

**CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IN A WEST AFRICAN CONTEXT:  
A STUDY OF THE INTERACTION AND SYNTHESIS OF METHODIST  
AND FANTI MORAL TRADITIONS AS A MODEL FOR THE  
CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the use of Alasdair MacIntyre's tradition based model of ethics as a heuristic tool in analysing the contextualisation of Christian ethics. Ethical contextualisation is thus understood as the interaction and synthesis of particular Christian moral traditions with the moral traditions they encountered in the different cultures where the Christian faith was established. This study focuses on the interaction of the Methodist moral tradition with that of the Fanti people of Ghana. The argument begins with the contention that morality in African cultures may be better understood as discrete traditions in the light of MacIntyre's model. This claim is substantiated by a reconstruction of the Fanti (Akan) moral tradition in terms of its practices, virtues and ends. A detailed historical study of the interaction of the Methodist and Fanti moral traditions within Ghana indicates that a synthesis between these traditions has occurred at the level of leadership practice and virtue. The findings of field research conducted among Fanti traditional rulers and Methodist ministers suggests this synthesis is continuing, and probably extends to other areas of moral practice, and even to the heart of each moral tradition. Taken together historical and empirical research provide credible evidence that a Fanti-Methodist moral tradition is emerging out of the encounter between the two traditions.

**TO MY FRIENDS ON FOUR CONTINENTS AND ELSEWHERE...**

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## **INTRODUCTION: ISSUES AND INTERPRETATIONS**

### **0.1 PRELIMINARIES**

This introduction sets out the background and difficulties of the author's concern to study the processes by which ethics are contextualised or inculturated in the West African context where he has taught since 1989. The major problem faced in beginning this study was to find an adequate working model through which moral traditions and their transformations might be understood. Alasdair MacIntyre's moral philosophy is proposed as a starting point for such a model and a sketch is provided of how the ethics of African Christianity as represented by a selected African Church might be analysed and evaluated through this model. Some indication of the research focus and methodology required by this proposal are given along with an outline of the chapters that comprise the thesis.

### **0.2 THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL CONTEXT: HOW TO TEACH CHRISTIAN ETHICS MEANINGFULLY IN A GHANAIAN CONTEXT**

The roots of this research lie in the author's experience of teaching Christian ethics in Ghana at Ghana Christian University College in Accra. When he began his work some eighteen years ago he found that he was teaching a highly theoretical Western approach to ethics using textbooks highly oriented to Western theories and issues. Such an approach he found then, and still finds now, disjunctive and lacking authenticity. The theological discipline that should relate most directly to Christian living became distant and abstract for himself and for his students. To some extent he tried to circumvent the real issues that faced him as a teacher by concentrating on issues of particular pertinence to the communities to which his students belonged and by giving his approach a largely Biblical and empirical orientation. However, this remains unsatisfactory as the issues are still defined from within the perspective of Western philosophy and theology and, in so far as the use of Biblical material depended on his exegesis, they were also approached from the perspective of a Western Christian. This was inevitable, but it was still necessary to find ways to transcend a Western cultural perspective in order to enable students to address the moral issues within their context as African Christians. The attempt to resolve this issue resulted in an increasing concern with the issue of the contextualisation of ethics.

### **0.3 THE PROBLEM: THE LACK OF ADEQUATE MODELS**

Little help was found in the literature on contextualisation then available to the author. This literature either concentrated on theological issues to the exclusion of ethics (although in reality ethics and theology cannot be separated) or was prescriptive in its approach giving edicts as to what Christian ethics should be in a particular situation (Bediako 1992; Eitel 1986; Fleming 1980; Kraft 1979). This latter course proved to be woefully inadequate as contextualisation, in ethics at least, is best understood as an experimental process arising out of the way in which Christians might relate their culture to their new identity in Christ. What was necessary was a tool that might facilitate understanding of this process.

Prevailing approaches to Christian ethics seemed to be equally disappointing. Deontological approaches to ethics, whether framed in terms of divine command or natural law, assumed that there was one set of universal moral norms that were expressed in every culture with minor variations (Geisler 1989: 17-134; Holmes 1984: 15-22). This claim is unconvincing on two grounds: firstly, the variations in moral values from culture to culture are considerable and significant; secondly, deontological theorists were often at odds over what constituted basic moral norms and their relationships to each other (Geisler 1989: 79-134; Hauerwas 1983: 17-24). The author's own ethical thinking began to develop more along teleological lines under the influence of John Howard Yoder's 'Kingdom' or 'Intentional' ethics in which Christian ethics are understood as the ethics of an eschatologically defined community (Kallenberg 2005A: 74-80; Yoder 1972). He was further impressed by Stanley Hauerwas' development of this position by relating Christian moral stances to the distinctive narrative tradition of the community (Hauerwas 1983; Kallenberg 2005A: 58-64). This led in turn to an interest in narrative theology as a way of stating and understanding Christian doctrines within the context of the story of the people of God (Stroup 1981). In the light of this it seemed that it might be possible to understand the contextualisation of ethics in African Churches through their experiences and additions to the Christian story. A narrative approach to ethics might provide a tool for understanding the contextualisation of ethics. However, while this gave a greater insight into how ethics actually worked within the Christian community it did not lead to the discovery or development of any tools of analysis that might assist in understanding the processes of moral development within West African Christian communities beyond vague ideas about analysing testimony and preaching within West African Churches, a task really too vast to contemplate. At this time the author was under the influence of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, and their accounts of Christian Ethics. Hauerwas, in particular, discusses the narrative formation of ethics, not to provide any

analytical tools, but to explain his own use of the narratives of Christian faith in forming new moral perspectives. Both Yoder and Hauerwas seek to establish their own place within the Christian moral tradition. They were not concerned to provide tools for an external analysis of moral traditions. Even so, their approach did provide some clues concerning the nature of moral traditions and the manner in which they might be approached, but yielded no firm hypotheses or methodologies. A 'bottomless pit' of questions still remained.

#### **0.4 THE UTILITY OF MACINTYRE'S THEORY FOR THE CROSS CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ETHICS.**

##### **0.4.1.THE 'BOTTOMLESS PIT OF QUESTIONS' AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FAILURE OF 'THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT'**

The fact of the matter was that adequate tools for an analysis of moral language, values and behaviour were lacking. All of the author's education in moral philosophy under teachers in the English Analytic Tradition and all of his study of theological ethics left him unable to form an overview of moral processes. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that this situation is typical of all who are heirs of the Enlightenment moral tradition. They possess the vestiges of moral values and concepts but are unable to indicate their proper *meaning*. For this reason, MacIntyre argues, that Westerners are unable to decide between competing moral arguments and claims. Western moral theory, he insists has reached an impasse in which it is asserted that moral statements have no meaning and are either mere expressions of emotional preference, or assertions of a 'will to power' (Kallenberg 1997A: 7-9; MacIntyre 1985: 6-35). MacIntyre claims that this situation is the result of the failure of the 'Enlightenment Project.' This consisted of an attempt to find a basis and justification for morality in terms of reason alone quite apart from the 'extraneous considerations' of any idea of a purpose for human life, history, or divine claim. After two hundred years of trying this project has failed and has now come to its end game in emotivism and Nietzschean moral philosophy. MacIntyre contends that emotivism and Nietzsche's moral scepticism should be understood within their historical context as the final outcome of the attempt to derive moral imperatives from a rationalistic premise, and as a statement of how Western society actually perceives morality (Kallenberg 1997A: 9-13; MacIntyre 1985: 36-61, 109-120).

#### **0.4.2 MACINTYRE'S MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING MORAL LANGUAGE: VIRTUES, PRACTICE, NARRATIVE, AND TRADITION (ARGUMENT)**

MacIntyre believes that moral philosophy in the West took a wrong turn when it rejected the 'virtue' tradition embodied in Aristotle (Kallenberg 1997A: 14; MacIntyre 1985: 109-120). Aristotle held that moral behaviour was to be understood and directed in terms of virtues or acquired patterns or qualities of thought and behaviour that were directed toward developing a particular end or goal for human life understood in terms of the overall good for human life. In Aristotle's case this was defined as the contemplation of the divine within the context of the common life of the ancient Greek *polis*. MacIntyre elaborates this theory by locating the practice and development of virtues within the framework of *practices*, *narratives*, and *traditions* (Kallenberg 1997A: 20; MacIntyre 1985: 181-187).

A *practice* is an activity that requires particular skills and relationships for its realisation such as chess, scholarship, gardening or accountancy. Each practice has what MacIntyre calls external and internal goods. *External goods* would be winning competitions at chess tournaments or gardening shows, publishing a work of original research, or resolving a particularly difficult set of accounts. *Internal goods*, which MacIntyre asserts are valued more highly, are the *skills* and *excellencies* required to perform practices well such as careful planning and strategy, skillful nurturing and pruning of plants, diligent research and cross-checking. The *virtues* in these contexts are those acquired qualities that enable people to perform skills well such as patience, carefulness, persistence, a love of living things, a love of intellectual puzzles, honesty, integrity, prudence and so on. Practices also imply a community that establishes the standards of excellence for these skills. This community will also have a history which will include the development of the prized skills and the 'discovery' of the qualities needed to perform these skills well. Both virtues and practices require the context of *narrative* to become meaningful (Kallenberg 1997A: 21-22; MacIntyre 1985: 187-196).

*Narratives* are the stories of individuals, families, and communities that define their actions, practices and identities. An action, MacIntyre says, means nothing on its own; it has to be set in a *story* or sequence of other actions performed for a particular purpose to be meaningful. The same is true of the unity of a person's identity. A person's identity has continuity from day to day, even if they change, because their identity is given unity by their *story*. Any changes they experience or make in their self-understanding are all part of this same narrative. The significance or meaning of virtues and practices is also dependent on narratives. The reason why particular virtues, and not others, are prized by a given community is to be explained by its history. The reason that certain practices, and not others, are important to a



particular community is likewise defined by its history. For instance the rise of the coal mining industry (a *practice*) in Britain can only be explained in the light of the industrial revolution, and its demise only in the context of British political history of the 1970's and 1980s. The sense of fortitude, of struggle for justice, and of solidarity prized by many mining communities (communities who share a common practice) are likewise to be explained from the history of these communities as they have struggled for dignity and justice in the face of adverse working conditions and unjust terms of employment (Kallenberg 1997A: 22-24; MacIntyre 1985: 196-203).

A *tradition* is the '*master-narrative*' that ties the particular narratives of individuals and various sub-communities together in the over-arching story of a greater community. According to MacIntyre a tradition describes an ongoing 'argument' about the good of human life as understood by a particular community and expressed in a number of canonical texts, stories, and figures ('saints' and 'heroes'). The tradition, and the community formed around it, is alive as long as the argument continues and is extended. If the argument dries up, is frozen, or faces questions it is unable to answer the tradition will die, either as a result of a process of ossification or disintegration in the face of a crisis. The idea of the supreme human good at the centre of a tradition will set the course of individuals and communities as they define interpret and extend their narratives towards that goal. This idea of the good defines what qualities count as virtues insofar as they enable people to move toward that goal. Those practices that engender these virtues and whose internal and external goods contribute to the fulfilment of what is considered to be the chief good will be given the greatest priority. Virtues, practices, and narratives are thus all brought together in tradition and its idea of the good. Moral disagreements will be resolved in terms of what supports or undermines that supreme good.

MacIntyre did not claim to have produced a new moral theory but rather a model of understanding moral theory, argument, behaviour and its language (Kallenberg 1997A: 24-27; MacIntyre 1985: 204-22).

MacIntyre believes that he has enabled Westerners to talk coherently about ethics once more by showing how the moral life works. If this is the case, and if MacIntyre's model has at least some degree of veracity, then it should be possible to use it to analyse a wide variety of moral traditions from different religious and cultural backgrounds, not least Christian and African. MacIntyre's virtue model would seem to furnish the necessary tools to begin analysing the processes of ethical contextualisation within West African Christianity, especially as MacIntyre presents a meta-ethical framework for the study of moral traditions, rather than a

(western) moral tradition as such. However, two questions need to be resolved before this hypothesis can be pursued further: ‘Can Christian ethics be analysed using this model?’, and ‘Can this model be applied to African cultures given its origins in Western philosophical debate?’

#### **0.4.3 APPLICATION OF MACINTYRE’S MODEL TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

It is twenty-two years since the publication of *After Virtue* and MacIntyre’s model has generated a great deal of debate among Christian moral theologians and ethicists. A number of sympathetic scholars have sought to interpret Christian ethics on the basis of MacIntyre’s model. One particular group have proposed that the moral tradition of the Christian community is organised around the good of the *Church* in being a demonstration of the Kingdom of God to humanity (Murphy 1997: 31-33). This goal is expressed in its key texts and stories, including the community’s reading of its own history, and in its exemplary figures, especially Jesus. The virtues that are held to lead toward this good are enshrined in its canonical texts as ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ of ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’ (Gal. 5: 22-23). Five practices are identified that nurture these virtues and support the good of the Church: worship, witness, ‘well-doing,’ discipleship, and discernment (Murphy 1997: 33-38). These practices are defined and united by the narratives peculiar to the Christian tradition, especially that of the life death and resurrection of Jesus which is the master-narrative of the Christian tradition. The *argument* of the Christian tradition is how the good of the Church and the individual Christian within the Church might be realised through these and various other practices in the face of the various challenges and alternatives that face the Church and in the light of its various canonical texts, stories, and figures (Murphy 1997: 41-43). One could speculate that divergent answers beget various ‘sub-traditions’ such as Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Free Church. In this case, heresy would only arise if the central good of the Christian tradition is denied, or the validity of its canonical sources and master-story were rejected. Such a holistic approach to ethics is highly attractive for it widens discussion from often abstract theories and case studies to embrace the moral character of the whole life of the Church. Moreover, such a widening does not lead to any loss of precision or clarity of analysis as these are secured by the use of MacIntyre’s categories of virtue, practice, narrative, and tradition. This particular account of the Christian tradition is valuable as it shows that it is possible to give a coherent account of Christian ethics using MacIntyre’s model and it establishes some important starting points. However, it is questionable whether the range of ‘essential’ practice is broad enough.

Secondly, the definition of the supreme good of the Christian tradition as the role of the Church in God's Kingdom is both too narrow and too vague. The Christian tradition makes universal claims about the highest good of humanity and *all Creation*, not merely that of the Church. The concept of 'The Kingdom of God' has to be more carefully defined in order to be useful as there are several rival theories about the meaning of this Kingdom. The supreme good for human life of the Christian tradition is probably better expressed in the idea of the *imago Dei* in which human beings are to live in relationship with God as His representatives and stewards upon the earth which is a strong theme of both Old and New Testaments (Carey 1977: 62-81; Childes 1978: 85-102; Cook 1978: 131-152; Gardner 1960: 152-159; Gladwin 1978: 157-167; Moltmann 1984: 19-35).

This discussion has shown that MacIntyre's model *can* be successfully applied to the Christian tradition. However, this tradition largely stands *within* Western culture which is also the context of MacIntyre's theory. Can MacIntyre's model be used *outside* of the Western cultural context?

#### **0.4.4 AFRICAN ETHICS INTERPRETED THROUGH THE VIRTUE TRADITION MODEL**

Peter J. Paris, an African-American scholar, and admirer of MacIntyre's work (Paris 1995: 182) has given an interpretation of the ethics of African peoples from the perspective of Aristotle's virtue ethics. While Paris does not explicitly use MacIntyre's model his account is compatible with it. Paris defines the highest good of the African moral tradition as the preservation and harmony of the community understood in both human and cosmic terms. Paris then considers the virtues necessary to fulfil this good such as beneficence, forbearance, wisdom, forgiveness, and justice. He describes these in the light of what MacIntyre would call the *practices* of hospitality, survival, resistance, reconciliation, and leadership. Paris further demonstrates their meaning and significance through the *narratives* of the struggles against slavery, racism, and colonialism, especially as exemplified in the lives of Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. (Paris 1995:129-156). Paris thus gives a coherent account of the moral tradition of African peoples, which he contends is one tradition (Paris 1995: 129-130), using a model that is extremely close to MacIntyre's.<sup>1</sup> Paris' example

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<sup>1</sup> I suspect that Paris *is* actually using MacIntyre's model as he is using all of MacIntyre's tools: practices, narratives, and a tradition expressed in canonical figures. Perhaps the reason that Paris does not acknowledge this is the danger of being accused of succumbing to 'Western epistemological imperialism' (Paris 1995:182-183). (Paris defends his use of Aristotelian virtue theory for such a charge that whatever common

suggests that it is possible to interpret African moral traditions in the light of virtue theory, but because Paris is still working within a Western context with an agenda oriented to a Western situation his example is not conclusive. The only way to really establish whether or not MacIntyre's model, or something like, it might apply to African Christian moral traditions is to see whether or not this model is helpful in explicating these traditions in their own context and with their own agenda. This is the design of this research. MacIntyre's framework provides a place to begin but it will only prove helpful insofar as it furnishes a valid understanding of, and insight into, the morality of African Churches. If MacIntyre's theory does not do this it will have to be modified or replaced.

#### **0.4.5 ANALYSING THE ETHICS OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY THROUGH MACINTYRE'S MODEL**

This discussion now returns to the place where it began. How is it possible to study the processes of the contextualisation of ethics at work within Christianity in Africa? However, the case is now altered. At the beginning of this discussion it was not possible to identify any analytic tools that were appropriate to this task but now it would appear that MacIntyre's moral theory provides some provisional tools. It will be necessary to begin by identifying the *practices* of a particular African community or people group, and their internal and external goods. The significance of the particular qualities or virtues central to the realisation of these internal goods would then have to be established in relation to the particular concerns that give them meaning. The meaning of the virtues thus established would then point to the highest good that stands at the centre of the tradition. A comparative study would then have to be made of the moral traditions of a specific Church connected to this people with a particular focus upon the source of the church's particular moral tradition and the manner in which it has or has not interacted with the traditional morality of the community. It will be interesting and important to see to what extent this highest good could be interpreted as being more Christian or African, or a fusion of both, and how the arguments implicit in both Christian and African traditions are extended. In this work this is accomplished by a comparison of the moral tradition of the Fanti, one of the Akan peoples and the Ghana Methodist Church which was established among the Fanti over 170 years ago in 1835.

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structure might be identified for the moral life of humanity the *content* of the African tradition will be *distinctively African*.)

## **0.5 THE FOCUS AND DIRECTION OF RESEARCH**

The main focus of this research, then, would be to analyse the moral traditions of a selected African people and the Church that flourished among them using MacIntyre's theory as a heuristic model with the purpose of discovering how the 'arguments' of both Christian and African traditions may have been modified. This proposal has resulted in a fairly logical line of research: i) a discussion of how MacIntyre's model might be useful in interpreting African moral traditions and their interaction with incoming Christian traditions and how it may be used for the inter-cultural analysis of such ethics in relation to the existing discussion about contextualisation and approaches to Christian ethics made by African scholars; ii) an analysis of the Akan moral tradition, especially as expressed in the life of the Fanti people, in the light of MacIntyre's model; iii) studies of the Methodist moral tradition both in the context of its origins in the United Kingdom and as it later developed among Fanti and other Akan Methodists; iv) an empirical study of particular contemporary aspects of the interaction between the Fanti and Methodist moral traditions; v) conclusions about the interaction and synthesis of Fanti and Methodist traditions and the viability of MacIntyre's model. The explication of these moral traditions is based upon existing research, archival study, the publications of the Ghana Methodist Church and supplemented by empirical research in the form of guided interviews.

## **0.6 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

### **0.6.1 CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS AND CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS AND THEIR INTERACTION IN AFRICA**

Chapter One is largely theoretical and explores the utility of MacIntyre's moral theory as a tool for understanding African moral traditions in contrast to various opposing points of view. While African moral philosophers and theologians who follow the 'liberal' tradition inspired by the European enlightenment generally deny the reality of distinct African moral traditions, those that have a more teleological and communitarian approach affirm the reality of these traditions either on the basis of MacIntyre's theory or of another approach that approximates it. This last group confirms that African moral traditions have the features that MacIntyre identifies in his theory. This establishes the plausibility of approaching the contextualisation of Christian ethics as an interaction and synthesis of a Christian tradition with an indigenous tradition. The nature of African ethics as '*Palaver ethics*' (Bujo 2001: 45-66) is established. This tradition is defined and grows through debate within local communities and also seeks to engage other traditions in such debate to the supreme end of maximising the abundance of life

for both the particular and universal community that includes all life, natural and supernatural, actual and potential. This chapter lays the foundation for the approach to ethics taken in this thesis.

### **0.6.2 CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTOURS OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION**

The second chapter takes a more descriptive turn as the moral tradition of the Akan of Ghana, is presented in the light of MacIntyre's model. The discussion here is largely based upon existing research completed by Akan philosophers and social scientists who treat the Akan moral tradition with integrity as a moral discourse concerning value, virtue, and goodness that relates to the parallel discourses in moral philosophy that occur in other cultures. The practices and virtues of the Akan moral tradition are identified along with its supreme good in the maximisation of the life of the cosmic community through the exemplary life and leadership of the community's elders in both the temporal and spiritual realms. The chapter closes with a discussion of the likely areas of interaction between Akan and Christian moral traditions.

### **0.6.3 CHAPTER THREE: THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION IN BRITAIN**

The Methodist moral tradition in Britain in its formative phase is presented in Chapter Two on the basis of MacIntyre's paradigm. This is necessary in order to provide a basis of comparison with the Fanti/Akan moral tradition and to trace the interaction and any synthesis between the two traditions. The practices and virtues of the Methodist tradition are largely identified from the works of John Wesley and a range of interpretative secondary literature. At the heart of the Methodist tradition is the supreme good of the fulfilment of the *imago Dei* in holiness understood as perfect love. The practices of leadership and benevolence are found to play a particularly important role in the achievement of this goal or purpose. The Methodist movement begun by Wesley was first organised as a 'Society' within the Church of England. When Methodism became a separate Church it still retained the structure and nomenclature of its origins as a 'society' at local, district, and national levels. For this reason Methodism in Britain and the Gold Coast is referred to both as 'Church' and 'Society' in Chapters Three and Four.

#### **0.6.4 CHAPTER FOUR: THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION AMONG THE AKAN, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE FANTI PEOPLES, FROM 1835 TO 1965**

Chapter Four is a study of the development of the Methodist moral tradition within Ghana in interaction with the Akan moral tradition as represented by the Fanti from 1835 to 1965. The analysis of the growth of the tradition from 1835 to 1918 rests upon three main sources; the standard histories of Ghana Methodism (Southron 1934, Bartels 1965), the journals and biographies of Thomas Birch Freeman (Freeman 1843, Milum 1893, Walker 1923, and Birtwhistle 1950), the pioneer Methodist missionary to Ghana, and extensive materials from the archives of the Ghana Methodist Church. Resources for the period 1918 to 1965 were furnished by major studies made of the Methodist Church by the Church itself (Taylor 1948) and by independent researchers (Parsons 1963). There are two particularly significant results of this survey. Firstly, there was continuity between the supreme good of British Methodism and Ghana Methodism of holiness understood as perfect love as the ultimate goal of both. Secondly, there was evidence of an important synthesis between Fanti and Methodist leadership practices as incidences of Fanti leadership practice occur within Methodism and traditional rule among the Fanti takes on a democratic and developmental agenda.

#### **0.6.5 CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN LEADERSHIP AMONG THE FANTI**

The evidence provided in Chapter Four of a synthesis between Fanti and Methodist leadership practices is developed further in the empirical research described and evaluated in Chapter Five. Limited field research was conducted among ministers from royal lineages, who could have become traditional rulers and would have been prepared for that role, and among traditional rulers with a strong Methodist affiliation or background. This research provided ‘proof of concept’ evidence that a synthesis was still in progress between the leadership practices of the two traditions in that the ministers draw on values and virtues from their traditional background in their Church leadership, and the traditional rulers were likewise conceiving their role in specifically Christian terms. The field research conducted among the ministers and rulers also furnished material for two case studies, of the development of the village of Twiekukrom and the ministry of Reverend J. Yedu Bannerman that gave further support to the conclusions reached in the main project among ministers and rulers. The developments revealed in these studies indicate that a nascent Fanti Methodist moral tradition is in the process of formation.

## **0.7 NOTES ON METHODOLOGY AND CITATIONS**

### **0.7.1 METHODOLOGY**

#### **0.7.1.1 SELECTION AND USE OF SOURCES**

Because of the focus and breadth of the research conducted in this thesis there are some particular matters concerning the selection and use of sources that should be noted. The focus of this work is to present African moral traditions within the context of moral philosophy and theology. Consequently, in chapters One and Two especially, particular attention has been given to the work of authors who interpret African traditions within the context of wider philosophical and theological discourse. The consequence of this is that many popular authors that give a more anthropological treatment to this same material have not been included. This was intentional as the purpose here is to give a fresh presentation of African moral traditions at the level of an ethical argument rather than at the level of sociological functions, mores, and custom which has often resulted in a reductionism that obscures the true nature and integrity of these traditions. The reasons for this focus and the range of literature that supports this perspective are further discussed and reviewed in the relevant sections of Chapters One and Two [1.1-1.2 and 2.1.1].

In chapters Three and Four, which are the main historical sections of this thesis reference has been made to primary sources wherever possible. However, because of the breadth of this work a considerable reliance on secondary sources has proved inevitable. This was particularly so with regard to the treatment of Freeman and the development of the Methodist moral tradition in the period after 1918. Primary sources are available for both, but their volume is considerable and they are available only in specialised archives. The primary focus of this thesis was to provide an account of the development of the moral tradition of the Ghana Methodist Church and not to write a new biography of Freeman, nor to produce a new history of the Methodist church in Ghana, although there is a need for both. As such, a strategic decision was made to use secondary sources where they were available and to concentrate the limited time and opportunity available for archival work on the period 1835 to 1918 where secondary sources were scanty or limited in scope. Having said this, the use of primary sources in both chapters three and four is considerable. Chapter Four, in particular, draws upon a great wealth of rarely investigated archive material.



### **0.7.1.2 FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The selections of the samples for the field research considered in Chapter Five posed a difficulty as the populations of both Fanti Methodist ministers with a royal background and of Fanti traditional rulers with a Methodist background were unknown. Consequently, the samples were constituted through a ‘snowball’ technique whereby contact with further members of the required population were made through referrals from already known or discovered members (Bryman 2004: 100-102). A minimum size of four was set for each sample, this being the minimum number that might be deemed sufficient to establish the existence and main characteristics of each population. In the event, both samples exceeded this minimum.

The samples themselves were investigated through the use of guided interviews that followed a common framework of questioning. This method provided sufficient structure to allow comparison but give sufficient flexibility for probing and to follow further leads. (Bryman 2004: 320-329). This flexibility is evidenced by the case studies that flow from the main research project. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions can be found in the Appendices.

### **0.7.2 CITATIONS**

The wide variety of material used in this thesis also raises some issues about citations that require some explanation. In the first and second chapters considerable use is made of Akan proverbs. These are usually given in English translation in italics followed by the source or authority for the proverb in parenthesis. The works of John Wesley are cited extensively in Chapter Three from the digital version produced by Abingdon Press in 2005 which includes both the completed volumes of the critical *Bicentennial Edition* of Wesley’s works edited by Richard P Heitzenrater and the 1831 edition edited by Thomas Jackson. (Wherever possible citations have been taken from the *Bicentennial Edition*.) Consequently, texts by Wesley are referenced ‘Wesley 2005’. Since these items are very numerous they are cited in an alphabetical sequence from ‘2005A’ to ‘2005AS’. In Chapter Four much of the evidence for the formation of the Methodist moral tradition is drawn from unpublished archive material. Since this material is not readily available it is extensively quoted and summarised in footnotes and items are referenced by the District, Synod, Circuit Minutes or Report from which they are drawn in parenthesis. Many of the quotations from District and Circuit Reports in Chapter Four and from interviews in Chapter Five consist of Fanti colloquial English. These quotations are given in an ‘uncorrected’ form to preserve their authenticity

and meaning. Lastly, page references are given in citations where this is appropriate and feasible. Where page references are absent it is because the citation concerns an entire item or that the item cited is such that it does not have page numbers such as an archive document, a web page or an interview.

### **0.7.3 ABBREVIATIONS**

*Heitzenrater: Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* Vols 1-4, 7, 18, 20-24, edited by Richard P Heitzenrater and included in Wesley 2005.

*Jackson: The Works of John Wesley* Vols. 1-16, edited by Thomas Jackson and included in Wesley 2005.

*KJV: King James Version* of the English Bible, also known as the *Authorised Version* originally published in 1611.

*WTJ: Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Publication of the Wesleyan Theological Society, P. O. Box 144, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390.USA (online versions of *WTJ* may be accessed at [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/theojrnl/](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/))

## **CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS AND CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS AND THEIR INTERACTION IN AFRICA**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1.1 ETHICAL UNCERTAINTIES IN AFRICA AND THE WEST**

This is an apposite time to be writing about ethics in Africa as moral traditions on the continent are in a state of flux and challenge, and have been so for some time. The established moral traditions of traditional African culture and religion have been undermined by the impact of colonialism, industrialisation, urbanisation, Christianity, Islam, Western modernity, and globalisation. The communities and their worldviews that were related to established moral traditions have, in some places, been destroyed, and in others are under great pressure. Certainly, in the huge metropolitan centres of West Africa the received moral traditions of the predominantly rural past and their virtues seem to have little appeal and relevance giving rise to a situation of moral rootlessness and ambiguity (Ajayi 1988; Anozoba 1988; Mbon 1991; Penoukou 1987; Tsele 1994:125-128). Those forces that have displaced the received moral traditions are unable to provide any alternative moral guidance. Western liberalism itself has never seemed to be able to develop a moral consensus and even now 'post-modern' critique questions the authenticity of many moral positions. Christian moral theology, in so far as it has followed the fashions of liberal moral philosophy, is now caught in the same dilemma and seems to have nothing to say (MacIntyre 1985:1-5, 51-78; 1988:1-11, 326-348, 389-403). This is indeed a crucial time to be writing about ethics in Africa!

#### **1.1.2 CONSEQUENT EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING ETHICS IN THE WORLD IN GENERAL AND IN AFRICA IN PARTICULAR**

This situation creates certain epistemological and methodological difficulties in discussing or even identifying moral traditions. There exists little consensus in philosophy or theology on what might constitute a moral value, or how such a value might be identified because of the extreme pluralism and relativism that now exists in these disciplines (MacIntyre 1985:1-5; 51-78; Shutte 1994). Matters are further complicated when the techniques of moral philosophy and theology are applied to moral traditions in African societies.<sup>1</sup> In the first place the canons

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<sup>1</sup> The nature of African moral traditions is discussed in section 1.2.7 below. It is my contention that there are commonalities in African moral traditions based upon a shared world view.

of moral understanding that exist in these societies are not recognised, or even known or understood by received Western liberal moral theory because they do not generally fit liberal paradigms (Richardson 1996: 37-47). Secondly, these moral understandings or traditions have themselves been placed in a position of crisis by the intrusion of Western culture (Kasenene 1994:141-142; Tsele 1994:125-128). In the wake of Western misinterpretation and intrusion the morals of African communities have often been *reduced* to mores that reflect only local issues of social structure or culture but not issues of the right and the good. African moral traditions have become the *object* of study by social scientists rather than the *subject* of discussion by moral philosophers and theologians. (Motlhabi 1987: 85ff).<sup>2</sup> In order

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Motlhabi makes the following remarks in this connection:

Few attempts have, so far, been made to look at the place of morality or ethics in traditional African life. This task has become primarily a concern of anthropologists, who, generally, merely glance at morality in the context of their other cultural explorations. Although in the last two decades African philosophers have been working hard to reclaim their traditional wisdom, depending on the anthropologists themselves, most of them also have dealt with questions of morality only in passing. Like the anthropologists, they have done this in the context of general, philosophical investigations or other concerns. They have thus not done justice to the study and illumination of the concept of morality in African tradition.

