that kind of assistance. I don't know if we can put it in line with modernisation.

*John* It is part of it.

**Frank** Experience has shown that those things even tend to break marriages and so on. Because we have become aware of this, we want to go away from this kind of thing. It has some effect. Some times, the people think that you want to avoid them.

**John** Okay.

**Sue** I will add that previously, when a woman got married, even when she was working, she'll stop work, come and be a housewife, maybe for a while, until the children, maybe the youngest is about eight, nine or ten, then, she may decide to go back to work. But now, it's not like that. You can't afford to have only one person working. You both have to work. And it's really had an effect. You go to work, come back, come and cook and that kind of thing. And now it has got the men also to help. Things that men were not doing before, now they are doing them.

**John** So the issue of household chores and those things come in?

**Sue** Now, we are both helping. Whilst I'm cooking, Paul may be taking care of the baby. At first, the woman will have to do all those things, in the night, when he wets his nappy, and I'm tired, he has to change it. It's all part of this modernisation.

**John** Okay, I do remember there was an issue in Britain about a man who wanted to take a paternity leave because the wife had given birth. He felt that the wife earned more than himself so instead of the wife being at home, he will rather be at home. It became a court case because the company he works with didn't want to give him the paternity leave. But I think he won the case. (All laugh) So, that food for thought.

**Frank** When it comes to this household chores, maybe it pertains to only me, but much as we accept it, in reality, we are not able to do much as we wanted.

**John** You mean the men?

**Frank** Yes, the men.

**John** Why?

**Frank** We find nothing wrong with it. Maybe, it's also from our upbringing.

**John** I should think so.

**Frank** When it has to do with, especially in the night, just changing the nappy and things like that, I don't even find it as being a household chore. That one, I do it so easily, but when it has to do with going to the kitchen and preparing food, I think it is a bit difficult for me.

**John** Well, you've not been trained to do it. In Britain, when Agnes came and she left, I used to prepare food for my friends. I started learning how to prepare food. I think it has to do with our society, our culture. It's going to take some time. And I think that for Ghanaian women, many women know that "that is my duty, I have to feed the man."

**Sue** Yes, as Paul was saying, it's because of our upbringing. But now, things are changing gradually. I remember my younger brother said he will never learn how to make *banku*. Why? Because he lives with my sister, and when he gets to know how to make *banku*, my sister will ask him to make *banku* all the time. You know, he's learned how to cook, so when for instance, my sister is not well, he cooks. As for her husband, he doesn't know how to cook. Even, some time ago, he couldn't even light the stove, but then, he has also come to learn it. When my sister is late from the shop, he can, not cook, but heat something to eat. When they got married, he couldn't even light the stove.

**John** But now, he can heat the food in the fridge to eat.

**Sue** A time will come, he may be able to boil some yam. But at least, Paul can boil yam and rice. I want to taste his *nketsenkwan*.

**John** I do prepare light soup. Anyway, okay, what about decision-making. It's part of the whole idea of modernisation. Who has the final word on issues. To what extent is Sue involved in decision-making.

**Sue** Okay, I'll say that we discuss a lot of things, try to bring out the pros and cons, and then, most times, most times, I leave it with Paul to make the final decision. But sometimes, when the decision is not favourable with me, I try to push out my point. If he still says no, then, I'll leave it for an opportune time.

**John** Leaving him to take the final decision, you don't take that as he been superior?

**Sue** No, most times, before we settle on the final decision, it would have been a consensus, sort of. It would have been an agreement between the two of us. But sometimes, for instance, some time ago, I thought I needed a car and we had to talk about it. Paul thought that, well, we should have only one car for the mean time, and the second car, if anything, should be a commercial car. I didn't see how I can be using a commercial car, because sometimes, you'll be in the office, you want to dash down to this place and come, the driver would have taken it to work. We spoke about this thing at length and I had to leave it. We didn't buy the car in the end. I left it for a while, and we've started talking about it again. He still stands on his point that it should be a commercial car, but I don't think that my car should be a commercial car.

**John** So eventually, you will come to a decision.

**Sue** Yes, eventually. Anyway, now, we have decided that if it's a private car, fine, because now, we have to take the children to school, go and pick them, and you can't trust these drivers so much.

**John** So at least, you talk through issues?

**Sue** Yes.

**John** Let's come to preparation for marriage. Did you have any premarital education or preparation?

**Sue** Yes, we had some six months counselling.

**John** I'm not talking about the counselling. I'm talking about education. Were you educated in any way on marriage, whether at home or in the Church, apart from the counselling? The counselling took place when you were ready to get married, but did you ever learn about marriage?

**Frank** I think it is just by reading and observing other people's marriage. I can also say that in the Church, there was this singles club, the destiny club.

**John** Did you find it useful?

**Frank** It was very useful. I think people's minds have to be disabused because those days, especially my friends, they thought that it's like you go there to pick a woman. They had not attended the meetings and they didn't know what was going on there, so they thought it's just an opportunity for you to 'grab' some woman or some man. Some people also don't take it serious. Not that they don't take it serious but it's all a matter of understanding. Especially if you are a bit above the expected age of marriage, some people even discourage you from going and even though I myself was going, people who were older than me, when I saw them there, I said, oh! For these people, I think they are above this. I remember a sister, they used to give us some membership card, and a sister, she was married, when she saw me with the card, she said "ei, Paul, you too, you are above this."

**John** Okay, what was involved in that type of education?

**Frank** That education is something, it was complementary. If I should say supplementary to what we were supposed to know already, like how to keep oneself, body hygiene, etc., so that you could make yourself attractive, not just for the opposite sex, but for personal development.

**John** Were there any issues specifically on marriage?

**Frank** No, but some of the things we learnt was how to relate to the opposite sex.

**John** Let me come to the issue of conflicts again. What in your view are the main sources or causes of conflict in marriage. You mentioned the differences in the man's perspective of things and the woman's perspective of things?

**Sue** yes, I'll say that the first quarrel we had was based on this. My mother called, or was it my sister, and we were chatting on the phone. Paul thought that we had chatted for too long. He just went and disconnected the phone, oh, without saying anything. In fact, without telling me anything. So I said "hello, hello. The line has gone off." And he didn't say anything. So I hung up and I was going to pick something, only to find that the line had been disconnected. So, I asked Paul, "did you do this?" He said, "yes, how can you talk for such a long time. Don't you know the bills are going up and all that kind of thing." We hadn't been married for long. It was barely two weeks and this thing happened. In fact, it really shook me, because I thought that ei, is this how this man is? How can you disconnect the phone when

I'm on the line, and people come here to make calls, people come to receive calls and all that and we allow the. This time, because of modernisation, we are going to put our moneys together to pay for this phone, and if I'm talking to my sister, what is wrong with it. I'll be part of ...

*John* So the issue was the bills, and then also, maybe, your connection to your family, you have not actually left.

*Sue* You know, that closeness was a problem for him. We are very close. In fact we know it ourselves and people say it. We are just too close as a family and it is not like that with, excuse me to say, with Paul's family. For instance, when my sister comes here now, I'll have to see her off to the gate. She comes back, I'll still have to see her off to the gate. My sister, my brother, older ones, younger ones, I'll walk them, but Paul may not do that to his brothers and sisters. Some of them will come and when they are going, sometimes, we will see them off to the gate. Sometimes, okay, bye, bye, that kind of thing. So I didn't see anything wrong with it but he thought that we were too close. I don't know why, at that time he felt intimidated. I don't what word to use. Maybe, he will be in a better position to talk about that.

*Frank* It was all because of bills.

*John* But it is taken that sometimes, because of the nature of our family system, relationship with our families sometimes have a negative impact on marriages. What do you think about that? Talking about being close to your siblings and your parents, and then considering your marriage, how do you find it? Do you think that the relationship with your family is still very important?

*Sue* Yes, my marriage is more important to me than my relationship with my family. I don't even know how to put it. They are both important, but if it comes to choosing between the two, of course, my marriage is more important, but that doesn't demean the relationship with my family. And talking about bills, I for instance think that you don't need so much money to be happy. It all depends on how you plan it and then what you think as happiness. For instance, when we were young, we used to go to the beach together and it is not that we go and buy the whole world and take to the beach. Let's say the lunch we are supposed to eat in the afternoon at home, that is what we will pack up, maybe add a few things, and then off

we go. Sometimes, we will decide that let's go and sit at Shangri La. One bottle of drink there is 5000 cedis, but if we will spend just a little, four or five of us, 5000 each, we buy just one bottle of mineral each, we sit down and chat, just enjoying the atmosphere. Well, we would have spent 20,000 cedis, but that is not too much. You know, you work, work, work, if you spend such an amount, it is not too much. But I realise that that part of my upbringing is, I don't know, but I had to talk about it for Paul to understand that you don't need so much money to have a nice time out.

*John* Frank didn't have that type of upbringing, so he doesn't even see the need for it.

*Sue* People spend a lot when they go out, but they don't know that two people can be at the same place, one person will spend so much, the other person will spend so little, and they will have the same level of enjoyment. So that is the secret. So, family relations, they have an influence because if I haven't been brought up that way, I wouldn't wish to go out. But Paul was saying that I like going out and the little boy has taken after me.

*John* He also likes going out?

*Sue* when he goes out, he doesn't want to come in.

*Frank* Even this evening, he wanted to go out. He went to the door when I wasn't in.

*John* Okay, so basically, what do you think about the causes and sources of conflict? You mentioned the differences.

*Sue* But excuse me, I also don't press too much because I know that Paul was brought up differently from me. So after some long time, when we haven't gone out, then, I'll remind him. Then gradually, he is also understanding me. Sometimes, he himself will say that let's go and sit somewhere. So I don't press it on him.

*Frank* This closeness with the external relations, I think that sometimes, I've been a bit cautious to avoid any conflict arising out of that, but sometimes it worries me. For example, yesterday, our plan was to host some friends in the house, but I thought that, maybe, we could squeeze some time and dash down to her parents and come back so I brought up this suggestion.

*John* It is a good suggestion

*Frank* A very good suggestion and this suggestion was almost going to ruin the hosting of our guests, because in the end ...

*John* You spent so much time?

*Frank* No, we even didn't go but just the discussion. Even at a point in time, I observed that we could postpone that because, we wanted to take some things along and those things were not ready. Just because of that I wanted us to postpone it. For her, just going to see them was not enough.

*Sue* No, you know, going to see my parents, we are hosting some people, at first he said 12 noon, and later on he changes it to 5.00 pm, going from here to Tema, we can't just go and sit there for one hour and come back.

*John* One hour is too short?

*Sue* It's too short. One hour is too short. We haven't gone there for some time now.

*John* but you forgot that if you are there alone, it's different. The type of conversations you'll be involved in, Paul may not be interested.

*Sue* He gets on very well with my father. They will chat and talk about so many things.

*John* Oh yes. But then, after one hour, I think he'll be tired. But you will think that I need to talk to my mum, my sisters and etc. So you thought that the time was so short. You needed a whole day for that. (All laugh) do you think that maybe, there might be some other causes and sources of conflicts. We've talked about decision-making. I don't think that finances and household chores are a problem because you are able to talk about them. Well, you've not been married for long. I was going to ask whether the problems have changes over the years. Each developmental stage has its own problems. Maybe, let me put it this way, from the time you married till the time Nyamekye came in, after Nyamekye was born, did you find any problems arising after the birth of Nyamekye or you think everything was smooth sailing?

**Frank** I never even expected there was going to be any misunderstanding from the word go, even though we had learned from the premarital class that there could be some petty misunderstanding. Now I have tasted it. On the expectation side, for that matter, it makes me a bit cautious. When we are discussing anything, I can almost foretell that this may go this way so I should be cautious.

**John** But looking at it in terms of development from the time you married, before we began, I was talking about being jealous when the child is born, because it's like the mother turns all attention to the child. That is also a problem.

**Sue** (Laughing) I remember before Nyamekye could even recognise things around, Paul was saying that the baby doesn't look at him. You remember?

**Frank** Oh, is that so?

**Sue** You said, why is it that the baby is always looking somewhere. He doesn't look at you. At that time Nyamekye didn't know anything about focusing.

**John** My main concern is, it was the two of you, but now you are three, so the attention will be divided. For example, the attention that you had for Paul will be divided between Paul and Nyamekye, and in the same way, the attention Paul had for you will be divided. Sometimes, it looks like the woman's attention for the child is too much to the extent that it affects the man. Or, you didn't experience anything?

**Frank** Maybe, I didn't so much experience it. Probably, I understood. I expected it.

**John** It's the understanding. You expected it.

**Frank** Sometimes, I understand I have to feed him. It is something which is very glaring.

**John** I think I will want to bring the curtain down. Maybe, the last thing. How do you receive support for your marriage? Support in the sense of, how do you keep things going in your marriage? Is there anyway by which you reinforce, may, your love for each other, reinforce your views on how marriage should be, and how you should continue living together and so on and so forth.

**Frank** That is an area which is lacking. We talked about this marriage counselling. We are now also talking about developmental changes. Some few days ago, I heard something from an elder couple. I think that there should be an opportunity for us to get some of these facts and experiences. Even though in the Church, there is supposed to be that grouping that we can invite pastors to talk to couples, it has not been functioning for some time. With that one, all is not well. Over the radio, I heard one man of God saying that the premarital counselling doesn't do it all. As time goes on, there has to be some follow-up. For that, we have not had anything. I should also say that we had some invitations to some other Churches. Rev. Dei-Awuku invited us. He also has some marriage club.