There are those, however, who have argued that the traditional African does not have a clear concept of morality. They claim that his behaviour is governed and determined completely by so-called tribal custom and the mores of his community with its taboos and sanctions. The impression given is that these customs and mores are followed blindly, without any deliberation or decision. Such an argument fails to realize that while customs and mores may form the basis for morality - as they do for law- they cannot take its place or make it irrelevant. To conform to given social obligations without any personal commitment or decision can have no moral significance whatsoever. For an act to be significant morally, it must involve some individual responsibility: the freedom to say yea or nay. It must be born in mind, however, that social obligations deriving from customs and mores are not directly imposed by society on individuals. This renders response to them distinct from response to legal obligations or certain legalistic moral codes that are directly and explicitly imposed under pain or threat of specifically defined sanctions. Customary and moral obligations are, rather, implicit and response to them is more self-regulated than determined by external factors which are characteristic of heteronomous obligations. The self-regulation implied in such obligations is what accounts for their moral nature.

Where there has been more dispute is on the question whether the traditional African has any concept of ethics as a rational code of conduct governing his/her practice of morality. The dispute seems to arise from a narrow or restricted interpretation of the terms "science" and "philosophy" as associated with ethics. It stems from the question whether the traditional African can philosophize at all or grasp concepts. If the words "science" and "philosophy" are understood in their etymological sense, however, and if Malinowski's seemingly superfluous study of magic, science and religion among so-called savages is anything to go by, it would be ridiculous to hold on to the view that traditional Africans had no basic life-philosophy or even a technical approach of their own to life.

This dispute also follows the belief by some, mainly anthropologists, that traditional African morality was concerned more with overt behaviour rather than character. Thus Hammond-Tooke writing on the Bhaba, claims that their morality "involves the more or less meticulous observation of certain ritual acts, failure to perform which lays one open to the displeasure of the shades. Hence there is seemingly no need for a form of theory, however basic, that mould character into harmony with accepted social norms. These experts seem to overlook the fact that behaviour not based on character and personal decision grounded on principles cannot be moral. If the people described, knowing the full consequences, are able to decide for or against these rituals, then it is

to correct this reductionism the discussion in this chapter draws heavily upon African scholars across the continent who favour a *philosophical* over an *anthropological* approach to African moral traditions and place African traditions of moral argument within the context of broad philosophical or theological discussion.

### **1.1.3 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER**

In this chapter the difficulties of understanding Africa's moral traditions are examined along with the attendant problems for studying the contextualisation of Christian moral traditions within African cultures, especially in West Africa. The chapter begins with a comparison between liberal (universalist) and communitarian approaches to moral philosophy and theology in Africa. It will be proposed that the continuing dominance of liberalism, based on the Western Enlightenment model in ethics, is the chief source of these difficulties and that a communitarian approach, particularly MacIntyre's tradition based model, would furnish a more fruitful approach for understanding ethics in a West African context. Consideration is then given to Alasdair MacIntyre's and Kwame Gyekye's insights into the interaction of traditions and the conclusion is reached that the most viable framework in which Christian moral traditions might be contextualised in African contexts is one in which a synthesis or assimilation takes place between different moral traditions. The chapter ends with a consideration of the methodological implications of this conclusion.

## **1.2. UNDERSTANDING ETHICS IN AFRICA**

### **1.2.1 APPROACHES TO ETHICS IN AFRICA: LIBERALISM AND COMMUNITARIANISM**

Many moral philosophers and theologians in Africa tend to be divided between those who follow the Western liberal tradition that stresses the role and rights of the individual and the universal basis of ethics and, on the other hand, communitarians who place a greater stress on the social nature of the individual and the local and particularistic sources of morality in culture and environment. Many African scholars are drawn to communitarianism because

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not clear why the actual behaviour should be abstracted from the whole moral act considered as by itself constituting the main focus of morality. Does not, for instance, Christian morality also lay emphasis on the performance of certain actions? Can we, because of this, say that it has less consideration for the moulding of character? Morality is a matter of both character and behaviour. The first is generally attained through up-bringing and moral education or "conditioning. The second is its application. (Motlhabi 1987:85-88)

they believe it has a greater synergy with African cultures and traditions. Despite this, liberalism has many African defenders.

## **1.2.2 AFRICAN DEFENDERS OF LIBERALISM**

### **1.2.2.1 C.S. MOMOH**

The West African scholar C. S. Momoh argues that morality and religion are distinct and that religion has often been immoral, especially regarding the image of God it has promoted. Moreover, religion he claims is not necessary for either the sanction nor development of morality but rather, religion has to be drawn back to its moral content and basis. This will mean giving greater attention to the service of man rather than of God. The ‘God’ of morality must be given precedence over the God of ‘religion’. This, he argues, will not undermine religions but will give them a greater moral base (Momoh 1988).<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.2.2 JOSEPH OMOREGBE**

The Nigerian scholar, Joseph Omoregbe argues that morality is based upon the rationality and sociality of human nature rather than religion (which he defines very narrowly as ‘an encounter with a supernatural being’). Because human nature is universally the same, he argues, there is only one universal morality that has only slight variations from place to place. This universal morality is expressed in moral principles that are recognised everywhere as ‘natural laws’. Religion is an expression of culture and so religions differ (but morality is not, so it remains always the same). The ethical traditions of different religions are merely perspectives on the one universal morality and represent different approaches to the same thing. Moreover particular religions are to be judged by morality, and not vice versa.

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<sup>3</sup> Momoh seems to lack a clear understanding of monotheism, especially revealed monotheism. In introducing a distinction between a ‘religious’ and ‘moral’ image of God he is making two difficult claims, neither of which he sustains. First of all he is claiming access to a more complete knowledge of God that is above that of the ‘religions.’ Momoh does not discuss the basis of such knowledge, as to how it is to be distinguished from a ‘religious’ knowledge of God (if any knowledge of God can be considered ‘non-religious’), nor does he critique the revelations of Islam and Christianity and explain why they should abandon their concepts of God in favour of his. Secondly, Momoh seems to be trapped in a problematic metaphysical position that there are at least two absolute realities: ‘the God religion’ and the ‘the God of morality.’ Either Momoh is some kind of polytheist or he does not really understand, and address correctly, the ethical monotheism of Christianity and Islam. The claim of monotheism is that there is only one ultimate reality which contains within itself all absolute criteria of truth and goodness. There is only one God who is both Good (the source of all morality) and Holy (the proper end of all religious devotion). Thus, to Jewish, Christian or Muslim ears Momoh is simply glib and incoherent. To make his case Momoh would have to show how religious believers have failed to interpret the goodness of God correctly in their teaching and practice or simply prove the falsehood of these religions on the basis of ‘morality.’ As it stands it sounds like he is accusing the revealed faiths of idolatry on the basis of some ill defined superior philosophical *gnosis* which he hides from scrutiny.

Omoregbe does not describe how human nature is the basis of morality, nor does he have any account of what human nature is other than it is characterised by rationality. A devotee of ethical universalism, he does not see that moral codes can function ideologically. Omoregbe attributes evil to malice and ignorance (Omoregbe 1988).

### **1.2.2.3 KWASI WIREDU**

The most influential West African defender of liberalism in recent years is the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu. He argues that human morality has a universal basis in human biology, evolutionary survival and development, and basic human interests. Wiredu also maintains that the fundamental moral principle sustained by this basis is a form of Kant's categorical imperative which he defines as 'sympathetic impartiality' (do to others what you would have them do to you) (Wiredu 1996:34-41). Morality, he argues is not to be confused with local *custom* that determines things like the forms of marriage, particular days of rest, and particular religious and social customs. Rather, morality is expressed in *rules* that express 'moral universals' grounded upon the promotion of human interests (Wiredu 1996:61-79).<sup>4</sup>

## **1.2.3 CRITICISM OF THE UNIVERSALIST PARADIGM**

### **1.2.3.1 THE DOMINANCE OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM**

Critics of liberalism have argued that systems of morality in Africa are more often misunderstood than understood by liberalism largely because they are not recognised as moral traditions. The reason for this, they argue, is the dominance of the liberal universalist paradigm of ethics over much of the discussion concerning morality on the continent in both philosophy and theology (Richardson 1996:37-47). The liberal paradigm generally consists of what Alasdair MacIntyre described as the 'Enlightenment Project.' This was the attempt to find a basis for morality that would be justified by reason alone and to which every free individual would give their assent. This paradigm had the following characteristics: firstly, Enlightenment thinkers rejected tradition and authority as a basis for morality as they claimed

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<sup>4</sup> Wiredu seems to be caught in some confusion here himself as to maintain this distinction he will have to show how rules are framed differently from customs. Customs, he accepts may be expressions of rules, adapted to particular beliefs and circumstances. Yet, for 'rules' to apply to a situation they would also need to be defined in terms of local circumstances and beliefs, in which case it is difficult to see how rules and customs would differ. Is Wiredu really attempting to make a distinction between *rules* and *principles*? If this is the case, his attempt to separate *customs* from morality fails as principles are general concepts that always need particular expression in a situationally specific rule which would be indistinguishable from a 'custom' as Wiredu has defined this.

that these were characterised by superstition and self-interest; secondly, any moral principle had to be self evident so that it would command the consent of any rational individual as being a necessary duty; thirdly, any moral idea or principle would have to be universally valid, a rationally perceived duty for all; fourthly, no behaviour could be considered to be moral unless it was based upon a rational decision by an autonomous individual. Thus the liberal paradigm has four criteria for what might constitute morality: rationality, necessity, universality, and autonomy (MacIntyre 1985:36-61; Richardson 1996:37-47).

### **1.2.3.2 THE INVISIBILITY OF AFRICAN MORAL PARADIGMS**

When Western philosophers, and more often theologians, searched for systems of morality in Africa and in other non-western contexts they subsequently failed to find them. African moralities are based upon the tradition of a community and the authority of its leaders who continued to develop the tradition. As a result those holding an Enlightenment perspective did not consider these moral traditions rational. Most moral traditions in Africa, while affirming the dignity of the outsider, were confined to particular, often small, communities and reflected their history and the circumstances of their lives, thus, they were neither necessary nor universal. African moral traditions were also intensely communal - the community gave individual persons their identity, status, and security, and individuals in turn had various responsibilities that they owed to their communities. Individuals, consequently, were not regarded as autonomous, having the right to select from their community's values and customs for themselves. These things could be changed but only as a result of collective discussion and decision (Kasenene 1994:140-143; Tsele 1994:133-134). Moral systems in African culture were traditional, contingent, local, and communal and so were not recognised as being truly moral. They were dismissed as mere custom or even superstition (Lovin and Reynolds 1993: 269-271,<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre 1990: 170-195<sup>6</sup>). These critics claim that the ethical

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<sup>5</sup> Lovin and Reynolds comment that 'Modern ethics,' especially those of the Eighteenth century sought to base ethics on reason and utility that in principle could be universalised. With Hume 'Modern Ethics' dismissed the ethics of traditional cultures which did not share these characteristics, as primitive and based upon fear. In the 19th century there was a reaction to this view based upon better knowledge, however this tended to romanticise the morals of 'simpler societies. Many contemporary theorists now stress the sense that the ethics of indigenous peoples make in their own contexts but question their contribution to moral philosophy that seeks universal principles. (Lovin and Reynolds 1993: 269-271.)

<sup>6</sup> MacIntyre contends that 'Encyclopaedists' (eighteenth century liberals) argued that progress in morality could only be measured by the degree to which morality is independent of religion and culture and open to be understood and agreed upon by all 'plain persons' no matter what their background and culture. The Encyclopaedists saw taboo, in which behavioural prohibitions are refined in relations to religious and social



value and significance of African moral traditions were generally not recognised or affirmed and as a consequence Western philosophers and theologians generally disparaged them and left them as cultural oddities that should only concern the anthropologist. The myth thus arose that Africans had no real morality (Parrinder 1974:167).<sup>7</sup>

Richardson, in particular, stresses the contrast between African communal and Western liberal moral traditions. The moral traditions of Africa, he argues define meaning, authority, and individual identity in terms of a particular community and its traditions. In fact the ethics of a particular African community may not be separated from its life and rituals. In contrast the Western tradition is defined by the 'Enlightenment Project' in Ethics as an ethics that was universally valid, centred upon the autonomous individual, was purposeful and effective. No universally valid criteria were ever found and all 'extraneous' sources of moral authority such as history and religion were pushed aside as being too particular. The 'autonomy' of the individual became sacrosanct and emphasis was placed upon the individual's free decision to choose, act, and 'do what was right'. There was no acknowledgement that the individual was located in and formed by a community. All emphasis was placed on the individual doing what was 'right' rather than doing what is good in terms of the network of his/her relationships. The purpose of moral behaviour was also defined in terms of utilitarianism: the greatest happiness, but no satisfactory definition of happiness could be found. "Effectiveness" became an end in itself aside from what any action was effective *for*. Clearly there could be no common ground between African and liberal ethics defined by the Enlightenment. In so far as the Enlightenment has largely set the parameters for mainstream Christian ethics, both within and outside Africa, Christian ethics, Richardson claims, has lost sight of its identity and cannot enter any meaningful engagement with African ethics (Richardson 1996:37-47).

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goods and status as the opposite to rational morality and its decline as a sign of moral progress. (MacIntyre 1990:170-195)

<sup>7</sup>

Parrinder comments:

The ethical teachings of African peoples are difficult to estimate, for many reasons from neglect in scholarly studies to misrepresentation on the popular level. The latter can be illustrated by many radio and television programmes on which white settlers talk of their 'boys' as slow if not lazy, and shifty if not immoral, in the same air of moral superiority with which Victorian employers spoke of their servants below stairs as idle, feckless, spoilt by education and incapable of using the vote. Even in Academic circles it is still common in France to write of 'savages' or 'pre-logical mentality', while in Britain and America there are those who maintain that some coloured people do not perform well in 'intelligence' tests devised by some whites. (Parrinder 1974:167)

In sum, the ethics of the Enlightenment is characterised by universalism, ahistoricism, individualism, an understanding of society as a rational contract, a punctiliar understanding of human experience, effectiveness as a moral factor, actions above persons, the priority of right over good, and a floating free from religious bases into secularism. It goes without saying that such an ethic is profoundly at odds with the ethics of Africa. Christian ethics which has been dominated and shaped by the Enlightenment has only two ways to go in Africa, both of them undesirable. Either it must continue in irresolvable incompatibility with African ethics knowing that there can never be reconciliation, or it must try to dominate and colonise African ethics in the name of “progress” or some similar slogan. The former scenario must lead to frustration and conflict. The latter implies the aim of leading Africa away from its African identity. Either approach, of course, could also result in the weakening of Christianity’s presence, and ultimately in its demise in Africa. (Richardson 1996:47)

### 1.2.3.3 THE IMPOSITION OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM

As Western missionaries and colonial authorities were largely unperceiving of African moral traditions, they proceeded to impose the Western paradigm. Missionaries did this in their religious instruction of new converts and later in the schools they established.<sup>8</sup> Colonial administrators enforced the new paradigm in the bureaucracies they established and in the laws they enforced. In this way the universalist paradigm became the prevailing orthodoxy in both church and society: works of moral theology produced in Africa generally reflected the same authority and agenda as those produced in Europe or America, and academics in the secular universities would also usually argue that no principle could be considered a moral principle unless it had universal validity and was independent of any religious or cultural tradition (Richardson 1996:37 ff;<sup>9</sup> Tsele:1994: 125-132).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Wiredu argues that the opposite of this process took place and that missionaries in particular promoted religious taboos as universal moral values and that Akan ethics were more universally oriented being humanistic. (Wiredu 1996:61-79) This claim is contentious as it would seem to entail a rewriting of the history of moral tradition in both Europe and Africa.

<sup>9</sup> Richardson observes that Africans face a dilemma over whether to try to salvage the remnants of traditional African morals or to simply embrace the moral tradition of the West. This dilemma is particularly acute for Christians as missionary Christianity waged a ‘Christ against culture’ war against traditional morality on the level of ethics. [However, its own stance to the Western tradition was a “Christ of Culture.”] Consequently contemporary African theology has had great difficulty in developing an adequate ethic. (Richardson 1996:37)

<sup>10</sup> Ethics in South Africa, Tsele argues, is in crisis. Black South Africans cannot look to the ethics of white theology and society because they are oppressive. Moreover, the traditional institutions of morality are breaking down under the impact of the white western tradition. Rather, Tsele insists black South Africans must develop their own ethical system in the light of their experience and struggle. Tsele, describes three levels of meaning in the word ‘black’: the literal, the derogatory, and the liberative. White ethics, claims Tsele has always viewed ‘black’ in the second sense as evil, barbarous, heathen, and pagan - uncivilised and unchristian.

## **1.2.4 THE CRISIS OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW APPROACH TO ETHICS**

### **1.2.4.1 THE FAILURE OF THE ‘ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT’**

The liberal paradigm of ethics that was imposed upon African culture is now in a general state of collapse. A moral consensus conforming to the Enlightenment criteria does not seem to have been formed and as a result ethics itself is now regarded as irrational by significant movements within Western modernity. Ethics are even seen by some philosophers in the West as merely matters of emotional attachment and personal taste. On the other hand all moral claims have been regarded with suspicion by post-modernist critics, following Nietzsche, as claims to power. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that this situation came about because in rejecting tradition as a basis for morality, modernity also rejected the basis for all moral discourse. Moral discourse in modernity has been parasitic on earlier traditions and so when moral debate has taken place it has been upon fragments of earlier moral traditions. These fragments have little meaning or justification outside of their original context and so they inevitably appear unconvincing to those who do not already have a preference for them. If there is to be any meaningful moral understanding or debate anywhere in the world, then there needs to be, MacIntyre asserts, a return to a tradition based paradigm. (MacIntyre 1985:1-22, 109-120; 1988: 326-348; 1990: 32-57).

### **1.2.4.2 MACINTYRE’S TRADITION BASED APPROACH**

MacIntyre takes his inspiration from Aristotle who attempted to give a rational articulation to the moral tradition of his community in terms of the virtues it prized.<sup>11</sup> MacIntyre builds on Aristotle and argues that at the heart of a community’s moral tradition is an understanding of

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‘Civilisation’ and ‘Christianity’ are things that white ethics have always associated with whiteness. The characteristics of white ethics is that they are absolutist, individualistic, and favour the status quo, dissolving all injustices and conflicts into matters of personal relationship and perspective. Blacks must base their ethics on the third meaning of ‘black,’ of an oppressed people who struggle for freedom and full humanity. However, Tsele cautions against the dismissal of all western ethical traditions as some were liberative within their own context. (Tsele 1994:125-128)

<sup>11</sup> For Aristotle these virtues were the ‘balanced’ and satisfying intellectual virtues of practical and abstract wisdom and the moral virtues of courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, and pride. (Aristotle 1999: 20-21; 43-65)

the highest good or purpose of human life (*telos*)<sup>12</sup> defined by the historical experience and practical reason of the community.<sup>13</sup> This *telos* is supported by a number of specific *virtues* that are sustained, nurtured, and cultivated by distinct *practices* or disciplines within the community. These moral traditions are not frozen or static as communities develop their understandings of their *telos*, and the virtues and practices that relate to it through their history. Practices and virtues in particular continually change as they are passed on from one generation to the next, from master to apprentice. In the contemporary West few communities remain that could sustain the moral life in the manner that MacIntyre describes. The communal structures that remain are the professional associations which require particular practices and virtues of their members as part of the standards of excellence they seek to establish for their profession, although there are the beleaguered churches, and the ethnic minorities whose communities, for the moment, are more cohesive. However, Western society as a whole has lost much of its sense of moral community (Kallenberg 1997A: 20-28; MacIntyre 1985: 181-225, 255-263).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Telos* is used here in an ethical rather than theological sense as this chapter, and indeed this study as a whole, focuses upon moral philosophy and theology rather than systematic, fundamental, or metaphysical theology. 'Telos' in the latter disciplines focuses on the fundamental or ultimate end of existence understood in terms of 'depth' or transcendence. It is my understanding that in ethical disciplines such as moral philosophy or theology the *telos* concerns the supreme good or end of human behaviour and community. Clearly, there may well be an overlap with a theological *telos*, especially where the ethical *telos* is conceived in transcendent and theocentric terms. However, this may just as easily be conceived in mundane and humanistic terms. The major difference between the two usages is, I believe, to be found in their focus. In ethics the *telos* has to do with the supreme good of *human* life and action whereas in theology it concerns the ultimate purpose of reality. Since this work is concerned with the formation and interaction of moral traditions the ethical sense is stressed here and this is reflected in both the sources that have been selected and the discussion based upon them.

<sup>13</sup> For Aristotle this lay in the philosopher's life of the contemplation of theoretical reason, although for his community it lay in the practical service of the state as soldier and statesman (Aristotle 1999: 172-182).

<sup>14</sup> In *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre (1999) makes a departure from his earlier work in seeking a basis for moral discourse in the biological nature of human beings rather than in a 'tradition constituted enquiry.' He begins by seeking to establish, through a comparison with other species of intelligent animals, the particular circumstances of human life and the conditions required for human beings to flourish. Human beings, he notes, are defined by their *dependency* upon others in their long childhood, their vulnerability to illness and disability, especially in old age, and in their inability to achieve many of their needs and desires on their own. Secondly, MacIntyre argues, human beings are defined by their *rationality* which is distinguished by their advanced use of language and particularly on their ability to reflect on their own action and existence in a detached manner. Human beings reach maturity when they become independent reasoners. In order to flourish as dependent rational animals human beings need a community of nurture, care, and argument. Human beings require nurture and education in their childhood, they need ordinary care and support throughout their lives, but also specialised support in times of disability produced by sickness and age, and, as rational beings, they need to be part of a deliberative community that will develop their knowledge and insight. MacIntyre identifies various *practices* such as parenting, education, nursing and practical reason that are necessary to create such a community in which human beings can flourish. These in turn require certain *virtues* such as parental love, patience, fidelity, honesty and, above all 'just generosity' (apparently his version of the Golden Mean), if the human is to achieve the good of human flourishing. Individual humans are truthful and generous because these virtues are necessary to sustain the kind of community that their own good, as dependent rational animals, requires. Rationality, like dependency, requires community as reason only develops in dialogue with others. For MacIntyre this dialogue

#### 1.2.4.3 THE APPLICABILITY OF MACINTYRE'S MODEL TO AFRICA

If MacIntyre's model can bring some coherence to the discussion of ethics in the West could it do so in Africa? Is this even a legitimate question as the danger is that it would simply be another case of imposing yet another Western model upon African culture? However, if MacIntyre's model could be regarded as, and function as, a *cross-cultural* model of ethics<sup>15</sup> with a *heuristic* role or function its use might well be appropriate in an African setting. This would be a validation of MacIntyre's approach. Moreover, received African moral traditions fulfil all of MacIntyre's criteria: their moral systems are formed in distinct communities that, as a result of their histories are focused on particular goals whose related virtues are sustained by particular practices, in work, agriculture, family life, hospitality, and communal leadership

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has two levels: the first is that of practical reason in which the community considers how it may achieve the common good and within that the good of particular individuals. The second level of rational dialogue is that in which the value and justification of the perceived good of the individual and community are critically evaluated. Reason is part of the common good in that it forces the community to review its practices and goals in the light of human flourishing.

Does this mean that MacIntyre has abandoned his emphasis, in *After Virtue*, on moral discourse defined and sustained by particular culturally contingent traditions in favour of a universal ethic based upon human biology? However, there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two approaches. To begin with MacIntyre remains a teleological thinker. The human good is still defined empirically and contingently in the circumstances of human existence rather than from above in terms of a self-evident moral law or deduction. The human good is only discovered through the processes of practical reasoning that occur in the life of human communities and through the comparative study of such communities. It is as if MacIntyre is setting the scene for the development of moral traditions by examining the existential conditions that lead to practical reasoning and the rise of moral traditions within human communities in the first place. (Small communities and their moral discourse remain the primary focus of ethical deliberation and the performance of the virtues for MacIntyre.) Secondly, while MacIntyre's thought in *Dependent Rational Animals* might take a different direction from his earlier works it is a new direction *within* the *tradition* of Aristotelean-Thomistic moral discourse that he commenced with *After Virtue*. MacIntyre has not become a Kantian or utilitarian – his thought is a development of his adopted tradition as he continues to develop Aristotle's and Aquinas' insight and retains the thought of these figures as his points of reference. (Indeed, the 'biological' emphasis of this book is a re-evaluation of an Aristotelean insight previously rejected.) If anything, MacIntyre's latest work tends to confirm the emphasis he placed on the importance of tradition in moral discourse and the process of his argument in this work is a practical demonstration of his emphasis on tradition.

This being the case nothing that MacIntyre presents in *Dependent Rational Animals* undermines or challenges the approach taken in this study. Rather it is the kind of comparative study of the practical reasoning of small communities that he believes to be necessary for gaining a broader view of the human good (MacIntyre 1999:143). (In fact the Akan communities that are studied in this dissertation with their localised and participatory political structures and *Palaver* traditions of practical reason have a close correspondence to MacIntyre's description of the institutional structuring of the ideal moral and political community (MacIntyre 1999: 129-146).)

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Lovin and Reynolds favour a theory of 'ethical naturalism' which seeks to understand choices and patterns of behaviour in communities in relation to the conditions created by their physical environment. This does not directly address the 'transcendental' conditions of all human existence that is the concern of moral philosophy; it does put contingent issues, the environment, and relations with animal on an agenda usually focused only on humans. In concentrating upon the community's response to its *contingent* circumstances this approach is fairly close to MacIntyre's. (Lovin and Reynolds 1993: 272-277 c.f. Bird 1993.)

(Alabe 1988: 104-132; Idowu 1994: 154-166; Ilogu 1977: 17-32; Paris 1995).<sup>16</sup> It would seem, in the light of these considerations that it would be worthwhile using MacIntyre's model on a tentative basis to see if it leads to a better understanding of African moral traditions.

### **1.2.5 AFRICAN ADVOCATES OF COMMUNITARIANISM**

In fact a number of African oriented scholars have applied MacIntyre's communitarian approach, or something akin to it, to morality in Africa, among them Richardson, Paris, Gyekye, and Bujo.

#### **1.2.5.1 NEVILLE RICHARDSON**

The South African scholar Neville Richardson argues that MacIntyre's model is able to comprehend African moral traditions which would not even feature in the liberal paradigm. African societies are very close in their structures, world-views, and social relationships to those of Aristotle's *polis* whose analysis of the moral life is so important for MacIntyre. Richardson argues that Hauerwas' ethics, which is closely related to MacIntyre's approach, has a number of close parallels to African traditional morality. Richardson believes that Hauerwas' approach to Christian ethics would provide a better model for developing Christian ethics in an African context than those that stress universality and moral autonomy. The community is central to Hauerwas' ethic as it is to traditional African moralities. The Church, he argues is a community formed by the narrative of God's saving work in Jesus which then produces its own ethics on the basis of this formation (Hauerwas 1983: 91-95). Richardson insists that Hauerwas' ethics have strong parallels to the ethics of African communities both in their structure and values. Hauerwas would stress that such parallels are accidental and superficial as the ethics of the Christian community are not 'human' ethics as such but the ethics of a community formed by the story of Jesus. (Hauerwas 1983: 55-59) Because Hauerwas' ethics are related to the community formed narratives of Christian identity they have a Christian base. In fact the community may not be separated from its ethics. Thus the Church does not have a social ethic, it *is* a social ethic. The best way to learn and discover Christian ethics, then, is not in a book or document but in the life of an

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<sup>16</sup> A number of African scholars identify African moral traditions as being teleological or virtue based (Alabe 1988; Ilogu 1977: 17-32), while others give lists of virtues and quite detailed studies of the narratives and practices that sustain them (Anyanwu 1986:101-110; Healey and Sybertz 1996:62-376; Idowu 1994: 154-166).

actual church (Hauerwas 1983: 96-115). Hauerwas also has a strong sense of the boundaries of the Christian community. It is the community of the disciples of Jesus; that is the community of all who choose to be *formed* by His story. This gives Christian ethics a highly contextual character (Hauerwas 1981: 129-152). Like African communities, the Christian community is particular. This rules out any individualism because it is the community, through its story telling, nurture and rituals, which forms the individual. The Christian cannot live or exist without the Church. For Christians, as for Africans, the phrase “I am because we are,” holds true in these areas of Christian identity, particularity and community (Richardson 1997: 378-381).

It will be apparent that Richardson’s approach to ethics is very close to that followed in this in his commitment to a narrative virtue ethic. However, for Richardson this forms the proper starting point for reflection and even prescription by moral theologians in Africa, whereas here this same approach is used as a heuristic tool for analysing moral traditions and their interactions in Africa.

#### **1.2.5.2 PETER PARIS**

The African American scholar Peter Paris goes even further than this by interpreting African and African American ethics as *one* moral tradition entirely in terms of MacIntyre’s model. Thus, he identifies its *telos* as the preservation of the human and cosmic community (Paris 1995:130-136) defined through the narrative of suffering and struggle of African peoples (Paris 1995:24-25; 44-49). Paris identifies the virtues connected to this *telos* as respect, tolerance, beneficence, forbearance, practical wisdom, improvisation, forgiveness, justice, justice, and hospitality which are nurtured and sustained by the practices of worship and religious ritual, community life, family life, the individual’s life in community, and in leadership (Paris 1995: 26-154). These virtues are exemplified by leaders such as King and Mandela who become people who are revered and remembered beyond their death as ancestors (Paris 1995: 24, 51-61,130-136). In various end notes Paris discusses his relationship to other virtue ethicists. He notes that his approach has some similarities to Aristotle’s ethics, especially in the *Politics*. However, he distances himself from Hauerwas because of his lack of political engagement. He makes a similar criticism of MacIntyre:

... further, although I have much admiration of Alasdair MacIntyre’s major work ...I am convinced that his pessimism about the incommensurability of virtue ethics in a pluralistic society is contradicted by the transforming actions of leaders like President Nelson Mandela and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., both

of whom have been exemplars of virtue ethics as well as effective negotiators for social change in their respective pluralistic societies. (Paris 1995: n. 6 p.182.)

Paris distinguishes between Platonist, Thomist, and Aristotelian traditions of virtue ethics and states that his is more closely related to Aristotle because of his claim that in African ethics ‘the claim and depth of community can only be determined politically.’ Paris believes he finds similarities between African and Aristotelian ethics and he denies imposing an Aristotelian conceptual scheme on African ethics. In any case, he argues, the content of African virtue ethics is culturally specific. Thus this is not a further case of Western epistemological imperialism (Paris 1995: n. 7 and 8 pp. 182-183).

Paris’ approach, like that of Richardson, is also close to that used in this work as he makes great use of MacIntyre’s understanding of a moral tradition and its goals and practices. The difference between the programme of this work and that of Paris is one of scale and focus. Paris has sought to paint on a large canvas and encompass the whole African tradition in ethics both on and off the continent. This author’s concern is with particular African traditions in a local context. Further, while Paris acknowledges the contribution of Christian ethics to the development of the African moral tradition he does not consider how and why Christian ethics influenced African morality. These two issues will be considered in Chapter Four by studying the interaction of Christian and indigenous moral traditions within a specific African context.

### **1.2.5.3 KWAME GYEKYE**

The approach of the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye is similar to that of MacIntyre in that he sees ethics, particularly ethics in Africa as a “tradition constituted enquiry.” In contrast to MacIntyre, though, he advocates a “moderate communitarianism” on the basis that the individual cannot receive their rights or develop their potential as individuals without a social structure (Gyekye 1997:35-36). While Gyekye is strongly committed to a universal conception of the *telos* or common good based on human needs (Gyekye 1997:41-47)<sup>17</sup> he

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<sup>17</sup> In a later work Gyekye (Gyekye 2004) makes a strong defence of a universally oriented ethic against what he describes as ‘ethnocentrism.’ Gyekye defines ethnocentrism as the absolutising of one’s own culture so that it is regarded as totally superior to all other cultures which are then given no respect or serious attention. The ethnocentric person refuses to look over the cultural wall. This exclusivism gives rise to all kind of prejudice, violence and injustice. Some moral philosophers have argued that the proper response to ethnocentrism is cultural relativism in which all cultures are seen as equal. Gyekye also rejects this position as it allows for no evaluation or criticism of a culture from outside and allows every particular culture to be a law to



takes a particularist approach to African traditions which he discusses and evaluates in terms of their own moral coherence. This is evidenced by his “moderate communitarianism” which is deeply informed by his African and Akan tradition and the resources he draws from it in the form of examples and proverbs.

Gyekye notes that many post-colonial political leaders such as Senghor, Nkrumah, and Nyerere developed “African socialism” basing it upon traditional African communalism. Gyekye agrees with their insight that African societies stress the priority of the community and he defends this position arguing that individuals have no choice about being born into a

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itself, even claiming that it is incommensurable with any other culture, all under the guise of ‘cultural integrity.’ This to, Gyekye, is merely a reinforcement of ethnocentrism.

Gyekye regards all cultures as projects whose purpose is to secure human wellbeing, broadly understood. As all cultures share a common goal they will develop similarities and commonalities as they seek their goal. Part of these commonalities will include a shared pool of values and imperatives which promote human good. Gyekye identifies this pool of shared values as universal values because of their commonality and validity are accepted across all cultural boundaries. He distinguishes these from cultural values which only have validity within a particular culture. If a culture is truly a *human* culture it cannot be incommensurable with other cultures. In fact one of the major characteristics of human cultures, Gyekye insists are their interaction and borrowing from other cultures. This applies especially to ideas, institutions, items and practices that will enhance human wellbeing, for the good of all cultures. In the light of this, criticism of the negative practices of other cultures in the light of common human values, where these arise from a concern for universal human wellbeing in all cultures, is legitimate and important. Such criticism has brought about improvements in the human condition in many situations. Of even greater importance, though is the opportunity cultural interaction gives to evaluate one’s own culture. Exposure to other cultures gives points of comparison whereby one may identify the strengths and deficiencies of one’s own culture and perhaps borrow from other cultures to make good the deficiencies. Such cultural openness, rather than cultural relativism, Gyekye insists is the best antidote to ethnocentrism.

While Gyekye promotes a universal humanistic ethic that transcends all cultural communities it is important to stress that this ethic is only developed and articulated in particular communities as they develop their culture. The values that promote human wellbeing are only discovered through particular cultural enterprises as they strive for the human good. Gyekye’s ethics remain teleological as the values that promote human good are only established as that good is sought by a culture. Universal human values are only found in particular human experiences and their universal validity only established through cultural interaction. Gyekye’s universalism, then does not begin with a deontological intuition or logic from ‘above’ but by convergence from ‘below.’ Thus, while ‘universal human values’ transcend any particular culture the learning of them, and the conversation about them must begin in particular cultures. This is reflected in Gyekye’s own descriptions of ‘universal human values’ which are heavily influenced and defined by his Akan cultural background, especially when he stresses human solidarity and compassion in the face of egoistic individualism (Gyekye 2004:95-100).

Gyekye is really attempting to erect a universal ethic on a particularistic basis which means that the universal and particular exist in a tension within his work. On the one side he is wary of any ethic that is too particularistic in its emphasis as this is a challenge to his vision of a universal human ethic. On the other hand, as Gyekye’s ethic is teleological in character it has to be rooted in the actual experience and practice of *particular* human communities, in his case the Akan of West Africa. This forces him into a contradictory position where he is forced both to affirm and deny the particularity of human morality.

Given that moral argument must still be rooted in particular communities Gyekye’s universalism does not challenge the approach taken in this study. Indeed, a crucial aspect of the ethnocentrism against which Gyekye protests was the refusal on the part of European scholars and thinkers to acknowledge the moral traditions of Africa and the correctives and support that they might supply to traditions in crisis in the West. Insofar as this work demonstrates the interaction and mutual enrichment of moral traditions from diverse cultures it actually contributes to Gyekye’s search for universal human values as it is only through the type of research in inter-cultural ethics embodied in this study that the common human values that are of such great concern to Professor Gyekye will be identified.

society, *“Every human being who comes from heaven is born into a town (or human society).”* Moreover, it is the community that forms and develops the human being and gives her the opportunity to develop her talents. *“One tree by itself does not make a forest.” “A person is not self-sufficient like a palm nut tree.”* On the other hand, Gyekye argues that this does not mean that the individual is completely subordinate to the community. He notes that Senghor argues that the community is *relatively* more important than the individual - the individual is not completely buried. Gyekye finds this same emphasis in Akan thought: *“From a distance the clan looks like clumps of trees but a closer view shows that the trees are separate”.* *“Life is as you make it yourself.” “It is by individual effort that we can struggle for our heads.” “Life is war.” “The person who helps you carry your load does not develop a hump.” “The lizard does not eat pepper for the frog to sweat.”* Thus while the individual is dependent on the community it is the individual’s effort that is necessary to advance the community and each individual bears responsibility for her own progress in life. Gyekye presents this as a moderate communalism in which the relative roles of both the community and the individual are appropriately stressed. He contrasts this with radical individualism of Western liberalism that sees society merely as an aggregate of individuals and radical communalism that allows the individual no identity separate from the community. He regards both as false as neither individual nor community can exist without the other and it is a question of the *relative* stress put on either (Gyekye 1997:36-41).

While community has priority over individuality Gyekye warns against giving the social nature of the individual so great a stress that the other attributes of personhood are submerged. He feels that Mbiti, Menkiti and the advocates of the ideology of African Socialism have all made this error (Gyekye 1997:47-48). Gyekye argues that there are two aspects of personhood that are not defined by the communal structure: Firstly, what he defines as the “mental feature” of a person; that is rationality, creative imagination, and the ability to conceive new ideas and possibilities. Secondly, persons are defined by autonomy - the ability to choose between good and evil and to make free choices between different options. Gyekye reinforces his point by arguing that any community is actually dependent on these attributes in individuals for its own welfare and development otherwise moral reform and social development would never take place as nothing would ever be questioned or new possibilities envisioned and introduced. Gyekye regards the fact that change does take place in societies and societies do develop as evidence that individuals are communally unconditioned in these

areas. In fact he notes that the most creative individuals have emerged from the *communal* societies of ancient Greece and mediaeval Europe (Gyekye 1997:52-61).

Gyekye's emphasis on the community here belies his commitment to a form of universally valid ethics. His concept of the moral community and the place of the individual within it is strongly rooted in African moral traditions. He draws upon his native Akan tradition, of which he is an outstanding interpreter, and he enters a debate with other African thinkers on the basis of that tradition. Gyekye's example serves as a further indication and proof of the contention made in these pages that moral discourse is rooted in *moral traditions*. This is set in even greater relief by Gyekye's perceptive and persuasive critique of the individualism of the Western Enlightenment *tradition*.

Secondly, Gyekye's discourse is also evidence, despite, again, his commitment to a universal ethic, that when African moral thought is discussed a communal orientation is necessary if such thought is to be comprehensible.

While Gyekye makes extensive and penetrating studies of the communal basis of ethics, the parameters and issues of Akan moral discourse, and the development and interaction of traditions, strangely, he does not integrate these areas of study. Gyekye gives little consideration to the manner in which Western moral traditions, particularly Christian traditions, may have interacted with the Akan moral tradition nor does he appear to have any interest in identifying the contributions that the Akan tradition might make to the wider international philosophical and theological discourse on human morality<sup>18</sup>. It is this serious area of neglect that is the primary focus of this work. The excellent insights and tools that Gyekye provides will be integrated and used to trace the interaction and synthesis of traditions. It is likely that it is only out of such a process that the unique contributions of the Akan moral tradition to universal human moral discourse can be identified.

#### **1.2.5.4 BENEZET BUJO AND THE CONTEXT OF VIRTUE**

A fourth African moral thinker who builds on MacIntyre's tradition oriented concept of ethics is the Congolese Roman Catholic theologian Benezet Bujo. Bujo draws upon MacIntyre's understanding in *After Virtue* of the influence of a community's stories or narratives in forming the virtues valued by the community. He notes that in an African context such

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<sup>18</sup> This failure may be a further manifestation of the tension that exists between the universal and particular in Gyekye's thought. The interaction and synthesis of particular moral traditions might well be perceived as a relativistic threat to the universality of ethics, and any recognition of this process therefore evaded.

stories have two aspects: firstly, there are the narrative traditions themselves, and secondly, the contexts in which these stories are made real and applied to the lives of individuals in the community by popular songs, naming ceremonies (where names are connected to the narratives of past ancestors), rites of initiation and other ceremonies. However, Bujo feels that Western communitarianism does not really move beyond the first level and can learn from the contextual narratives of African ethics (Bujo 2001: 27-29).

Bujo further argues, again following MacIntyre, that virtues are understood differently in different cultural contexts. In western ethics lying is seen as a more serious offence than theft, whereas the reverse is true in an African context. In African cultures truth is defined within the context of the community and must be handled carefully. Theft is seen as a fundamental violation of the relationships involved in community which is why adultery is seen as theft. The consequence of this, suggests Bujo is that there is no moral 'Esperanto' and Christian morality needs to be contextualised:

These remarks about truth and falsehood are meant only for clarification. One could present similar reflections on all the virtues, with the same result: virtues cannot be prescribed *ab extra*, but depend concretely on a specific context. It is precisely here that the proclamation of Christian morality must submit to inculturation. The most sensitive area for Christianity is in fact that of ethical problems, which must find corresponding solutions with a plurality of cultures; and this is not a question for the non-European world alone, since voices urging a new understanding of virtue can be heard in the West itself. (Bujo 2001: 31)

Unfortunately, the orientation of Bujo's Catholic moral tradition to natural law makes it difficult to rise to this challenge. Bujo denies that his emphasis leads to ethnocentrism in African ethics as African ethics engages in dialogue with itself and other traditions out of which new consensus may be formed (Bujo 2001: 29-33).

Bujo's insight into the implication of MacIntyre's approach for understanding the contextual nature of virtue confirms the approach taken in the following chapters which seek to understand the pattern of virtue formed in the context of Fanti and Methodist communities and in the later interaction of these communities. Bujo himself in his works (Bujo 1992 and 2001) applies this insight to African traditions at large (among them the Akan). The path taken by this work is very similar to that of Bujo with the difference that the interaction of the Methodist (rather than the Catholic) moral tradition with one particular African tradition, that of the Akan (or more specifically, the Fanti) is considered in contrast to Bujo's broader

canvas. A further difference is that this author's work is more empirically oriented than that of Bujo.

### **1.2.6 THE COMMUNITARIAN ORIENTATION OF AFRICAN MORAL TRADITIONS**

From the forgoing comparison and discussion a number of things become clear. Firstly, that the liberal paradigm of ethics fails to comprehend African moral traditions. Secondly, that African moral traditions have a communal orientation and thus are better described by communitarian interpretations of ethics. Thirdly, that African moral traditions are deeply rooted in *local* communities and only approaches like MacIntyre's that recognise the extended moral arguments represented in a community's narratives and traditions will be able to give an adequate account of these tradition based arguments.

### **1.2.7 THE NATURE OF AFRICAN ETHICS: FULLNESS OF LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY OF BEING**

#### **1.2.7.1 VITALITY AND COMMUNITY: THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN MORAL TRADITIONS**

In MacIntyre's model moral traditions are focused around a particular *telos*, purpose or good. There seems to be a *telos* that is common to most African cultures and these are the well-known emphases of *vitality* and *community* (Kasenene 1994: 140-142; Mbon 1991: Motlhabi 1987: 85-100; Parrinder 1974: 167-169). In African cultures, by and large, life is at the root of everything and inheres everything as a dynamic energy. This energy has its source in the creating god and fills everything bringing ever-greater abundance and power. The continual maximisation of life is seen as the sign that the cosmic order is in balance and as the greatest good to which all things should work, especially human behaviour.

The working of this creative power, however, is understood in a relational or communal context. It is not the maximisation of life for any individual or isolated group that is the good, but for the whole cosmic order. There exists a community of vitality that begins with the high god and flows down through the gods and spirits to the human community and the rest of the natural world. If life is to be maximised for the cosmos the balance of the relationships of the beings involved in the community of vitality must be preserved and it is here that the human community has a crucial role to play. Human community seems to be the linchpin of the cosmos since human beings can either maintain or destroy the harmony of the cosmos, and

the growth or decline of life, by their actions. The vitality of the spiritual world is enhanced by the proper worship of the gods which includes the careful use of those things sacred to them such as the earth, water, fish, particular animals, and so forth. In this area piety and reverence become important virtues which are supported by practices of worship and the observance of ritual and taboo. The vitality that then prevails in the spiritual community overflows into the human community. Similar virtues apply in the human community. Those who are older and senior in the community are to be approached in accord with their status and authority. Thus respect and obedience become crucial virtues sustained by a practice of service. Those who are weaker and junior to one's self are to be the object of one's care and protection. Consequently, responsibility becomes a crucial virtue sustained by practices of leadership in family and communal life and by hospitality. If each person follows the practices appropriate to their position in life the harmony of the community will be preserved and life will flourish. Moreover, those who become proficient in these virtues become ancestors who, as spiritual beings, participate in the abundant life of the community of the divine.

#### **1.2.7.2 ARE THE ROOTS OF AFRICAN MORAL TRADITIONS RELIGIOUS OR HUMANISTIC?**

Because all of life and all moral values seem to flow from the Supreme Being in this manner many African scholars have assumed that the root of all morality in African cultures is "religious" in the sense that it has supernatural roots. It is important to note that in African cultures there is no separation of 'religious' and 'secular' or of the sacred from the mundane (Ajayi 1988:242-251; Idowu 1994:145; Kasenene 1994:42-143; Motlhabi 1987:85-100; Parrinder 1974:169). This appears to be true of all African cultures.

However this "orthodoxy" has been very strongly challenged in recent years. As early as 1976 the Ghanaian theologian Joshua N. Kudajie, in connection with the Ga-Adangme peoples, argued that to claim that religion was the source of all moral principles was to trivialise religion on the one side and to ignore the role of tradition, social solidarity and prudence as sources of moral principles, on the other (Kudajie 1976). Gbadegesin, writing of the Yoruba, concurs with Kudajie's judgement as he finds that the Yoruba live by prudent and humanistic principles that they enforce with religious taboos and fear of supernatural judgement. While taboos and fear of supernatural reprisals may religiously enforce moral traditions it is the social good rather than religion that is their source (Gbadegesin 1998).

Kwasi Wiredu goes further than both Kudajie and Gbadegesin. He argues that values or principles are only moral if they are based upon the universal premise of moral behaviour of “sympathetic impartiality” (doing to others what you would have them do to you) that is essential for human survival, anything else is merely a local custom or taboo. Wiredu argues that it is only possible to speak of morality being based upon tradition or religion where a fundamental confusion is made between morals and customs. Morals are ideas and actions that are always right whereas customs are practices adopted by people for cultural (including religious) reasons. Customs may be considered moral or immoral depending on whether they serve the good of the universal human community in their particular instances. The Akans, adds Wiredu, believe that God approves of morality because it is good for humanity and not because he has willed it. God is as bound by moral requirements as human beings (Wiredu 1996:20-79).

It seems that this objection can only succeed if the moral community consists only of human beings (and this is Wiredu’s contention). But in the African worldview the moral community includes the whole cosmic community of gods, ancestors, the unborn, spirits and powers, all of whom are dependent upon God for their being. It would appear that Gbadegesin and Wiredu are correct in that there is a communal ethic at work here, but they are wrong in so far as they overlook the fact that this ethic embraces the cosmic (supernatural) community as well as the human community. This gives African moral traditions a supernatural focus and therefore a *religious* focus.

### **1.2.7.3 WORLDVIEW AND COMMUNITY**

This brief survey of the African worldview further reinforces the contention that African moral traditions may only be understood from within a communitarian framework. At the human level these traditions focus on the good or *telos* of the local community which includes the living, the ancestors, and the unborn. At the cosmic level African traditions focus upon the *telos* of the community of all vital beings. To argue that the *telos* in African morality concerns the universal human community apart from other vital beings, as Wiredu and, to a lesser extent, Gyekye insist, would seem to be a misconception.

## **1.3 THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS IN AFRICA**

### **1.3.1 OBSTACLES TO CONTEXTUALISATION**

#### **1.3.1.1 THE NATURE OF THE PROCESS OF CONTEXTUALISATION IN ETHICS**

Having considered the most appropriate approach for understanding established moral traditions in Africa it is now necessary to turn to the issue of how these ethical traditions interact with Africa's Christian ethical traditions. Like the moral systems of traditional African communities these are linked to the story and life of particular groups and so are also open to explication by the use of MacIntyre's model of ethics. It is also important to stress the point that it is only possible to talk of the particular Christian traditions encountered by particular established traditions. While it is arguable that there is a 'meta-tradition' that unites the various sub-traditions of Christian ethics (as well as a kind of 'meta-tradition' of African ethics (Kasenene 1994: 183; Paris 1995: 18-26)) this 'meta-tradition' is only encountered through particular sub-traditions such as the Catholic, Reformed, or holiness traditions. It is these particular traditions with which local established traditions interact in a process of mutual transformation or mutual antagonism. It is this first process that might most profitably be regarded as contextualisation as through it a particular Christian tradition is related to a new moral situation, to the narrative and *telos* of a new people and is changed thereby. This process is a parallel to the more commonly discussed and understood process of conceptual contextualisation in dogmatic theology,<sup>19</sup> but how is it best understood and how will it be possible to identify it where and when it occurs?

#### **1.3.1.2 THE CONTINUING DOMINANCE OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM**

There remain obstacles to such an understanding. The first of these is the continuing dominance of the Western paradigm that still insists upon a universalised ethics, sometimes with a Christian gloss, in which context and a communal narrative is more or less irrelevant. For this approach to ethics any talk of contextualisation is irrelevant as there is only one moral law. If any moral behaviour has a local definition it is not *moral* behaviour (which by definition must be universalisable) but merely a local custom. Despite the fact that this approach is now under attack and that it plainly does not do justice to African moral traditions, it is strangely persistent in moral philosophy and theology in Africa.

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<sup>19</sup> For a fuller discussion of this issue see Schreiter 1985 and Bevens 1992. For a thorough consideration of how contextualisation applies to the African situation see Healey and Sybertz 1996 and Ilesanmi 1995.



Those African theologians, that remain attached to the liberal approach seem to find themselves caught between their desire to affirm African moral traditions and their feeling that ‘real’ ethics must conform to the four criteria of the Western paradigm [1.2.2.3]. This leads to an attempt to show that the ethics of African traditions are examples of universal principles (Kasenene 1994: 139; Motlhabi 1987: 85-100; Richardson 1997: 374-378). This obscures understanding of African moral traditions as elements of these traditions are abstracted from their context in which they might be most fruitfully understood and squeezed into a European conceptual framework. In the final analysis, such ‘universal’ principles are fragments of the European moral tradition. Neville Richardson goes further and claims that while most African theologians have an ethical dimension to their work there has been little work specifically on ethics within African theology (Richardson 1997:374). Motlhabi makes a similar observation (Motlhabi 1987:85). If Richardson and Motlhabi are correct it may well be that the continuing commitment by African theologians to universality and autonomy is actually an impediment to developing moral philosophies and theologies oriented to African moral traditions.<sup>20</sup>

### **1.3.1.3 PRESCRIPTIVE APPROACHES**

The second major obstacle towards an understanding and practice of moral contextualisation are prescriptive approaches. These are approaches that may be conservative or radical but which understand contextualisation as the prescription from above of what is right in a particular situation. Such approaches see ethics only in a theoretical framework and have a weak perception, if any, of how moral traditions are actually formed through the narratives of particular communities as they respond to the challenges of their situation.

One of the most striking examples of this approach is to be encountered in Keith Eitel’s book *Transforming Culture* (Eitel 1986) in which Eitel gives a simplistic exegesis of what a ‘Biblical Ethic’ for marriage in Africa should be and then takes a straw poll of African Church leaders to see if they agree! However, most of the theologians discussed in this chapter also give their criteria of what African Christian ethics should do and be. (Kasenene 1994:144-147; Ilesanmi 1995: 49-73; Okolo 1987: 81-93; Richardson 1997:381-384)

Tsele provides a particularly interesting example of such prescriptivism as he lays out his agenda after discussing that of other theologians (Tsele 1994). Tsele surveys the ethical

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It would seem to me that Wiredu is also vulnerable to this criticism.

perspectives of four black theologians, all of whom give their own prescriptions, and then proceeds to produce his own model of “Black Critical Ethics.” To begin with Black ethics, especially traditional Africa ethics, must guard against being a status quo ethics justifying what exists. (Tsele 1994: 131) Secondly Black ethics must guard against being rationalist in depoliticising moral issues reducing them to adherence to the right logical and moral principles, and to the right virtues. This will only produce an ‘Africanisation’ of White ethics and not an ethics of liberation. (Tsele 1994:132) Thirdly Black ethics will be a critical ethics which takes a prophetic stance in the light of the breakdown of traditional White ethics which cannot give guidance to those in a situation of oppression and suffering. (Tsele 1994:132)

Tsele argues that such a critical Black ethics will have the following characteristics:

- 1: It will be critical of white society and morality. (Tsele 1994:133)
- 2: It will be contextual. (Tsele 1994:133)
- 3: Social in the sense of communal. (Tsele 1994:133)
- 4: Be rooted in African tradition:

Black ethics is ...an African ethics premised on an African world-view and religiosity. To this worldview, the Western dichotomy of the spiritual and material, the sacred and the secular is foreign. African virtues of solidarity, respect for elders, human life and nature, hospitality, and veneration of the memory of the dead (ancestors) are central to black ethics.

However, not everything belonging to the African heritage is necessarily liberating and critical. African submissiveness, humility and uncritical respect for authority have resulted in conservatism and passivity. The other problem is the insensitivity of African male customs to the oppression, dehumanisation and suffering of women. What is needed is a critical appropriation of all that is best in the African heritage. The soul of black ethics is the sacredness of life in its entirety and in all dimensions. (Tsele 1994: 133-134)

- 5: A Black ethic will be “rational and aligned with the Enlightenment tradition in so far as it is critical of absolutism and legalism.” (Tsele 1994:134). Black ethics will use rationality to deconstruct old meaning systems and construct new ones. (Tsele 1994:134)

There is value in all of Tsele prescriptions, but they have their place as part of a critique of existing Christian moral traditions that Tsele does not really make a significant contribution to. Without a knowledge of the state of such traditions it is not possible to participate in their ongoing internal argument as Tsele wishes to do. The other thing that becomes apparent from Tsele is that prescriptivism seems to be conjoined with a commitment to the ‘Enlightenment Project’, especially in its more radical forms.

Tsele's ethics can be understood as an 'emergency ethics:' a response to the post-Apartheid situation, especially given its antagonism to 'White society and morality,' in which a clear demarcation between liberative and oppressive tendencies in ethics was regarded as essential. A clear prescription for a liberative ethics was thus a necessity along with a rigorous critique of those elements of 'White' and 'Black' ethics that would succour White racism or undermine Black identity in anyway. This may well have resulted in undue ideological rigidity in Tsele's prescriptions and exaggerated criticisms of both European and African moral traditions. In particular this seems to have resulted in a misrepresentation of traditions of respect for authority and gender roles.<sup>21</sup> Even so, Tsele's agenda and critique must be respected coming as it does out of a long struggle.

However, Tsele's ethics are indicative that prescriptive approaches, such as his, arise in crisis situations in which the community's processes of practical reasoning are interrupted and its centres of authority are uncertain because the community has lost contact with its narratives of identity in which these are based. Prescriptive ethics are likely to be crisis ethics! Prescriptive ethics may be seen as a kind of martial law. They may have a place in times of an 'emergency of morals' but they cannot sustain the life of a community in the long term. Prescriptive ethics are only temporary and serve either to reorient, rescue or re-establish a moral tradition. They represent a new starting point from which the process of a community's moral discourse must start anew. By themselves they cannot possibly sustain the extended process of contextualisation.

Rather than following abstract prescriptions the contextualisation of ethics would instead appear to be an intuitive process produced as African Christians, who are committed to different and sometimes conflicting traditions, begin to negotiate their way between the narratives of which they are part in an attempt to reconcile or resolve the tensions between them. Clearly, from the perspective of Christian moral theology this is a risky process as the Christian narrative and tradition may not be as decisive as some would prefer. Yet, without this process there is the danger that Christians in an African context will be left with a kind of dual moral identity - committed to a Christian tradition in some areas and to a local tradition in others.

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<sup>21</sup> In Akan traditions, for example, respect is given to rulers out of regard for their office. If as people they fail to display the integrity and honour necessary for their office they can be destooled. Absolute monarchies are, thankfully, rare and novel exceptions in Africa as a whole. In Akan society women have considerable political and social influence through the position of the Queen Mother, the matrilineal inheritance system and through the significant economic role played by women in the traditional markets. Female circumcision also appears to be unknown among the Akan, including among Akan Muslims.

### **1.3.1.4 OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES TO THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS: THE MORAL THEOLOGY OF BENEZET BUJO**

Neville Richardson suggests some guidelines for Christian ethics in Africa. First of all it must rest upon narratives patterned after the model of the myths about the ancestors and of an understanding of narrative theology. (However, the great difference here is that the narrative of the Christian community is a historical narrative while, (Richardson insists) those of the ancestors are not.) Second, Christian ethics in Africa must be defined in terms of the Christian community as the community of those who wish to be disciples and become servants of all. Third, Christian ethics in Africa must be open to the African situation, especially the suffering, injustice, and violence on the continent. (Richardson 1997 381-384) Benezet Bujo has actually developed such a contextualised ethics that largely conforms to Richardson's guidelines<sup>22</sup> as it is based on a true interaction between African and Christian traditions.

#### **1.3.1.4.1 ORIENTATION TO AFRICAN CULTURE**

##### **1.3.1.4.1.1 CRITIQUE OF WESTERN ORIENTED ETHICS**

Bujo's orientation to African culture is demonstrated in his critique of Western ethics. First of all, he argues, Western moral discourse often becomes overly abstract as it searches for

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Richardson makes a critique of Benezet Bujo's earlier explorations into moral theology. Richardson sees Bujo as one 'who stands out for his attempt to put together an account of African Christian ethics' (Richardson 1997: 373) in his collection of essays *African Christian Morality in the Age of Inculturation* (Nairobi, Kenya: St Paul Publications, 1990). In this work Bujo attempts to create a framework for Christian ethics around the model of the African community founded by its particular ancestors and continually formed and held together by their traditions and continuing influence, in particular their mediation of vital power, the increase of which is the primary good. The life of the person is formed through the education and rituals provided by the community to become a full and responsible member. Bujo builds a Christology and an ecclesiology around this model. Christ is the proto-ancestor and mediator of vital power who founds the community of the church and lays down its traditions as a moral community. Its rituals, such as the Eucharist, play an important role in inducting people into those traditions and challenging them to live up to them. The Eucharist as a meal is particularly important in an African context since it was during ritual meals that the ancestors were held to be particularly present. It is in the Eucharist that Christ is present and challenges us to be open to all suffering humanity. Richardson commends Bujo's basic concept but finds it deficient in two particular areas. Firstly, Bujo has no framework for a distinctively Christian ethic. He adopts the universalism and individualism of the Western liberal moral tradition. He denies that there are any unique Christian moral teachings and asserts instead a universal human ethic. Secondly, he claims that Christian individuals, like all other individuals, must act autonomously in their moral decisions and not in relation to any communal authority or Christian moral tradition. Richardson claims that this is also at odds with the particularity of the morals of African communities and socially defined identity. Richardson also questions Bujo's understanding of the Church as, while Bujo rightly recognises that this is wider than ethnically based traditional African communities, he never clearly defines the basis of the Church as a community. Richardson claims that Bujo is also ambiguous about the future of the African traditions he wishes to use as a theological resource; at times he believes that they are inevitably fading and at others he argues for their deliberate preservation (Richardson 1997: 374-378). Bujo's later work shows little or no evidence of the flaws identified by Richardson, rather the reverse.

universal principles and definitions that have little or no concrete or particular application (Bujo 2001: 11-24, 66-71). Secondly, the Western moral tradition has made absolute the conscience of the individual, completely ignoring the role of the community in the formation of the individual's conscience and the impact of the individual's decision and action upon the community. In the Western model the moral life of the community can be held to ransom by the egoism of the individual who is conceived as acting in a complete vacuum, owing accountability to none (especially in Situation Ethics). (Bujo 2001:75-95, 107-130) Lastly, the missionary and colonial representatives of the Western moral tradition in Africa refused to acknowledge the moral traditions of African communities and set about systematically denigrating and dismantling the social and cultural infrastructure that supported African moral discourse and practice (in the manner described in sections 1.2.3.2 to 1.2.3.3 above). (Bujo 1992: 37-49)

#### **1.3.1.4.1.2 CHRIST AS ANCESTOR**

In line with Richardson's insight, Bujo presents Christ as the Proto-Ancestor. He argues that this model best defines the identity and mission of Christ for Africans. In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus became the Hero who founded a new community and continues as Ancestor and the source of its life. Jesus' Community, the Church, is not a community of mere biological life but a community of powerful spiritual life, which includes and transcends biological life. A person becomes part of this Community of Life through Baptism as Initiation. As a member of Jesus' community the Christian now has a responsibility to act in accord with the life principle of Christ in his own life and to seek the maximization of the life principle of Christ as Ancestor on the life of others. Christ is not only the source of life but also the paradigm and paragon of the meaning of that life (Bujo 1992: 75-92; 2001: 102-105). In this way Bujo contextualises the Lordship of Christ and the Eternal Life he bestows within the African perspective of the community of life and the place of the Ancestors within it.

#### **1.3.1.4.1.3 PALAVER ETHICS**

Bujo's most significant insight into African moral traditions is to identify them as '*Palaver Ethics*'.<sup>23</sup> In the African *Palaver* the whole community is engaged upon an inclusive,

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<sup>23</sup> In contemporary English usage *palaver* has an ambiguous range of meaning from pointless controversy and dissention to trouble and difficulty. However, Bujo uses this as a technical term to describe the process of practical moral reasoning through inclusive dialogue and debate until consensus is reached. The Sixth

extended discourse on an issue until a consensus is reached. This discourse is conducted at the level of families, villages, divisions, and states. It will centre around the relation of the issue at hand in relation to the life of the community as received from the ancestors, as lived in the present, and as bequeathed to the unborn. The resources for this discourse are found in the history of the community, the narratives of its heroes, and in its tradition of practical reason expressed in its proverbs. Each individual has the freedom (even responsibility) to participate in this discourse but once the community reaches consensus on an issue he is bound by that consensus, even if he is the ruler. In the event that a community fails to reach such a consensus the individual is free to act as he believes best. The *Palaver* is most often begun and concluded with the word of the ruler, but the ruler's task is to listen to the community rather than to force the community to listen to him. When the ruler speaks the final word, it must be the word of the community that he speaks (Bujo 2001: 45-66). Bujo insists that an acculturated Christian moral tradition will also need to reach its decisions on the same basis, involving local and international communities in an extended debate on the meaning of the life of Christ drawing upon the history and wisdom of the Christian tradition (2001: 143-153).

#### **1.3.1.4.2 CHRISTIAN AFRICAN ETHICS: THE CHRIST LIFE AS THE SUBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN PALAVER**

In defining the terms of Christian moral discourse within the context of African cultures in terms of Christ understood as Proto-Ancestor and the *Palaver* Bujo has set some significant markers for the development of Christian morality in African contexts. In the first place the power of Christ's life becomes the evaluating principle for all institutions and practices. The marginalised, especially women and children and those normally excluded in African cultures, receive particular affirmation as those in whom Christ's life is particularly manifest. Rulers are to be evaluated on the degree to which they are channels of the Christ Life to the community by ruling according to the example of Christ. Practices, such as female circumcision and the treatment of twins, are to be judged on the basis of whether they promote or obstruct the Life coming from Christ (Bujo 1992:87-92, 111-113; 2001: 102-105).