**John** I want to thank you very much for your time and for opening up to me.

## APPENDIX XI

### INTERVIEW WITH MRS. CAROLINE BUCKLES

**PROFILE:** *Mrs. Caroline Buckles is a member of the International Central Gospel Church. She has benefited from the Family Enrichment Ministry of the Church and currently serves as a family life facilitator in the ministry. This interview was conducted at the Church premises of the ICGC, Accra on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I am doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages and I should be grateful if you could spare some time to tell me how your marriage is going. You could begin by telling me your name and for how long you've been married.

**Caroline** My name is Mrs. Caroline Buckles and February will be fourteen years since I got married.

**John** Fourteen?

**Caroline** Yes.

**John** That's a long time.

**Caroline** That is not lengthy compared to that of my parents.

**John** What type of marriage is it?

**Caroline** I've done both the customary and the wedding or ordinance.

**John** The customary and the wedding. The way you put it, I've done both the customary and the wedding, it sounds as if they are two different marriages that you've been involved in.

**Caroline** Well, as far as I understand, I think that with time, people have tended not to regard our traditional, our customary marriage. But our church insists and I did the customary marriage before the ordinance in our church. That is why I said both.

**John** I was interested in the way you put it.

**Caroline** Yeah, a lot of people consider our customary marriage as just an engagement. Usually, it's called that way, and as a Christian, I believe in the ordinance, bringing everything before God, but we also want to respect our traditions. It's considered marriage and I don't want to use the word engagement, that's why I said both.

**John** That's fine. So, based on that, would you say that you were fully married after the customary rites, or it was after the ordinance that you were fully married?

**Caroline** Well, after the ordinance. I said, as a Christian, the wedding is considered as a very important part so though we have done what traditionally is considered right, we still deemed it right and fitting to bring it before God. That is my personal opinion. I believe that that is also right, so I considered myself married after the wedding.

**John** Not after the customary rites had been performed?

**Caroline** No.

**John** Well, would you say that your marriage is a successful one and what reasons will you give for that.

**Caroline** Well, yes. I'll say my marriage is successful. The reasons, I believe are many. Sometimes my husband and I sit down and we try to enumerate why it's been successful. I think the first thing is we've been very open with our communication right from the word go. Well, we were very good friends, so communication wise, we were very open before. We've never had the problem of keeping things from each other. I've never had to go and tell our problem to a third person to come between us. Both of us have been open enough to confront the other if we had any problems. I think apart from that another thing is that we've both been able to accept each other for what they are and although we all have our expectations, and what we wanted a partner to be, we haven't set limits for our partners which they haven't been able to achieve. We've accepted them for what they are. We've taken their shortcomings as they come and I think because of that, it's made life easier. My husband will say it openly that if I'm tired he wouldn't ask me to cook. He wouldn't make any unnecessary demand, that as a wife I must always be a good cook. These are some of the shortcomings I talk about. We have accepted each other for what they are and because of that we get on well. We have our fair share of angry moments, but that's not the major part of our marriage.

**John** So, what were your expectations before you married? How did you see marriage? What did you expect for yourself in marriage?

**Caroline** Let me say that I like reading a lot of romantic books. I was expecting a Cinderella kind of, a fairy tale kind of marriage, to live happily ever after, a husband who will pamper his wife. All that. I'm married to a very interesting Ga man who likes attention just as much as I do. That was my first disappointment. I wasn't going to have it all glowing and all that. He wasn't that romantic. He'll tell you he's a typical African man. It's now that he's learned to say 'I love you'. So, you can imagine for a woman who reads a lot of fairy tale stories, that was a big disappointment. But I think education too has helped me to be a very practical person. Very early in life, you have to know what is important and what isn't. . maybe, coming from a woman, a lot of people will be surprised, but even before I married, I realised that if I wanted all the nice fanciful things from a person who didn't know how to do it, I might just end up being hurt, so I quite quickly realigned. After ten years, it's now my husband has learned to remember my birthday. For a long time, he didn't, but for a woman. I learned that if I wanted to be happy, this shouldn't be an important issue. And I think it helped us all. But with time, somehow, I think it's coming back to what I dreamt about. So, maybe, after twenty years, I'll have a real fairy tale marriage.

**John** So those expectations have not all been met?

**Caroline** Yes, but we're improving from where we began.

**John** Basically, you mentioned that you read books. Are there other areas where you built up your perception about marriage?

**Caroline** I think my own fantasies as I held them. I think my parents have a very practical marriage. Of course another thing too is coming from a Christian background. You feel that being Christians, really getting into the word of God, reading the Bible and all that, you have a few ideas that everything will be rosy. When we were getting married too, although there were books around, they weren't as practical as the material you find now. So, all these have added up to the fantasies but we soon got practical.

**John** That's fine. Some of the things have to do with the way modernisation has affected life in all societies including the Ghanaian society. You mentioned something briefly, as a

woman, in terms of work at home, and in terms of decision-making, how do you think that modernisation has affected your marriage?

**Caroline** Let's deal first with work at home. My husband is a very difficult man. I don't think he's not modern. He will tell you that even as a child, his mother did her best to get him to do household chores, but it didn't really work. So, sometimes, he'll soak his clothes and he'll just hang them out to dry them. So, like I said, I had to accept him for what he is. If I was going to insist that he should help me with household chores, I think I would have been dismantled very early. I'd have had a lot of problems. Fortunately, I didn't really have much problem with household chores as a young girl, and so I always managed. But when it has been necessary, we've had household helps. Also modernisation has brought in gadgets etc. which can help you. My husband always tell people if you buy your wife electronic needs, then you won't have a problem. So, where he can afford to, he hasn't hesitated to get me those things and he feels he has done his fair bit of household chores. Its not the best but half a loaf is better than none, and if you get half a loaf, you don't insist on the whole one. You may not get any. In fact he hasn't been very helpful, but I don't think it is because he doesn't believe a man should do it, but it is his nature. I can say you've got to decide what your priorities are in marriage. That is my first stand. I can insist he does it but I know where that will take us, so I don't.

**John** It's interesting hearing this from a woman. Many modern women wouldn't go along with you.

**Caroline** No. I encourage young men to do it. Its not easy. Sometimes, it's been very challenging for me. I don't think that any woman should have to do all that, but what I am saying is that in my particular situation, I knew who I was dealing with, and if I were going to insist, we would quarrel. What do I achieve at the end of the day? The guy wouldn't do it. His whole mother who had trained him couldn't get him to do it. Not when he is the head of the home are you going to get him to do it. That is my perspective so I encourage young people. I tell them it's not right and all that but what are you going to get from insisting, quarrels. Is that what I wanted? That is why I accepted my particular situation. I'm not saying it's the ideal, but I can say he does try in his own way to put tin a bit when it's very, very necessary. But he soon backslides.

Now, talking about decision-making, as you can see, I'm a very vocal person. Very early, my husband learned that he can't shut his wife up. I did know him before he married me because we did our tertiary education at IPS together. So he found that I was very outspoken. I think early in life, when we first started, he realised that very often what I was saying was true, especially when it came to judging people. When I tell him I don't like this person and he doesn't listen to me ' it always backfires. I think I'm also learning to be more diplomatic, how to present my point. When you say no, no, no, no, it doesn't help. I think I'm also trying to improve. He is also learning, very fast, because if you decide to ignore your wife, you pay the price and I'm good at teasing him. I wouldn't let him go Scott free. That one is sure. But that was more on a personal level when it came to maybe, things that I will say are up to him. But when it came to the family, things like our children's school, what we buy and all that, I've never had a problem with my husband taking the decision. Like I said, our communication has always been very good. We've always done it together.

*John* You've always done it together?

*Caroline* Yes. What I was talking about earlier was about him. That was more personal. Maybe, he's going into business with someone and I say that I don't like the person. But he's learned to respect my views with time. But when it comes to actual household issues, it's always been the two of us.

*John* Did you have any premarital education. I'm not talking about premarital counselling. That is when you are getting ready to marry. But then, let me put it this way, did you learn to marry?

*Caroline* I think in my own personal way, yes. In my own personal way, I didn't really do philosophy, but I like to sit down, especially, when it comes to marriage, I philosophise about issues. That is why I think I became practical early. I can say we like to philosophise, we like to discuss things.

*John* With who?

*Caroline* The two of us.

**John** I mean before marriage.

**Caroline** Yes, well before marriage. Once a while, yes. Like I said, some of my more romantic things we expected, where he will disappoint me, I'll say why did you do this or do that and we'll talk about it. I'll tell him, can't you see your wife, can't you see that I do well. As for me, I don't expect you to do this or do that. We used to have such conversation. I think in my own way, I used to think about some of these things. What's important and what's not.

**John** What informs that thinking? Is it based on what you have read or what you have heard or observed?

**Caroline** Well, sometimes, what I've heard. Not much what I've observed. Before I got married, I wasn't really looking at how people were married. But sometimes, comments people make, and I will sit down and think, what do I want?

**John** There wasn't anything formal?

**Caroline** No, no. it wasn't anything formal. Sometimes we sit down and say, how come we didn't have some of the problems we find people having and we try to analyse it, and it's not very easy because like I said, it was a very informal thing.

**John** In terms of conflicts or problems in marriage, what are the main causes of conflicts in your marriage?

**Caroline** I get angry quite often but sometimes, it's the feeling that my husband is being inconsiderate. He's being selfish.

**John** What makes you feel that way?

**Caroline** I want to give a very good example. I mean selfish the way men like to be selfish. You want to do something, okay let's go somewhere, can you do this for me, and it like no, no, no, but he expects that you're always at his beck and call. Other sources of conflict, he accuses me very often that I don't respect him.

**John** Why do you think he makes those accusations?

**Caroline** He says sometimes, the way I will talk or I will throw him off or something. He accuses me of that but I don't think that is true. So that one, I know from his point of view. But me I get angry often, like I said, for selfish things in every area of life.

**John** You've been married for fourteen years. Would you say that over the years, the issues that has been creating conflicts have changed?

**Caroline** I can't answer for him. I think when we first got married, the first few conflicts we had were more over adjustments, knowing everybody's limits. How far you can go and all that. I can't really remember our conflicts very well. Maybe, it's because we have not had serious ones. Sometimes, you are angry for half a day. Now he accuses me that when I get angry I keep quiet. The thing is that I don't know how to frown but then I will keep quiet, as he says. He says I just don't talk. Sometimes for two days, I won't talk to him. I don't think it has changed much.

**John** But then, when those petty problems and conflicts arise, do you always attempt at resolving them yourselves?

**Caroline** When I'm angry with him, where it's important, I'll talk to him, but I'm a chatterbox. He's used to my talking all the time but when I'm angry, I don't talk, but after two days, you have a lot to say so it's in your interest to reconcile. But that much I have to commend him. He's good at saying sorry, and he does so when he offends me. If he knows what he did was offensive, he doesn't hesitate to say sorry. But there has been times when one has offended the other, and one party has got up, but why did you do this? And when the other party feels that I'm also justified, you know, we have had quite a bit of exchange, everyone bringing out his or her point strongly. In fact, bringing in a third person, we've never had that so far.

**John** So, either of you will initiate the process?

**Caroline** Yes, normally, when he knows what he did was wrong, he will initiate.

**John** It's the person who thinks that I've wronged the other who takes the initiative?

**Caroline** Yes, the only thing is that he accuses me and sometimes, I get quiet and he doesn't know why.

**John** And you think those attempts have been quite successful in trying to resolve your conflicts?

**Caroline** Yes, sometimes, if everybody is angry, it doesn't work immediately, so we have to wait a day or two but still each will be insisting that I'm right. But eventually, we have to come to some sort of compromise.

**John** You mentioned that you've not had the occasion of bringing in a third person. But if it gets to the situation where maybe, there is a deadlock, and you have to bring in someone, who would you bring in, a pastor, a family elder or a friend?

**Caroline** I don't think I'll get to that. I had a philosophy before I got married. I believe that when I'm married, I'm married to a man and I believe that I'm the closest person to him and he should be the closest person to me. I've always solved my problems, and I don't see why two married people, allow me to say who have sex together, have a conflict and they bring in a third person to decide for us. That's my personal view.

**John** Maybe, bringing in the third person, its not a question of he deciding for you, but you mentioned that sometimes you are angry and he doesn't understand why you are angry. There is the possibility of getting into a deadlock where the two of you may not understand each other and it can go on for a very long period. In that situation, somebody might have to come in to help you to understand. You may think from your perspective and the man may also think from his perspective and maybe, the two perspectives will never meet.

**Caroline** Anyway, like I was saying, I've always believed that if we have to get to a point where we have to bring a third person in before you listen, then, I'm not prepared to marry you again. I believe that if you can't respect the person you're married to, and you want to bring in a third person, then marry the third person. That's my personal view. But in my mind, very often, when I'm angry with him, in my mind, I've had a whole play where I've gone to report him to pastor or someone and he has called him to talk to him, but really, personally, I don't believe in it. I don't and I think that maybe, because we hold some of these views that we've always tried to solve the problem ourselves. Well, I'm not saying it's wrong, but I believe that there should be respect for the man, enough to be determined to solve the problem with the person. That's my personal view.

**John** So it is the determination that the marriage should work?

**Caroline** Sometimes, I've divorced him in my mind but not in reality. "I will say this and won't mind anybody", but I think that's the worst it can come to.