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Edition of the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* gives the following: "Conference (prolonged discussion), esp. (Hist.) between African or other natives and traders etc..." (Sykes 1976: 793) It is actually a derivative of a Portuguese word 'palavra' and probably arose out of the interactions between the Portuguese and Africans. Given its etymology and recent (although not perhaps current) usage it does seem an appropriate word here and Bujo's technical usage of it is justified.

These same criteria must also be applied to the structures and practices of the Church with the Priests and Bishops, especially the Pope, acting as Senior Brothers who have the responsibility to ensure that their siblings receive their inheritance from Christ as their divine father (Bujo 1992: 92-103).

The development of this moral practice and its supporting institutions is also to take place through the African *Palaver*. In Africa Christian Ethics must become *Palaver Ethics* with the issues concerning the Christian community debated at the local and international levels by every member of the community in the light of the life of Christ which stands at the centre of the community. This model of moral discourse will have a profound effect upon ecclesiastical structures as Christian moral teaching and practice will be formulated by the community as a whole, and not simply by the theologians who pass it to the priests and pastors who communicate it to the rest of the community. The bishops and the Pope will have to become rulers who listen and promote the consensus of the community rather than those who impose their word from above (Bujo 2001: 143-161).

#### **1.3.1.4.3 AFRICAN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND LIBERATION**

African traditional religion and morality, Bujo argues, was liberative in that it sought to give significance and security to individuals within the context of prosperous and peaceful communities through the maximisation of the life of the ancestors for the present and coming generations (Bujo 1992: 17-18). So far, he insists, Christian morality in Africa has failed to be liberative because of its lack of incarnation and acculturation (contextualisation). The Life of Christ as Ancestor has not been adequately realized in the life of the poor, disposed, and victimized because the leaders of the community and the Church have failed to be sources of the life of Christ to the neighbour and the stranger (Bujo 2001:132-137). This remains a challenge for the Christian *Palaver*, especially in the face of continuing war and famine. This challenge will only be met through a *palaver* between African moral traditions and with the Christian tradition (Bujo 1992: 130; 2001: 137-143).

#### **1.3.2 DESCRIBING CONTEXTUALISATION**

##### **1.3.2.1 THE NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF ETHICS: MACINTYRE'S MODEL REVISITED**

Neither universalising, nor prescriptive models have shown themselves to be adequate to facilitate an understanding of the contextualisation of Christian ethics. An alternative

approach is needed such as that exemplified by Bujo which relies on interaction and synthesis between traditions. MacIntyre's model shows itself to be useful in this area as well (indeed Bujo draws extensively upon MacIntyre's account of virtue and narrative (Bujo 2001: 24-33)). Firstly, MacIntyre recognises the integrity and uniqueness of particular moral traditions - they do not need to be validated by reference to a universal and necessary reference point. Secondly, he stresses that moral traditions grow, rather than being legislated, through the ongoing narrative of a community. Any attempt to impose on this process by prescription from above will only create a hiatus. MacIntyre's narrative model avoids both of these difficulties and in so doing provides a far better basis for tracing the contextualisation of Christian ethics. This is especially so as contextualisation probably takes place as traditions modify each other on the level of purpose, exemplars, and defining narrative (and this is reflected in Bujo's moral theology considered above).

### **1.3.2.2 MACINTYRE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERACTION OF MORAL TRADITIONS**

#### **1.3.2.2.1 FULFILMENT OF GOALS**

MacIntyre discusses the interaction of disparate moral traditions in two of his works. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre discusses the possibility that there might be wholesale conversion from one tradition to another because the 'alien' tradition fulfils the goals or *telos* of the original tradition better than it does itself. Such a conversion would be a rational and an epistemological decision. MacIntyre argues that all enquiry constituted traditions are rational in that they have their own standards of rationality that have to be satisfied. MacIntyre claims that all traditions pass through three stages. The first stage of initial development in which primary authorities and principles are identified. (Such authorities and principles are regarded as contingent truths because of their value to the community in the past.) The second stage is one in which important features of the tradition are questioned. The third stage is one in which the questions are resolved and the weaknesses that led to them surpassed (MacIntyre 1988: 349-358). In the process of this development a tradition develops its own standard of rationality which is neither Cartesian, arguing from universally valid first principles, nor Hegelian, moving toward an all-embracing final synthesis. Rather, the starting points of tradition instituted enquiry are historically validated contingents and the development of the tradition is open-ended (MacIntyre 1988: 358-361).



Each tradition, MacIntyre suggests, will face epistemological crises arising either from its failure to answer its questions from its own resources or through encounter with another tradition that might provide a better answer to its own questions than it does itself. MacIntyre sets out three criteria that any resolution of an epistemological crisis must meet: 1) Provide a solution that is systematic and coherent; 2) Explain why the tradition had not previously been able to resolve this problem; 3) Maintain continuity with the tradition. In situations where a community embraces an ‘alien tradition’ wholesale only the first and second criteria stated above will be fulfilled. The new tradition should be able to explain the failure of the old in the light of its own epistemological standards (MacIntyre 1988: 361-366).<sup>24</sup>

#### **1.3.2.2.2 UNTRANSLATABILITY<sup>25</sup>.**

Later in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre discusses the interaction of traditions in regard to cultural and linguistic translation. Tradition constituted enquiries, he says, are rooted in particular linguistic contexts and traditions which makes their translation into the language and use of another tradition, or even that of the same tradition at a later place and time, problematic. MacIntyre illustrates this with the example of the way that different names function in different societies. Translations will require a great use of paraphrase and same-saying if they are to be successful. MacIntyre argues that aspects of some traditions may be untranslatable. The only way to ascertain what is untranslatable is to adopt anthropological procedures and learn the language of a people as a second language through becoming a part of the linguistic community and then see what can and cannot be translated into one’s own first language. MacIntyre uses this argument about translation to emphasise his point that members of a community may abandon their tradition in favour of another which they find superior on the grounds that it provides them with resources lacking in their own tradition. This lack may well be encountered in the areas of untranslatibility in the new tradition - that it is able to say things that were unsayable but which it was necessary to say in the old tradition

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<sup>24</sup> MacIntyre provides another account of this epistemological displacement when he describes how Galileo moved from an Aristotelian to a Copernican position. This was not achieved through a simple rejection or departure from the old tradition but rather a testing of the old to its theoretical limits and consequently discovering its inadequacy. Only after this does the search for a new model begin. Once the new model has been formulated the history of the failure of the old tradition is reinterpreted or retold from the perspective of the new in such a way that the story of the old tradition becomes part of the new (MacIntyre 1990: 118-120).

<sup>25</sup> MacIntyre’s concept is entirely unconnected with Lamin Sanneh’s and David Walls’ discussion about the ‘untranslatability’ of the Qur’an.

(MacIntyre 1988: 370-388).<sup>26</sup> In this case the new, the 'alien' tradition would present an entirely new conceptual horizon with possibilities unknown to the original tradition which is now shown to be lacking because it did not conceive of these possibilities. The old tradition is abandoned because it did not even address the right issues.

### 1.3.2.2.3 SYNTHESIS

In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre discusses a third way that traditions might encounter and interact with each other: that of a synthesis in which one tradition corrects the weaknesses of the other. When Aristotle's works were first introduced to the medieval world Christians, Muslims, and Jews initially all developed a kind of dualism

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<sup>26</sup> Milbank challenges MacIntyre's view of incommensurability or untranslatability. MacIntyre argues that some traditions, or at least part of those traditions, are incommensurable with other traditions as their translation from one tradition to another would involve a distortion and betrayal of meaning. MacIntyre's critics argue that if this were true it would involve incomprehensibility rather than incommensurability as the mysterious part of one tradition would be completely opaque and unknowable to the other. On the other hand MacIntyre's contention rather belies the nature of translation and interpretation. If MacIntyre's contention were true, his critics claim, then one would have to be initiated into the cult of Demeter to understand Greek religion, yet outsiders gain sufficient understanding to be intelligent observers and commentators on a tradition, but without commitment to its *mythos* they cannot be full participants. Milbank however, agrees with MacIntyre that there are areas of untranslatability but they occur within cultures between different areas of concern or activity (or practices). Thus the language and concepts involved in designing a cathedral will be incommensurable with those involved in designing a nuclear power station. The difference lies in the range of language used rather than the reality described. But there is a further possibility that neither MacIntyre or Milbank consider: that if both discourses are subsumed under another unifying discourse of spiritual and material needs of the good society surely they are brought to a point of higher commensurability despite being separately discrete.

Incommensurability, Milbank suggests, is one of the foundations for MacIntyre's limited relativism in which he insists upon the uniqueness of traditions each of which rests upon its own narrative. MacIntyre is a historicist in that he argues that particular stories and their interpretation or *mythos* form societies and their traditions. Milbank argues that MacIntyre is only partially a historicist in that he subordinates narrative to dialectic. Dialectic is the process of moving from criticism to response, question to answer in an ongoing argument in which inadequate positions are discarded in favour of those that more adequately satisfy the criteria of the tradition. Milbank argues that this cancels out narrative and finally freezes it in the history of the progress of the argument that has reached its culmination in the present. It seems to me that Milbank is misrepresenting MacIntyre here as MacIntyre sees a narrative as an account of an argument thus far - it is not intended to close off further development of the argument. Milbank is attributing to MacIntyre a fixed conception of narrative that he does not actually hold.

Milbank feels that MacIntyre's emphasis on dialectic also overlooks the role played by rhetoric and the appealing presentation it makes of *mythos*. He believes that change occurs because of this appeal rather than because of argument. Thus Milbank questions the assimilation of one tradition by another because the criteria of the one are better fulfilled by the other. This would mean that elements of the first tradition were still active and therefore were not assimilated by the new, or that the criteria had now changed to those of the new tradition. This would mean that the contents of the old tradition were now interpreted differently, particular symbols being emphasised which were hitherto ignored. What has really happened here, Milbank insists, is that one tradition is abandoned in favour of another because its *mythos* appears more attractive in its rhetoric. But this would imply that a decision between traditions is based purely upon the image or feeling generated by rhetoric and not on any rational grounds. It seems that Milbank over-states his case as even rhetoric would still have to address issues and arguments important to the original tradition to be effective. In other words rhetoric will have to make use of dialectic and so the two are not as opposed as Milbank claims. It also seems to me that Milbank runs together MacIntyre's fulfilment and untranslatability models (Milbank 1990:339-347).

between the truth of revealed religion and the truth of philosophy. In the case of Catholic Christianity this meant a parallelism between the philosophical theories of Aristotle and the theological theories of Augustine that were at this point accepted as authoritative truth. MacIntyre describes how Aquinas was able to synthesise these two traditions into one new one by sympathetically discovering the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition and then using them to correct each other. Thus a new narrative became possible which tells of how each tradition on its own had conundrums that it could not resolve from its own resources according to its own standards of truth but which have been resolved through the resources of the alien tradition. Each tradition, in turn, has helped to resolve issues in the other. The new synthesised Thomist tradition is thus richer and stronger than either the Augustinian or Aristotelian would have been alone. The Thomist tradition was thus able to incorporate both the Aristotelian and Augustinian narratives into its own (MacIntyre 1990: 105-126).

### **1.3.2.3 CONTINUITY AND ‘UNTRANSLATABILITY’ BETWEEN AFRICAN AND CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS**

MacIntyre, then considers three models of interaction between different moral traditions: *Fulfilment*, *Untranslatability*, and *Synthesis*. Which of these best describes the contextualisation of Christian moral traditions in missionary situations? Probably all of them in different contexts; it will all depend upon the encounter between the traditions and the degree of continuity between them and to what extent a genuine encounter between traditions takes place.<sup>27</sup> MacIntyre’s models can be placed on a continuum that reflects the degree of continuity between original and alien traditions. The model that allows greatest continuity is the synthetic model as the two traditions correct and enrich each other. The next model in line would be the fulfilment model as the new tradition still relates to the goals and narrative of the old: a unity of goals is discovered and the narrative of the old is embraced in that of the new. The Untranslatability model allows little or no continuity. There is little or no point of contact or understanding between the new tradition and the old as the two are so radically

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<sup>27</sup> In situations of conquest one tradition may simply suppress another without any serious effort to engage with it, forcing it underground or pushing it to the margins. (However, even from the margins a subversive encounter of traditions can take place.) Such situations of conquest, however, may create an unreal situation as the suppressed tradition does not disappear (for it has not yet failed by its own criteria) but remains the value system of the conquered, and the living of it becomes a point of resistance. In this case a dualism will probably emerge in which the conquered will formally acknowledge the tradition of their conquerors but actually live by their own tradition. In the case where the Christian tradition is the conquering tradition this will mean that no encounter, and no contextualisation will take place, at least until dissent breaks out in a later generation.

different - there are no shared goals and there can be no shared narrative other than one of abandoning darkness for light. In the case of the first two models it is possible to speak of contextualisation where Christianity as the 'alien' tradition reaches an agreement with the established tradition in which the alien and indigenous traditions enrich each other or in which the established tradition sees in the alien Christian tradition the fulfilment of its own moral enquiry. In either case their narratives continue, either as part of a joint narrative or as an aspect of the narrative of the fulfilling tradition. It is hard to talk of contextualisation in regard to the 'untranslatability' model as one tradition is merely abandoned in favour of another without dialogue or agreement between the traditions and the narrative of the first tradition is simply discarded without any rational process. In fact this third model occurs only rarely for four reasons. Firstly, Christian traditions are usually able to find a point of engagement with the traditions they encounter.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, if Christian traditions are to truly contextualise they will need to find points of agreement with the established local traditions that they encounter so that they can become comprehensible to those traditions and live in the same situation that they exist in. This would militate against a complete displacement of the established tradition. Thirdly, a complete displacement of the established tradition would also mean a complete displacement of the existing culture. (It is hard to see how this could be successful. The established tradition would never be fully annihilated and while people may formally adopt the new tradition they will, inevitably have a dual identity and implicitly continue the old. In fact the established tradition might become even more powerful in the margins as a source of resistance.) Fourth, there are good theological reasons for rejecting the 'untranslatability' model arising from the affirmation of all cultures as avenues of natural revelation and as the spiritual 'home' of particular peoples. The replacement model would obliterate the signs of God's presence in a given culture and deprive a people of their home and identity by leaving them 'storyless'. From this point of view the synthetic model is the ideal as it allows the Christian tradition to engage with the received tradition in such a way that its riches can be preserved and people left in their historical and cultural home.

From a theological point of view the synthetic approach is to be preferred as it allows for continuity between cultural traditions and between human traditions and revelation. First of all, the synthetic approach allows the affirmation of both special and general revelation. It leaves room for special revelation by stressing the openness of a culture to 'alien' traditions

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<sup>28</sup> Kathryn Tanner's suggestion that Christianity has no culture of its own and is actually parasitic upon its host cultures for its means of expression is extremely suggestive and interesting (Tanner 1997:103-119).

and ‘words’ - no culture can be regarded as self-contained or totally enclosed. Special revelation is, in an important sense alien to all traditions (although it is never encountered apart from the particular traditions that become its vehicles) and only if cultures are open to such strange words and are able to receive them into their life can God’s Word be inculturated within them and, they in turn, become vehicles for this Word. On the other hand, the synthetic model, because it places an intrinsic value on all cultural traditions, affirms the words that God has already spoken within each culture and affirmed by human beings as they seek the good. Secondly, the synthetic approach affirms the value of human moral traditions and of the human creativity that produces them. No tradition is to be replaced or erased as in the fulfilment or translation models. Rather, the narrative of each tradition and the best of its values are able to continue as an integral parts of a new tradition brought about by a process of creative negotiation. Nothing that is good is to be lost; everything that is in the Image of God is to be treasured. Thirdly, the synthetic approach is dialogical in that it creates interaction between cultural traditions allowing them to enrich each other. It also opens the way for a dialogue between the Kingdom of God and moral traditions that challenges and transforms them even as it is inculturated within them and is given new expression by them. Benezet Bujo’s moral theology, discussed above, is a good example of such synthesis in that it affirms the existing truths and values discovered by the ancestors and passed on in their tradition. Secondly, it seeks to relate the truth or revelation already possessed by African cultures to the unique truth of Christ, who takes up and fulfils the hopes of the ancestors. Thirdly, the tradition of the ancestors and the Gospel of Christ become part of a new *palaver* that ultimately seeks to embrace all traditions.

### **1.3.3 GYEKYE’S ACCOUNT OF TRADITION**

#### **1.3.3.1 GYEKYE’S DEFINITION OF TRADITION**

Kwame Gyekye also gives a significant account of tradition that complements MacIntyre’s and emphasises further the process of synthesis between cultures that is the ideal outcome of their encounter. Gyekye argues that a tradition is a cultural value (or set of values) that has been made available to and accepted by at least three generations. He rejects terms like transmission or “handing-on” as to persist a cultural value it has to be found worthy of acceptance by a new generation, and in the process it may be transformed or given a new theoretical grounding so that it makes sense in a new age. Gyekye notes the overlap between culture and tradition. Culture gives the framework for tradition and it consists of many

traditions and, as a whole, functions like a tradition, but not everything within it is a tradition (Gyekye 1997:219-221).

A new definition I propose is this: a tradition is any cultural product that was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present. (Note that “present” here means a certain, a particular present time, not necessarily *our* present, contemporary world) (Gyekye 1997:221)

### **1.3.3.2 TRADITION AND CULTURAL CHANGE**

New cultural values may be created in the face of new circumstances or because individual reformers and visionaries expose the inadequacies of old values and insist upon new ones. No culture has a fixed and unchanging tradition. However, neither does a culture experience wholesale change as in a “cultural revolution” as the complete destruction of a culture and the end of its development. Cultures do not simply end or change in this way. Change is piecemeal and evolutionary (Gyekye 1997:221-224).

### **1.3.3.3 INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER AND CULTURAL CHANGE**

Change, Gyekye notes, comes also from encounters with alien cultures. No culture develops in isolation. Important changes in cultures often occur through contact with an alien culture (that is non-indigenous to the host culture) in which elements from the alien culture are incorporated into the indigenous culture. In the majority of cases this cultural borrowing is a voluntary transaction in which the indigenous culture selects the aspects of the alien culture in which it finds itself deficient and assimilates them into its life. The success of such assimilation depends upon the ‘adaptive capacity’ of the indigenous tradition to so incorporate the elements of the alien tradition into its life so that indigenous practitioners will be able to understand and develop these elements from within the context of their own tradition and be able to transfer the fruits of this understanding to the donor tradition. Insofar as people are able to appropriate such elements in terms of their own tradition they will have considerable appreciation and commitment to them. Imposition, by contrast, generates little appreciation or commitment. Where elements of an alien tradition are imposed, the indigenous tradition has no opportunity to appraise, select, and assimilate the foreign elements and make them its own. As a result there will be no real comprehension of, or commitment to, them and these elements will be practised in a superficial and confused manner (Gyekye 1997:224-225).

Gyekye sees this as an indication of the universal nature of human culture and that, ultimately, humanity forms one universal cultural community that can exchange cultural values.

A particular cultural creation will thus have two faces: a particular face - when the appreciation of the cultural creation is confined to its local origin- and a potentially universal face - when that appreciation transcends the borders of the environment that created it. The appreciation may be passive - when no attempt is made to appropriate the cultural creation, notwithstanding one's enjoyment of it - or it may be active - when some attempt is made to appropriate the particular creation and allow it to shape life and thought. (Gyekye 1997:226)

Gyekye argues that once a value has been assimilated into a tradition it has become the property of that tradition and it makes no sense to ask thereafter where it came from (Gyekye 1997: 226-232).

#### **1.3.3.4 ASSIMILATION AND SYNTHESIS**

Gyekye's concept of "assimilation" is broadly similar to MacIntyre's idea of synthesis and is basically supportive of it. Where Gyekye is more helpful is in his analysis of the two conditions necessary for a good synthesis: i) *voluntary adoption* by the indigenous tradition of elements from the 'alien' tradition that ii) the indigenous tradition *deems to be inherently valuable and lacking in itself*. Forced acceptance of alien cultural values that the arbiters of tradition do not understand or are not convinced that they need, will fail to produce a creative synthesis. However, in Gyekye's model of tradition development the arbiters of tradition make their selection on the basis of their own understanding of the *telos* - he does not entertain the thought that a tradition might become reoriented around a new *telos* while retaining its existing cultural forms and even values. Such a reorientation is surely the pattern or goal of the contextualisation of Christian moral traditions and MacIntyre, appears to, develop a better account of this. This is particularly seen in his description of the manner in which the Thomist tradition affirmed both the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions by developing a *telos* that genuinely embraced those of the other two traditions. The Thomist synthesis provides an actual example in which two moral traditions quite separated by both language and time were brought into a dialogical relationship that produced a new and distinct tradition that preserved the best in the narratives and values of the previous traditions. This would appear to be closer to the ideal outcome of the process of Christian moral contextualisation in which an 'alien' Christian tradition and an established 'indigenous'

tradition form a dialogical relationship which produces a new contextualised Christian tradition. Bujo's identification of Christ as the Proto-ancestor who becomes the source of liberative life within the context of the African *Palaver* is also an example of such a synthesis between traditions. Gyekye's approach does not really allow for this kind of synthesis, as the only options he allows is for the alien tradition to be absorbed into the indigenous tradition or be rejected. While Gyekye allows that traditions may radically change through an encounter with an alien tradition such change is purely internal: the essential identity of the tradition does not change. However in MacIntyre's synthetic model something new and unique is born from the creative meeting of traditions. Gyekye really only allows for continuity whereas the Word of God born along in different traditions brings about new creations. It is this that MacIntyre is rather better able to embrace.

MacIntyre's account of the elements that develop and sustain a tradition is also richer and allows for a deeper analysis of traditions than that provided by Gyekye. However, MacIntyre's understanding of tradition also needs to be enriched by Gyekye's account of the authority of the contemporary generation in the formation of tradition.<sup>29</sup>

## **1.4 METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **1.4.1 THE STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS IN AFRICA**

What are the methodological implications of these reflections? First of all it means that study will have to begin with particular moral traditions that have come into an interactive relationship. There is, though, some difficulty in trying to study received or established pre-Christian moral traditions in Africa. These were conversations orally preserved in proverbs, and parables and while the contemporary state of development of these traditions can be described, any attempt to reconstruct them in their "original purity" prior to the arrival of

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<sup>29</sup> Kathryn Tanner has a similar understanding of the contemporary formation of tradition only she sees this as the particular task of the theologian within the Christian tradition. She gives the theologian an almost Olympian position free to draw on whatever resources she deems necessary from within and without the Christian community (Tanner 1997:159-167). While Tanner recognises that there has to be a cultural starting point she assiduously avoids defining this as she is opposed to anything that might limit the freedom of the theologian, the diversity of sources that theologians might draw upon, or the diversity of forms of Christianity that they might produce. (Tanner 1997: 167-175) Tanner believes that Christian identity lays in a commitment to continuing the argument about the meaning of Christian discipleship. The danger of the diversity she advocates is that Christian discipleship could easily fragment into a number of discontinuous arguments that no longer recognise each other and mutually exclude each other. There is also the danger that she gives too great a role to the theologian as a privileged individual at the expense of the role of the whole community in the process of the formation of tradition.



Christianity, remains problematic. A more straightforward approach is the comparison of a Christian tradition literally preserved in concepts and cases before and after its habituation to an African context through a comparison of texts and records. If a genuine synthesis between the Christian tradition and the established indigenous moral tradition has taken place, this will be evidenced by changes in the African variant of the Christian tradition. These changes will signify the contributions made by the established tradition. A prior study of the established tradition as it now exists in its present (and likely previous) form will assist in the identification of such changes and contributions. In practical terms for the purpose of this dissertation this will mean the study of one particular Christian moral tradition that has been established in the life of one particular West African people group over an extended time. These investigations should reveal the manner in which a Christian moral tradition has synthesised with an established tradition and thus contextualised.

#### **1.4.2 THE HIGHEST GOOD(S) AND SUPPORTING NARRATIVES, EXEMPLARS, VIRTUES AND PRACTICES OF EACH TRADITION TO BE IDENTIFIED**

MacIntyre's model will remain the basic tool for investigating this change. This means that an attempt will be made to identify and describe the conceptions of the highest good(s) as framed by the traditions' defining narratives, the virtues and their sustaining practices that arise from these narratives, and the figures that exemplify these virtues.

#### **1.4.3 THE INTERACTION OF SELECTED TRADITIONS TO BE STUDIED IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT SEEK TO RECONCILE OR SYNTHESISE THESE TRADITIONS IN THEIR LIVES**

To further this investigation it will be necessary to consider the (continuing) interaction of the established indigenous and incoming Christian traditions in the lives of those communities and individuals that seek to relate the arguments of the traditions they inhabit and to identify the form of this attempted reconciliation: an abandoning of the indigenous tradition, the acceptance of the Christian tradition as the fulfilment of the indigenous tradition, or the synthesis of the two into a new, local, Christian tradition.

The next step in this research, considers the (continuing) processes of interaction between established 'host' traditions and incoming 'guest' Christian traditions in the lives of communities and individuals that seek to relate the narratives and arguments of the moral traditions that they have adopted. An attempt is made to identify the manner in which

communities and individuals seek to relate these traditions in terms of MacIntyre's models of abandonment, fulfilment or synthesis.

#### **1.4.4 EVALUATION OF CONTEXTUALISATION**

The final step in this process will be to evaluate these processes of interaction, where they occur. To what degree are these processes, and the new traditions that they produce, faithful to both the community's established tradition and the new Christian tradition? In what ways may they enrich other African moral traditions and the 'meta-tradition' of global Christian ethics?

#### **1.5 CONCLUSION: STEPS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

These methodological considerations have informed the development of this study. In order to test the model of moral contextualisation suggested in these pages it is necessary to study the interaction between a major Christian tradition and one of the main people groups of Ghana over the extended period of time that might be considered necessary for change to occur within a moral tradition. The Methodist Church has been present among the Akan people of Ghana (who constitute 49.1% of Ghana's population (Nukunya 2003: 214) for one hundred and seventy years. The moral traditions of both Methodism and the Akan are well documented (see Chapters Two, Three and Four) which makes it possible to explore the influences that they may have had upon each other. In particular if it is found that the Akan tradition has significantly influenced the development of the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana this would clear evidence that a synthesis has occurred, at least, between the Methodist and Akan traditions. It might also indicate assimilation of some elements of the Methodist tradition on the part of the Akan tradition. The research focuses mainly on the Fanti<sup>30</sup> sub-

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<sup>30</sup> The Fanti (also spelled Fante) are part of the Twi speaking Akan group of Western Sudanese peoples. They are concentrated in the coastal districts of the Central and Western regions of Ghana between Winneba and Axim (GhanaHomePage/tribes/fanti, 2006).

It is believed that the Fanti peoples migrated to this area around the early sixteenth century as the great West African empires of ancient Ghana, Mali, and Songhai began to decline. By the end of the seventeenth century they had formed a number of independent minor kingdoms whose economic base was variously agriculture, fisheries, hunting and forest products and trade. Due to their position on the coast the Fanti controlled the trade routes to the north and exploited their opportunities by acting as middlemen between the Europeans and the inland states, especially Ashanti. This sometimes led them into conflict with their European 'guests' and their Akan neighbours until finally the Fantis found themselves caught between the British and the Ashanti. The Fantis endured several damaging wars and occupations by the Ashantis and were finally declared a protectorate by the British in 1873. While all the Fanti states were autonomous they would, at need, form a confederation to act in their common interest, especially in the face of an external threat. In the late 1860s this confederation was given a more formal structure with a written hybrid constitution that included both traditional rulers and elected

unit of the Akan people who largely inhabit the Central and Western coastal regions of Ghana (Nukunya 2003:93, 186, 214) because of their long exposure to the Methodist tradition.

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representatives from each of the states and responsibility for education, agricultural development, and trade as well as defence. Sadly, this experiment in innovative government was brought to an abrupt end in 1873 when the British assumed direct rule of the Fanti lands (Fynn 1971: 1-26; GhanaHomePage/tribes/fanti, 2006).

Methodism arrived in the Fanti lands in 1835 and had a profound effect on the life and culture of the people. Christian faith and practice became widespread. The education and literacy that was also promoted by the Church became highly prized and contributed to the growth of an educated middle class of clerks, teachers, merchants, and Church leaders.

In 1993 the Fantis numbered over four million (GhanaHomePage/tribes/akan, 2006). Like other Akan peoples they mostly observe a matrilineal pattern of inheritance and succession.

Fuller details of the Akan culture and religion shared by the Fanti and the development of Methodism among the Fanti peoples will be found in Chapters Two, Four and Five

## CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTOURS OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH AND THE NATURE OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION

#### 2.1.1. RESEARCH AND TRADITION

The purpose of this chapter is to give a survey of the main characteristics of the Akan<sup>1</sup> moral tradition in order to discover possible points of convergence and challenge or conflict with Christian traditions<sup>2</sup>. Without such a study it will be difficult to develop clues or hints as to the likely shape of any Akan Christian moral tradition that may have emerged out of the interaction of Akan and Christian traditions that could then form the basis of criteria for field research. A modest body of literature exists on Akan ethics largely based upon the fieldwork of its authors. The authors made their researches among different Akan peoples from a period spanning the 1920s to 1990s. My main sources for this chapter are Danquah (1944; 1951), Ackah (1959; 1988), Gyekye (1987; 1996), and Ephirim-Donkor (1997). J. B. Danquah based his work *The Akan Doctrine of God* on anthropological researches he made during the 1930s. Sadly, this material, along with studies on religious ceremonials and proverbs were all lost in a fire in 1940 (Danquah 1944: i-x). *The Akan Doctrine of God* was to be the third volume of a much wider work, drawing together the fruits of Danquah's research in a closing survey (Danquah 1944: ix). Danquah's work should be respected as resting on a deep foundation of empirical research even though that research has been lost. C. A. Ackah completed his research in the late 1950s for his doctoral thesis *An Ethical Study of the Akan*

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<sup>1</sup> The Akan consist of a group of peoples settled in southern Ghana west of the Volta and in south eastern Ivory Coast united by a common language (Twi) and by common culture. The groups comprising the Akan include the Ashanti (the most powerful and well known of the Akan peoples), the Fante, Brong, Twifo, Wasa, Denkyira, Sehwi, Assin, Adansi, Akyem, Akwapim, Akwamu, Anyi, and Baule. Traditionally, the Akan gained their livelihood from fishing, if they were on the coast, hunting and agriculture in the forest area, small scale mining for gold and trade, especially with the European ports on the coast. The Akan were divided into a number of small states that were assimilated under British and French colonial rule from 1870 to 1910. The last of the Akan states to lose its independence was the Ashanti Confederation which was finally conquered by the British in 1901. The majority of the Akan follow a matrilineal pattern of inheritance and succession that passes through the maternal uncle to his nephews (Warren 1986: 7-10). However, there are also a number of communities that follow a patrilineal pattern such as the Larteh and Anum in Akwapim and the Effutu of Winneba. The discussion in this chapter concentrates upon the traditions of the matrilineal Akan, especially the Ashante and Fanti.

<sup>2</sup> I need to express my thanks to a number of knowledgeable Akan friends who read and commented upon an earlier draft of this chapter among them are Reverend Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah, President of Pentecost University College and a fellow doctoral student in the Department of Theology of the University of Birmingham, Mr Joseph Nsiah, Vice President for Academics Ghana Christian University College, and the Very Reverend Dr Foley, Senior Lecturer in Theology, Methodist University College. Their remarks have proved most crucial in making a number of significant revisions. Any errors, however, remain my responsibility!

*Tribes of Ghana* that was submitted to the London School of Economics in 1959. Ackah subsequently revised this work and finally published it in 1988 under the title of *Akan Ethics* (Ackah 1988: v). Kwame Gyekye drew upon the insights of a number of Akan chiefs, elders, and experts in traditional wisdom during the 1970s and 1980s in his preparation for *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: the Akan Conceptual Scheme* (1987: ix-xiii). This same research is reflected in Gyekye's more popular work, *African Cultural Values* (1996). While Gyekye presents this latter work as a survey of African cultural values as a whole he bases his reflections quite firmly on the Akan tradition that he presents as representative of all African traditions (Gyekye 1996: xiii-xiv). For this reason this text is used in the current chapter as a source for Akan traditions<sup>3</sup>. Finally, Ephirim-Donkor conducted extensive field research largely in the Gomoa and the Awutu-Effutu-Senya districts from 1986 to 1993 (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 5-6). The work of these researchers tends to represent the views of traditionally minded Akans, however none of these researchers have reconstructed pristine "pre-Christian" Akan ethics that might have existed five hundred years ago before any encounter with Christianity nor does this seem to have been their purpose. Rather, they generally present the Akan tradition as a way of life, distinct from Christian practice in preference or in parallel to the Christian life, as it was practiced at the time of their researches. Gyekye indicates that change, at least in the Akan moral tradition, is negotiated piecemeal by the moral community in response to new situations and new ideas arising from cross-cultural encounters. If this is so then the main elements of Akan ethics such as the family and the role of the elders have probably been constant through the generations but one has no guarantee of this (Gyekye 1997: 219-232). In any case this is not of ultimate importance for the discussion here as it is the Akan moral tradition in its most recent forms, with which Christian moral traditions have interacted, not that which existed half a millennium ago, that is the concern of this chapter. With this in mind, a synthetic view of the main elements of the Akan moral tradition has been developed from authors who sometimes take drastically different positions. These researchers all approach the Akan moral tradition from different perspectives. J. B. Danquah was concerned to understand the Akan cultural tradition as a whole, especially in its moral and religious aspects but he was also concerned to interpret this tradition to a wider audience for which reason he presented many of its moral ideas in the categories of western

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<sup>3</sup> Gyekye's approach in this work reflects his contention that a number of similarities or commonalities can be found between African cultures making it possible to speak of a common African philosophy and culture. (Gyekye 1987: 189-212; 1996: xiii-xiv) for more on this issue see the discussion above in 1.2.5-2.7

philosophy. Later commentators have wondered to what degree Danquah modified and re-interpreted Akan ideas in the process, making his results invalid (Dickson 1968: vii-xxiii, Thomas 1981: 36-44). It is impossible to resolve these reservations in the absence of Danquah's research material, but in the light of the profound scholarship and knowledge of the Akan tradition on which Danquah's presentation of the Akan moral perspective rests there is a strong case for accepting its conclusions. Ackah's approach is much more specific as he concentrates upon moral language, behaviour, and institutions from a strongly sociological perspective. As a result he uncovers relationships and develops insights that Danquah seemed to overlook (although it must be said that Ackah built upon Danquah's work as they reviewed and critiqued each other's scholarship (Danquah 1944: ix; Ackah 1988: vi).) The weakness of Ackah's account, however, is that it is not always sufficiently existential (Obeng 1992: 281-282). Gyekye's concern is not dissimilar from Danquah's in that he seeks to place Akan thought and insights within the context of contemporary philosophical debate. The difference between him and Danquah is that Danquah was attempting to set Akan thought within the great metaphysical schemes that flourished in the early twentieth century (Thomas 1981:42) whereas Gyekye's interpretive framework is analytic philosophy that is suspicious of any all-encompassing scheme of metaphysics and focuses upon specific problems and their possible solutions. For this reason Gyekye tends to have a narrower focus than either Danquah or Ackah and so seems to discuss ethics in isolation from other aspects of the Akan worldview. He concentrates particularly upon behaviour and character without paying any particular attention to institutions and practices (Gyekye 1987:146-153). Ephirim-Donkor, on the other hand, is concerned to chart the moral and intellectual development of persons within the Akan community from the perspective of the Akan worldview (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 3-9). This results in a more holistic approach than that followed by either Ackah or Gyekye as Ephirim-Donkor seeks to set the moral development of the person in the context of religious ideas and practices as well as in that of the family and community. He is deeply concerned with what it means to *exist* as an Akan adult. In the course of this endeavour Ephirim-Donkor seems to confirm Danquah's findings on many points, especially the relationship between the Akan religious quest and the Akan moral tradition. In the following discussion the work of by Danquah and Ephirim-Donkor will be favoured as they both have a more comprehensive approach and mutually confirm each other.

These authors have been used here in preference to other more influential scholars such as Rattray (Rattray 1923, 1927, 1929) and Busia (Busia 1951) because they interpret the Akan

moral tradition from the point of view of philosophical or religious ethics. This contrasts sharply with the anthropological approach taken by Rattray and Busia in which morals are reduced to mores and laws associated with status, taboo and ceremony. Writers following this approach tend not to yield much insight into the Akan moral tradition as a tradition of *moral discourse*.<sup>4</sup>

The rich Akan proverbial tradition has also been employed, where possible, to illustrate and support the argument in the following pages. English translations of Akan proverbs are given in italics. The translation is always that of the scholar interpreting the proverb.

## **2.1.2 THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUALITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE AKAN TRADITION**

Kwame Gyekye in his outstanding works on the Akan cultural and moral tradition claims that Akan ethics gives balanced stress to both individuality and community (Gyekye 1987: 154-156; 1996: 55-64; 1997: 36-70). This claim is amply supported by the examples of communal practice that he furnishes and the proverbial evidence that he cites (Gyekye 1987: 154-160). However, he does not seem to indicate the basis for this admirable negotiation between the roles of the individual and the community. The source of this modified communitarianism, may well lie in the Akans' complicated spiritual and metaphysical anthropology that gives each individual a unique identity and dignity but in the midst of his other relational connections. It would also appear that the strong communitarianism of Akan ethics is most likely sustained by the religious framework of the Akan worldview. These matters are the concern of the pages that follow.

## **2.2 THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION**

### **2.2.1 INTRODUCTION: ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING**

In order to understand the Akan moral tradition and quest it is important to examine the Akans' understanding of the moral anatomy of the individual. Although this understanding has many metaphysical aspects it is important because it provides a map of the social and religious relationships and responsibilities of the individual. Discussions of the Akan concept

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<sup>4</sup> These practice the same *reduction* of moral discourse to social functions noted in 1.1.2 and 2.3.2. John Mensah-Sarbah, another notable commentator (Mensah-Sarbah 1968) does take the Akan moral tradition seriously as a *moral* tradition. However, his interest is in the expression of this tradition as jurisprudence and case law. This contrasts with the position taken here which concentrates on the expression of the Akan tradition as moral philosophy and theology.

of the self are usually dominated by the etymology of different words and the consequences of this for the metaphysical status of different aspects of the person (Danquah 1944: 111-119; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 11-15; Gyekye 1987: 85-103). Such an approach is sometimes problematic, as etymology does not always disclose the meaning of a word as it is used at any particular time and place. Furthermore, a metaphysical account of the person does not particularly provide an insight into the Akan understanding of the moral constitution of the person as end and agent. Therefore, a different approach is offered here that seeks to interpret the various elements of the Akan self *relationally* within the limits of their accepted meanings. This approach sets in relief the Akan understanding of the different moral connections or contexts of the person.

## **2.2.2 ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION**

### **2.2.2.1 ORIGIN IN GOD (*OKRA* AND *NKRABEA*)**

An important Akan proverb states, “*All human beings are the children of God, none is the child of the earth*”. (Opoku 1997: 11 (No. 41)). For an Akan each person has his fundamental origin in God. At the heart of each person is his divine soul, his *okra* that is really a spark of the divine (Danquah 1944: 111-113; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 71-73). Hidden within the *okra* is the individual’s destiny from God; his *nkrabea* or message from God that he must discover and endeavour to fulfil in the course of his life<sup>5</sup> (Danquah 1944: 113-115; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 74-76; Gyekye 1987:107-112). After death the *okra* returns to God to give account of itself and, eventually, be re-united with the divine essence from which it came.

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<sup>5</sup> Gyekye disagrees with Danquah’s claim that the Akan have a concept of double destiny: a person’s destiny being set by both God and their soul. Gyekye has three grounds for objecting to this: - it contradicts proverbial evidence which only speaks of God’s destiny being unchangeable; Akan myths give no indication that individuals are able to choose the circumstances of their lives; the idea of a double destiny makes no logical sense, especially if the soul is entering an unknown state of existence. It makes much more sense if God chooses the soul’s destiny and it is this view that Gyekye finds that his field research supports. (Gyekye 1987: 112-114) However, if Gyekye’s contention is true, that God makes an immutable decision concerning each person’s destiny, little room is left for personal responsibility and little point in the individual’s moral and spiritual quest as its outcome has already been determined. The sense of purpose and endeavour encountered in the Akan tradition that is presented in these pages would tend to favour Danquah’s opinion over that of Gyekye.



#### **2.2.2.2 ORIGIN IN THE *EBUSUA* (*MOGYA*)**

The majority of the Akan peoples follow a matrilineal pattern of inheritance so that inheritance and family identity proceed through the female line rather than the male line. Thus the *mogya* or blood a person receives from his mother defines a person's social identity and relationships. The community to which they belong, and which forms them, is the *ebusua* or matrilineal clan. The *ebusua* assumes responsibility for the nurturing, well being and guidance of each one of its members and each in return has the responsibility to build up the *ebusua* and seek the welfare of their matrikin (Ephirim-Donkor: 1997: 27-47).

#### **2.2.2.3 PATERNAL ORIGIN (*NTON*, ROOTS OF PERSONALITY)**

Akans believe that each person receives *nton*, spirit or energy from their father. This means that they stand under the spiritual protection of their father's spirit when children. Disobedience to one's father, then, is spiritually dangerous, as this would remove a person from the covering of his father's spirit. Even in later life it is believed that any rift with one's father is an obstruction to prosperity in life. The influence of the father's spirit is so powerful that it defines the personality traits of the individual since the personality (*sunsum*) of the father is also the personality of the child until the child matures sufficiently for his own fully developed *sunsum* or personality to become independent of his father. This influence of the father over his children would seem to be the reason behind his right to name his children (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 39-53).

#### **2.2.2.4 THE ROOTS OF THE SELF**

In Akan metaphysics it seems that the self is formed through its social and religious connections. While Akans place a strong emphasis upon the individual, the individual person has no autonomous existence but is defined theistically in terms of his moral purpose in the world (*nkra-bea*), matrilineally in terms of his social identity and existence (*mogya*), and patrilineally in terms of his personality (*nton*). It would seem that a person only has existence within the conjunction of these three realities (Abraham 1962: 59-61; Wiredu 1996: 125-129, 157-161).

### 2.2.3 MORAL GROWTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION

Despite this Akans place great moral responsibility on each person for the development of his character. Each person is born good (Danquah 1944: 86-7; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 53-54, 71-73) and each person's clan and parents endeavour to form good character in their children by encouraging positive virtues as indicated by the following proverbs: "*If the yam does not grow well we should not blame it, it is due to the soil.*" and "*As the knife is, so is its sheaf.*" (Ackah 1988:52). It is for each person to build upon this positive legacy by continuing to grow in virtue by constructively living in the community and seeking its good. Thus if a person develops a bad character with a number of vices it is his own fault as he has undermined the start given him by God and society and is held responsible for what he has made of himself as indicated in the following proverb: "*One is not born with a bad "head," but one takes it on the earth.*" (Gyekye 1996: 65)<sup>6</sup> Likewise a person who had cultivated a good and honourable character is praised and held in high esteem. Consequently, each person has the duty to develop his *sunsum* so that it becomes weighty and virtuous through habituation. (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 107-110)

The Akan regard strong and virtuous character as the cornerstone of morality<sup>7</sup>. Social laws and rules by themselves are insufficient to produce good behaviour so each person must possess the virtues that will issue in positive actions and so be received as valued member of society (Gyekye 1987: 146-153). The moral life cannot be built upon weak character. In the words of another proverb: "*If you use grass for beams what can you place on top of them?*" (Ackah 1988: 60) For this reason particular attention is paid to the formation of a virtuous character in children and in adulthood people are encouraged to habituate virtues regarded as socially valuable (Ackah 1988: 106-107; Gyekye 1996: 65-66). Gyekye gives the following list of such virtues:

Now, what are some of the moral virtues (good character traits) that are particularly valued in the African moral life? The virtues mentioned here are

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<sup>6</sup> This proverb would tend to undermine Gyekye's contention against Danquah and Sarpong that the destiny of the individual is fixed, or at least fixed in a negative sense. The individual, and not God, is responsible for his character. There would appear to be a tension between divine predestination and human responsibility within the Akan tradition.

<sup>7</sup> Gyekye prefers the word *suban* "character", instead of Danquah's *obra* "conduct, behaviour", as the basic designation for ethics in the Akan philosophical tradition as Akan thinkers, he insists, when they discuss morality do so in terms of whether persons and their actions reflect a good (*pa*) or bad (*bōne*) character. The Akan understanding of ethics is closer to the Ancient Greek (*ethos* meaning "character" and *he ethike* "the science of character") Gyekye thus translates ethics into Akan as *suban ho nimdee* or *suban ho adwendwen*, "studies or reflections on character" (Gyekye 1987: 147-146).

not necessarily common to all African societies or stressed to the same degree. But any list of what are considered good character traits would include: probity, patience, kindness, fairness, humility, gratitude, moderation, temperance, generosity, contentment, hospitality, perseverance, trustworthiness, truthfulness and honesty, respect for older people, chastity before marriage, and faithfulness in marriage. Most of the moral virtues that are stressed are other-regarding; that is, the pursuit or practice of them has beneficial effects on other people, directly or indirectly. They are highly valued for their effect on the well-being of others. Even some moral virtues that might be considered self-regarding, or self-benefiting, such as contentment, moderation, and temperance (self-control), can benefit others, directly or indirectly: a content person, for example, is unlikely to steal from others or to commit some other act that is morally wrong. Thus, in terms of their beneficiaries, some self-regarding virtues may appropriately be considered “mixed”, for they do in the long run have other regarding benefits as well.

Such a perception of moral virtues that focuses, immediately or ultimately, on the well-being of others is surely linked to the social character of African ethics, itself animated by humanist and communal ethos of African society. (Gyekye 1996: 68)

Akans evaluate people by the objective fruit of their character: a person who acts virtuously is regarded as good and a credit to his family. One who acts viciously, on the other hand is regarded as a wicked person and a disgrace to themselves and their kin (Gyekye 1987: 146-153; Sarpong 1972: 41-42). In addition to this virtue is seen as the key to success in life as Akans believe that only those with strong (good) character (*subanpa*) will achieve their goals in life by staying the course (Ackah 1988: 60). Lastly, Akans also regard strong character as the basis of a stable and harmonious society (Ackah 1959: 179). Only if individuals are virtuous will society and the state function fairly and with justice. Only good individuals acting in concert can guarantee that the life of the community will be worthwhile. According to the proverb, “*The decline and fall of a nation begins in its homes*” (Gyekye 1996: 67).

#### **2.2.4 THE CONCEPT OF DESTINY IN THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION**

At the heart of the individual’s quest for moral growth is the discovery of their destiny or purpose in life. This destiny is hidden from the conscious self, the *sunsum*, in the *okra*, but the *sunsum* will be troubled and encounter all kind of obstacles in life if it follows a course at odds with its own fundamental destiny. Thus for his own well being the individual must discover the nature of his destiny and live it out within the context of the community (Danquah 1944: 113-115; Ephirim-Donkor 1997:107-116; Gyekye 1987: 107-112, 119-122). Ephirim-Donkor suggests that the community can help the individual discover him/her self

through the various rites of passage it provides, but in more obtuse cases the family will have to consult a traditional priest or diviner who has the power to question a person's *okra* to discover its *nkrabea* (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 110-112).

### 2.2.5 THE QUEST OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO LIVE WELL

The moral quest of the individual is made up of three interrelated tasks that arise from his origins. He has to live as a full member of his *ebusua* furthering its interests and fulfilling his obligations towards it (Ackah 1988: 121; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 27-47; 107-110). He must develop a strong and virtuous *sunsum* in order to positively realise the potential of his paternity (Danquah 1944: 115-119; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 39-54; Gyekye 1987: 146-153). Lastly, he must discover and realise his *nkrabea* (Danquah 1944: 113-115; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 110; Gyekye 1987:119-122). These three tasks are necessary aspects of the single moral task to live well. It is only through the community that one can develop virtue or discover one's destiny. Then again, only the virtuous person will really be able to serve the community both in representing the community and in guiding its development. One Akan proverb says: "*When virtue founds a town, the town thrives and abides*" (Gyekye 1996: 67). However, if one does not discover one's destiny all of these efforts will be frustrated as one cannot act against one's destiny. As another proverb insists "*God's destiny (assigned to you) cannot be changed*" (Opoku 1997 No. 13). The nature of a person's destiny in Akan thought is not clear. Some traditions suggest that one chooses a destiny for oneself (Gyekye 1987: 112-114). Other traditions suggest that God may have given a person a bad destiny (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 74-76) (in which case whatever one does, one's life will be wretched). A further group of traditions indicate that destiny consists in living up to the standard set by the ancestors in some particular way so that one might ultimately join their number (Danquah 1944: 83-84, 113-123; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 140). This last interpretation finds support in proverbial wisdom: "*I am doing the good [thing] so that my way to the world of the spirits might not be blocked*" (Gyekye 1996: 18-19). Perhaps it is truer to say that one qualifies to join the company of the ancestors by discovering and fulfilling, by virtuous effort, the purpose that one's soul has agreed with God or that God has assigned to one's soul (assuming that it is a positive destiny) rather than imitating the ancestors as such. After all, none of the ancestors were present when the soul agreed or received its mission from God ("*When one was saying farewell to (his) God nobody else was there.*") It is arguable that the position and authority of the ancestors themselves must rest in the fact that they are in the process of fulfilling the

divine purpose for their lives. This finds support in the Akan concept of re-incarnation in which a person continues to be reborn, usually into their own family, until they reach the degree of moral perfection that will qualify them to become part of the *nananom*. (community of elders and ancestors) (Danquah 1944: 82-3, 93-96; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 27-47, 59-60, 74-76, 136-141; Thomas 1981: 37-38, 38-39, 42).

## **2.3. THE MORAL PRACTICES OF THE AKAN PEOPLES**

### **2.3.1 IDENTIFYING MORAL PRACTICES**

Alasdair MacIntyre argued that a community's moral tradition would be made up of a number of *practices* that would lead to or support particular moral goals. If this is correct it should be possible to identify such a range of practices in the Akan moral tradition. Ackah who made an intense study of the moral behaviour of the Akan in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly of moral vocabulary and language, identified six standards or principles at the end of his study which he felt constituted the main substance of the Akan moral tradition: the 'family standard', the '*Nana* standard,' the 'standard of reciprocity', the 'standard of generosity', the 'aesthetic standard', and the 'marriage standard' (Ackah 1959: 216-230; 1988: 119-130). On closer examination these six standards all have the formal characteristics of MacIntyre's practices as they have one overall goal or good and a particular range of skills and virtues that sustain this good.

### **2.3.2 THE *EBUSUA* PRACTICE**

Ackah's first standard is the 'Family standard' (Ackah 1959: 216-218; 1988: 121 c.f. Gyekye 1996: 75-92).<sup>8</sup> By *family* Ackah means the Akan extended family or matrilineal clan (*ebusua*). This consists of those united by a single identifiable maternal bloodline with a common female ancestor and would consist of her children and the children of her daughters. Succession and inheritance, however, would not pass from mother to daughter but between brothers of the same mother and then on to their nephews. Property rights and prerogatives of authority, consequently, remain in the hands of the male members of the family, although the more elderly women of the family exercise a great influence over the affairs of the clan. Members of the clan are expected to manage the family resources in a way that benefits all. This means sharing in the raising of the family's children, finding employment that will raise

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of the framework of family relations and obligations within the legal traditions of the Fanti people see Sarbah 1968: 33-40.

the status of the family, increasing the range of financial resources available to it and the range of economic, educational, and social opportunities open to its members. Family members will also contribute to the needs of the family as a whole, especially toward educational, health, and funeral expenses of family members. Each member has the responsibility to maintain the harmony and unity of the family, to further its welfare, and to promote its good reputation. The virtues necessary to this range of activities are obedience, industriousness, patience, loyalty, ambition, dependability, gratitude, generosity, and integrity. The indolent, complacent, fractious, and selfish would meet with the disapproval of the family because they would be considered to have shirked their obligations and tarnished the name and reputation of the family. The overriding good of this practice is the continued life of the family in prosperity and noble reputation. This practice is also essential, as was indicated in section 2.1.2, to the Akan person's sense of moral identity and existence. The *ebusua* is the community to which one *belongs*. Existence within the *ebusua* will always have a different quality from existence in the wider community where one simply *lives* and has a different range of moral obligations. Hence the sentiment of this proverb: “A *child resembles his or her father, but he or she belongs to a family (ebusua)*” (Opoku 1997 No. 194).

### 2.3.3 THE NANANOM PRACTICE

#### 2.3.3.1 THE NANANOM PRACTICE DEFINED<sup>9</sup>

The *Nananom* standard is the second standard described by Ackah (Ackah 1959: 218-219; 1988: 121-122). Ackah describes two aspects of this practice. The first is observing the customs and wishes of the previous *nananom* of the *ebusua* who are now ancestors (Ackah 1959: 218-219; 1988:122). The Akan believe that the departed continue to live in *asamando*<sup>10</sup> a spiritual world similar to the temporal world, and parallel and connected to it at many points. The deceased are able to observe the affairs of the families and intervene in them when they are concerned. The ancestors have a deep interest in the affairs of their families and are concerned to ensure that they increase in numbers, prosperity and honour.

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<sup>9</sup> I use the term ‘*Nananom Practice*’ to describe the sense of fellowship between the community’s living elders and its departed elders who have become ancestors. The living elders look to the example and wishes of the ancestors to guide them in their leadership and decisions. The living elders do this in the hope that they will adequately fulfil their role and destiny and so join the community of ancestors themselves. *Nananom* is related to ‘*nana*’ which may be translated as ‘grandfather’ or ‘grandmother’. Grandchildren may also be called *nana* if they resemble a grandparent who is believed to have returned to the community of the living to complete their *nkrabea*.

<sup>10</sup> Also known in Fanti as *samanadze* which is reflected in Ephirim-Donkor’s usage.

They have supernatural powers that they will use for the sake of their descendants whom they will also chastise when they consider that they are betraying the best interests of the family. The living will be careful to honour the ancestors with prayers, libations, and gifts of food, but also by observing their customs and wishes. Consequently, tradition plays a very important part in the life of the family. The second aspect of this practice is that the ancestors are regarded as exemplars of moral behaviour whose example is to be followed as part of the way to the good life (Ackah 1988: 121). A third aspect of this practice, described by Danquah and Ephirim-Donkor, is the endeavour to become a *nana* and subsequently an ancestor oneself (Danquah 1944: 121-127; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 129-141). The basic qualifications to be regarded as an ancestor are to have married, produced children who will bear one in grateful memory, have lived an exemplary life, and died of natural causes. Danquah and Ephirim-Donkor appear to add two further qualifications. Firstly, that one achieves the status of an elder or *nana* (Danquah 1944: 120), and secondly, that one fulfils one's destiny (which includes becoming a *nana*) (Danquah 1944: 120; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 142-145). One becomes a *nana* by being selected by one's *ebusua* as the ruling elder (*ebusuapanyin*) of the family. Succession to leadership of the clan does not merely pass to the next eldest male. Rather the family is free to choose from among the men of the appropriate status and maturity. Ideally, they will nominate the man of the greatest wisdom and virtue (Danquah 1944: 121-123; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 118-120). To be invited to become the *ebusuapanyin* of one's family is thus a great honour as well as a position of great responsibility. To become the head of one's lineage also gives one a seat on the council of elders of one's town or village that will usually consist of several clans. This opens the way to further influence as one may then be among the kingmakers of the community, division and even state. This would give one influence over rulers appointed at these levels. Kings and provincial chiefs of Akan states are believed to represent the ancestors and speak for them, while the ancestors guide their decisions and those of their councils (Ackah 1959: 5-20; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 120-124). Ephirim-Donkor insists that Akans believe that those who reach such positions are already immortal. Elders mediate between the living community, the ancestors and God, and as such he asserts, they have already become spiritually powerful beings (Ephirim-Donkor 1997:124-127). Those who occupy any position as *nana* require good skills of psychological insight, mediation, persuasion and argument – requiring knowledge and insight into the use of the traditional wealth of proverbial wisdom,

reasonableness, and the virtues of justice, impartiality, compassion, integrity, and nobility (Danquah 1944: 123; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 124-127).

### 2.3.3.2 THE ROLE OF PRACTICAL REASON IN THE NANANOM PRACTICE

Proficiency in the Akan proverbial or wisdom tradition is a particularly important qualification for eldership. All elders, but particularly chiefs and linguists (*akyeame*),<sup>11</sup> are expected to be experts in this tradition as its use is an important element in discussions of the council of the community's leaders. (Ackah 1988: 49; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 120-124). The *ebusua* therefore will always seek those with a proven track record in their use of wisdom who will be a worthy and skilful representative for the family (Danquah 1944: 121).

The wisdom tradition, however, is much more than the recitation of proverbs and stories. The wisdom tradition is actually a continuing debate in practical reasoning concerning the good of the community with specific presuppositions and goals<sup>12</sup> as one proverb indicates: "*Wisdom is not like gold dust that should be tied up and put away*" (Ackah 1988: 27; Abraham 1962:71-72; Ackah 1959: 166-167; Gyekye 1996: 137, 142-143). Any given proverb, Gyekye insists, is the particular contribution of an individual thinker to the communal debate and incorporated into the collective tradition (Gyekye 1987: 24-29, 51-57, 1996: 141). As an oral tradition the Akan wisdom tradition does not give us the names of those thinkers who contributed to its formation nor the details of their arguments and debates. We have their summations and conclusions represented by their proverbs (Gyekye 1987: ix-xi).

The proficiency in the wisdom tradition required by elders requires a skill in practical reasoning rather than the mere ability to recite proverbs. Elders need to be able to apply proverbial wisdom to new problems in their debates and, if necessary, to find original

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<sup>11</sup> The Linguist or *okyeame* (plural *akyeame*) is the public spokesman for the traditional ruler and his council. The requirements of this post would require some facility in languages, but more so in the community's historical, proverbial and rhetorical traditions. In particular he must be conversant with the community's traditions of practical reason.

<sup>12</sup> Practical reasoning, expressed in aphorisms and proverbs seems to be a vital part of any culture's moral traditions. Gyekye argues that such practical reasoning is the beginning of philosophical discussion in any culture, including African cultures (Gyekye 1987: 13-29, 44-57 c.f. Wiredu 1996: 113-119). This judgment is confirmed by MacIntyre who shows in *Whose Justice; Which Rationality* (MacIntyre 1988) that practical reason seeks to move from value to action in the traditions he discusses according to their conception of justice (1-11, 124-145, 183-208, 260-280, 300-325, 346-369). A similar pattern may be discovered in the Akan tradition in which the leaders of the community seek the good of the community and its members within the context of the vital balance of the cosmic community that defines justice within the Akan tradition. Danquah also noted these same parallels in practical rationality and action between African and ancient European cultures (Danquah 1944: 123-127). This process of practical reasoning also conforms to the pattern of Benezet Bujo's '*Palaver*' Ethics discussed in 1.3.1.4.



solutions to those problems that will be summed-up in new proverbs reflecting innovative insight beyond that of their predecessors (Gyekye 1996: 163-167). This emphasis is indicated in the following sayings: “*Times change*” (Gyekye 1996: 166). “*The resting place of the ancients, we no longer rest there*”. (Gyekye 1996: 166). “*A person cutting a path does not know that the part that has been cleared behind him is crooked*” (Gyekye 1996: 167). True wisdom lies in being able to continue the tradition rather than in simply preserving it (Gyekye 1987: 3-24; Wiredu 1996: 114-119).

The ideal elder or *nana*, then, is not merely an elderly person with a good memory for proverbs, but a person, young or old, skilled in the community’s tradition of practical reason in *Palaver*. This is reflected in this proverb: “*Wisdom is not in the head of one person*” (Gyekye 1996: 144). Ideally, the community’s leaders should be practical moral philosophers. While there may be many who fall short of this ideal, both Wiredu and Gyekye insist that such identifiable moral philosophers have and do exist (Wiredu 1996: 114-119; Gyekye: 1987: 58-67). They are honoured with the title: *Nyansafo* (wise people) and are highly regarded and widely consulted by communities other than their own (Ackah 1988: 27). Insofar as the *Nananom* practice is related to the final purpose in life of each and every individual it is connected to the divine aspect of the human person. As the soul achieves its *nkrabea* it become fitted for the community of the ancestors and eventually for reunion with God.

### **2.3.4 THE PRACTICE OF *YI MA***

Ackah’s third standard is that of reciprocity (*yi ma* – receiving and giving) (Ackah 1959: 221-223; 988: 124-125 c.f. Gyekye 1996: 36-47, 63-64). The content of this practice are the numerous daily and mundane social exchanges that allow life in community to flow freely. This is illustrated by the following proverbs: “*The left arm washes the right arm and the right arm washes the left arm*” (Gyekye 1996: 37). “*The tortoise says: The hand goes and a hand comes*” (Gyekye 1996: 64). This would include obligations to one’s family but has a wider focus including neighbours and even strangers from other Akan communities. (Danquah 1951: 6-9). In rural communities this would be expressed in helping to build a neighbour’s house, helping to harvest each other’s crops, showing practical sympathy to the bereaved, cooperating in community projects, and in offering hospitality to travellers. In urban areas it would often mean a continuing watch and interest in the affairs of one’s neighbours (Ackah 1959: 174). The characteristic virtues of this practice would be respect and regard for others,

tolerance, interest and concern in the affairs of others, humility so that one might receive advice and gifts from others, gratitude, and generosity. The aim of this practice would be to develop a worthwhile life in the framework of community. This theme is the subject of a number of proverbs: “A man must depend for his well-being on his fellow man;” “Life is mutual aid” (Gyekye 1996:45). Akans would not consider that any truly human life would be possible outside of community as is indicated in two further sayings: “When a person descends from heaven, he ... descends into a human society...” (Gyekye 1996:36). “A person is not a palm-tree that he should be self-complete.”<sup>13</sup> (Gyekye 1996: 37).

### **2.3.5 THE PRACTICE OF OMA**

Discussion of the practice of reciprocity leads naturally to the consideration of Ackah’s fourth standard, that of generosity (*oma* - giving) (Ackah 1988:125). Ackah considers that acts of generosity to any one in need are typical of the Akan character and can range from individual gifts to endowments to the whole community. The Akans express this through another proverb: “It takes one man to kill an elephant, but it is a whole town that consumes it” (Ackah 1988: 51). Ackah argues that the roots of such behaviour are to be found in communal setting of the Akan home in which children are trained to treat each person present as a mother, father, brother, or sister with generosity and compassion. Having been raised in such a fashion, he suggests, Akan people come naturally to treat all people in this manner (Ackah 1959: 223-224). Ackah considers that generosity is the true root of reciprocity and its goal, quite simply, is love of all human beings. The love of humanity is a frequent theme in the Akan wisdom tradition: “It is the human being that counts; I call upon gold, it answers not; I call upon cloth, it answers not; it is the human being that counts.” (Gyekye 1996: 25) “Humanity has no boundary.” (Gyekye 1996: 27) “Any man is a friend to any other man.” (Ackah 1988: 111)

### **2.3.6 THE AHOOFE PRACTICE**

The *ahoofe* or aesthetic standard concerns beauty. In his linguistic studies Ackah found that Akans described as beautiful (*ahoofe*) anything that had pleasing form and served its purpose

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<sup>13</sup> The Akans regard a palm tree as being totally self-sufficient and therefore independent of any other creature.

well aside from things that they found beautiful<sup>14</sup> for their own sake (Ackah 1988: 26, 46-47, 123 c.f. Gyekye 1996: 125-133). In the proverbial tradition human beings are considered beautiful because of their uniqueness and intrinsic worth: “*A human being is more beautiful than gold*” (Opoku 1997 No. 45). Virtuous behaviour is also described as beautiful and appreciated when it serves well the ends of one of the practices of the Akan tradition or when virtue and goodness are appreciated for their own sake. A virtuous character and generous and noble acts are perceived as things of precious beauty and so Akans make this exhortation: “*Endeavour to develop a beautiful character*” (Ackah 1988:26). In contrast immoral and contemptible behaviour is described as ugly, and foul tasting (Ackah 1988: 123; Gyekye 1996: 132-133). It is important to the *ebusua* that the character and behaviour of each of its members be found beautiful by others because it reflects on their status and reputation (Ackah 1959: 170-171, 220-221; 1988: 48, 89-90). Such an affirmation is also important to the individual for it means that he is developing his own character in a positive way and growing in his own moral quest (Ackah 1988: 43; Gyekye 1987: 146-153; 1996: 65-70). Having said this the goal of this practice would seem to be goodness as an end in itself (Ackah 1959: 141-149; 1988: 111-112).