**John** You do the battle in your mind?

**Caroline** Yes. That's when I'm quiet and I don't talk.

**John** when would you say were the most difficult years of your marriage?

**Caroline** I think the first few years.

**John** Why?

**Caroline** The first few years of our marriage, it's because we haven't found our level. Our main source of conflict is that I come from a closely-knit family. Everyday, either we're doing engagement or wedding or funeral or something else. I mean we're a very close family. Some of our children cannot tell the difference between their mothers and aunts. That's how close we are. And so when I got married, we had a lot of problems. I got married in this church. My father is a strong Catholic so he wasn't prepared to come to my wedding. My husband was a bit disappointed. He felt I was still running to them. His family is a relatively rich family, so at first he had a bit of a problem with that. That was one serious area of conflict. But I think with time, he's growing used to and I'm also growing used to. Sometimes, he looks forward to our reunions and things. There is always plenty of good food to eat. So the first few years were the most difficult.

**John** You mean reunion with your family?

**Caroline** Our family reunions. For whatever reason we're getting together, he's grown to like them. He sees that there's a lot of nice food, we laugh around the place and all that. That was one source of conflict. But I think apart from that, finding our levels with each other, knowing what one person can do, what the other person can't. later on in our marriage, we went through financial crisis, but I don't think that it gave us as much problem like the adjustment. That we handled easily. But the adjustment, it was difficult.

**John** So, what kept you going during those difficult years when the adjustment was a problem?

**Caroline** A few things. Remembering my vows. This time I never thought of divorce. I didn't have those nasty fantasies. I think my faith in God and my vows. Then, I didn't know that it was just a period of adjustment. I was wandering, why do we seem to have these problems? Now, I can tell people it's normal. I was wandering, is it always going to be that way? Are we going to differ so much? That was a bit frightening. It was discouraging. I used to cry in my room, but even then, afterwards, I will sit down and reason, why this and why that? But with time, we came to understand each other. That is one area at least I can remember, but there were other areas we had to adjust to.

**John** You mentioned the whole idea of being close to your family and the fact that your father wasn't prepared to come to your wedding. Do you still remain close?

**Caroline** Let's say that we are close on a more physical level. One thing is that I've never made any complaints to any member of my family about problems I have in marriage. When I went through my financial crisis, where I was living was one of my father's houses. My sister was in the other half so I'm sure she noticed that we were going through financial problems, but I never discussed it with her. So when I say close, it's more on a social level. Yes we still remain close. With my father, yes.

**John** With the whole family?

**Caroline** Yes, we are still close.

**John** Doesn't it have any adverse effect on your marriage/

**Caroline** When I say close, I can say it's more on a social level. I visit my sisters very often, those who are here. We are seven kids actually. Six girls with just a brother. We visit them very often.

**John** Both you and your husband?

**Caroline** My husband, not very often, but the children and I. They're used to their aunts. Like I said, I lived with my elder sister for a long time. It was only when my mother died that

she moved to live with my father. So my children look up to her more as a grandmother. She is the eldest. I'm number six, about twelve years difference, so my children are used to her as a grandmother sort of. So they are still used to their aunts, going there, spending Sunday afternoons with them and all that. Normally, he doesn't bother. At Christmas, he was asking me, are we going to Paulina's for breakfast?

*John* Who is Paulina?

*Caroline* My elder sister.

*John* Okay

*Caroline* That's what I said. He's grown accustomed to it. He accepts it as one of those things. He doesn't have a problem if we're going there. Initially, he didn't use to visit his family very much, although they are just in Accra central, but now he does and quite often, he takes the children along and they've also started growing to enjoy their grandparents, especially my father-in-law. He comes to visit very often. They like the atmosphere. It's very informal living in Accra central as compared to where we live at Cantonments, which is very formal. And they've got cousins around, they can run around in the streets so they've also grown to enjoy it.

*John* You have very good relationship with your external families?

*Caroline* Not the external families, the immediate families, yes very good.

*John* and they don't bring any problem to your marriage?

*Caroline* No, I think my father-in-law normally comes to see him or something to discuss things. But like I said, I'm way down on number six. All my sisters who are here are older so they don't normally come and visit me. They may come in for thirty minutes or an hour, just for something, but normally, being Africans, we always visit them since they are older, and it is the same with my husband. Like I said, my father-in-law may come to see his son on something, but normally, it's my husband who goes there. As for my mother-in-law, she has a problem with walking, she doesn't even move around so she can't come to my house, but we visit them. So we've never had the problem of family interference.

**John** In what ways do you receive support for your marriage? How is your marriage strengthened?

**Caroline** Do you mean external support or what?

**John** Yes, external support.

**Caroline** One, we have the church, we have our family enrichment. From time to time, we have programmes. For the last few years, I haven't been too active and I haven't been able to attend most of the evening services because I have relatively young children. But my husband makes it a point to attend those meetings. He makes sure he participates. I think indirectly, being marriage counsellors has been a strong source of support for us.

**John** Oh, you yourselves are marriage counsellors?

**Caroline** Yes. Now we have a system where they give you couples for you to counsel and there is no way you can counsel people and just live anyhow. That in itself is a challenge. So that has indirectly really helped us. Like I said, the church also has programmes. Sometimes, the pastor preaches on marriage issues and I believe when you take your Christian life seriously, any message that is preached, you can just ignore it. You have to apply it to your life. And marriage being a very important part of it, we naturally or unconsciously apply it. You can listen to one thing and continue doing the other.

**John** Apart from the church, are there any other areas where you receive support?

**Caroline** No. like I said, my marriage has always been no go areas. Even when they want to sat something, I don't think anybody will have the courage to.

**John** Thank you very much for opening up to me and for your time.

**Caroline** Welcome.

## APPENDIX XII

### INTERVIEW WITH MOSES AIDOO

**PROFILE:** *Moses Aidoo is a member of the International Central Gospel Church and has benefited from the Family Enrichment Ministry of the Church. This interview was conducted at the ICGC premises in Accra on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. John Abedu Quashie and I'm doing a research on marriage and how to support marriages. I should be very grateful if you could offer me some time to find out how your marriage is going. So, if we can begin, can you please tell me your name and how long you have been married?

**Moses** Thank you very much. My name is Moses Aidoo and this is my fifth year in marriage, that is September 1996 till date.

**John** What type of marriage is it? Is it customary marriage, Muslim or ordinance, either civil or church wedding?

**Moses** Church wedding.

**John** Before the church wedding, did you organise the customary marriage rites?

**Moses** Yes, that was done.

**John** So, when would you say or consider yourself to have fully married, was it after the church wedding or the customary marriage rites?

**Moses** After the church wedding.

**John** Why would you say that you were fully married after the church wedding?

**Moses** What I've been made to understand, that is both from the teachings I received at church and my own observation as to what my parents went through, tells me that it was after the church wedding that I consider myself to have fully married. I say this because in the case of my parents, after the customary marriage, the kind of relationship was not as when they

actually signed a register. I'm saying this because in the case of church wedding, they signed a register and it brought a kind of change in their relationship. Secondly, personally, I also see that after the customary marriage, because it was not really done publicly in church, you'll not feel it. I think it is because of the upbringing, because of the way society sees things.

*John* Well, there are two issues coming out of that. The first is, publicly done in church, but then in a sense, the customary rites was public because the two families met together.

*Moses* That is why I say that it is the perception. It is the general saying. Personally, my own principle is, and was and it has always been that after my proposal and its acceptance, after my wife accepted my proposal, I took it that I had a whole responsibility. Responsibility in the sense that I was very careful before making the proposal and it wasn't something I was going to turn back from. For that matter, I considered it as a complete covenant although we had not done the customary rites etc. That is my personal perception. But as I said, we have the societal perception. For example, although personally, I considered that we had a covenant, I couldn't for instance go ahead to have any sexual relationship, because the Bible has made it clear that there should be some kind of ceremony before you can do such things. But I still saw her as somebody I could be committed to. So, basically, I will say that it is a societal perception. At the engagement, the day we had the customary rites, we had pastors around. We had the blessing of our parents and we had the blessing of the men of God. The only thing that was left was the signing of the register. That is the legal aspect or what the state requires and to me, if we live in the country and the state requires that we should sign something, and it is not done, I will not go ahead and live as a married man because it would be illegal. But here is the case where because of the church, not religion, I belong to, the signing will be done at the wedding ceremony. I hope I'm clear.

*John* I get the point you are making. It means that the only difference between the customary marriage and the church wedding, to you is the legal aspect of it, because in terms of blessing, you had pastors there to bless you, but then, the only difference is the legal part of it.

*Moses* And in a sense too, in my particular case, I'm a church worker, and I had to go through it to make things complete.

**John** The other issue that comes out of it is when you were talking about your parents marriage, you said that after the customary rites, they were not that close, their relationship wasn't like after the church wedding. It looks like things had changed in terms of their relationship. Can you just tell me a bit more about it?

**Moses** I think I should make a correction here. They didn't have a church wedding but they registered. That was the legal aspect. Obviously, they had the customary rites before I was born. But along the line, you realised that they were being individualistic. What I'm trying to say is that if my dad was doing something, it was for him and if my mum was doing something, it was for her. If you will permit me to go back, my father was a soldier and at a point, the Armed Forces realised that they were having problems because if you have to go to the hospital, you have to use your father's name or your husband's name. They were having difficulties with this and so it became a requirement that they should all register their marriage. And the process brought them together. It is not just going to write your name, but when you're registering, there are certain conditions attached. So from that point, you realise that things were not the same. If my mum thought that one day, she could just be booted out and for that matter she'll behave in a certain way, now the perception had changed. And if my daddy too thought that he could just go round after women, it had changed. So, that is a major difference.

**John** Was it the registration of the customary marriage or it was a civil wedding?

**Moses** No, there wasn't anything like that. In their case, because it is the Armed Forces, they did it there, instead of going to the registrar general's office.

**John** But it was a civil wedding. You can register a customary marriage, but that doesn't make the marriage monogamous.

**Moses** No, no, it was a civil wedding.

**John** Let me come to your personal marriage. Will you say that your marriage is a successful one or not, and what reasons will you give?

**Moses** I'll say it's a successful one and very successful. The reason is that basically, I've seen maturity in our lives. Secondly many of the things that we looked out for, we hoped for, we

prayed for, before we even had the customary marriage are being fulfilled. We are seeing them. And we also have commendation from others. People talk about our marriage and they are happy about it.

*John* You think that you yourself are happy in your marriage?

*Moses* Yes, I said I am happy. If I will just take it one by one, I will talk about the maturity in the spiritual life and maturity in ones personal life. What I'm saying is that I am somebody who had a lot of plans so to speak, because fortunately or somehow, I travel and I read a lot. The other side is that I had the plans but there was the element of lack of confidence to take the risk. It just wasn't there. But my wife has that element. She can look at one aspect, see the good thing in it and urge you and give you the encouragement to move on. And the result is always good, so it makes you move on.

*John* So, I don't think that you are suggesting that there are no problems in your marriage?

*Moses* Oh, no. There have been and I think the problems are problems that are unsolvable, so to speak. In fact, on one occasion, we had to talk to our pastor, Pastor Jenkins about it. And it was resolved and we went on. Some of the problems have actually made us understand ourselves better. So the problems do come.

*John* Apart from the time that you talked to Pastor Jenkins, were there other problems that you didn't bring to him? How did you deal with those problems?

*Moses* Actually, apart from Pastor Jenkins, we have not talked to any other person about our problems. So we solve them ourselves. We are friends and we were very good friends. We were very good friends before marrying. So some of the problems that come up are solved by, sort of, recollecting how things were and basically we solve them between ourselves.

*John* So you talk about the problems?

*Moses* We talk about them. I don't want that kind of thing, or when we meet friends and the discussion centres around our problem, we raise the issue and discuss without bringing it out as our problem. At the end of the day, we gain something. But apart from Pastor Jenkins, we've not spoken to anybody.

**John** Okay, two things here. Who normally takes the initiative, maybe calling the other person that we need to talk about this. Is it yourself or your wife?

**Moses** Most of the times, my wife.

**John** Why do you think she takes the initiative.

**Moses** I think she does that because I tend to keep a lot of things. There are certain things that I take it that she should understand or it will solve on its own, or I just talk once about it and I think it is solved. And she is type of person who is always frank about things.

**John** then the other part of it, you mentioned that apart from Pastor Jenkins, you've not talked to anyone about your marriage before. Why is it that it is only Pastor Jenkins?

**Moses** Well, before we married, as I said, we were very good friends. And somehow, there is a kind of unwritten agreement that we have decided to enter into the marriage and whatever happens is our headache. Pastor Jenkins, because he was our counsellor and he is still our counsellor, being the pastor in charge of the Marriage and Enrichment Programme. And we also think that we don't have to bother the people around us with our own marital problems.

**John** What about your family elders and so on?

**Moses** No. for example, the early says that we married, it was just the two of us and we had to go for water. The container was big and heavy and the two of us had to hold it side by side. And she complained that it was so heavy and I said, well, its only the two of us. Now after that we just paid a visit to my mother and the issue of carrying water came up so jokingly. She mentioned that the last time we went to fetch water and this was what happened. We did that jokingly because the relationship between me and my mother is very, very cordial and it was in the midst of other siblings, so we laughed over it, talked about it and that was all. But as I said, we think that we don't have to bother other family members, not because they don't care, but because we think that with God, ourselves and our pastor, we should be able to handle our problems.