### 2.3.7 THE AWAR PRACTICE

Ackah's last standard is that of exogamy in marriage (*awar*) (Ackah 1988: 125-126).<sup>15</sup> Traditionally Akans have considered it essential to marry outside of the *ebusua* and the father's *nton* tradition. To marry someone who might be considered too closely related was felt to have serious biological and spiritual dangers that could lead to either physical deformity or to a harmful spiritual situation. However, this practice was also socially helpful to the *ebusua* as it brought new wealth into the family in the form of bride wealth, extended the relationships and connections of the family, and ensured that the family gained fresh spiritual energies. However, it was important that people married from within the matrilineal Akan peoples in order to preserve matrilineal inheritance. Exogamy serves the *ebusua* well and it might make greater sense to see it as part of the *ebusua* practice. (Ackah 1959: 5-20; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 27-47).

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<sup>14</sup> The Akan word for beauty *fe* has parallels with its Greek counterpart *kalos* in that it indicates an instrumental judgement of the value or utility of things and behaviour and things.

<sup>15</sup> For a legal perspective on marriage among the Fanti see Sarbah 1968: 41-57 and for a comparison between Fanti customary marriage law and Islamic marriage law see Buaben 1985.

Marriage in the wider sense, though, is such an important institution to the Akan that it could almost stand as a distinct practice by itself. It is seen as the normal state of life for all individuals (Gyekye 1996: 76-81).<sup>16</sup> The goal of most childhood training, especially of girls, is to prepare them for married life (Ackah 1988: 83-86; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 91-104). Men and women are not truly viewed as adults until they are married and have begun to tackle the tasks and challenges of life as husband and wife (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 112-116). Marriage too, is regarded as the proper setting for procreation so that children may be clearly entitled to receive a name from their father and be provided with the proper training and care from both parents that Akans believe to be necessary to prepare children for life (Gyekye 1996: 83-85; Ackah 1988: 79-80). Thus the Akans say: “[Parental] absence does not bring up a child” (Gyekye 1996: 85).

## **2.4 THE SUPREME GOOD OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION AND THE AKAN RELIGIOUS QUEST**

### **2.4.1 WHAT IS THE SUPREME GOOD OF THE AKAN TRADITION?**

Having, with Ackah’s assistance, described the practices of the Akan moral tradition it now remains to identify its supreme good which should be discernible from these practices if MacIntyre’s hypothesis about the nature of human morality is to have any veracity.<sup>17</sup> Ackah is helpful in this area as he attempts to discover which of his standards has the highest priority by the simple expedient of finding which standard prevails when there is a conflict between different standards. He found that in every case it was the family standard (Ackah 1988: 127-130). However, there is no unanimity among other commentators. Wiredu (Wiredu 1996 61-79) and Gyekye (Gyekye 1987: 143-146) both see the enhancement of human life through life in community as the overriding goal of Akan ethics and so they tend to define matters more in terms of the practice of reciprocity. For Ephirim-Donkor and Danquah the situation is less clear. Ephirim-Donkor sees the family as the matrix (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 4, 107-110, 124-127, 143-144) of moral practice but tends to see ‘ancestors’ as the final goal of the Akan moral quest: “We must understand that the ultimate goal in life is to lead the ideal life and become an ancestor.” (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 140). Danquah in one place quite plainly states, “What the Akan take to be the good is the family.” (Danquah 1944: ix). Like Ephirim-

<sup>16</sup> For this reason, both homosexuality and celibacy (as practiced by the Roman Catholic priesthood) are regarded as profoundly irresponsible practices that undermine the life of the community since they obstruct the expression of the life-force in a new generation.

<sup>17</sup> Note the discussion of MacIntyre’s tradition based approach to ethics in 1.2.4.

Donkor he sees ascension to the status of an ancestor as crucial to the Akan moral quest (Danquah 1944: 120-123) but he sees God (*Nyame*) as the supreme exemplar of the good (Danquah 1944: 152) in whom all humanity moves towards unity as one family or *ebusua* with *Nyame* as their single or great ancestor:

God, therefore, is conceived to be creator, the ultimate ancestor. As such He is head of the great *Abusua*, Family which, as we saw, is that for which the ethical good is good. Every human family is portion of the one Family which makes God a Head. (Danquah 1944: 183)

For this reason the Akan often refer to God as *Nana Nyame* ('Grandfather God').

Ephirim-Donkor and Danquah both seem to relate the supreme good of the Akan moral tradition to its religious dimension and so to resolve this question of the final goal of Akan morality it will be necessary to discuss the relationship between morality and religion in the Akan worldview.

#### **2.4.2 THE DEBATE ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND MORALITY**

Danquah in his seminal work *The Akan Doctrine of God* had suggested that Akan morality was largely based upon Akan traditional religion (Danquah 1944: 78-80) but a number of later significant students of Akan ethics have been severely critical of this assertion. Ackah makes a careful analysis of this issue in his work. He finds that religion touches upon ethics in three areas. Firstly, the ancestors watch over the family, guide its leaders, confer material benefits upon the people, and punish those who break the traditions they have established or who work against the good of the family (Ackah 1959: 218-219; 1988: 121-122). Secondly, religious rituals such as the pouring of libation to the ancestors at the *Adae* and *Akwambo* festivals give unity and solidarity to the community (Ackah 1959: 224-225). Thirdly, *Nyame* and his numerous subordinates, the *abosom* or divinities, abhor evil and will visit supernatural retribution upon evil doers who break the rules of the community, especially where these are taboos (Ackah 1988: 98-99). Ackah believes that the '*Nananom* standard' is really subordinate to the *ebusua* as the ancestors really seek the good of the family and so cannot be regarded as an independent (supernatural) source of values (Ackah 1959: 229-233; 1988: 131-134). Ackah says the same of the rituals surrounding the *Adae* festival (Ackah 1959: 233). They constitute no new set of values but only reinforce values already established by the practice of reciprocity in the community (Ackah 1959: 224-225). The only moral function that Ackah leaves to supernatural beings is that of providing sanctions against breaches of the

moral standards of the family and community (Ackah 1988: 131-134). In fact Ackah goes even further and claims that Akan traditional religion is not an independent source of moral values. Rather, it provides a way for the living human community to implore God, the deities, and the ancestors to provide them with material prosperity and protection from disease, misfortune, and spiritual and physical enemies (Ackah 1959: 232; 1988: 134).

It may, therefore, be concluded that the indigenous religion of the people has some relation to their morals, particularly in the role of departed ancestors as guardians of morality, but that the idea of obtaining material benefits with the help of the supernatural powers appears to be a more prominent purpose of this religion. (Ackah 1988: 133-134)

Wiredu and Gyekye make similar arguments to those of Ackah which seem to arise from a common secular emphasis.<sup>18</sup> Both argue that Akan ethics are humanistic ethics grounded in the life of the community and based upon a communitarian version of the categorical imperative (Wiredu 1996: 42-79). Wiredu appears to consider that the Akan are virtual materialists and atheists so that God and the ancestors are basically an irrelevance to a pragmatic and humanistic lifestyle (Wiredu 1996: 119-125).<sup>19</sup> Gyekye does affirm Akan

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<sup>18</sup> Ackah, Gyekye, and Wiredu all share a common attachment to Western empirical-analytical philosophy that appears to dispose them to a secular and humanistic emphasis in their ethics. This would tend to explain their scepticism concerning religion as a source of moral values and their rejection of any 'supernatural' realities. See the extended discussion on footnote 19 below.

<sup>19</sup> English and Hamme (1995) take issue with Wiredu's claim that Akan morality has a humanistic base by arguing that traditional Akan society had supernaturalist emphasis in at least three areas:

(1) Traditional Akans used beliefs about the authority and action of spiritual entities to an overwhelming extent in teaching and enforcing their moral principles. These beliefs were designed to influence people who typically viewed environmental order as fragile. The beliefs were meant to shape an individual's thought so that he or she could feel at peace with ever-present spiritual entities only if he or she cooperated in maintaining social harmony. This meant obedience to extant moral principles. (2) As successors to departed leaders, traditional chiefs (especially the *Asantehene*) were regarded as the living humans most able to intercede with spiritual entities for general social welfare. This was a primary source for the secular, political power of traditional chiefs. (3) By virtue his apparent success in contacting spiritual entities, Komfo Anokye, had the secular power to destroy the most important symbols of political authority in the Akan member states, their royal regalia. Likewise, he had the authority to present the seventy-seven laws that served as the basis of traditional Akan moral thought. English and Hamme (1995: 414-415)

English and Hamme's first point reflects the supernatural sanctions of Akan morality already noted by many scholars including Wiredu, however, their third point indicates a supernatural source of moral and social values and their second that these values are sustained by a cosmic community in which human communities and their leaders are a part. These authors consequently, broadly support the argument pursued in this chapter and rightly question the substance of Wiredu's assertions (English and Hamme 1995: 415-416).

In response to this Wiredu argues that English and Hamme have not understood the distinction that he makes between morality and custom and they confuse morality with custom. Some customs, Wiredu concedes, are indeed based upon the whims of "extra-human" beings but this is not morality as such - it only contains some elements of morality. He repeats his claim that Akans understood the difference between morality and custom and that their moral proverbs are evidence of this. Moreover, not all "Akan customs" were observed by all Akan peoples. Wiredu also insists that moral thought is the work of particular individuals and not of a whole

theism but stresses that it is a 'natural religion' that has no defining revelation and consequently no supernatural ethic based upon divine command (Gyekye 1987: 68-76).<sup>20</sup> He also disparages the role of ancestors seeing ancestor veneration and the entrenched tradition it perpetuates as major obstacle to moral progress (Gyekye 1996: 167-168).

In contrast to this Ephirim-Donkor affirms Danquah's view and locates Akan moral practice very firmly within the Akan religious quest that begins with the divine origin of the person and ends with the home of the human spirit in the ancestral community (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 3-9, 141-149). How is one to choose between these divergent opinions? Perhaps the difference lies in the presuppositions of their research. Ackah, Wiredu, and Gyekye all seek the sources of Akan ethics but because of their secular and humanistic assumptions do not pay particular attention to the wider worldview in which this ethical tradition functions. In contrast, both Danquah and Ephirim-Donkor are open to the role of transcendent realities. This openness allows them to take a broader view and to uncover the spiritual framework and roots of Akan ethics. In so doing they appear to have discovered the basic coherence of the Akan moral tradition that only appears as a whole when viewed from a religious perspective.

## **2.4.3 THE RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK OF AKAN MORALITY**

### **2.4.3.1 THE MORAL POSITION OF THE PERSON**

The moral position and quest of the individual for the Akan make greater sense if viewed from a religious perspective. First of all the value of the human person rests upon a religious foundation. It is because all human beings are children of God and share a spark of the divine that they are valued as moral ends. Both Wiredu and Gyekye (Wiredu 1996: 157-161; Gyekye 1996: 150-151) believe that this forms the basis of human rights for the Akan. It entails that individuals cannot be sacrificed for the good of the community and that each person is equal whatever their status or rank, and whether they belong to the Akan community

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community in its customs. Wiredu stresses that he recognises that supernaturalism is only one strand in Western thinking, but it is particularly Western as the distinction between natural and supernatural does not exist in Akan thought. He argues that Akan scholars who do accept the existence of "spiritual" beings in the Akan cosmos have been subverted by Western (colonial) culture in their thinking (Wiredu 1996:191-200).

English and Hamme show, from their survey of Akan symbols and rituals, that Ashanti culture (at least) was defined as a whole by supernaturalism and that it is very difficult to separate 'morality' from 'custom' in the way that Wiredu suggests (Hamme and English 1995: 410-414). Secondly, Wiredu is unable to cope with evidence of the role of 'supernatural' beings in Akan morality and his only response is to plead a curious monism and to impugn the intellectual integrity of those who disagree with him. It cannot be said that Wiredu has successfully defended his position.

<sup>20</sup> In saying this Gyekye overlooks the role of divination in Akan religion, especially where this involves relationships between the living human community and the 'cosmic' community of ancestors and deities.

or not. The instance of these scholars that Akan ethics is non-religious lacks credibility in the light of their recognition of the theistic basis of human rights in Akan thought. Akan ethics may be humanistic but the reason that it values human beings and seeks their good through the communal life is because in the Akan tradition they are regarded as children of God. “*All human beings are children of God; no one is a child of the earth*” (Gyekye 1996: 190). Akan humanism is thus a religious humanism and, by extension, it should surely be recognised that Akan ethics are also religious in the same manner.

The individual is also constituted as a moral agent through Akan traditional religion. Akans consider that each person has the God given responsibility to discover and fulfil his *nkrabea*. (Danquah 1944: 113-115; Gyekye 1987: 114-122; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 74-76). The only way in which this may be done is through the moral life by developing the character, conscience, creativity, and maturity of one’s *sunsum* and by participation in the life of the community. To fulfil his full potential in life an individual must become a responsible moral agent fully involved in the affairs of the community (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 107-110). Secondly, those who may be influenced by thoughts of the afterlife will seek to fulfil the moral standards and examples set by the ancestors in order to be able to join their number in *asamando*. Akan traditional religion thus plays an important part in constituting individuals both as moral ends and as moral agents (Danquah 1944: 121-123; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 110-112, 129-130). In the light of these considerations the assertion that the root of Akan ethics are wholly secular becomes a little difficult to sustain.

#### **2.4.3.2 THE MORAL POSITION OF THE ANCESTORS: THE HUMAN COMMUNITY AND THE COSMIC COMMUNITY**

It is arguable that Akan traditional religion plays a similar role in the moral life of the community. Against this Ackah contends that the sanctions that the supernatural beings provide against evil acts are sub-moral because ‘truly’ moral behaviour is produced only by inner disinterested motivation (Ackah 1959: 239-240; 1988: 111-112).<sup>21</sup> In addition to this the petitions offered to the Supreme Being, the divinities, and the ancestors are said to be devoid of moral content as they seek only material blessings and physical and spiritual protection (Ackah 1988: 131-134).

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<sup>21</sup> This emphasis may well betray a Kantian bias on the part of Ackah. The difficulties of this position are thoroughly discussed in 1.2.7.2.



The first difficulty with Ackah's perspective is that it represents a truncation of the moral community to the community of living human beings, whereas to the traditional Akan the moral community would most probably have included the ancestors, the divinities, the spiritual forces that inhabit nature, as well as God (Assimeng 1999: 41-48). The exclusion of these supra-mundane beings in this manner is further evidence of a secularist bias in Ackah's thought, as it is hard to explain this omission on any other grounds. Additionally, Akan people would probably regard God, the divinities, and the ancestors as moral ends and agents in a manner similar to human beings. Thus when supra-mundane beings visit punishments upon those damaging the life of the community by their acts or omissions it is a *moral* action parallel to that of living human rulers when they pass sentence on an offender in order to preserve the life of the community (Assimeng 1999: 48-55). Moreover, material blessings are moral goods in so far as they enhance the life of the family and the community (Danquah 1944: 90; Gyekye 1996: 18-19). The supra-mundane beings are petitioned to fulfil their moral responsibilities and duties to the family and community just as the elders of the *ebusua* and community would call upon their members to fulfil their obligations to their relatives and neighbours in order that all might live the good life (Gyekye 1996: 14-18; Wiredu 1996: 42-60).<sup>22</sup> In the Akan worldview it seems that the supra-mundane beings should thus be understood as contributing to, and included in, the well being of the community as moral agents and ends themselves (Gyekye 1987: 135-138). It is not merely the balance and harmony of the human beings that have to be considered but also that of the cosmic community (Assimeng 1999: 51-55). Thus ancestors have the task of mediating between the human community and the cosmic community in a similar way that they mediated between individuals and families when they were elders in human communities. For this reason libations are poured at any family, community, or state functions to welcome the ancestors and to invite them to be part of the moral deliberations (Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 139-140). God rules over the cosmic community seeking to draw all into the just and good life and uses the divinities, ancestors and natural forces to achieve this end (Abraham 1962: 48-59; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 69-71).

Akan ethics have been described as "rationalist," that is to say they work deductively from metaphysical beliefs to particular actions, especially with regard to taboos. This means that it

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<sup>22</sup> Both Wiredu (Wiredu 1996: 42-60) and Gyekye (Gyekye 1987: 68-76, 138-143) describe the *moral role* played by the divinities but fail to make the connection that in playing such roles the divinities are *de facto* moral agents as far as the Akan worldview is concerned.

is more likely that an Akan will allow his beliefs in the wishes of the ancestors and the taboos of the divinities to govern his moral actions rather than act pragmatically (Abraham 1962:106-107; Sarpong 1972: 43). This also means that the supernatural beings are taken as real members of the moral community for Akan people and so they have a profound influence upon their behaviour in ways analogous to that of influential human members of the community (Abraham 1962: 46-51; Sarpong 1972: 41; Opoku 1974: 8).

These considerations tend to indicate that the Akan moral community ought also to be regarded as a religious community and that the two cannot really be separated (Vecsey 1981: 161-164).

#### **2.4.3.3 THE SUPREME GOOD OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION: THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY**

What then is the supreme good of the Akan moral tradition? In the light of the discussion in the previous section this good cannot be defined too narrowly. If it is the *ebusua*, the living dead and even the unborn must be included along with the living. If it is the well-being produced by the community this must be that of the cosmic community and not just that of the human community. A common thread in both of these moral goals is the harmony, balance or justice, and prosperity necessary for maintaining and enhancing either the life of the family or community. In the Akan social and religious order it was the task of the elders and ancestors (who had previously been elders) to establish these values in the community. The *Nana* as both elder and ancestor sought to preserve and enhance the things most valued by the Akans. In fulfilling this task the *Nana* seems to have become a symbol of these prized goods (Vecsey 1981:165). In the light of this it becomes easy to understand how eldership became the most highly regarded role in Akan society and the ancestors exalted as exemplars of the good. It does seem that the “*Nananom* practice” embraces the values that are the goals of the other major practices of the Akan moral tradition in such a way that one might tentatively identify the *Nananom* as the highest good of Akan society.

### **2.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS**

#### **2.5.1 IDENTIFYING POINTS OF CONNECTION AND TENSION**

As Christianity became established in the Akan lands the Akan moral tradition encountered and interacted with the Christian moral tradition in its various forms. What interaction took

place between the Akan tradition and this ‘alien’ tradition? Did any synthesis between Akan and particular expressions of the Christian tradition arise from this interaction resulting in the formation of a new moral tradition that could be regarded as both Akan and Christian? To assist in answering these questions it would be helpful to map the different points of possible connection or tension between these traditions. The purpose of this exercise is to identify the likely areas in which the two traditions might connect with each other because of similarity of concern, perspective, and purpose or where they might be in tension because of serious divergences in these areas. This review may give clues as to the *likely* shape of a possible synthesis between Christian and Akan traditions that can serve as a guide for identifying such a synthesised tradition.

## **2.5.2 POINTS OF CONNECTION AND TENSION IN AKAN MORAL PSYCHOLOGY**

### **2.5.2.1 THE OKRA**

The Akan believe that each person has a divine origin in that they carry a spark of the divine within themselves. The idea of a divine origin of the human person finds a ready parallel in the Hebrew and Christian idea of the *imago Dei* in which human beings are akin to their creator usually in the areas of personhood, creativity, and moral agency. For both traditional Akan and for Christians this divine origin is the basis of the value and rights of individual persons. However, the Christian understating of humanity differs from the Akan conception of the relationship between humanity and God. Christians generally see human beings as creatures, distinct from their creator; sharing many of His attributes but not any part of his essential being. The Akan, on the other hand, believe that human beings do share aspects of God’s essential nature.

### **2.5.2.2 THE NKRABEA**

The Akan belief in *nkrabea* finds a counterpart in the Christian doctrine of election that is particularly strong in Reformed traditions. Election includes not only predestination to salvation (or perdition) but also to specific areas of service. Finding one’s proper vocation in life has been as much an issue for many Christians, especially Protestant Christians, as discovering one’s destiny has been for the Akan. One area of challenge to any interaction between Akan and Christian moral traditions is the Christian idea of original sin. Akans believe that the *okra* is essentially good and remains so even if the *sunsum* embraces vice and

evil behaviour. The result is that the human self is principally in spiritual conflict with itself rather than separated from God by a sinful nature (Danquah 1944: 82-87; 1951: 14; Ackah 1959: 214-215; 1988: 60; Gyekye 1987: 146-153). It is always possible for a person to change his conduct and seek virtue and so restore his spiritual harmony. This seems to be the thrust of the following proverb: “*If you do good, you do it for yourself*” (Ackah 1988: 60). Christians emphasise the necessity of being reconciled with God and of God’s forgiveness and grace if the sinful nature is to be overcome (Thomas 1981: 37-38, 43-44). However, even with grace the transformation of a person’s nature is a slow and difficult process unless one admits of a “second work of grace” as in the Wesleyan tradition. While for Christians the priority lies on the divine rather than human initiative there are points of connection between Christian and Akan ideas of divine grace. The Akan are deeply aware of the fragility and limitations of human life and believe that nothing can be accomplished without the blessing and assistance of the creator God. This is expressed in the common response to greetings *Nyame Nadom* – ‘By the grace of God;’ in the request in the pouring of libation at funerals for *adom* (grace) and *bonfakye* (forgiveness) and even in the popular slogan often seen on vans and trucks ‘Unless God!’ ‘*Gye Nyame!*’ While the Akan believe that human beings are essentially good they also see them as weak and flawed. This means that, in practical terms, the Akan concept of grace is not too distant from Christian ideas. This would be especially the case with the Methodist tradition with its different understanding of the effects of original sin and its greater emphasis on the capacity of human beings to respond to the divine grace.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.5.2.3 THE *MOGYA*

A person’s *mogya* or blood is his inheritance from his mother and defines his social identity through his mother’s line of descent. While most Christian moral traditions have developed within cultures characterised by patrilineal customs of inheritance, succession and identity, and reflect this in their moral practices, it is hard to think of coherent reasons why a Christian moral tradition should not flourish in a matrilineal culture also. Virtually all Christian moral

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<sup>23</sup> While the Methodist tradition accepted the Augustinian belief that original sin led to the total depravity of human beings they did not share Augustine’s conclusion that human beings are unable to respond to divine grace and that only a limited progress in sanctification was possible before death. On the contrary, Methodism taught that while human nature was corrupted it the capacity to freely respond to God’s justifying grace and to attain an ‘entire’ sanctification (in which a person would act only out of love) before death was possible on the basis of prevenient grace (Taylor 1948: 164-171; Dunning 2003: 50-61). Reference should be made to the discussion of Wesley’s anthropology in 3.2.1.1 below.

traditions would also affirm the solidarity and dependence of children upon their mother that is expressed in the Akan idea of *mogya*.

#### **2.5.2.4 THE *NTON***

The observation that children share the personality traits of their parents is common place around the world but the Akan concept of the *nton* or spirit that one inherits from one's father goes further than this by insisting that the moral characteristics of the father is determinative of those of his children. This, too, need not be problematic from a Christian perspective unless the spiritual influence of the spirit of a father were to be perceived as rivalling or obstructing that of the Holy Spirit in the moral re-formation of the human person. If the father's influence were interpreted as one of authority over his children then the concept of *nton* would find broad acceptance in certain Charismatic Christian moral traditions that place a great emphasis on male "headship" and "covering". On the other side Akans may well find Christian suggestions that a person should seek to develop personal traits in imitation of Christ that might differ from those of his father and his *nton* succession to be in tension with paternal identity. Unless, perhaps, it is seen that God in Christ has now become the person's 'father' or ancestor.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.5.3 POINTS OF CONNECTION AND TENSION IN AKAN MORAL PRACTICES**

#### **2.5.3.1 THE *EBUSUA* PRACTICE**

Most Christian moral traditions would affirm the close and supportive family network formed by the Akan *ebusua* that encourages the highest standard of behaviour in its members, spurs them onto the highest achievements, and expects the highest degree of mutual obligations. However, the prior loyalties required by the *ebusua* may be problematic to Christians as the fraternity they would feel should be shown toward fellow Christians and to all human beings are sometime challenged by those that are traditionally reserved for one's maternal kin. In recent years Christians have been outraged by the manner in which a man's *ebusua* would abuse the customs concerning inheritance and appropriate all of his property upon his death, even those things his wife and he produced together, leaving his wife and his children

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<sup>24</sup> This would make sense as *nton* is a spiritual rather than a physical succession. This is also probably the reason that the *Akabohas* of the Musama Disco Christo Church (The Army of the Cross of Christ, an Akan African Initiated Church that emerged out of the Methodist Church in Ghana in the 1930s) follow a patrilineal pattern of succession rather than the matrilineal that is usually common among the Akans. (Asante-Antwi 1980: 102-109)

destitute. However, this is an abuse of the traditional system which has equally offended many traditionally minded Akans as it is the responsibility of the *ebusua* to care for the widow and children of one of their deceased male relatives (Mensah-Sarbah: 41-64; 100-113).<sup>25</sup> On the Akan side, the Christian demand that a person should not give the *ebusua* his final loyalty could well be perceived as weakening the fabric of family life and as a discouragement to family members fulfilling their family responsibilities. Yet, there is no reason why the Akan *ebusua* rooted in faith, could not be a vehicle for the development of Christian virtue and leadership just like any family structure..<sup>26</sup> There is already a convergence here with those Christian moral traditions that place a great emphasis on nurturing groups, such as the Methodist Class Meeting, as both seek to cultivate the potential and virtue of their members.

### 2.5.3.2 THE NANANOM PRACTICE

The sense of care, responsibility, openness, accountability, probity, and dignity that are among the virtues of leadership enshrined in the *Nananom* practice are equally valued in the practice of leadership in the Christian church. Both traditions value high standards of virtue and performance in their leaders. On the other hand, many, especially Protestant Christians, while appreciating and embracing much of Akan custom and traditional wisdom, find the dependence of Akan elders upon the *living* community of ancestors a stumbling block. Many traditionally minded Akan also find the rejection of the community of the ancestors by Christians, and especially Akan Christians, as a denial of the identity of the Akan as a spiritual community. However, there are possible points of convergence with the *Nananom* practice in the Christian tradition. The first is in the communion of saints and the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ of the ancestors of the Christian faith (Heb. 12:1); this is generally the approach

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<sup>25</sup> Buaben reports that in Fanti customary law heirs (usually maternal nephews) inherit obligations as well as property and the *ebusua* supervise his exercise of these responsibilities. The heir thus has responsibility to discharge all the debts of the deceased. He also has to assume the responsibilities that the deceased had toward his wife and children. These include ensuring that they are housed, clothed and fed. He would have to act as a father toward the deceased’s children ensuring that they had an occupation to support themselves, and arranging their marriages. This gives the wife and children of the deceased some limited rights of inheritance which consist in the right of accommodation in the deceased’s house and the right to work the land that they had worked with their husband or father. (Buaben 1985:101-108) Furthermore, anything that the widow obtained through her own independent efforts remained hers (Buaben 1985:107-108) and any gifts that the husband and father gave to his wife and children from his personal property (as opposed to family property) also remains theirs provided this is done with the knowledge of the family. (Buaben 1985:108-112)

<sup>26</sup> My field research presented in Chapter Five suggests that this is exactly what has happened, especially in the case of the *ebusua* of Methodist ministers from royal lineages.

of the Catholic Church (Brosnan 1988: 62).<sup>27</sup> The second is in regarding Jesus as the Ancestor of those who have faith and whose wisdom is the basis of a new tradition and whose living presence and guidance is the true authority of all Christian leaders (Bediako 1995: 223-230).<sup>28</sup>

### **2.5.3.3 THE PRACTICES OF *YI MA*, *OMA*, AND *AHOOFE***

There is scarcely any Christian moral tradition that would not affirm these practices and indicate parallels in Christian fraternity, service, and charity. Akans, however, might well wonder why Christians, especially Western Christians, do not engage in these practices more wholeheartedly. In particular the lack of moral beauty among many Christians is a moot point, especially in the light of whom they profess to represent. This represents a point of critical interface as these are practices prized by both Akan and Christian moral traditions and the Akan tradition is well placed to present a critique of Christian implementations of these practices and to furnish models and examples worthy of emulation by Christian traditions (Ackah 1959:213). However, a possible area of Christian critique is the exclusivism with which reciprocity is sometimes practised. Strangers and foreigners who seek to join a community or settle within its geographical space are frequently pushed to the margins (Danquah 1951: 8-9, 14). However, such cases are contradictions of the most prized values and virtues of the Akan tradition in which “*humanity has no boundary*” and “*Man’s brother is man*” (Gyekye 1996: 190). Moreover, Christians are also guilty of such lapses when they limit their generosity to those of their own denominations and religion.

### **2.5.3.4 THE PRACTICE OF *AWAR***

#### **2.5.3.4.1 *EXO*GAMY**

Some Christian moral traditions have their own practices of biological exogamy but these are arguably just as much products of local culture as the Akan practice. Of greater consequence is the instance of Christian traditions upon marriage within the Christian community often across ethnic boundaries. The limitation to taking Akans as marriage partners might well occasion actual conflict. However, Akans would see marriage within the Akan people groups as essential to preserving the *ebusua*, one of the fundamental pillars of the Akan way of life.

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<sup>27</sup> The Sierra Leonian Anglican theologian Fashole-Luke has also equated the ancestors with the communion of saints (Fashole-Luke 1974).

<sup>28</sup> Bujo has developed the Christ/ancestor symbol (1992 and 2001). This paradigm was also reflected among the Christian traditional rulers interviewed as of the field research for this dissertation.

Any Akan Christian tradition would be unlikely to positively encourage its members to marry outside of the Akan ethnic community although it would, most likely, encourage them to marry other Christian Akans. Even so it is hard to see how such a practice could be absolved of the charge of ethnocentricity moreover if emphasis is placed upon the creation of a *Christian ebusua* then the preservation of the tradition of faith rather than of ethnic identity becomes primary. This is also an area in which Christian practice can be questioned as sometimes denominational differences become obstructions to a choice of marriage partner.

#### **2.5.3.4.2 POLYGAMY**

Polygamy was widely practiced in rural areas among the Akan in the early twentieth century for economic and social reasons (Ackah 1959: 225-227). While churches promoted monogamy and colonial legislation discriminated against polygamy it was hard, even for Christians, to adopt monogamy while these conditions persisted. However, as economic circumstances have changed the practice of monogamy has increased and it is now the preferred and more highly regarded form of marriage among the Akan (Ackah 1959: 211-213). Despite the fact that Christian teaching has clearly influenced and modified Akan practice in this area polygamy still persists and the old rules that prohibit polygamous men from becoming or remaining Church members if they have more than one wife are still enforced.<sup>29</sup>

#### **2.5.3.4.3 BRIDEWEALTH**

As Akan and Christian traditions interact one might also expect a discussion over bride wealth. Akans never regarded bride wealth as the fee for buying a wife but as a sign of appreciation and gratitude to his betrothed's family for the gift of their daughter. It also served as a guarantee that a women's suitor would not simply abandon her and renege on his responsibilities (Gyekye 1996: 76-83; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 112-116). However, in more recent times some families seem to set the bride wealth so high that it becomes an impediment to a properly recognised marriage.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> One traditional ruler who I interviewed had been a very active Methodist layman but once he took a wife 'for the stool' (i.e. for his position as ruler) he was removed from the membership list of the Society and denied Communion.