**John** Let me come to this. What were your expectations before you married? You mentioned that you had some plans. Those may not be in terms of marriage, but what were you expecting in marriage?

**Moses** I was expecting general progress in life. I was expecting a partner who will not depend on me for personal progress or whatever it is and I was also expecting that both of us will have our own liberty to grow in life. I wasn't expecting the situation where for instance my wife will say, now we're okay, so maybe stop your work, stop your profession. I wasn't expecting a situation where I will tell my wife that now, its okay, stay at home and I'll provide everything. It was something that right from childhood, I never believed in. I was expecting that we would all develop in our respective carriers. I respect her carrier and I was looking up to someone who would respect my carrier.

**John** So you thought that marriage was going to help you to improve yourselves, the two of you.

**Moses** Yes, the two of us. Not just in our lives per se but even in our relationship with God and other social activities we engage ourselves in.

**John** Now, what were those expectations based on? Were they based on the observation of other people's marriages, from books you read, or whatever?

**Moses** I think there were a lot of factors, books, other people's marriages, what I had heard from my pastors, and what I had read from the Bible. But I think the most principal thing was my parent's marriage. From my own observation, it has not been the best. That is my point of view. I saw a lot of abuse, my father abusing my mother. I realised the relationship wasn't the best, so I made it a point that I will be different and I think that is the main thing. That is one of the reasons why I said that I'm happy about how far we have come.

**John** Thank God for that. What do you see the effect of modernisation in terms of your marriage. How has modernisation affected your marriage?

**Moses** I don't know what you mean by modernisation because we married in a modern age.

**John** Let me put it this way. Looking at issues of maybe, work in the house, issues of making decisions, you know that in the olden days, it was the woman who was supposed to do every work in the house. When it comes to decision-making, it was the man who decides. The Akan has a proverb that *Se obaa nyen oguan a banyin na oton*. So it's like the man who decides, not the woman. And modernisation is leading us in the sense that now, the woman

also has to go to work outside. Does she still has to do every work in the house in addition to the paid labour? Now women are asserting themselves. What goes on in terms of decision-making?

**Moses** As I said about my expectation or our expectation, because we have been talking about this thing for a while before we entered into marriage, our expectation was that we would respect each other's work and that we would make room for covering up. Now, coincidentally we work at one place. When we married, my wife was working on Saturdays. She was running shifts. She used to work in a hotel, so there was no reason why I would say I would wait for her to return to do the washing. I was doing the washing and I was washing everything. When she doesn't go to work on Saturday, she does the washing. Fortunately or unfortunately, I'm not very good at cooking. Apart from maybe, preparing beverages and boiling eggs, I can't do much, but I don't also force her to cook by all means. Somehow, the kind of food I like are simple foods. I don't eat *fufu* which takes a lot of time to prepare. I don't like *banku* which also takes time to prepare. My foods are rice, *garri*, and yam which are all simple to prepare. So when you talk about household chores, I don't think there is any problem. When it come to decision-making, basically, we expect that I'll take the step, I'll take the lead. I tell people, she's also my secretary in the house. There are certain decisions she takes because we've grown to know ourselves. She knows that she'll take the decision and it will work well. Sometimes I allow her to take the decisions because I know the areas that she is strong in. she also knows the areas that I am strong in. so, we've not had the problem where I've had to blame her for taking a particular decision. Even when her decision has backfired, I think we look at the causes and try to make amends. Sometimes, I take decisions and it backfires. Sometimes, when it happens, maybe , at the initial moment, unconsciously, you find yourself blaming her or she blaming you, but eventually, we sit down and look at the problem and move ahead.

**John** You said that basically, she expects you to take the decisions. Why is it so?

**Moses** For instance in the choice of our son's school, we have a boy, it was like I came out with a suggestion, and these are the things we used to discuss even before we married, that I will want our son to start school at a very early age. It was something that we always said, so after the one year anniversary, she came to me and said, I think we should look at implementing what you said. Which school do you want him to attend? This is because I

think in the matter of education, I have a better urge. It depends on the area, you know, it depends on the area.

*John* Let's look at this other issue, did you have any premarital education. I'm not talking about the counselling, but is there any way you learned about marriage.

*Moses* Yes. First, my parents and secondly, I read a lot and I still read about marriage.

*John* Was there any formal type of training in marriage that you had?

*Moses* Yeah. We had what we call singles fellowship here in this church and at these meetings, even though the topics might not be directly related to marriage, we do talk about things such as 'looking at the future', 'preparing yourself' and those kinds of things.

*John* So, how useful would you say the books you have read, and your observations and what you have learned from the singles fellowship on marriage, have been? Do you think you learned anything that is impacting your marriage?

*Moses* Yeah. I think so. I think I learnt a lot and these are some of the things we keep referring to and working on. For example, I read about pregnancy and how pregnant women behave, before we even had an issue, and I can say that I didn't have much problem. In fact, its not just books, but sometimes magazines. I read some things from some magazine and some newspaper cuttings. I have them and I shared with her even before we had our child. So, those things are helpful.

*John* Let me come to conflicts. What in your view are the main sources or causes of conflict in your marriage? Is it finances, decision-making, sex, communication?

*Moses* One of the causes is finances, and its not because the money is not available that brings the conflict, but usually it is related to how it should be spent. And then sometimes, we have little conflicts on commitment to worship, to church activity. What I'm trying to say is that I'm the person who thinks that praying, like all-night prayers is good, but if you can have that same, lets say two, three or four hours during the day time to pray, it is also good. But she sees it differently in the sense that you have to attend all-night prayer sessions. It's spiritual to attend all-night prayers. I don't usually attend all-night prayers. Sometimes, when it happens that she has to attend, she tends to say 'you are not being committed' and that kind of thing.

Those are differences in perceptions etc., but it is not something that materialises into any big conflict. And when it comes to finances, sometimes, I think views are different. Whereas I'm looking at long-term investments, what I've observed is that sometimes my wife tends to forget about certain investments. What I'm trying to say is that, for example you go in for a loan for a property, and it will be deducted every month. But as a man I expect that she remembers that at the end of the month, certain amounts have been deducted. For that matter, certain things may not be met, but I need to remind her before she remembers, and these brings problems.

*John* you said that when conflicts arise, you try to sit down and talk about things. Will you say that over the years, the nature of the conflicts have changed? For example, in the first year of marriage, when there was no child, maybe things were going all right. With the birth of the child, instead of being two, you are now three. Did this bring in other types of conflicts? Would you say that over the years there have been changes in the nature of conflicts, the problems that you face?

*Moses* The problems that we face have not changed. It's getting better. We are now having a better understanding. Before this time, we had a little problem with communication. Communication in the sense that I think there were a lot of things that, although she was involved in initially, she seems not to be aware if there is no reminder, for example the investment issue that I was talking about. I think it is not a conscious effort to behave that way, but I think it is basically an attitude and I have realised it. I think that it is better now that things are discussed.

*John* So, when will you say were the most difficult year or years in your marriage?

*Moses* I think 1997 or thereabouts.

*John* The third year?

*Moses* The second to the third year.

*John* Why do you say that that was the most difficult year?

**Moses** No, I think 1999. It was basically because we went into a lot of investments. for that matter, it affected the total income at the end of the month. Of course, we had to do a lot of adjustments. That's basically the reason.

**John** What kept you going during those years?

**Moses** What kept us going was the fact that we are friends so we get to understand ourselves, that it is for our own good that we had to do that.

**John** Thank you. Now the last thing. In what ways do you receive support for your marriage?

**Moses** What kind of support?

**John** Support in terms of still maintaining your marriage, making it happy, making it interesting.

**Moses** The support we receive is from friends, relatives giving us words of encouragement, and pastors. When they meet you, they will say, you are looking good. Thank God for your life. Some of these things, when you are told, it encourages you. And then I think the fact that we are friends, if there is any secret, we share it among ourselves. I can't say I've a better friend than my wife, so if there is anything that can be discussed among friends, we do that.

*Yedi kokonsa kakra.*

**John** Okay, thank you very much for the time and for opening up to me to have this interaction with you.

**Moses** Thank you too.

**John** My pleasure.

## APPENDIX XIII

### INTERVIEW WITH GWENDO

**PROFILE:** *Gwendolyn is a member of the International Central Gospel Church. She is a divorcee. The interview was conducted at her office in Accra on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2001.*

**John** I'm doing a research on marriage and the support of marriages, the pastoral care of marriages, and I should be grateful if you could spare some few minutes to share with me about your own marriage and how things have been. If you can please tell me your name, when you were married and for how long you have been married?

**Gwendolyn** My name is Gwendolyn and I was married in '87 for five years.

**John** What type of marriage?

**Gwendolyn** It was a customary marriage.

**John** What were your expectations for marriage before the marriage actually took place?

**Gwendolyn** Originally, I was living abroad and my husband was staying here. The plan was for me to have moved down, but later on I found out that it wasn't an easy situation, so that was what caused the conflict in the beginning.

**John** Why do you say that it wasn't an easy situation?

**Gwendolyn** Because I was settled there and he was settled here and he was trying to force me to come down when I was not ready.

**John** So that began the conflict?

**Gwendolyn** That's right.

**John** You went to live abroad after the marriage?

**Gwendolyn** Before.

**John** Before the marriage. So what was your expectation for marriage?

**Gwendolyn** Well, I thought, like everybody else, it would be a happy union, but it turned out to be otherwise and I've since put it behind me.

**John** Okay. And what were those expectations you had, the happy union, based on? Was it based on maybe, the observations you had made of other people's marriage, books you had read or whatever?

**Gwendolyn** In fact both. I think mostly from books.

**John** Are there other things that influenced your views about marriage apart from the books you read and then the observations of other people's marriage?

**Gwendolyn** Well, I felt that bringing up children is best brought up in a stable relationship, so that was my main objective initially.

**John** and would you say that those expectations were not met?

**Gwendolyn** They were not met in the sense that it looks like personal ambitions always overrides certain things, so we didn't give it a chance to work.

**John** Personal ambitions?

**Gwendolyn** In the sense that I wasn't ready to come down and settle. I couldn't really make up my mind and I didn't like the force being put on me. I took my own time to come down. By that time, the relationship had sort of fixed.

**John** Would you say that that was the main cause of the breakdown?

**Gwendolyn** I think I was settled in my ways and he was also settled in his ways. I didn't want to make any compromises.

**John** None was prepared to make any compromise?

**Gwendolyn** Hmm.

**John** Did you ever live together for a period or most of the time, you lived apart?

**Gwendo** Yes, we lived together for some time.

**John** Here or abroad?

**Gwendo** Here. For abroad, he never lived for a long time. He was just coming up and down, but this was his main home.

**John** During the period that you lived together, obviously, some petty problems came up?

**Gwendo** So many problems.

**John** How did you deal with those problems? Did you deal with them yourselves?

**Gwendo** Yes, mostly yes, because I felt he was reasonable at the time, but I was right. Although he also felt he was right. Looking back now, if then he had listened to me, things would have worked better for us.

**John** Can we put it the other way round. Maybe if you had also listened to him, ...

**Gwendo** No, I think I was right. Let me give you an example. We got a school for my son far away, and I was trying to get a school close by, and he didn't understand why I was forcing so much. I was saying for proximity reasons, it's better, but he was complaining that there will always be this, there will always be that so that's no problem. But in the end, things worked out the other way, and there was really suffering involved. So I felt that I was right and if he had listened to me, it would have worked out better.

**John** So, during those times when you had those problems, you tried to deal with them yourselves. Who normally took the initiative, yourself or himself?

**Gwendo** Well, I just used to speak my mind and that was it, I just finished and that was the end of it.

**John** You never sat down to discuss things?

**Gwendo** No, normally, when the problem came, we talk about it. If he said his decision was final, I just left him to it because he never saw my point, so I just drop it and led my own life.

**John** So often times, you actually bring the issue up and sometimes he did it?

**Gwendolyn** No, most of the times, I was bringing it up because I felt that I was being cheated. I was looking at the future and he was looking at the here and now. I didn't really like it. I've been a person who has always planned for the future and I didn't want his way. There was no point in the whole thing. I just took my own decision and I led my own life.

**John** So those attempts at trying to sort things out yourselves were not always successful?

**Gwendolyn** No.

**John** And did you ever see someone else to help you resolve your problems?

**Gwendolyn** No, I never brought anybody in because, I felt that eventually, it was just between the two of us. We should have to take the final decision.

**John** But it wasn't working out well?

**Gwendolyn** Hmm. But I didn't regret anything.

**John** That's why you decided to buck out?

**Gwendolyn** That's right. I mean I've always been independent so I felt that I should just get on with my life and continue from where I left off.

**John** That's interesting. You've always been independent even when you were married?

**Gwendolyn** Not that. He made me that way because I tried to relax and bring things up but he didn't see it that way. So I felt that it was the same stand I had to take. Because like this school issue I was telling you about, under normal circumstances, I'll just go and look for a school and that was it if I was that independent. But I consulted him and he was saying this. Later I even regretted telling him about it because I suffered the most. There were times when there was no car and I had to go all the way from Osu to Kaneshie all the time. Because he said this, I just relaxed in my attempts to get a school near us, and I just went his way and I suffered for it.

**John** Before you got married, did you have any form of education concerning marriage. Did you learn about marriage in any way?

**Gwendo** Well, from normal life, my parents and that sort of thing. Normal observations, but I didn't really ...

**John** There wasn't any formal training?

**Gwendo** Although I had read so much about it, but I thought that like childbirth, it came naturally.

**John** Talking about childbirth, it means that one of your main concerns about marriage was childbirth?

**Gwendo** Yes, yes. I mean that's the main thing. I have two children. I don't crave to marry. I'm satisfied with my life. If I decide that I want to get married, fine, then my children would have been old. For now, my focus is all on the children and I don't have any other energy for anything else. I think that's the main thing for me really.

**John** Well, if I can probe further, would you say that, because children were the main thing and you had the children, so you were not bent on working things out?

**Gwendo** I tried and you know, normally, I get frustrated with certain things, all manner of things. Maybe, it's based on my upbringing. So if somebody is proving difficult, I just ignore the person and go. I feel it's no big deal. Once I can cope, that's it. That's me.

**John** Let me put it another way. If you had not had the children at the time, would you still have been in the marriage or you would have bucked out?

**Gwendo** That's very difficult to tell because I wouldn't have known. Yeah, maybe, because I feel that that's what marriage is. That is of primary importance, so without children, obviously, I sympathise with those who go to lengths looking for children, because I believe it's an experience that everybody should go through, and if you miss it, ... So I sympathise with them. But I'm for adoption and that sort of thing. I don't really mind looking after other person's children so I don't know what it would have been like really.

**John** How does look like being a single parent?

**Gwendo** I'm fine.

**John** Do you think everything is all right?

**Gwendo** It's fine with me.

**John** What about the children, do they see their father?

**Gwendo** They do. Yes, they do. I think they are all right.

**John** Don't you think that it has some negative impact on their development?

**Gwendo** I don't think so. I don't think so. They are fine.

**John** Let me ask, when you were married, did you have any type of support for your marriage, in terms of any activity or programme that was aimed at strengthening your relationship?

**Gwendo** No, no, no, no.

**John** There wasn't anything like that?

**Gwendo** No.

**John** And there wasn't any formal training in terms of marriage?

**Gwendo** No, apart from your parents, every time you are doing something, they tell you this and that. Apart from that ...

**John** Did you have any sort of premarital counselling?

**Gwendo** No.

**John** Do you think that if you had had that, it would have been better for the two of you?

**Gwendo** I don't know. I've not thought about that. In fact at that time, I wasn't a practising Christian, so living in a place like England, maybe your lifestyle and everything

and the nature of things. Although I had some beliefs, but sometimes, you just throw them overboard.

**John** You were not that committed in your beliefs?

**Gwendolyn** That's right. Yes.

**John** So when did you become a Christian?

**Gwendolyn** In the 90's.

**John** You mentioned that you are coping as a single parent. I think it's all right, but in terms of finances, do you receive support from your ex-husband?

**Gwendolyn** Oh yes. He supports the children.

**John** Is he married again?

**Gwendolyn** No, he's not.

**John** When did the marriage break up?

**Gwendolyn** We were friends afterwards, but about five ago, I think, we stopped. There was no sexual intimacy or anything after five years, so that was the end.

**John** Is there any way by which, apart from the financial support from him, as a single parent you think you are supported in your own personal life.

**Gwendolyn** What do you mean by that?

**John** I'm not talking about financial support, but emotionally and in terms of personal life in general.

**Gwendolyn** I'm coping well. I'm fine.

**John** Without any form of support?

**Gwendolyn** I don't even have the time to sit down and think. I wasn't working before. I took up this job last year and it's occupied me. I don't leave here before 8.00 o'clock. By the time I get home, I'm too tired, so I don't even have time to sit back and gloat or something.

**John** Doesn't it affect the children that you are always out of the house?

**Gwendolyn** I know, but they have had me all these years. It is a long time when I started having these children. My son is going on to 15. I was home all the time so I think that they had the initial stability, because I was there for them 24 hours a day. So weekends, we all spend it together all the time. So I make time.

**John** You make time at the weekends?

**Gwendolyn** I don't know. I'm the type. I even call them at school and that sort of thing. When they get home, within two hours, they would have called me five times. So any small thing, they call. I also call to make sure that they are all right.

**John** Is there any way that the teachings of the church is sort of a help to you?

**Gwendolyn** It has actually. It has.

**John** Is there any programme that you attend?

**Gwendolyn** Not really. It's just the normal Sunday service teachings. I have tapes and things like that and that's it. Now, I'm just busy trying to make money. That's all. That is my focus now. I don't have time for anything else.

**John** So money is the main thing now?

**Gwendolyn** Yes, because I had plans initially and I didn't get the chance to really take off as I would have liked so I'm back to it. That's my focus now, to do something for myself.

**John** Maybe, finally, do you intend to marry again?

**Gwendolyn** Maybe, years later, but not now.

**John** Not now, what if somebody comes in now?

**Gwendo** No, not now, I don't have the time.

**John** You think you'll have the time later?

**Gwendo** Yes, when the children are out of the scene fine.

**John** Out of the scene in what sense?

**Gwendo** In the sense that they've finished school. My son will be starting SSS this year. My daughter too is going on to class six. For the next five years, my mind is on them, so the person will have to wait till after five years and then try me.

**John** Don't you think that maybe, if somebody comes in, you will be better able to take care of the children?

**Gwendo** I don't have the time. I'm not prepared. That's okay. I don't think I can be prepared to make up my mind. My mind is now settled that I've thrown my work overboard all these years.

**John** I think we can bring it to an end. I'm grateful to you. Not everybody will be willing to open up in such a situation. So thank you very much.

**Gwendo** Don't mention.

## APPENDIX XIV

### INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE ASANTE

**PROFILE:** *George Asante is a teacher by profession. He is a Roman Catholic and has benefited from the ministry of the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal. He has found the services of the CCFR quite useful. This interview was conducted at the offices of the CCFR on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. John Abedu Quashie and I'm doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages. I should be grateful if you can offer me some time to find out how your marriage is doing. If we can begin, you can tell me your name and for how long you've been married.

**George** I will, with all pleasure. My name is George Asante. I've been in marriage for the past eleven years.

**John** What type of marriage is it, is it customary or wedding?

**George** My marriage is customary.

**John** But do you consider yourself to be fully married?

**George** I don't consider myself to be fully married.

**John** You don't? why?

**George** I want to have the church blessing.

**John** Before you consider yourself fully married?

**George** Why I am saying this is that I am a Roman Catholic and without having the matrimony, you cannot go in for the communion. So right now, I am not a communicant. But I have the desire to participate in communion.

**John** Okay, would you say that your marriage is successful or not?

**George** Well, my marriage, I won't say it's not successful. It is quite successful.

**John** Quite successful, what reasons would you assign for that?

**George** Why I don't want to say it is very successful is that we are human flesh and blood and there are human imperfections here and there. For me to say that it is very successful, I think it will mean that we don't have problems here and there.

**John** Well, that may not be the implication because there is no single marriage without a problem.

**George** That's true. Then, I will say it is quite a successful marriage.

**John** Before you married, what expectations did you have for marriage? What did you think marriage was going to be and how did you expect to enjoy your married life?

**George** Well, before I got married, some of my expectations were that I am going to have a wife, get children, just like the traditional marriage, the man and the woman will be staying together, the woman will be serving the man. Those were some of the things I was expecting.

**John** Using the phrase just like the traditional marriage, it looks like those expectations were based on the observation of traditional marriages.

**George** That's right.

**John** But apart from the observation, did you read from books or whatever? What informed your expectations?

**George** It was mostly based on observation of other people's marriage and also a little from church gatherings and from counsellors and so on.

**John** So, would you say that those expectations have been met or they have not been met?

**George** I should think that they have been met because I was not expecting too much. I was only expecting a peaceful family life. In our case though, we've not had many children. I had some children before marriage and I have had just one child with my wife. Since then we've not had any other child. We are satisfied.

**John** Let me bring in this issue of children. Basically, childbirth was one of the main things for which you married?

**George** It was one of the major things. Then also, companionship is one of the expectations. But quite unfortunately, since we married, we have never stayed together at one place. I was staying at one place and she was also staying at another place when we married. Then I moved from where I was staying. At that time I had finished my diploma course, so I went to stay in the school where I was teaching with the hope of furthering my education. So for the two to three years that I stayed there, we agreed that she should stay where she was, so that when I am going back to school, there wouldn't be the problem her moving. And really I went for further course for two years. When I finished, it's only last week that I've been given a place to stay, so I'm now thinking of moving her to stay with me.

**John** Where the whole idea of companionship will be a reality?

**George** That's right. But all the sae, I've been visiting everyday.

**John** Well, that's interesting. I know that traditionally, that shouldn't be a problem, but then do you think that it is the best of arrangements that married couples should live apart?

**George** No, I've never been happy with it.

**John** The world is changing and the things that we used to do traditionally are changing here and there. One of the main things has to do with the role of women in the marriage and also the role of the man. Now women are asserting themselves. They are in wage labour just like the men. Would you say that in your marriage, this has had a positive or adverse effect?

**George** Well, both of us are working and I think it has helped us financially. I don't think that I consider it as a serious problem. The upbringing of the child is where we have a difficulty. My wife is a nurse and sometimes she is on night duty. At that time, someone need to take care of the child early in the morning. I see it as a little problem for me. Apart from that I think that things have worked well.

**John** Maybe, because you're not living together, you haven't come to appreciate some of the issues that come up. For example, there is work to be done in the house and because your

wife is gone to work, she expects that you do that work. You may also say that tradition doesn't demand that you do that work, then you begin to face some of the tensions.

*George* Well, I don't think that I am a very serious traditionalist. And also I see that if we were together, I wouldn't mind assisting in the household work. Where you see the wife very busy and you expect her to do another thing while you are doing nothing, I think you are being unfair to the woman. So, well, if we happen to live together, I will help where I can.

*John* What about decision-making, You know that sometimes women's contributions are taken as *mbaasem*, that is their contribution are not taken serious. I don't think you have a problem with that.

*George* Well, I've not had so much problem. Certain personal decisions she makes is where I might have some problem with. But if it is a decision about the family, there is no problem at all.

*John* So, there are times that she takes decisions for the family and you don't have any problem?

*George* No, there is no problem when she takes decisions for the family and I think it is good for us.

*John* You don't take it as woman's talk?

*George* No.

*John* May I find out whether you had any premarital education, did you learn about marriage before you entered into it?

*George* Formal learning?

*John* Whatever?

*George* Well, quite a little formal learning at the centre and other gatherings where they talk about marriage. Then the informal one is through observation and through coming into contact with other married couples.

**John** So you learned informally by observing other peoples' marriage, but then by coming to the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal, you feel that you've learned a lot?

**George** Oh yes, I've gained a lot.

**John** And you think that what you learned have been helpful in your marriage?

**George** Very helpful because before we went to perform the customary rites, Mr. Ampah counsel us a little on marriage and we came back, we came to report. He again advised us and I think the advice has been helpful.

**John** You also do attend other Christian gatherings and seminars on marriage?

**George** Yes, my wife is a Methodist and I am a Roman Catholic and she is in the Women's Fellowship and they do learn a bit about marriage.

**John** Can you tell me a bit of what was involved in that type of education at the centre? Just broad themes or topics in the content.

**George** We talked about patience in marriage, understanding, tolerance and some other things. We also dealt with conflict in marriage. They reminded us that it is bound to come once we are human beings. Misunderstanding is bound to come and we must resolve it ourselves without involving any other neutral person.

**John** Talking about involving other neutral persons, let me ask when problems arise and you try to deal with the problem yourself but are unable to resolve the problem, have you had any occasion inviting someone to help you sort things out?

**George** I cannot remember a day when there has been any conflict between us which will demand the coming in of a third person. There have been some misunderstandings here and there but no actual conflict.

**John** If you were to get to a situation where you need to bring in someone, who would you want to bring in?

**George** As soon as we got married, I told my wife that we are married, there is bound to be misunderstanding here and there, but I am warning you, I will never be happy if you tell

my family members our marriage affairs. I wouldn't like you to make any complaints to my mother, my father not my sisters. But I left out my brothers.

*John* Why?

*George* Well, I feel that these are the people who can get your marriage destroyed.

*John* You mean your mother, father and sisters but not your brothers and your friends?

*George* Yes.

*John* Why do you have that kind of feeling?

*George* Well, it is from one or two observations, so I advised her not to discuss anything about our marriage. She can talk to them about the marriage but she should not send marital problems to them. It looks like she has also complied with it. Now the other side of the question, in case there is the need to see somebody, well, I'll most of the time rely on my friends. If I have a very close friend who is impartial, I will rely on him as I am also impartial when I get to hear about their marriage problems. Then some friends of my wife. I guess there was one occasion when my wife did something I was not happy about. I informed her friend, her Christian brother about the situation. She has two maids, the children of her elder sister. These girls were fighting in the house. I happened to be there and in an attempt to separate them, they hit me and I had a serious cut. At that time, my wife was at work so I went there and asked for her and she came. Through her assistance I was treated and I went home. The problem was that the next day I went there, and the next, three or four times. My wife never asked me how I got wounded. She never said, let me see the sore and all those things.

*John* But you told her the cause?

*George* She got to know it that her maids were fighting. Other people in the house also informed her. The children later in apologised. One is about 25 years, getting to 30. So I pointed it out to her, since I got the cut, you have never asked me how I feel. You've not even asked me to show you the cut and you're a nurse. And you have never said sorry for what happened. So I pointed it out to her and she was saying, oh, I have now sacked the girls. So that was the time I reported her to her friend what she had done and how painful it was. So, I

remember that was the only occasion that I told someone our problem. And he didn't call the two of us. He went to talk to her and reported it to me.