<sup>30</sup> The reasons for high bridewealth in many African societies are complex. Factors effecting the level of bridewealth may include the general economic situation, the relative statuses of the bride and groom, their different economic potential in terms of their education and profession, the character of the groom and his family, the kind of relationship that the groom desires to have with his bride when they are married. (Muller



## 2.5.4 CONNECTIONS AND TENSIONS IN THE RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION

### 2.5.4.1 THE QUEST OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Akan person is committed to a religious and moral quest within the context of his or her family and community. The information provided by Danquah and Ephirim-Donkor in particular suggests that this quest has two parts. Firstly, to discover and fulfil one's particular destiny (Danquah 1944: 82-83; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 74-76, 110), and, secondly, to aspire to become a *nana* and eventually an ancestor (Danquah 1944: 107-109; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 124-127, 129-130, 143-144). Both of these tasks require the development of the individual's *sunsum* in terms of wisdom, character, and conscience. Much of this quest would be compatible with Christian goals of spiritual formation and discipleship. However, traditionally minded Akans could see the idea of original sin and the general rejection of any form of rebirth found in most Christian traditions as impediments to their quest. Akans believe in moral perfectibility and that each person has a God-given responsibility to strive for such perfection (or beauty). The insistence of some Christian traditions upon sin and human helplessness is seen as undermining this task as they render much moral effort futile and even

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1978; Mulder 1995; Bell and Song 1994) Bridewealth can also provide evidence that the groom is a responsible adult and that he and his family can support the bride and her future children (Reyna 1984) (as, perhaps, in Jacob's case when he was required to work for fourteen years for the hand of each of his wives (Gen. 29:15-30)). The practice of bridewealth among the Fanti could be interpreted similarly. The suitor and his family make a number of graduated donations to the bride's family that mark different milestones in the courting process. In each case the donation is symbolic of an agreement between the individuals and families involved. The beginning of courting is marked by *anobuensa* (mouth opening drink) paid by the suitor to the bride's father whose acceptance of the gift represents his agreement for the suitor to court his daughter. The gift for the next stage, the 'engagement is *tsinsa* (head-drink) which is paid by the suitor's father to father of bride and indicates a commitment to proceed with the marriage with the approval of both families. Several further gifts are presented on the occasion of the marriage itself; *abowmu bodze* (knocking fee) paid by the suitor to gain permission for his wedding party to enter the house; *tsiadze* (bridewealth) paid by the suitor to seal the marriage legally (if the marriage breaks down this is returned to the groom); *tamboba* (gift to the mother); *bowdotowa* (gift to the father); *akotan sekan* (brother-in-laws's knife) gift paid to brothers in recognition of their power of protection over their sister. (Buaben 1985:71-74) All of these payments are symbolic of the agreements made between the individuals and families at the different stages of the courtship. In Fanti culture agreements were often confirmed with payments of small amounts of money, usually to buy drinks that would be consumed to seal the agreements. In no wise were these payments regarded as the selling or purchase of a bride. Traditionally, such an idea is abhorrent to the Akan who regarded themselves, whether men or women, as freeborn. Moreover, Akan women generally held a higher status than in some other African cultures in that they had an independent economic status and they and their families could initiate divorce proceedings if they were unhappy. Quashie insists that these gifts were always modest, especially in the case of wealthy and educated families. (Quashie 2002: 59-62) The heavy payments required in more recent years may have come about through various forces of modernism and globalisation that Quashie describes in which families find themselves in precarious financial circumstances and women found themselves reduced to the status of docile commodities through a growing patriarchalism, partly arising from Christian teaching as well as Enlightenment rationalism (Quashie 2002:72-104). These influences are, of course, at odds with traditional practices and their intent.

irrelevant.<sup>31</sup> Having said this other Christian traditions such as the Anglican, Methodist, Catholic and Orthodox stress other New Testament texts that emphasise the believer's responsibility to respond to the divine grace and grow into 'the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13) which have a far greater empathy for the Akan insistence on the need for each person to take responsibility for their moral and spiritual development. This would be especially true of Methodism with its emphasis on holiness and 'Christian Perfection'.

The rejection of rebirth also seems unjust to traditional Akans as individuals are deprived of the opportunity to compensate for their moral deficiencies with further experiences of life and therefore may never finally discover and fulfil their destinies as this enterprise may take several lifetimes (Danquah 1944: 82-84; Ephirim-Donkor 1997: 74-76). Worst of all, the possibility of becoming an ancestor is denied altogether in many Protestant Churches.<sup>32</sup> However, the quest to become an ancestor does find a counterpart in the quest for holiness and perfection through the enabling of the Holy Spirit that exists in some Christian traditions.

#### **2.5.4.2 NYAME**

Akans have a monotheistic understanding of *Nyame*, the Supreme Being whom they understand as the creator, judge, saviour, and provider who is good and loving, who encourages the good among human beings, and punishes the wicked and unjust. This understanding of the Supreme Being is fully compatible with the view of God found in most Christian traditions to the extent that many Christian theologians identify God with *Nyame* and argue that the Akan have always worshipped God (Danquah 1951: 6, 14; Dickson 1968: xxv). Certainly, both play similar roles. Wiredu, however, claims that there is a significant difference between the moral functions performed by the Supreme Being in Christianity and Akan traditional religion (Wiredu 1996: 42-79). The Christian God is believed to have revealed a moral code that Christian believers are expected to follow. The ethics in this code are good because God has commanded them, not because of their intrinsic merit. Christian ethics is thus religious and particularistic. *Nyame*, on the other hand, has no system of revealed commands but commends virtues and conduct that are intrinsically good. Thus the Akan, Wiredu, insists believe that *Nyame* sanctions their humanistic ethic that is based upon universally valid principles. Wiredu argues that Christians seek to impose an idiosyncratic

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<sup>31</sup> And even suspect to some Evangelicals as "works-righteousness."

<sup>32</sup> This is, perhaps, less of an issue for denominations like the Anglican and Catholic Churches that have a more inclusive view of the 'Communion of Saints' which embraces the noble ancestors as well as faithful Christians. (Brown 1994)

ethic upon the Akan based upon particular religious customs. Yet, as has already been made clear above [2.4.3], the Akan moral tradition is more deeply rooted in cultural and religious specifics than Wiredu seems willing to admit. The discussion in this section also indicates that there might be a greater degree of possible connection between Akan and Christian traditions than Wiredu allows.<sup>33</sup>

#### **2.5.4.3 RATIONALISM**

Ackah observes that the influence of Western culture and Christian faith have already worked to humanise the rationalistic outlook of the deductive Akan moral outlook, which traditionally maintained a very strict correspondence between moral transgressions, consequences, and punishments, by introducing variations of culpability and punishment and greater leniency in implementing different moral imperatives (Ackah 1959: 197-202).

#### **2.5.4.4 THE COSMIC COMMUNITY**

The other elements in the ‘cosmic community’ other than God: divinities, ancestors, and natural forces, are also important factors in the Akan moral tradition, as they are perceived to be significant moral ends and agents. The role of these entities is problematic for most Christian traditions as they are generally regarded as objects of idolatry and challenges to God’s absolute sovereignty. More often than not in Protestant traditions they are either equated with demonic spirits that seek to reduce human beings to spiritual bondage or their existence is denied altogether. Catholicism, as noted in section 2.5.3.2, takes a different approach in the Communion of Saints. Despite this it still faces the same dilemma as other Christian traditions over the nature of the divinities and the natural spirits or forces. However, the Akan vision of the cosmic community does find a parallel in the Christian vision of the Kingdom of God in which the whole of reality is united by faith and love in the realm of justice and peace.

### **2.6 CONCLUSION**

#### **2.6.1 SUMMARY OF THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION**

Two things have been accomplished in this chapter. First of all, the contours of the Akan moral tradition have been delineated from existing research and literature. This tradition has

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<sup>33</sup> See sections 2.3.2 The *Ebusua* Practice and 2.3.3 The *Nananom* Practice above.

the following general characteristics: Firstly, while it is highly communal it gives an important place to the individual as indicated by its definition of the identity of the human person through his relations to the divine, to his social context and inheritance through his maternity, and to his personal attributes through his paternity. Secondly, the Akan moral tradition consists of the following *practices*: the life of the family, leadership, reciprocity, generosity, the achievement of moral beauty, and marriage. Thirdly, these practices are closely related to a religious metaphysics that defines both the moral quest of the individual and the life of the family and community. This religious metaphysics concerns the endeavour of the individual to fulfil his destiny and join the community of the ancestors after this or another life. The community of the ancestors forms a part of the cosmic community of the Supreme Being, the divinities, the ancestors, human beings, and natural forces or spirits. The members of the cosmic community are either moral agents, ends, or both, of the harmony and increase of the cosmic community, especially, but not only, in its human aspects, benefits all and which is sought by all. Three important goods arise from the Akan tradition: the life of the family, the communal life, and the task of the *nana* or elder. As the task of the elder embraces the conduct and virtues vital to sustaining the other goods of Akan morality with regard to both the human community and (as ancestor) to the cosmic community, and also forms the focus of the individual's religious and moral quest, it seems that the role and example of the *nana* probably constitutes the chief good of the Akan moral tradition.

## **2.6.2 SUMMARY OF AREAS OF CONNECTION AND TENSION BETWEEN AKAN AND CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITIONS**

In the second place the possible areas of connection and tension or conflict between the Akan tradition and Christian moral traditions have been identified. The areas of possible convergence were found to be the value and the spiritual quest of the individual, the importance of family and community life, the practice of charity, the role of leadership, the morality of the reign of God, the role and necessity of grace in human life. Areas of tension or challenge were identified as the Christian concepts of sin and human depravity, the Akan concepts of rebirth and the cosmic community, and the extent of family and community.

### **2.6.3 POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AKAN CHRISTIAN MORAL TRADITION**

The discussion in this section makes it possible to make a tentative indication of the features that might be expected to define a moral tradition that might develop out of the interaction between Christian and Akan traditions. Such a synthesised tradition would probably be distinguished by a strong sense of the role of the family, a strong daily practice of communal living and generosity, a high view of leadership, a heightened understanding of Christ as leader and king, a greater concern on the part of individuals with their vocational and spiritual condition and, above all a deep sense of gratitude and dependence with regard to God's grace. However, such a tradition will also inevitably question some central values of the Akan tradition such as its exclusiveness, its focus on supernatural beings other than God, and its concern with ancestorship. Rather than creating ancestors, a Christian Akan moral tradition might seek to create saints.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION IN BRITAIN**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **3.1.1 THE SHAPE OF A MORAL TRADITION REVISITED**

##### **3.1.1.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS**

The main purpose of this chapter is to consider the formation and shaping of the Methodist moral tradition in Britain during its definitive period under John Wesley (1703-1791 )<sup>1</sup>. This is a preparatory stage to understanding the development of the Methodist moral tradition in the Gold Coast and its interaction with the Fanti moral tradition. This will set the scene for an analysis in the next chapter of the manner in which Methodist missionaries and national leaders further developed the tradition on the Gold Coast, particularly among the Fanti people.

##### **3.1.1.2 THE SHAPE OF A MORAL TRADITION**

In the previous chapter the Akan moral tradition was interpreted according to Alasdair MacIntyre's tradition model of ethics that holds that moral language is only intelligible if it is interpreted in the light of particular traditions of ethical conversation. In Chapter One it was noted that moral traditions are characterised by a concept of the supreme good or end that holds the tradition together, a cluster of virtues that support that end, and a number of practices that nurture and sustain these virtues. This chapter will consider the Methodist moral tradition as it first developed in England according to MacIntyre's model.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Wesley began his work against a background of great social change in eighteenth century Britain as society moved from a hierarchical largely agrarian society towards a capitalist, industrial and largely urban social order. At this time, England lacked in both Church and State the spiritual and moral resources to cope with such a transition. Formalism and moralism dominated the Church, and scepticism, moral indifference, and great extremes of wealth and poverty characterised wider society. Wesley felt that the nation was in a parlous condition and his response to the situation was to inaugurate a programme of spiritual renewal which included the development of a moral tradition that affirmed the dignity of even the most 'lowly' person and enabled them to rise to the challenge of the times. (Semmler 1974:1-22)

<sup>2</sup> Ray Dunning anticipated such an interpretation of Wesley's ethics in 1979 (Dunning 1979) Dunning discusses how the rules that Wesley developed for the Methodist societies were not legalistic codes that defined and judged behaviour but were advisory guides designed to lead people to full sanctification in which the overflow of love rendered all rules redundant. In other words the Rules of the Societies promoted various practices and virtues that would promote Wesley's *telos* of attaining the divine likeness expressed in selfless love. Dunning later developed these insights at a popular level in *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective* (Dunning 2003). This text has not been extensively used in this work as it is written at an introductory level and does not include an extensive exegesis of Wesley's works. Moreover, MacIntyre's approach followed here makes room for the connection of the Rules with the various practices of the Methodist societies with the virtues that they promoted and comprehension of how these are oriented to the supreme good of perfect love.

## 3.2 THE SHAPE OF THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION IN ENGLAND

### 3.2.1 THE SUPREME GOOD OF THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION: HOLINESS

#### 3.2.1.1 WESLEY'S ANTHROPOLOGY

The background to the *telos* of the Methodist tradition is found in John Wesley's understanding of creation and humanity. As a High Church Anglican Wesley was heavily influenced by the Fathers of the Eastern Church in contrast to the majority of Protestantism who primarily drew upon Augustine and the Western Fathers (Merriitt 1987; Alichin 1991; McCormick 1991; Bundy 1991; Christensen 1996).<sup>3</sup> The Eastern Fathers tended to stress

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<sup>3</sup> The Greek or Eastern Church Fathers from the second to the fifth century received greater attention in the Anglican Church than in any other Protestant Church. Anglican theologians saw the Greek fathers as a resource in their attempt to chart a middle path between Catholicism and the more radical forms of Protestantism such as Lutheranism and Presbyterianism. One of the founding theologians of Anglicanism, Thomas Cranmer drew upon Chrysostom and the other fathers of the Golden age in his influential *Homilies*. This emphasis reached its peak with theologians working during the reign of Charles the Second such as Lancelot Andrews. Wesley's father Samuel stood in this tradition and urged his sons to read authors such as Cave and Beveridge, who are also dependent upon the Greek Fathers, and the Greek Fathers themselves, particularly Chrysostom. (Bundy 1991; McCormick 1991; Christensen 1996; Wakefield 1998)

John heeded his father's advice and soon developed his own attachment to particular Greek Fathers, especially Clement of Alexandria, Ephraem of Syria, John Chrysostom, and Pseudo-Macarius (whom Wesley believed was Macarius of Egypt but was actually a Syrian monk, heavily influence by Gregory of Nyssia writing in the fifth century). (Christensen 1996)

While each of John Wesley's favoured authors had their own theological nuances, there were common themes in their anthropology and soteriology. All stressed the original destiny of humanity to become, in some sense, divine through an increase in moral and spiritual perfection which was, in part, lost when humanity snatched at equality with God. Even so humanity's fall was not total, as divine grace working through human conscience, ensured that some knowledge of God, and of the good, and the ability to seek both, remained in the human heart. The purpose of Christ's incarnation and work of redemption was to restore humanity to their divine destiny. All of Wesley's regarded fathers would agree with Athanasius' statement: 'For He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God ...' (Athanasius 1997: 341) As God in Christ had participated in human life, so men could participate in the divine life through fellowship with Christ. *Theosis* (divinisation or participation in the divine life) was to be achieved through a process in which the divine energy of grace and love was communicated to the soul through the sacraments and in which the soul sought to immerse itself in the life of God through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, contemplation, the practice of asceticism, and above all, the practice of love. (McCormack 1991; Christensen 1996)

Wesley reinterpreted and adapted this theology to serve the purposes of his own situation and agenda. Wesley's primary concern was the spiritual and moral reform of the English Church and nation and he saw the Greek Fathers' emphasis on holiness as the key to this but he believed that this was given through the active grace of God working through faith. In contrast to the Fathers Wesley believed that this grace proceeded through a crisis experience that have to be sought in faith. Wesley reinterpreted 'conscience' as *preventing grace* in which the soul could have a sense of sin and the need of salvation and so it could seek pardon and justification on the basis of Christ's death. Wesley held that such knowledge was possible for unregenerate humanity as what had been lost in the fall was the *moral* image of God rather than the *natural* image. The latter was preserved though God's grace and was the basis of the knowledge that could lead to salvation. This brought Wesley in to confrontation with Calvinism which was then widespread in Britain. Calvinism insisted that humanity was so totally depraved that no free response to grace was possible and therefore salvation was only possible through divine election. Wesley felt that this actually undermined the progress of grace which he understood to be participatory rather than passive. This optimistic view of the possibilities of human nature combined with a participatory model of grace formed the basis of his concept of perfection in which believers

love as God's purpose in Creation and 'divinisation' as the final destiny for humanity. This contrasts with the Augustinian stress on divine sovereignty and human depravity that dominated the theology of the Reformers (Semmell 1942: 96-99). The effect of this is that Wesley sets the drama of human creation and redemption within the story of Creation as the arena of God's love more than His glory. The Creation exists as an expression of the divine love and humanity exists to participate in and build the community of divine love within the created order (Reist 1972; McCormick 1991). According to Wesley, Adam was a perfect being, who had the complete knowledge and understanding necessary for his rule and wholly loved and obeyed God. However, Adam was overtaken by self-will and fell. As Adam ruled creation as God's steward, the purpose of creation was frustrated because humanity ruled creation for its own ends and creation became hostile to humanity. The more profound changes, though, take place within human nature itself. Wesley believed that the image of God in humanity was an expression of God's relationship to human beings and the task He wished them to fulfil and the destiny they were to have (Wesley 2005E; 2005G). In his perfect state, Wesley believed that Adam had immortality, the knowledge and power to rule the creation, and moral holiness - the 'natural', 'political', and 'moral' aspects of the image. Above all the *imago* was an expression of human destiny - humanity was to become Godlike. According to Wesley, the 'natural' and 'moral' aspects of the image of God in humanity are lost while the 'political' aspect is severely compromised. Human knowledge, understanding, and power over the creation were greatly limited after the Fall but were in part preserved. Wesley also held that in the 'natural' state human beings were devoid of all moral conscience,

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could collaborate with God by seeking and struggling for holiness and perfection through faith. The charge of Pelagianism could not be advanced against Wesley's position as humanity is enabled to respond to the Gospel by prevenient grace rather than by human ability. Wesley believed (in contrast to the Fathers and his brother Charles) that the Holy Spirit would meet such struggle and yearning with a further crisis experience in this life in which the soul was so overwhelmed by the divine love that all its motives, intentions, and actions flowed from love and were freed from sin. Wesley shied away from calling this blessing *theosis* or divinisation as he felt it was unscriptural but his 'Christian perfection' is essentially the same thing. In elaborating his teaching on holiness, Wesley believed that he was simply stating what was implicit in Anglican teaching and that he was articulating the 'third alternative' approach to faith and works based upon the teaching of the Greek fathers. (Bundy 1991; McCormick 1991; Christensen 1996)

While Wesley 'corrected' much in the language of the Fathers that he felt was unbiblical, to all intents and purposes his spirituality and discipline followed that recommended by them very closely, especially Ephraem. His lifestyle was highly ascetic and largely celibate and readings from the Greek fathers were part of his spiritual exercises (Wakefield 1998). His model of an ideal Methodist (Wesley 2005AC) was based upon Clement's *True Gnostic* (Clement 1997: 1053-1125; Bundy 1991). Like Ephraem John, along with his brother Charles, believed that the deepest insights of faith could be understood and communicated through poetry and hymns (Christensen 1996; Wakefield 1998). In his daily discipleship Wesley was more attuned to the Eastern rather than the Western tradition.



however no one lives in the natural state as all are illuminated by the 'Light, which lighteth every man' (John 1:8 *KJV*). He argued that one of the fruits of Christ's atonement was a prevenient grace that teaches all people the difference between good and evil and gives an inkling of the existence of God. This same grace also allows people to hear and accept or reject the Gospel. Thus while Wesley believes, in theory, in the total moral depravity of human beings, he did not believe it in fact. Moreover, humanity's destiny to be Godlike remains, salvation is nothing less than the full recovery of the divine likeness. Following the Eastern Fathers Wesley believed that this was the purpose of Christ's coming 'God became man that men might become God' (Wesley 2005F; Reist 1972). Wesley's view of human nature was thus more positive and optimistic when contrasted with much of mainstream Protestantism, which under the influence of Augustine and Calvin, had a deeply pessimistic emphasis on total depravity and human inability (Semmell 1974: 13-19).

### 3.2.1.2 JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

For many years, the Wesley brothers believed that the image of God could be gained by human effort in self-denial, good works, and love of God and neighbour on the basis of prevenient grace. Good works, they thought, would lead to perfection or sanctification understood as pure love to God and man. Sanctification would then result in justification. From their student days in the 1720's until 1738 John and Charles laboured toward this goal with a growing sense of futility and frustration until they encountered the Moravians<sup>4</sup> who

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<sup>4</sup> The Moravians grew out of the persecuted remnants of the Unity of the Brethren or the Bohemian Brethren, the reforming Church in Bohemia that was established by the ministry of John Huss in the early fifteenth century. From 1600 a wave of persecution drove the members of this movement out of Bohemia and some, after many other migrations, arrived in Moravia in 1722 where they were allowed to settle on the estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf and establish a religious community. Zinzendorf was deeply immersed in Pietism having studied at a boarding school in Halle, one of its theological centres, under August Francke one of the movement's principle leaders. (Pietism was a movement of personal spirituality that stressed personal faith, earnest prayer, practical Bible reading, and works of Christian love and service that arose in Northern Europe in the eighteenth century following the aridity of the strictly doctrinal emphasis of Protestant scholasticism and the bitterness of the wars of religion.) Zinzendorf took responsibility for the community settled at Herrnhut, not only as their landlord, but as their pastor. In 1732 Zinzendorf attended the coronation of the king of Denmark and while there met converts from Greenland and the West Indies. These encounters filled him with a concern for the missionary extension of the Gospel which he communicated to the other members of his community at Herrnhut. In the years that followed members of the community were sent around the world as missionaries (Mulholland 1999: 221-224). (The Moravians were also among the first Protestant missionaries to the Gold Coast in 1769 (Debrunner 1967: 35-83). It was in this guise that John Wesley encountered the Moravians on his voyage to America aboard the *Simmons* in 1735 to take up a post as a clergyman and missionary to the native Americans in Georgia. One night the ship was buffeted by a severe storm and most of the passengers, including Wesley, feared for their lives. Not so a group of Moravian missionaries who were also making the passage who spent the night in prayer and worship. Wesley never forgot their faith and composure.

emphasised the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. John Wesley later expressed the fruits of this encounter in the following words:

Q. What was the rise of Methodism, so called?

A. In 1729, two young men, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 they saw holiness comes by faith. They saw likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their point. God then thrust them out, utterly against their will, to raise a holy people. When Satan could no otherwise hinder this, he threw Calvinism in the way; and then Antinomianism, which strikes directly at the root of all holiness. (Wesley 2005AB)

The discovery of justification by faith by Wesley caused a revolution in his theology and experience. First, Wesley's emphasis passed from human effort to obtain the result God desired, to faith that one may receive a result of what God has already accomplished. Second, ecstatic religious experience now became vital for the normally rational Wesley as he accepted the Moravian insistence on the necessity of an experience of assurance to guarantee one's justification before God. Third, the order of sanctification and justification were reversed. Whereas before the pious soul had to struggle toward sanctification in the hope of justification now justification opened the way to sanctification. Prevenient grace was now the basis of justification not sanctification as it granted people to ability to understand and accept or reject the Gospel. Sanctification began at the moment of justification and would proceed as a gradual process that could be punctuated at any moment by an experience of 'entire sanctification' followed by further growth. The experience of 'entire sanctification' should be sought in faith and would be attested by an inner witness of the Spirit as well as by a change in outward behaviour. Wesley understood sanctification to be an increase of love in the life of a disciple to the extent that sin is driven out. 'Entire sanctification' was an instant flooding of the believer's heart with the divine love and the resulting death of sin in the same moment. Wesley taught that this event usually occurred shortly before the Christian's death but he insisted that there was no reason why it could not happen at any time if people had faith that God would do this and earnestly sought it. To be motivated only and completely by the love

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On his return to England, his ministry to Georgia a failure, Wesley sought out the Moravians living in London and at one of their meetings in 1738 he had an experience of personal faith and justification himself. Wesley later acknowledged that his earlier faith was based upon law and was that of a 'servant'. His new experience enabled him to experience the love of God as son. Wesley learnt a great deal from the Moravians and even spent time at their community at Herrnhut but he later broke with them over their passive view of faith and their low view of the sacraments. (Wilson 1977 )

of God and man, for Wesley, constituted holiness or perfection and the renewal of the divine image in humanity (Moore 1985; Staples 1986; Kisker 1993; Lodahl 1997).

### **3.2.1.3 THE POSSIBILITY OF PERFECTION: RENEWAL OF THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HOLINESS**

Like the Eastern fathers Wesley believed that human beings could be perfect by sharing God's moral nature as love. However, Wesley introduced all kinds of qualifications to this 'perfection.' It did not imply perfect knowledge, disposition, insight, or ability. All kinds of 'errors' could arise from natural 'infirmities' that could be interpreted as sins as they fell short of God's requirements and therefore required Christ's atonement. The perfection that Wesley taught was one of intention and he argued that any thought or behaviour that flowed from an intention of 'pure love' was not sin. Moreover, the state of perfection could also be lost if the 'perfected' saint fell into temptation. Thus, there was the need for continued watchfulness and spiritual growth to gain better knowledge, judgment, and ability. However, the fact remains that Wesley believed that human beings could become perfect in love and this for him constituted the renewal of the divine image in human beings. This was the true goal of religion. If justification was the door of the house, holiness was its interior. For Wesley the goal of the Christian life was holiness defined as perfect love and this was attainable by perseverance and faith (Wesley 2005AL; 2005I; Stanley 1983; Rack 1989: 333-342; Maddox 2001).

### **3.2.1.4 WESLEY'S *TELOS*: THE RENEWAL OF THE IMAGE OF GOD**

The supreme good of the Wesleyan moral tradition, was the full renewal of the image of God in human beings through Jesus Christ. It was considered that some limited progress could, and should be made in renewing the 'political' and 'natural' aspects of the image through learning, work, and medicine but these aspects of the image would not be restored until the New Creation. However, the moral image could and should be restored by the growth of the love of God and man in the heart both gradual and instantaneous. All of Wesley's efforts, and those of his preachers in nurturing and discipleship were focused on this end.(Wesley 2005S; Dunning 1970; Knight 1980; Johnson 1983; Cubie 1985; Dunning 1988: 498-504).

### 3.2.2 THE VIRTUES OF HOLINESS

What virtues sustain love other than love itself? Wesley stressed some particular virtues that seem to be essential to his vision of the nature of love and these tend to recur in his writings. The common thread that seems to run between these virtues is that they are necessary to the cultivation or maintenance of ‘pure’ love (Wesley 2005AC; Bundy 1991).

The foundational virtue is *self-denial*. The original sin was self-will leading to pride. If the image of God is to be restored self-will must be broken. This can only be achieved by denying self and its desires so that one is entirely surrendered to the will of God and cease to be distracted from the worship and service of God by all the creaturely things desired by the self, that result in the worship of the creation rather than the creator (Wesley 2005A).

The breaking of the will should lead to *obedience* to God expressed in obedience to the moral law found in Scripture and to the Christian leaders a person has accepted as his/her spiritual guides (Dillman 1977).

If the will is broken so is pride and in its place *humility* will be found. Humility has a number of attributes: it entails that people will not seek to place themselves or their opinions in control of others; it entails that they will have a cautious estimate of their own abilities and maturity; and it entails that they will be open to receive correction from their brethren.

A counter-part of humility is *meekness*. By meekness Wesley seems to mean a gentleness of manner bordering on Anabaptist non-resistance. There should be no hint of violence in one’s thoughts, actions, or words. One should not respond aggressively to one’s persecutors nor to those caught in sin. Rather one’s response should be designed to explain, reconcile and nurture. Those who ridicule faith should be encouraged to believe and those who err should be gently corrected.

Methodists were also to be distinguished by *industry* and *austerity*. These virtues were necessary for restraining sin and for expressing benevolence (Wesley 2005AD). The savings made through industry and austerity were to be used in active *charity* or *benevolence* in assisting the poor and vulnerable. Wesley and his followers expressed these virtues in very direct and personal ways. They did not merely give to charitable foundations but themselves went to visit and tend the sick and the imprisoned, to teach the illiterate, and take food to the hungry (Rack 1989: 447-449).

All of these virtues were rather sombre and restrained. They were rational virtues that had been practiced by many other groups, both Christian and non-Christian before Wesley’s time.

What really distinguished Methodist holiness were the emotionally charged virtues of *zeal* and *enthusiasm*. One serious difference that Wesley had with the Eastern fathers was his attitude to passion. The fathers believed that passion was distracting and dangerous and should be restrained. Wesley, on the other hand, believed that nothing could be achieved without passion as a motivation. There should be zeal both for righteousness and expressing love to God and neighbour. Wesley encouraged his followers to be passionate in serving God and seeking the welfare and salvation of their neighbours. He also encouraged 'enthusiasm' in religious experience for only thus could the experiences of justification and sanctification be received and fervent prayer be offered up. It was these two last virtues that made the Methodists so effective and caused them to be viewed with such suspicion (Semmler 1974: 13-19).

Wesley regarded both rational and emotional virtues as vital for the growth of love. The first were nurtured by Wesley's spiritual 'Method' and his system of meetings and the second by worship and prayer.

### **3.2.3 THE PRACTICES OF HOLINESS**

#### **3.2.3.1 THE WESLEYAN METHOD**

The Wesleyan Method that evolved from the student days of the Wesleys was designed to support the 'rational' virtues of self-denial, humility, meekness, industry, austerity, and charity. It rested upon three important pillars: the self-discipline of the individual, the support of a community of mutual discipline, and leadership that could prove exemplary, inspirational, and directive.

##### **3.2.3.1.1 THE DISCIPLINED LIFE**

The Wesleyan Method begins with the motivation of individuals regardless of whether they are seeking justification or sanctification. Did they really desire to show their love for God by living a life that pleased him? Repentance and the desire for holiness needed to be shown in 'works that make for repentance' in the individual's daily life and in his pursuit of God. Neither justification nor sanctification, insisted Wesley would be gained by works, they were both gifts of God's grace to be received by faith. However insofar as the works of a moral life demonstrate commitment and sincerity Wesley also stressed that God's gifts would not

be given apart from such works.(Wesley 2005X; 2005AA; Coppedge 1980; Rack 1989: 437-443; Momany 1993).