*John* Do you think that it yielded some fruit, her friend talking to her?

*George* Well, she gave some excuses and I said I should forget about it. If I wanted peace in the house, I should forget about this sort of thing so I forgot about it.

*John* Apart from what you have said, do other things bring in conflicts, say finances, problem with communication, sexual issues and so on?

*George* Communication is one factor. Naturally, I am quiet, but I am also very interested in having interaction with my wife and children. I like that very much. Because I am not staying with her, any time I go there, I ask, where is this boy, where is that boy and so on. I ask of everyone. Sometimes, you ask and there will be no response. So, I only have to keep quiet. Then I will say, I'm asking you a question, won't you answer me, before she will answer, oh I haven't seen them. Well, sometimes, when there is a problem, who put this thing here, then maybe she might not talk or she might say I don't know and so on. So, that is one thing.

*John* Have there been any attempts at trying to sort out that problem?

*George* Well, no attempt, but I do talk to her about certain questions I ask her and she doesn't respond. Well, you know how women behave, she'll say, but I've been answering your questions. You don't need to go far, you just have to forget about those things. But we are getting on nicely.

*John* Let me take the issue of communication again. Do you think that underlying the problem is some fundamental need that is not being met on the part of your wife?

*George* Well, I don't think that there is any need should result in that.

*John* Over the years, since you married, do you think that the issues that brings about problems have changed?

**George** Well, I think they change and sometimes they don't. when the change comes, it will just go back to the old problem. With communication for instance, sometimes you see that things are better and sometimes you see that we go back to the old problem.

**John** So you don't see any difference maybe in the issue that didn't go well when you first married and the now. If you re compare those two periods, the first year of marriage and this period, what difference do you see in the problems.

**George** In the first year, I feel the marriage was a young marriage and there is no doubt there is very much happiness here and there. But as time goes on, I don't know whether it is because we stayed apart for a long time, that was when the attitudes began to change and she wouldn't answer my questions. But why I am not very much particular or serious about her attitude is that I have concluded that that is her attitude. That is her nature.

**John** So you accept her as she is?

**George** Yes, that's her nature. Sometimes, she will come from outside she has to put down her bag before she says good morning or good afternoon, so I'm taking that as her nature.

**John** So, when there is an issue, you take the initiative to come together and talk about it or she takes the initiative?

**George** Well, most of the time, I take the initiative. I haven't seen her taking the initiative.

**John** So, most of the time, you take the initiative?

**George** Yes, but what I have observed is that when she goes wrong, instead of saying it, you see that in her attitude that she has regretted what she did.

**John** So, she wouldn't actually voice it out but then it shows?

**George** Yes, it shows in her behaviour.

**John** It looks like in our day, talking about communication, people think that it is only when you speak that you have communicated.

**George** Oh, no. There are various forms of communication. We communicate with all the parts of the body.

**John** So, you have learned that that is the way she communicates to you and you do accept it.

**George** That's right.

**John** But then, when you see that in her attitude, do you accept it that is just like she's told you that I'm sorry? Do you actually point it out to her that this is what I hear you saying to me?

**George** No, I've never done that. Sometimes, later, I'll go back to the problem and discuss with her and we explain things to each other.

**John** When would you say was the most difficult years of your marriage?

**George** Difficult in what sense?

**John** When generally, you felt that the problems were overwhelming?

**George** We have not had any serious problem.

**John** In what ways do you receive support for your marriage? How do you sustain your marriage?

**George** Financially?

**John** In all areas.

**George** Well, financially, I'll say that the woman has been contributing. We are all salaried workers, and she has also got the opportunity to engage in some trading after her normal work. So, she has been contributing.

**John** Generally in you relationship, how do you receive support so that you come to love each other stronger?

**George** Okay, we don't receive any support from outside apart from the counselling.

**John** How did you come to be connected with the centre?

**George** I was driven to the centre by the wife of a friend of my senior brother. The wife was my age group and we were staying in the same house. She had been coming to the centre, not knowing my wife was also coming here.

**John** At that time were you married?

**George** We were not married. We became members of the centre before we got to know ourselves. We were not even meeting. We came here at different times. But when we got to know ourselves, the later we realised that both of us were visiting this place.

**John** Do you think that apart from what you learned from the centre before you got married, you have gained anything from the centre since you married?

**George** Yes, you know human beings. We are forgetful. Sometimes, we are also weak in certain things. So we come and we are reminded of certain things. You know the Bible is full of new insights. The last sentence you read, the next time you read it again, you may get a different message. So the centre has been reminding us of so many issues.

**John** Do you come here as a couple or individually?

**George** We have not been able to come as a couple. It was just after our marriage that we came once as a couple. Now, because she is working and staying at a different place and I'm also working and staying at a different place, it becomes difficult for us to come together. Even three days ago, I was asking her to be visiting the place. Yesterday, I said she should try and come and I told her I would be coming here myself, but I couldn't so I came today. So the nature of our work prevents us from coming here together.

**John** But when you come here individually, you gain a lot from what you receive?

**George** Yes.

**John** I think I should thank you for your time and for opening up to me.

**George** Let me add a bit. The centre has been very helpful in the raising of the kids. When there is a problem with the children and I inform the centre and come to Mr. Ampah to discuss with him, he is able to help me out of the situation.

**John** That's fine. So, it's become a place where you receive a lot of support for your marriage and the whole of your family life?

**George** That's right. I have even come to see him about one of the kids. I'm having a problem with one of the kids and I'm coming to see him to discuss with him and give him the progress report.

**John** Thank you very much. We thank God for your marriage too and I trust that you will grow in your marriage and be an example unto other people.

**George** Thank you very much.

**John** God bless you.

**George** Same to you.

## APPENDIX XV

### INTERVIEW WITH FREDA ADJAPONG

**PROFILE:** *Freda Adjapong is a married woman and has benefited from the ministry of the Centre for Counselling and Family Renewal. This interview was conducted at the Prayer Centre of the CCFR, Kumasi, after a prayer meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. Abedu Quashie, a minister of the Methodist Church and I'm doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages. I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to find out how things have been going on in your marriage and the support you have had from this ministry and generally, how life is going on. If we can begin, you can tell me your name and how long you have been married?

**Freda** As far as the assembly is concerned, right now, I've got some credentials, so I'll say I'm Honourable Freda Adjapong.

**John** How long have you been married?

**Freda** About 36 years. In fact, this is my second marriage. Maybe I can start from this last one.

**John** From the first marriage, don't worry. With the first marriage, when did you marry and for how long were you married?

**Freda** In fact, the first marriage, at that time I was very young. My husband could have been my father. You know in those days, if you're attending school, somebody might come in, especially in Ashanti, to tell your parents that, well, I'm interested in your daughter so I'll even help her in her schooling. In fact, I was somebody who was anxious to study and so when I was attending school, I decided that I would go to the secondary school and to the higher level if all went well. It was very unfortunate my mother became ill and so I couldn't continue with my secondary education. From the elementary school, I just entered into the marriage at the ripe age. So I went into the marriage and you know the child issue was my problem. In those days, I didn't know Christ really, so I became a second wife. The childbirth

was difficult and this brought some conflict in the marriage and so I decided to go away from the marriage.

*John* So, you decided to leave?

*Freda* Yes, to leave because of the problem I was having. All the time I'll be hearing things which were not normal. In fact, I never knew Christ but my mother was a Christian and I was following her to the Methodist Church. So I decided to go away from the marriage and the man was not on my side, but I just moved from the house and when I was trying to leave, there I realised that I had taken seed, so I decided to wait till I gave birth. After giving birth, I just came out of the marriage. That marriage started from 1954 to 1962, when I came out of the marriage.

*John* About 8 years?

*Freda* At that time, I was working with the Swiss African Trading Company. When I came out from the marriage, fortunately for me, I had an appointment with the GIHOC Fibre Company Ltd. in those days. That was 1962. The factory was brought in and at that time, they were installing the machines, so I had an opportunity to join that company. I joined the company in 1962 and in 1965, I was awarded a scholarship from Kwame Nkrumah and I went to Belfast to learn how to operate the machines and the new technology. After returning, just about two years, then I went in to my second marriage.

*John* That will be 1968?

*Freda* 1966

*John* Well, that's fine. What type of marriage is it, is it customary marriage?

*Freda* It is customary marriage. The man told me that he was having a wife but due to some unforeseen circumstances, they had separated so the wife was not there, so I went in. Immediately I went in, the he started telling me that he wanted to go and bring that woman. Well, I didn't care so I made up my mind that he could go and bring in the wife. So the wife was staying in her own area.

*John* She was staying with the man?

**Freda** No, she wasn't. I was staying with the man. Immediately I married him, the company gave me a bungalow. He told me that he didn't want to stay with her so he had a flat for her at Mampong. He moved and stayed with me and brought about six of the children to stay with me.

**John** The first woman's children?

**Freda** he was having another wife together with the first one. He had different children so he brought me a boy and a girl from the other woman and then two boys from the other wife so they all came to stay with us.

**John** So, basically, your marriage is a polygamous marriage?

**Freda** It was, it was.

**John** Are the other wives still around?

**Freda** The other wife has expired. You see, when that woman came in, we were staying nicely because it was somebody who drove her away. Immediately I came in and the wife came back, the wife was so nice with me and I even did so many things for her. But somewhere in 1986, I decided to go to the Deeper Life Bible Church to go and study the word of God. There I had a counselling with some of the pastors and they told me that I should come out of that marriage. When I decided to come out, the wife got sick and the national overseer told me that because of the wife's sickness, if I come out, people might think that I have done something to her so I should wait for the wife to get well, then I could leave. Unfortunately, the wife expired. That was in 1987. So I didn't come out of the marriage.

**John** Since then, have you been with the man alone?

**Freda** Alone since then.

**John** Has your marriage been blessed in church or it is just the customary marriage?

**Freda** It wasn't blessed. It's just the customary marriage.

**John** How would you describe your marriage, would you say it has been a successful one?

**Freda** In fact, when e got married, as I have already stated, I was somebody who was so serviceable so the man was so happy together with the family, the brothers and so on. I was staying with the children and my hospital and work compensation was covering all the children. But as the children started to grow, some enmity started brewing. They were saying that I had killed their mother and all sorts of things. In all these things I was all the time praying. I was living soberly and as time went on, it developed. Just a year after the death of the woman, then my elder son with my present husband also died in an accident. That was 1988, 18<sup>th</sup> October. My son got expired. That nearly jeopardised my personality. I was all the time going and coming. That time too, my son had impregnated a young girl so after four months, the girl brought forth a boy and after one year, I went in and took the boy with me. After the boy had come into the house and these people had grown up, there the whole problem started. The marriage nearly collapsed.

**John** Was it the problem with the children that led to the problem between you and your husband?

**Freda Ehee.** That time, I was having a shop. I had then come out from GIHOC. After 25 years of service with them, I decided to come out. When I came out and started my own business, it was through the business that the boy was going to collect some goods for me that he had the accident. During that time, I hadn't known Mr. And Mrs. Ampah. I was a church goer, I was moving all right but my life was shattered. I sold all my belongings. I wasn't happy in the world. My consolation was the child.

**John** That's the grandchild?

**Freda** Yes, the grandchild. I was moving up and down and in the year 1990, it became worse. My shop was just near the Methodist Church. There I heard that this couple were having a fellowship so I attended the fellowship and through their counselling, I am what I am now.

**John** That's fine. Since you talked about those problems, let me get into that, what was the nature of the problem between you and your husband?

**Freda** In fact, those children, their grandmother died?

**John** That's their mother's mother?

**Freda** Their mother's mother died. After two years, their only uncle died and in six months time, their mother died. They are saying that I am the one who killed their grandmother, their uncle and their mother. My husband wasn't attending any church. It was I who followed him to the Methodist Church in 1981 and he was baptised and confirmed by the then Rev. Emmanuel Asante. When he went in, he started making some girlfriends there. He took one chorister here, took one there and after the church, he will be going to the hotels with the choristers here and there. It was very unfortunate.

**John** So, it was extramarital affairs?

**Freda** Yes, extramarital affairs. Even that wasn't my problem, but he was not on good terms with me. But the man was so good to me and my family. We married in 1966 and it was only 1988 when this problem started.

**John** So, before 1988, you were living nicely together?

**Freda** We were living nicely together.

**John** Irrespective of the fact that it was a polygamous marriage, everything was all right. It was after the death of the other woman that the problems started?

**Freda** And one thing I have noticed is that I'm somebody who is very prayerful. If I face any unforeseen circumstance, I will rise up and go for counselling. I won't take the matter into my own hands. I will rise up and go for counselling. I was somebody who would retaliate when anyone did something wrong to me. I was born a politician. Right now I am a politician. So, even the man was afraid of me. As for this I can say it as a Christian. You can't just tell me something and go away whether you are a man or not. But it was through Mr. and Mrs. Ampah that I became sober. And so what I noticed was that, my husband was a church goer, he didn't read the Bible, he didn't even carry a Bible with him to church. He doesn't take anything serious. Then why do you go to church? Going to church without a Bible. He will say, *nse nea osofo no beka no mete*. You see right now, we have to meet in the morning and do some devotion. Even this my boy who lost his life was somebody you'll hear praying at 12.00 midnight, and then this man will go and knock, *ei, gyae, gyae, wotuetue nkorofa aso*.

Immediately, my boy stopped, then he had the accident and died. So, what I noticed was that, he is somebody who is well to do and so he is looking after all his relatives, all the family affairs. His elder brother died and he inherited and he looks after the brothers children, all of them. Some of them have completed university, some of them are now doing their own work. And the family, they have been dragging this man, using juju and so my husband is not okay. Right now, when you see him, if it were not the grace of God, he would have died. He even lost one of his sons last December, 5<sup>th</sup> December.

*John* What happened?

*Freda* Ask me. The boy was staying with me, together with other children. He is so good.

*John* He is not your own son?

*Freda* No. It was the woman who died. But I collected him at the age of two. When I went into the marriage, he was just one year. So when he started to talk, he said, I'll go to Aunt Sarah. I'll go and stay with Aunt Sarah. By that time I was going to Europe and coming very often. I was on scholarship. I was somebody who was also doing very well so the boy decided to stay with me. He stayed with me for a very long period and he was well. Then last two years, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, he got married. He was educated to the university level so he was the one looking after the father's job. He was the managing director, the accountant and everything. When he got married, he decided to go and stay with the wife. He had a nice wife and he stayed with her. When I was travelling to Holland just last September, I went to the wife's shop. She is a seamstress. She told me that Aunt, Brother Kweku is not feeling fine. And I asked, what is happening? She said, malaria, ordinary malaria. The doctor says he should rest. So I said, when you go home, tell him that I'm travelling. It's impromptu so he should rest, because you know, his father's job. He doesn't go on leave. I went to Holland. It was a management training for the KMA staff. When I came back in October and I went to the house, I saw that everything was deteriorating. Instead of allowing this man to go to the hospital, they went to a certain pastor who is staying at Adukrom calling himself Jesus way or whatever it is, giving him some concoction to drink and then they were praying for him. They told him that I was the one who was trying to kill him. So when I even went to the house, the type of reception I received wasn't very nice. When I came back, I wept. So my younger son who is at the university said, mama, why should you go there? I have to, I loved him and even

during my election campaign, he spent more than two million, why shouldn't i. I nearly wept. So when I came too, my husband was saying, one of my ears is paining me. Then I rushed him to the hospital. He was also operated on. So, two problems, one, God. And about 5.00 am one morning, my husband got up, I asked, where are you going, and he said I am coming. One of his children brought a taxi, put my husband in, without my knowledge, they took him to that man, the same pastor who was praying for that young man.

*John* At Adukrom?

*Freda* Not Adukrom. Sikakyenkrom. If you are going to Kumasi Academy, between Kumasi Academy and ...

*John* I don't know this place very well.

*Freda* Aha, that man is there. They sent him there and after two days, the man came. We are coming to pray, whoever is doing that in this house, he's going to die in a weeks time. For me, I knew everything was okay with me so I didn't bother. I went to them and we all prayed together and he left. And then they sent my husband to the hospital. He was operated on and he nearly died. His condition was deteriorating. When my husband was discharged from the hospital, this young man came to the house. Immediately my husband saw him, he said, *ei, Kweku, woewu koraa o*. then he got up and took him to Korle Bu. Two weeks and he died. And the death of this young boy has really jeopardised the whole marriage right now as I sit here. We are staying in the same house.

*John* Your husband's house?

*Freda* Yes, when I went in, he was not having even a bicycle. I also did my part. I already told you. My insurance and everything was covering these young people. And whenever there is a problem, as a senior officer, you know this '82, '83 problem, they'll give me some food and I will bring it home. They'll give me ten gallons of petrol a week and I'll send his car to collect it for more than five years. Now these people are saying all sort of things but as I am saying, praise God that I met Mr. and Mrs. Ampah. Whenever there is a problem and I take a telephone and call them, they will just whisper a word of consolation to me. That is why I'm saying that it was through them that I am who I am. Right now, I am serving on a committee. We were supposed to have a meeting at 11.00 o'clock so I never decided coming here.

Immediately I went and they told me that they've withdrawn all the government appointees so we can't form a quorum, I said, thank you Jesus and rushed here. Right now, I'm in a problem but because God says in everything we should give thanks, and then put everything before him, I am doing fine. I'm here as one of their members they counsel and also one of the elders who are looking after this wonderful centre.

**John** Okay. It's good to hear that. Before you married, what were your expectations.

**Freda** In fact, my expectation for going in for marriage was to have a good marriage. At least, every marriage, you know the blessings are the children. But you know in every family, there are some problems as I have already told you. When I was so young, I married and the man I married was Kotoko chairman. He was somebody who was well to do so I was looking after all my family, my mother and my elder sisters. So everything stopped. My mother then told me, if I don't stop looking after them, I won't even have children. Right now, I have two boys with him, the Kotoko chairman and two boys with my present husband and one girl. One is in Accra, the second one is in Canada now and the last son with this man is in the University of Science and Technology. He is in his final year. Right now, he is in America for some holidays. This problem has extended to this young boy.

**John** His own son?

**Freda** His own son.

**John** He doesn't want to take care of him?

**Freda** He does, but in difficulty.

**John** So that in your expectation, you were thinking about children and to a large extent, you had the children.

**Freda** And also support my husband. I wouldn't say that I am going to marry and sit in the house and be a housewife, always looking up to my husband. I tried to do my part. When working with the SAT, it was a fibre manufacturing company. Kwame Nkrumah changed the whole episode and made it GIHOC. I worked with SSAT seven years, and twenty-five years with GIHOC, that is thirty-two years as a civil servant. So, I did my part. I was staying with my brother's children, doing everything. When you came into my house, at that time, we

didn't have blenders, you'll see me grinding, and he was happy. His brothers, everybody was so happy. Even right now, there are some people who are supporting me among his relatives. So I decided to go and be a very good wife to a man. But it didn't work out well.

*John* It started well, but then later, the problems came. Let's look at the effect of modernisation. You mentioned that even though you were working, you did the work at home and those things. Times are changing when people are saying that because the man and the are working, work in the house should be shared between them. What do you think about it and what was happening in your own marriage?

*Freda* Well, in my marriage, I think things were going okay. When you marry, you have to study your partner and know what he likes and what he doesn't like. He was somebody who was always concentrating on the job. Even on Sundays. As I told you, it was 1981 that he became a Christian and I was also attending church. He wouldn't stop me from going to church. Even when the time came for me to go for convention, I would send all the children.

*John* That was with Deeper Life Church.

*Freda* No, no, my church is Church of Christ.

*John* Okay.

*Freda* The Deeper life Church, I went there for three years. I wanted to study the word of God, that is why I went there. He was always anxious with his work, so somebody like that, he doesn't have time to stay at home and do anything. But when I was working with the GIHOC people, in fact, I will say that maybe, because I was helping him in that way, giving him the petrol and etc., all the men I was working with, the big men, the managers, they were calling him akonta, akonta. He was so good that three months time, he will invite some of the senior officers and their wives together with me, then we go out to say Chop Sticks. So he was a nice man. He was a very good man. He was a caring husband too. It is only recently that there is a change. So we were doing things in common. And whatever I do, he was telling me that oh, you are tired, you need to rest. Even when blender started coming in, he bought one and said because of this and that, I have bought you this, so I'll prepare food together, put everything in the freezer, so that even when I am not in, he can just heat and eat. He is somebody who likes *fufu* in the morning and I saw to it that he gets his *fufu* before I go to

church. Recently, when he started going out and chasing women, when he started going to church, then he started having problems. Now, he is diabetic. Before having that diabetes, when he went to the hospital, the doctor asked me the type of food I was giving to him. When I told the doctor, the doctor told him that he should thank me. I was giving him fruits and vegetables. I don't give him oily food and so on. And you know immediately all these things started, he said he wouldn't eat my food again. Oh, what is happening? I have cooked for you for so long. I even came and told mama and dada that this is what is happening and they told me that you just give him the food. If I give him the food, he'll not eat. My son came from school and said enough is enough. If he says he doesn't want to eat, that's all right. So, when he started eating out, things went bad. He is even now impotent because of chasing women here and there.

**John** He does take your food now?

**Freda** Well, at times, he will eat it. But his last boy I took when he was three years, he is now twenty-five. He is now the greater problem between us. Even, he now sleeps with my husband.

**John** I see. And you sleep in a different room?

**Freda** Yes, the whole house is there. When he came out from the hospital, one of the daughters said, *dada, aden na wegya aunt ho. Ne ba no se ennye hwee, ennye hwee, na nse oda hoa ennye hwee.* He would rather listen to the son, a boy of about twenty-five. I've been telling mama and dada, this is what is happening.

**John** And do you think that coming to the centre and discussing your problem with Mr. and Mrs. Ampah, you have had some help from them?

**Freda** I've had not some, but a big help from them. They have been my, I don't know how to put it, in all areas. Even if he does something and it's not good, all of these things, I'll go about my duties. People will run away. They will tell me, if anything happens, do this, and now I am fine. I met them in the year 1990 when my problems started.

So, when this District Assembly issue came in, I even consulted dada before I contested. You know, they were all praying. But my husband and his children were praying that I shouldn't win the election. Even my opponent went to my husband, gave some bribe to somebody to go and give it to my husband. My husband collected the money, put it in his safe and he came to me and said, people are saying that you should step down because you are going to meet with so many problems. You know you are not a member of the party in power, NDC, and when you are not their member, they won't give you anything. And I said, you just mention that person's name and I'll step down. For that I can't do it and I also said, I'm not stepping down. Even the son who has just expired came over to tell me that, don't step down, I'll help you. And my husband couldn't help me in any way. So, after this somebody came and told me that that man came and he gave him back that ten million.

**John** Ten million?

**Freda** Yes, well, I wish you'll stop contesting. There's nothing in your shop. I'm prepared to help you. It was that ten million he took. How can you go and collect a bribe and come and give it to your own wife and pretend as if you're giving her the money. I told him that I know you wouldn't even give me two million so as you are saying that somebody has approached you, I am telling you point blank that you have collected money from that man. And then he went back. How would you know that I have collected money? I said yes, you have collected something to be given to me. I'm not prepared to step down. I'll contest with him and I contested with him and won. So, that is it. And I'm still in it. I even went for a funeral last Saturday. He told me he was going but I didn't tell him that I was going and I left. When he came, he said, yesterday you didn't tell me your were going for a funeral. I said, it was the funeral of that lady who came and supported us. Why didn't you tell me? I said, well, you told me that you were going. How much did you spend? And I said that I spent 60,000. I hired a taxi and the taxi charged me 40,000 because it was after Mampong, and I gave a donation of 20,000. This morning he came and gave me the money, and I said thank you, my dear, you've done well. I'm doing my part. I know it isn't his will. He was a good husband as far as I know, looking after me and even my mother and my sisters. Because I was also helping him. He was somebody who couldn't go out but I could go out. If there is a problem, I can stand in as a wife and defend him, so he was so appreciative, but recently things have changed.

**John** So how are you trying to deal with the problem?

**Freda** I'm praying to God. Even the problem he went in, the vision and dreams that people had, he would have died. I went to pastor Fred and said, pastor, please pray for my husband so that he wouldn't die. If he dies, I can't do anything. He is looking after my grandchild.

**John** Before you married, did you learn about marriage in any way?

**Freda** All that I knew was staying with my mother. My mother was illiterate but she was strict and gave us some education on marriage. When you do this you'll die. If you don't take care and have your puberty rites and you go in for a man and become pregnant, you'll die. So we were very careful.

**John** So, that's the type of education you had. Apart from prayer what else are you doing in terms of trying to resolve the conflict between yourself and your husband?

**Freda** Well, in fact, for me what I don't like is to go and tell somebody that this is what my husband is doing and then they gather. If it comes like that, so many people will come in, unbelievers and then they'll start to do their own thing. So all that I do is that I just consult my counsellors, Mr. and Mrs. Ampah. I go to them, maybe, at the centre, tell them and have conversation with them as we are doing. If not, I'll call them on the telephone and then tell them my problem.

**John** But then, after talking to them, do you also talk to your husband about the problem and how you feel?

**Freda** As for that, he doesn't want to hear that at all. He is not prepared to hear anything. Even, just before we had the funeral, his own sister came into house and in fact, it was terrible. How this woman came and insulted me. It was some people who came from their individual houses and drove the woman away. Up till now, he hasn't said anything to me and he is nice with her. So I don't say anything. If you say you're going, it will bring so many problems.

**John** But you say that things are okay. What do you mean by that? Coming for counselling with Mr. and Mrs. Ampah, do you think things are going well?

**Freda** The reason why I said that things are going well is that I don't retaliate. If I say I'm going to retaliate, it will be worse. People will get to know that this is what is happening. So,

right now, even when he is coming to talk to me, you see him shouting, like he's coming to fight with me, and if you don't take care you too will retaliate. If I see that all that I have to do is to sit down quietly and pray. When he finishes, then he goes away.

**John** So, what you are doing is that you have decided to be patient with him and not to respond to any of his provocation?

**Freda** That is something I'm doing, living patiently with him, listen to him as he talks. When I see him, I ask, *dada, whoho te sen?* We have divided the house. I will go to his apartment and ask, *dada, how do you feel this morning.* But immediately the boy sees that I am coming, he'll lock the door.

**John** That's interesting.

**Freda** But if I see that the door is opened, I will go in, *daa, whoho ye? Anadwe yi na maso ye me ya paa.* Oh, sorry, *wakohu* doctor? *Ose menkoe.* Then I'll call the boy, my son, *kaakyire, wo ho te sen?* Aunt, *me ho ye.* Whether he likes it or not, I'll go. So this is what I'm doing.

**John** I guess that the most difficult years of your marriage has been from 1988 to date?

**Freda** No, he became nice. He became nice about two or three years ago, so nice, so cordial, but after the death of the last boy, ..

**John** That is last December?

**Freda** Yes, last December. I was staying with him doing everything for him. We were all sleeping together. Immediately somebody dies, then they start to put the blame on me.

**John** So, basically, they are taking the problem as being spiritual, that you are the cause of the death of ...

**Freda** Of everybody, including their grandmother. How can I go to somebody's house? And you know, one of the step children came in last two weeks or so. I never knew the lady was there. She's a grown up. Immediately I came out from the bathroom and entered my room, I heard somebody talking and I opened the window to see who was there. I saw this woman. And the boy was saying *mama, what are you throwing on the floor?* She said *leave me alone.*

Do you know what I'm doing? Somebody will die in this house. This is my father's house. There is a witch here. She was talking and I was standing in the window listening to her. There is a witch here so let me put it there. And when she was coming, she brought in a dirty dog. Then she went round the house with the dog about three times before she came in. This is what my maid told me. So, when I came out from the bath, I heard her, this is my father's house. My father has bought this house. The woman who is here, she is a witch. I'm going to do something. She won't even sleep. She'll scratch her body during the night. So, I became furious, but the Holy Spirit spoke to me, what are you doing? You are having a weapon, use it. Do you know the weapon? And I said, yes, prayer. And I started praying. I said, almighty God, and I asked all the powers of heaven that whatever the woman has brought should follow her. Immediately I finished praying, she couldn't wait for the father. She took the dog and ran away and she hasn't been to the house since then. So I called Mr. Ampah and informed him. So, prayer is powerful.

**John** so, basically, you have been using prayer as your weapon and trying to be patient?

**Freda** If it wasn't the prayer and the counselling I've been receiving from Mr. and Mrs. Ampah, I would have gone out to quarrel with him and that would be my doom. I took it to be physical but it wasn't. I later took it as a spiritual thing so I didn't go out. It wasn't through my power. It was through the counselling of Mr. and Mrs. Ampah.

**John** I've gained a lot of insight from talking with you and I should thank you very much for the time and for sharing with me. It is my prayer that things will work out for the better and that you'll enjoy your marriage as you used to.

**Freda** Thank you very much indeed and when you go back, remember me in prayer. I've already mentioned my name. Right now, look at my age, where am I going? It is my wish that I stay with him. Right now that he's not feeling fine, this is the time that I should take care of him and console him, but they won't give me the chance. But I know that one day, God will make a way. Thank you very much.

**John** My pleasure.

## APPENDIX XI

### INTERVIEW WITH JANET AGGREY

**PROFILE:** *Janet Aggrey is a medical student. She is single but has made the choice of a future partner. She has indirectly benefited from the activities of the Family Life Programme of the Christian Council of Ghana through such programmes as the Annual Christian Home Week. This interview was conducted at home in Akosombo on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001.*

**John** I'm Rev. Abedu Quashie and I'm doing a research on the pastoral care of marriages. I should be grateful if you could offer me some time to find out your views about marriage. We can begin by telling me your name.

**Janet** I'm Janet Aggrey.

**John** What is your view of marriage?

**Janet** I believe that marriage is a holy union between two people, two consented adults who enter that union with the aim of helping one another, loving one another to achieve certain goals and certain aims in life.

**John** Where certain goals and certain aims mean what?

**Janet** The family, I believe is one. If you are fortunate enough and God blesses you with children. That may not always happen. But then also, to share ones dreams, maybe certain projects in life such as a building, to share one another's company, for fun and companionship, everything for the rest of your life.

**John** That's fine. How did you come up with this view of marriage? Is it by observing other people's marriage or what you have read, what friends say or from the teachings of your church or whatever?

**Janet** I think that a bit of everything.

**John** A bit of everything?

*Janet* From watching others, and these days the church does a bit of teaching on marriage, how it is supposed to be like, from watching my parents, watching other couples, a bit of everything to form my own ideas of marriage.

*John* When do you think that marriage is fully contracted, is it after the customary rites have been performed or after what we call the wedding?

*Janet* I think it depends on the couple. I think everybody should decide on what they want to be and their marriage ceremony, so that if you want the customary rites, you take that and stick to it and after that you are married. I don't think you should bother with anything else. But if you want to have the wedding, which is my preference, then you take that. So, I will take the wedding to be the final say.

*John* But do you know that you'll also have to do the customary rites?

*Janet* Yes, I'll do that but from my conception of it, I'll take that to be what is called engagement.

*John* Why do you take that to be the engagement because traditionally, that is marriage.

*Janet* Yes, traditionally, that is marriage but I like the idea of the wedding.

*John* you like the idea of the wedding?

*Janet* I like the idea of the wedding and I have to do the traditional one too. The way it is going, these days, most people take the traditional one to be the engagement and the wedding to be the final part.

*John* They take it to be the engagement but in actual fact, that is not engagement.

*Janet* Yeah, that is true. But I think it is up to you, how you see it.

*John* So, will I be right if I say that people are married twice?

*Janet* Yes, I think twice, or even thrice and all that. Maybe what we need to do is that we should streamline it, or maybe you choose the one you want. If you want the traditional one, you do everything at once and if it is the wedding you want, you do it at once, everything in

it with the minister and all, and then in your eyes that is marriage and in God's eyes, that is marriage.

*John* But you will want to have the church wedding?

*Janet* Yeah, but I may have to do the engagement ceremony since I have to do it. Around here, you have to do it. There is no way out so you make it simple and let everybody understand that that is engagement.

*John* But that is not engagement no matter how much you want people to take it that it is engagement. The two families have met to contract the marriage and they know that you are marriage so that terminology is inappropriate.

*Janet* I think in my mind, I know that it is engagement.

*John* But in the minds of the witnesses and all others, they know that marriage has been contracted.

*Janet* You just have to explain it.

*John* Any way, that is fine. What do you hope to expect from your marriage?

*Janet* Expect?

*John* What would you like your marriage to be?

*Janet* I'll like it to be as good as it can get.

*John* Where as good as it can get means what?

*Janet* It should be full of communication, companionship, understanding the partner, getting to know the other person better, getting to love the person, getting on along with the person.

*John* But do you also anticipate that there will be conflicts?

*Janet* Definitely. I think so. I think that initially, we all have this fairy tale idea about marriage. But from what I see, from what I know, it is not like that. So, I don't think I'll be

expecting too much. I think I'll be expecting a realistic marriage with good times and also with problems. I think that problems are part of life and part of marriage.

*John* And how do you hope to deal with those anticipated conflicts when they come?

*Janet* I think basically, through communication. Communication with my partner, talking things out and praying about them. I think it is important to talk things over and then be determined even before we get there that no matter what problem we would have, we would try and work it out because it would be worth saving our marriage.

*John* So, you are talking about discussing those issues even before you enter marriage?

*Janet* Yeah.

*John* You do hope to be involved in some form of marriage education before you enter into marriage?

*Janet* Like someone educating me?

*John* Whatever form of education. Already, you have some form of education. You have been observing people's marriage and also been reading and etc., but is there anything formal?

*Janet* I suppose so. Yes, I think so. These days, before you get married, the minister in charge of your church will take you through something.

*John* What is your mind about it? Do you think it is useful?

*Janet* When done well. I say so because I have come to realise that marriage is different for every couple. I do believe and think that to a certain extent, everybody needs some education. A lot I do not know, I need to be told. But to certain specifics and to certain details, I don't think the same rules can fit every couple, so I don't know how far they can go telling you. They can't know whatever things will come up in every couple's marriage. I think every couple is different. If the counsellor wants to go to certain levels, they have to treat every couple differently. I think that one has to find out a lot for oneself. I think there should be a lot of personal education.

**John** I suppose there is someone in mind?

**Janet** Yes.

**John** How did you choose your partner? Were family elders involved in your choice, and if they were, how were they involved?

**Janet** The family was not involved.

**John** They were not involved at all?

**Janet** Not at all.

**John** You didn't even seek their consent?

**Janet** No. After I had made up my mind, I asked them what they thought.

**John** That is seeking their consent.

**Janet** Okay, I suppose so.

**John** You made up your mind and you told them about it. Did they have any objections?

**Janet** They didn't have any objections.

**John** What if they had some objections? What were you going to do?

**Janet** That would be tough. If my family has objections, I think I would have to consider that and let whoever is concerned think about it too. They may be raising genuine concerns. I will see how far their concerns may be true and how it would affect my relationship.

**John** Do you think that those concerns of the family are important with respect to your marriage?

**Janet** Yes, I do think so.

**John** Why do you think so?

**Janet** Because, in getting married to this person, I'm going to bring that person and my family into close contact. We all have to work together. That means from the start, you have a problem if they don't approve of the person. That would bring a strained relationship. I would consider it. I might actually change my mind. I think it is worth considering.

**John** Apart from the involvement of the family, what else was the basis of your choice?

**Janet** I think the basic requirement is falling in love. But apart from that, I think about common ground, maybe the background he comes from, our families. Maybe I did think about what my family would think of the person, knowing what they expect. With the background, whether we can get along, the person's faith and generally common ground.

**John** That's fine. You said you were thinking about what the family expect, so I guess that the involvement of the family is very important to you.

**Janet** Yes, because there is a saying in our dialect that an old man is better than a fetish priest. Because they are experienced and they've lived long on this earth and passed through the stages, which I am passing through, they know the best. So, despite the things that I was looking for, I sought their consent to the choice.

**John** And how far do you think that their involvement should be in your marriage?

**Janet** Not so far.

**John** Can you be specific?

**Janet** I do hope that they will love my husband, appreciate him, respect him and get along with him. But I do hope that they will respect the fact that the marriage is between two people and that our problems are our problems and that we need some distance and privacy as much as we need their support and their counsel.

**John** They have to give you space?

**Janet** Yes, give us the space, give us the distance to work things out ourselves.

**John** That is fine. How do you think your marriage can be supported?

**Janet** Hmm. My family?

**John** Whatever, family, church, friends and so on and so forth.

**Janet** Well, I think that family is very important in giving support. I hope that wouldn't happen, but if I go running to my family with a problem, I hope that they'll rather be interested in bringing us together instead of pulling us apart. And I expect other people also, friends, church, everybody to respect the marriage and not to get too far.

**John** Is there any programme in your church by which you think that your marriage can be supported?

**Janet** I don't think so. Nothing comes to mind immediately.

**John** Let's look at the roles of partners in terms of household chores and decision-making. What are your views about these?

**Janet** Well, I think I agree that the man is the head of the marriage or the household. I can stick by that. I also believe that it is a partnership. We have to help each other. So, since he is the boss, in decision-making, I'll contribute what I can, give my ideas and my views, and I think together we will come to a decision. If someone wants to put his foot down, that's fine. On household chores, traditionally, it is the woman who is supposed to take care of it. I don't mind taking a greater share of chores and stuff. We intend to be very busy in the future so I definitely need some help.

**John** You definitely need some help. Traditionally, that was the role of the woman and it wasn't that difficult for her because the man was supposed to look for the means of survival for the family. You are training to be a medical officer, how are you going to combine this with work in the house?

**Janet** I think it is a matter of good planning. Even from now, you have to start because the course is demanding. I have to sort out something to suit me. Maybe do a bit of everything in a day and at the weekends, when I am relatively free, I will cook everything and leave them in the fridge. That is how I live now. We use it throughout the week. I'll go shopping, not everyday but every week, but things in bulk etc. I think it is common sense and good planning. And then also if you have a supportive partner, it'll be helpful. I've always had this

idea of a man who will show some interest. Even if he is not doing anything, whilst you're doing the cooking and the chores or whatever it is, he's around to keep me company. That is a good sign. So, I think in future, the two of us can work something out.

**John** That is fine. What are you going to do if your partner has a different view on some of these matters. For example, you are thinking that your partner should offer some help. What if that help is not forthcoming?

**Janet** I'll talk to him about it and try and make him see the need, make him understand.

**John** Do you think it is necessary to talk about it before you enter into marriage?

**Janet** Definitely. I do think so. I think if you can talk about it once you start courting the person, it is better, because once you get in, it is difficult to get out. For me, it is something I considered before getting into the relationship anyway.

**John** And have you talked about it?

**Janet** Yes.

**John** And you are certain about what you are going into?

**Janet** Not the fine details. He is someone who, ...I mean you can tell from the start that he doesn't mind giving a hand. It is very important to decide on that before.

**John** Putting aside household chores and decision-making, how can you know if your husband has different views about other areas in marriage?

**Janet** I'm a strong believer in communication. So, we will talk about it, any thing and any aspect that comes to light.

**John** You think that that should be before you enter the marriage?

**Janet** Way before you enter the marriage. And I think as you're going out together, it gives you the opportunity. The man may actually say one thing, but as you are going out, I think it gives you the opportunity to look out for these qualities and I think it should be fair to help you to decide whether you are marrying the person or not. Especially, if that issue is

important to you. To me it is very important because of my career, so I give it very high priority.

*John* I think I should thank you very much for the time you have offered for us to discuss what you think about marriage and what you're hoping for. Thank you very much.

*Janet* You're welcome.

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