In terms of daily life, this meant keeping God's law of loving God and one's neighbour. For Methodists the love of neighbour could not be separated from the love of God, as it was love for and from God that lead to love of neighbour. The love of God, at the very least, entailed the study of the Bible and other inspiring works, extended times of prayer for the salvation of the lost and for the progress of one's own soul. In particular, this entailed rigorous self-examination, repentance and new resolve, which were also signs of zeal and enthusiasm (Dillman 1977). The love of God also meant living a life pleasing to Him that Wesley taught entailed a particular lifestyle marked by the rational virtues of moderation, industry and austerity (Wesley 2005R). To prove industrious Methodists were to work diligently in an occupation where their skills were adequately employed. They were not to work so hard and long as was injurious to their health nor distracted them from their other duties in their family, in the Methodist Society, or in doing good (Wesley 2005C). However, they were to gain as much as they could, save as much as they could, in order to give as much as they could (Wesley 2005B, 2005O). Austerity was to be achieved through a plain life that avoided self-indulgence and frivolity. Wesley urged his followers to have no more sleep than they strictly needed, eat only simple food for nourishment, take healthy exercise, and dress plainly. (Wesley 2005Q; 2005AO). All 'worldliness' was to be avoided in the form of plays, alehouses, idle reading, frivolous conversation, or other irrelevant pursuits. Each moment was to be spent constructively in work, prayer, pious or useful study, discharging familial duties, in society meetings or in aiding the poor (Wesley 2005K). Neighbours were to be shown practical love (though not necessarily friendship) wherever possible (Wesley 2005J). Sometimes this would mean a word of rebuke or the tidings of the Gospel (Wesley 2005H) at others it would be gifts of food, clothing, or medicine, and at yet others prayers of exhortation and encouragement. Neighbourly love was to be shown to all, especially to the poor and dispossessed. Wesley believed that this required a direct personal involvement upon which Methodists needed to be ready to spend their time and substance, hence his insistence upon the stewardship of time and substance (Semmler 1974: 71-79).

### 3.2.3.1.2 THE DISCIPLINING COMMUNITY

The rigours of the Wesleyan method would have been exacting even for the most disciplined and ascetic individual. For most Methodists the lifestyle recommended by Wesley would have been impossible without the support of a community of mutual discipline. Small groups meeting for edification and prayer have been a feature of the Christian Church in all ages but Wesley made a special use of them.<sup>5</sup> There was a tradition of small groups meeting to encourage their members in the spiritual life in High Anglicanism and the Wesley brothers and their friends formed such a society in Oxford that earned the nickname of the ‘Holy Club’ because of the earnest piety of its members. The ‘Holy Club’ was a group of tutors and undergraduates who met for prayer, mutual spiritual examination, discussion of Biblical texts and spiritual books, and encouragement in good works, for example members of the group took it in turn to pray with condemned prisoners, often spending the night before their execution in the cells with them. It seems that the ‘Holy Club’ did not long survive the departure of the Wesley brothers from Oxford but it served as a template for later small group meetings (Rack 1989:83-96; Hunsicker 1996; White 2001).

The first Methodist Societies in Bristol and London seem to have been fairly loose affairs of people who gathered in Methodist preaching houses for worship, prayer and exhortation.

The more intimate organisation of the class system had its roots in two events. A new preaching house was built in London and to pay off the debt its construction had incurred, one of the wealthier members suggested a donation of a penny a week from each member. The proposer undertook to call upon twelve poor men himself and make up whatever they could not find out of his own pocket. This suggestion was taken up and generally applied in all of the Methodist Societies. ‘Classes’ of twelve men would be regularly visited by their leader who would collect their membership regular dues from them. (Wesley 2005W). These visits

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<sup>5</sup> While the Holy Club was probably Wesley’s model for the small groups that were later to be so important in the Methodist movement he would also, most likely have been aware of, and influenced by, other antecedents in European pietism, Catholic mysticism and the religious society movement within Anglicanism. However, Wesley also build on what he received by making a number of innovations. Firstly the Methodist groups were ecumenical and evangelistic, open to all who sought salvation and discipleship. Secondly, Wesley organised his groups for discipleship with geographically based *classes* and pastorally oriented bands to cater for different situations and stages of discipleship. Thirdly, Wesley made provision for the development of his small group leaders through regular meetings with a minister (Rack 1989, Albin 2003; Stafford 2003: 42-43). Albin notes that a large part of the success of the Methodist movement lay in its provision for a community of support and voluntary mutual accountability for those desiring to be seekers and disciples (Stafford 2003: 44). Small groups marked by these characteristics have played an important role in many Christian movements from Wesley’s day to the present (Albin 2003) My own congregation, for example, has both Alpha groups, roughly equivalent to Wesley’s *Trial Band* and Home groups, roughly the same as *bands*.

soon took on a pastoral dimension as the leaders began the regular practice of enquiring after the spiritual and material welfare of the members the facts of which he would then relate to the preacher or minister. The shift from visitation to meeting seems to have followed an initiative by Wesley in response to a group of men seeking salvation and holiness asked him to advise and exhort them. He set a regular time for them to meet as a group following a similar model to that which he and his friends had employed many years previously in the Holy Club. This precedent and the difficulty of being able to meet with people privately in their homes led to the re-organisation of the 'classes' to regular meetings.

There were three levels of groups in the Methodist society. The first was the class itself. This was a meeting of any who sought to 'flee from the wrath to come.' The primary aim of those involved in the classes was to gain an assurance of salvation, but as a pious life was one of the outward signs of justification they were also concerned with the constant struggle against sin (Wesley 2005X). Once people had received an experience of assurance of salvation they became part of a 'band' whose particular concern was to gain perfection through prayer and faith or by gradual degrees (Wesley 2005W; 2005Y; 2005Z). Those who experienced 'perfection' were in turn grouped into 'select societies' to assist each other in resisting pride and continuing in love (2005W). Lastly, in many societies there existed a group for penitents who were guilty of 'backsliding' into sin and who were seeking restoration. (2005W: 276-277) These groups differed in their goals, spiritual experience and intimacy; the bands and select societies in particular requiring members to disclose the most personal details of their lives to each other.

Albin suggests that the groups were organised according to Wesley's view of the operation of God's grace and the focus of human faith expressed in response and participation (Stafford 2003: 42). The *class* or *trial band* was for those who had received an awareness of sin and the need for salvation on the basis of prevenient grace. The *bands* were for those who had received the experience of justification and were now committed to live as disciples and so were organised into segregated groups according to gender and marital status in order to gain support in Christian living in their particular situation. The *select* band was for those who were seeking or had experienced full sanctification. This group was unsegregated on the premise that perfect love brought full maturity and equality (Stafford 2003: 42-43).

Albin comments:



The focus of the class meeting is on the mind, the band meeting focuses on the will, but the formational focus of the select society is the heart. The early Methodists would see the select society as spiritual adulthood. You've given all of yourself at a different level. (Stafford 2003:44)

The groups were all similar in their method and procedures. The meetings would usually begin and end with hymns and prayers and include the reading and perhaps study of a Bible passage. But the core of a Methodist small group meeting were the testimonies that each member was expected to make of their experiences of God, temptations, and successful or unsuccessful struggles with sin, the confession and repentance from sin, and the criticism and advice that each member was expected to receive from the other members of the group (Albin 2003; Stafford 2003).<sup>6</sup>

### **3.2.3.1.3 THE DISCIPLINE OF LEADERSHIP**

The Methodist Society was heavily dependent on leadership at every level from the class to the district, to the Conference (Wesley 2005W). The qualification for leadership was not just ability but also spirituality and zeal:

See that all the Leaders be not only men of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God. (Wesley 2005AB)

Leaders were expected to be driven by a concern for the salvation of the lost and the spiritual welfare of their charges to successfully 'guide them to heaven.' Pride and the desire for control or self-advancement had no place here (Wesley 2005AB).

Wesley demanded high standards from his leaders. They were required to be people of prayer, study, and pastoral commitment. The requirements for travelling preachers were particularly onerous (Wesley 2005AB). First of all they were permitted to do no paid work apart from the ministry, indeed the duties required of them would have left little opportunity for such diversions. Wesley recommended that they rise early at four and spend two hours in prayer. To allow themselves an hour for breakfast and then spend the morning until twelve in study, their afternoons to be spent in visitation and field preaching and their evenings in meeting with the society and its various groups. Wesley recommended a fairly ascetic lifestyle. Preachers should take no more sleep than their body required - six or seven hours, eat simply and sparingly, dress simply, have zeal for the task but be meek in manner. These

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Albin uses a different nomenclature for the Methodist small groups. He takes 'class' as a general term which embraces all of these groups but identifies the seeker's group as the *trial band* the disciples' group as the *band* and those seeking or living in full sanctification as *select bands* (Stafford 2003: 42-43). The terminology used here is based upon an independent reading of Wesley's rules for his societies and so is retained.

are Wesley's requirements for all Methodists writ large as he clearly intended that his preachers should be models of the life and manners he recommended for all.

In his 'Rules for a Helper' Wesley offers this advice to Methodist leaders:

You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most. Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember! A Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline! Therefore you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you! (2005AB)

While there might be a number of tasks in leadership such as preaching, administration and organisation, and visitation, they all have one aim, - to bring souls to salvation and lead them to holiness. Methodist leaders are not to allow themselves to be distracted from this singular task no matter how worthy the distraction. The whole business of the Methodist enterprise was to make people holy through the increase of love and this was also the ultimate goal of leadership (Wesley 2005U).

### **3.2.3.2 EXPERIENCE, WORSHIP, AND SACRAMENT**

#### **3.2.3.2.1 EXPERIENTIAL RELIGION**

As well as being a rational, disciplined, and ascetic movement Methodism was also emotional and experiential, an example of what Wesley's contemporaries called 'enthusiasm.' For Methodism, it was essential that a person believed not just in their mind but also in their heart, a conversion not only of the intellect but of the emotions. Because of this, it was expected that grace would be the subject of experience as well as assent. Thus, the justification of anyone who could not testify to an experience of assurance was doubted, especially in the early years of the movement. It was expected that those who received the gift of perfection would also receive it as an ecstatic experience of being overwhelmed by a sense of love for all, that they could describe and put a date on. In addition to the two crisis experiences of justification and sanctification, it was expected that there would be many other experiences of grace as the Holy Spirit worked in the heart of the believer and the believer sought God in earnest prayer, meditation and worship. The emotional dimensions of Methodism would have been one of its major attractions to its poor adherents and the point at which they would experience sustaining joy, but the defining characteristic of Methodist religious experience is

that it was controlled by the central *telos* of Methodism which was holiness. This was to be a matter of the affections and experience as much as ascetic discipline (Wesley 2005H; Semmell 1974: 99-101; Lodahl 1988).

#### **3.2.3.2.2 WORSHIP**

Methodists sang their faith and so their worship was a crucial practice by which their moral conversation was propagated. The hymns of Charles Wesley celebrated every aspect of Methodist faith and practice and constituted a powerful educational tool that John was careful to oversee (Nicholson 1970). In particular, the convictions of the Wesleys concerning holiness were expressed in these hymns and were sung and affirmed week by week by Methodist congregations (Wesley 2005AL).

Extemporaneous or spontaneous prayer was an important part of Methodist meetings and it was not uncommon for a service to continue as a prayer meeting once the formal elements of the liturgy had concluded. Chief among the topics of prayer would be prayers for assurance of salvation and for the blessing of perfection. Indeed Methodists were encouraged to earnestly pray and fast for these experiences, the end of both being holiness (Staples 1972; Rack 1989: 407-409; Knight 1997; Wesley 2005G).

#### **3.2.3.2.3 THE MEANS OF GRACE**

The worship of the Methodist preaching house tended to be informal because it was not conceived as a Church service. Wesley remained a priest of the Church of England, he saw Methodism as a renewal movement within the Church and encouraged his followers to continue to attend the services of the Church of England, especially the Eucharist. As a High Churchman Wesley had great faith in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as a channel of God's grace. He encouraged frequent communion as way of meeting with God and receiving divine grace. Indeed, Wesley insisted that people had received the experiences of the assurance of faith and entire sanctification while receiving the sacrament (Rack 1989: 402-407).

Sadly, Methodists often found themselves at odds with their parish priests whom they felt were ungodly or who discriminated against them. Nor would Wesley, until latter, allow his preachers to baptise or celebrate communion. There were very few priests of the Church who were disposed to Methodism and so whenever Wesley or one of his clerical associates

celebrated the Eucharist great crowds attended. Most of the time, however, the Methodists were cut off from the regular sacraments of the Anglican Church. In response to this situation they invented their own forms of celebration (Rack 1989: 409-420).

Methodists tended to look upon their chapel services, prayer, and class meetings as 'means of grace' that all were expected to attend if they hoped to grow in holiness. To these existing meetings they added new ones (Momany 1993).

The love feast developed as an unintentional substitute for communion. This was a simple meal of water and a plain cake preceded by a time of worship that included prayer and testimony of assurance and increasing holiness. This event was open only to society members in good standing (Wesley 2005W; Parkes 1997).

Another innovation was the watch night service (from eight until midnight) that again included preaching, testimony, hymns, and prayers. It was begun by the miners at Kingswood as an alternative to the usual Friday night revelries that took place in the community (Wesley 2005W; Parkes 1997).

The last innovation the Methodists introduced was the 'Covenant Service'. This was a service of confession and repentance of sin and of renewal of the vows of holiness that were implicit in baptism and conversion (Parkes 1997).

All of these services were emotionally charged occasions when the worshippers would pour out their hearts to God and when they would expect an ecstatic encounter with the Divine. They were occasions when the people would experience the joyful touch of the Holy Spirit. They were also, like the rest of Methodist practice, oriented toward furthering holiness in the participants (Staples 1972; Semmell 1974: 13-19; Rack 1989: 407-409, 427-428).

### **3.2.3.3 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE**

Marriage and the family usually occupy a central place in Christian moral practice as a relationship of intimate companionship and the setting in which children are nurtured and receive their religious and moral formation. Wesley, however, had an ambiguous attitude toward marriage. While he formally rejected Roman Catholic teaching on the celibacy of the priesthood he favoured the single life as he maintained it provided greater opportunities for service, fewer distractions for the worship and service of God, and greater opportunities for holiness. Where possible he encouraged single men and women to set up segregated households on the model of Acts 2:42-47. He felt that the married state was particularly

unsuited for the itinerant ministry that was one of the chief features of Methodism (Wesley 2005AM; 2005AN; Coe 1996: 57-62, 68-72).

Despite Wesley's preferences Methodists were not Shakers and marriage continued amongst them and so it was a practice he had to address in his teaching (Rack 1989: 257-269). Wesley laid down fairly strict rules about entering the married state. Methodists should not marry unbelievers, preferably they should marry other Methodists (if marry they must!). Members were encouraged to seek the advice of the brethren on their choice of partner and preachers were required to do so (Coe 1996: 84-92). Wesley believed that the primary purpose of marriage was for procreation but he also sought to employ it as an instrument of holiness, not least in restraining sexual temptation (Coe 1996: 52-55). Marriage was to be monogamous and lifelong, adultery being the only grounds for divorce (Coe 1996: 22-29, 55-57). The same discipline and asceticism that characterised the lifestyle of single Christians ought also to be applied in the Christian home with regular habits of prayer, simple, living and spiritual conversation. Not a moment was to be wasted in idleness or trivial pleasure (Coe 1996: 99-113).<sup>7</sup>

Wesley agreed that the nurturing of children was one of the purposes of marriage. It was not possible to train children into faith, but it was possible to prepare them for it by stifling self-will and worldliness. Wesley identifies three ways of doing this. The child's will is to be broken, first in infancy by leaving its cries unheeded and then as the child grows by refusing to acquiesce to its demands and by constantly reminding the child of his or her duty. Wesley believed that a child was never to be praised, for this would induce pride, but should be encouraged to progress in life and be reminded of their need to constantly depend upon God. Secondly, children were to be raised 'plain' with no toys or delicacies, or time to play nor any fancy or colourful dress. Such things were certainly not to be offered as rewards for doing their duty or they would learn to wrongly value them and in adult life seek vain things. Thirdly, children were to be constantly exposed to religious conversation and religious instruction. Wesley believed that the greatest obstacles to children's moral and religious growth were 'tender' parents who indulged their children (Wesley 2005AS; Wesley 2005T).

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<sup>7</sup> Wesley's attitude to marriage is probably reflected in his own sad romantic experience. Two, perhaps three, engagements ended in hesitation and heart break and when he did marry for companionship, he found himself in a very bitter relationship. The fact that Wesley allowed himself no simple joy in his marriage and he continued to take long preaching tours may well have contributed to the failure of the union. Charles Wesley, on the other hand, contracted a very happy and successful marriage but withdrew from the itinerant ministry much to his brother's disgust (Rack 1989: 61-83, 251-269; Coe 1996: 29-37, 72-79, 113-130).

Wesley was a strong advocate of raising and educating children outside of their family situation altogether. In the school for boys that Wesley set up in Kingswood parents were asked to leave their children in the care of the masters from the age of six until they were twelve. Wesley deliberately established his school in an isolated situation to minimise the number of corrupting influences to which the children might be exposed. The children themselves were always to be supervised by a master and never left alone. Nor were they ever to be idle but always engaged in work, study, practical learning, worship or prayer. They were certainly not to be allowed to play for 'he that plays as a child will play as a man!' (Wesley 2005AQ; 2005AP; Rack 1989: 353-360).

On the other side it must be said that the children were comfortably housed and adequately fed (even if the fare was monotonous) and the curriculum they followed was more enlightened than others of its time having greater attention to the difficulty and quality of texts and with greater attention to the sciences. The purpose of education for Wesley was to undo some of the damage done to the image of God by the Fall; by increasing knowledge and skills in the children, by increasing moral and religious awareness, and by breaking their will so that they might be open to do God's will. Wesley did not believe that education could save or create faith, but it could encourage the conditions for faith. Faith and holiness themselves were to be the result of the extensive religious life of the school (Wesley 2005AQ).<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2.3.4 BENEVOLENCE AND REFORM - THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF LOVE**

#### **3.2.3.4.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORLD**

While private acts of love and charity were an important part of the discipline of the individual life of the Methodist, Methodism as a movement also had a significant engagement with society as a whole in a number of public, often organised acts of love. Such engagement posed a problem for Methodists. They were to love the world but they were not to be friends with the world. Wesley's stern injunctions against worldliness and friendship with the world could have led to isolation on the model of the Hutterians or even Moravians. Such a development, however, would have both been impractical for the majority of Methodists and alien to the nature of their movement (Wesley 2005L, 2005O). Most Methodists were industrial workers, artisans, and people of commerce; removing themselves into agricultural

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<sup>8</sup> Wesley later lamented the fact that his experiment in education had proved unsuccessful in his own terms. The worst of it was that the children were allowed to play! (Wesley 2005AP)

enclaves would not have been economically feasible for them. Secondly, the Methodists saw themselves on a mission to an apostate Church and nation that was to be called back to its true faith and identity. The Gospel was not only to transform individuals but also societies and thereby create further bridgeheads for the Gospel. Wesley was noted for his own private practice of charity but was not formally a member of any charitable foundation or campaigning body, although he publicly supported such causes and encouraged Methodists to be involved in them (Rack 1989: 437-443).

#### **3.2.3.4.2 THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

The focus of much of Methodist philanthropy was the poor. This focus had two thrusts. The first was aimed at self-help and the second was benevolence. The greatest service that the Methodists felt that they could do the poor was to preach the Gospel to them and bring about a change in destructive lifestyles. Many of the Methodists were poor themselves but effectively changed their circumstances through the Wesleyan method. Whereas before they might have been drunkards, violent, gamblers, and wastrels, once they joined the Society they became self-restrained, gentle, honest, industrious, and dutiful spouses and parents. Moreover, they had an immensely strong peer support system to keep them that way. This immediately altered their circumstances and those of their families, particularly the children who were clothed, fed, healthy and educated. The surplus wealth Methodists generated was not all given away to the poor. Some of it was used in mutual assistance in rotating funds, and some in investment in the business of fellow Methodists. The result of this was that Methodists generally became more prosperous. Among the more fascinating accounts of self-help that are to be found are those of common purse communities. Wesley came upon one group of single miners who were about to be evicted from their accommodation. He encouraged them to band together and arrange accommodation for themselves in which they could live a common life. The Methodist lifestyle caused them to become prosperous as a group which created no little concern for Wesley as he saw any surplus wealth as a great temptation to worldliness. He urged his followers to give away all that they could but he still despaired for the next generation (Wesley 2005B; 2005W; Rack 1989: 444-446).

Alongside their own self-help and mutual aid Methodists sponsored and participated in organised charity to the poor. Such efforts included houses for the poor being established by the Stewards of the Methodist societies, 'Stranger's Aid Societies' aimed at assisting vagrants

who were supported both by Methodists individually and by their Societies. Lastly, the Methodist Societies were charitable institutions themselves and the Stewards were instructed to offer the poor whatever help they could with prudence and dignity. Wesley urged them to at least not insult the poor if they could not help them (Wesley 2005W; Rack 1989: 362-368).

#### **3.2.3.4.3 SERVING THE AFFLICTED**

Methodists also sought to address the situations that led to poverty such as sickness and imprisonment. Their care for the sick included basic nursing care for people in their home and herbal remedies that were recommended by Wesley himself (Wesley 2005W).

#### **3.2.3.4.4 THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS**

Methodism was not a world denying sect and saw the promotion of public, as well as individual, holiness as part of its mission. There were three reasons for this public engagement. Firstly a sense of duty to call England back to its Christian heritage (Wesley 2005AK).<sup>9</sup> Secondly, a desire to seek God's blessing and avoid judgement on the nation through public righteousness (Wesley 2005AJ; 2005AK). Thirdly, to make the Gospel attractive to 'heathen' nations by the example of England as a 'Christian' nation (Wesley 2005H; Hynson 1988). To these ends Wesley and his sympathizers sought to curb certain public expressions of immorality such as 'Sabbath breaking,' public drunkenness, brawling, prostitution, gambling, obscene and blasphemous language, and corruption in public office. Wesley believed that Christians had a duty to rebuke their neighbours over any improper behaviour with 'meekness' but with firmness and persistence and encouraged his followers to

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<sup>9</sup> Wesley described a highly secularised society in this address. What, he asks, are the characteristic manners of the English? While luxury and sloth are characteristic of the upper classes they are not so of the rest of the population who are industrious and modest in means and lives. The main characteristic of the English, Wesley claims, is Godlessness. He identifies two kinds of godlessness. A passive godlessness grounded in the ignorance of God that sees events as the result of human effort or natural causes and not as the providence of God who guides all things. Consequently, they do not acknowledge Him or worship Him. In this they have sunk lower than the heathens who do acknowledge a divine providence over all things:

So much the good people of England in general know of God their Creator! And high and low, from the meanest peasant to the gayest butterfly at court, know just as much of God their Governor. They know not, they do not in the least suspect, that he governs the world he has made; that he is the supreme and absolute Disposer of all things both in heaven and earth. A poor Heathen (though a Consul, a Prime Minister) knew *Deorum providentia cuncta geri*; that the providence of God directs all things. (Wesley 2005AK)

The second kind of Godlessness is active and is expressed in perjury in which oaths taken in God's name are easily set aside as a result of which God's name is blasphemed. (Wesley 2005AK)



do so (Wesley 2005H). He also supported the activities of the Society for the Reformation of Manners that had a high incidence of Methodists in its membership. The policy of this society was to ensure that existing laws on Sunday trading and public order were enforced and that corrupt officials who turned a blind eye were exposed. Their usual practice was first to warn offenders and if they continued in their offence to prosecute them (Wesley 2005D).<sup>10</sup>

#### **3.2.3.4.5 FREEDOM AND JUSTICE**

In accord with his High Church and Tory roots Wesley was a strong monarchist and political conservative. He was a strong advocate of civil and religious freedom. By civil freedom Wesley understood the right to hold property, follow one's occupation, hold and express one's opinions, and have bodily freedom without being disturbed by the authorities. By religious freedom he meant freedom of conscience and the right to associate for worship and religious exercises with whomever one chose. Wesley strongly believed that all Englishmen enjoyed these freedoms under King George III whose administration had also brought peace and prosperity to the land. Wesley did not consider the right of the majority to choose their leaders or to vote an essential freedom; rather he saw it as a recipe for the kind of anarchy and barbarism that prevailed in France. Consequently, he opposed all moves for democratisation within Methodism and in wider society. Thus, he opposed campaigns to enlarge the franchise and the demands of the American colonies. All of these Wesley regarded as dangerous attempts to subvert proper, divinely instituted, order (Wesley 2005AD; Wesley 2005AE; 2005AF; 2005AI; Semmell 1974: 56-71; Rack 1989:370-380).

However, Wesley was far from conservative in his attitude to the slave trade. He supported the abolitionist movement in a public and whole hearted manner preaching and writing against slavery. In the first place slavery violated all the rights and freedoms Wesley held essential; deprivation of civil liberty and frequently denial of any religious choice at all. One of his most trenchant criticisms of the American colonists in their dispute with the crown was that they sought liberties that they denied to others and complained of 'slavery' while being slave holders themselves (Wesley 2005AH).<sup>11</sup> Secondly, slavery was an outrage to all humane and Christian values as it involved unspeakable barbarity and physical and emotional

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<sup>10</sup> The work of the society was brought to an abrupt end after they lost a lawsuit. (Editorial comment in Wesley 2005D)

<sup>11</sup> Wesley regarded American slavery as particularly odious the 'the vilest under the sun.' (Rack 1989:362)

cruelty. Lastly, slavery was an insurmountable obstacle to the spread of the Gospel as Christian missionaries would have no credibility in lands in which ‘Christians’ raided communities, kidnapped innocent people, and incited neighbours to go to war with each other in order to sell each other into slavery (Wesley 2005AG; Rack 1989: 360-362).

### **3.2.4 EXCURSUS - WESLEY ON CULTURE AND MISSION**

#### **3.2.4.1 WESLEY’S ATTITUDE TO HUMAN CULTURES**

##### **3.2.4.1.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS**

At this point, it is necessary to deviate a little and consider Wesley’s attitude to human culture and cross-cultural missions. This is important because it sets the context of the attitudes of Methodist missionaries to the Gold Coast, and to the African cultures that they encountered and greatly influenced the way in which they treated African peoples and their moral traditions.

##### **3.2.4.1.2 PREVENIENT GRACE, CONSCIENCE, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

Wesley’s attitude to human culture is ambiguous. He insists that after the Fall humanity forsook the knowledge of God and of good and evil. People are now ‘naturally’ atheists and immoral having inherited Adam’s tendency to rebellion against God and to sin. (Sin being understood as the transgression of God’s laws.) However no person actually lives in this state of total depravity because of Christ’s atonement and the prevenient grace that flows from it. Wesley argues that this grace is nothing less than the light of Christ that illumines peoples’ hearts so that they have a rudimentary knowledge of God’s nature and his law, have an awareness of the difference between good and evil often known as ‘conscience,’ and are able to make and act upon moral choices, including accepting or rejecting the Gospel when it is heard (Reist 1972; Hynson 1972).

##### **3.2.4.1.3 THE QUESTION OF SALVATION**

While all human beings possess this rudimentary knowledge of God and goodness Wesley felt that it was inadequate for true morality, marked by his ideal of love and holiness. He seems to have allowed that there could be humane and just behaviour on the part of ‘heathens’ but it did not measure up to the standards of holiness taught and required by Christian faith through which alone the image of God could be renewed and true humanity attained. While

such knowledge was not enough for holiness, was it enough for salvation? Wesley was an agnostic on this issue and left it to God's just and loving judgement (Wesley 2005O).

#### **3.2.4.2 WESLEY'S EXPRESSED ATTITUDE TO AFRICAN CULTURE**

Wesley generally held a negative attitude to non-Christian cultures but in writing about African culture in his tract on slavery he gives an impression of well ordered societies and their peaceful and upright citizens being thrown into turmoil and distress by 'Christian' barbarians (Wesley 2005AG). To what extent was this his true opinion or a polemical stance designed to undermine the case for slavery? The latter seems most likely in the light of the facts that he believed that all cultures bereft of Christian influence are inhumane and stand in need of reformation by the Gospel. Wesley's tract is also highly dependent on a similar tract by Anthony Benezet<sup>12</sup> and Wesley may have been expressing his views rather than his own (Rack 1989:362). Having said this Wesley generally only used material with which he agreed and approved and his weight behind such positive opinions would have given them credence in the mind of his followers. That is to say they would influence the formation of the tradition even if Wesley did not hold them himself.

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony Benezet (1713-1784) was a Quaker with a French Huguenot background whose family had migrated to America in 1731 and settled in Pennsylvania. He became an influential teacher and educator who insisted upon giving educational opportunities to blacks as well as whites arguing that Negroes were equal to Caucasians. One of the principal clauses of his will was to establish an educational trust for Negro children. Benezet was a prolific anti-slavery publicist who produced many publications attacking slavery. These varied from short tracts to considered works of history, geography and philosophy. Benezet attacked slavery on several fronts: the cruelty and injustices that it imposed on African slaves, who he presents as intelligent and virtuous people abducted from their own lands and balanced societies by the barbarity of the slave trade. This information Benezet would garner from various travellers and their journals. Benezet confronted the immorality of the slave trade on both Biblical and philosophical grounds arguing that it was contrary to both Christian virtue (the duty to love your neighbour) and to natural justice as understood by secular philosophers such as Locke and Hutchinson. Slavery, Benezet argued flowed from the immoral motive of greed and caused the moral degradation of both slave and owner. Lastly, he argued that slavery was actually illegal according to the laws of England. One of Benezet's great achievements was that he was able to bring diverse evidence and argument against the slave trade and present it to a mass audience that would later be mobilised against slavery (Brendlinger 1997).

Wesley was moved to join the anti-slavery cause through reading one of Benezet's books as he records in his journal of 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1772 (Wesley 2005V: 447-448). Shortly after reading Benezet's work Wesley began a correspondence with Benezet and Grenville Sharpe, the anti-slavery barrister, and two years later published his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (Wesley 2005AG) which was heavily dependent upon Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1771). Sharpe read and approved Wesley's unpublished manuscript while Benezet himself complimented Wesley on his tract and arranged for it to be republished in America. Benezet had an abiding influence on Wesley which was extended into Wesley's widening circle (Brendlinger 1997).

### **3.2.4.3 WESLEY'S PROGRAMME OF CROSS CULTURAL MISSION**

Wesley's attitude to culture cannot be separated from his ideas about cross-cultural mission. Wesley affirmed the universal proclamation of the Gospel, after all this was the man who declared 'the whole world is my parish.' However, Wesley saw evangelism in terms of the transformation of nations as well as individuals. He believed that the Gospel should pass from one nation to another just as it passed from one individual to another. For this to take place the manners of the sending nations had to be such that they were consistent with the Gospel message and were attractive to the peoples of non-Christian nations. Social and cultural transformation were thus an essential part of mission for Wesley hence the importance placed on philanthropy, the reformation of manners, and the abolition of slavery. Only as English society was visibly marked by Christian influence could it be the base for mission. Wesley had great hopes for the success of this strategy and seems to have held a postmillenarian eschatology (Wesley 2005H; Hynson: 1988).

### **3.2.5 WESLEY'S LEGACY**

#### **3.2.5.1 WITHIN METHODISM**

##### **3.2.5.1.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS**

John Wesley dominated the Methodist movement for over forty years and had a pronounced effect on its leaders, members, sympathisers and upon British society, as a whole. His legacy, as a result is profound and in some aspects surprising. To understand the full dimensions of the moral tradition Wesley founded it will be necessary to consider its different dimensions, firstly within Methodism itself, secondly within wider British society, and thirdly in terms of cross-cultural missions.

##### **3.2.5.1.2 HOLINESS**

The doctrine of instant perfection preached by the Wesley brothers and John Fletcher was highly controversial even inside Methodism and Wesley was forced to clarify and qualify it many times [3.2.1.3]. After Wesley's death British Methodism abandoned the idea in favour of a gradual growth in holiness, that Wesley had also taught (Goodwin 1998).<sup>13</sup>

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In American Methodism, the pattern was different. The teaching on 'entire sanctification' was retained and enthusiastically advocated but it tended to be understood in legalistic terms and it is questionable whether the focus on love was retained. Perfectionist teaching returned from America to the British Isles in the 1830s but its impact seemed now to be dispersed over a number of denominations and made little apparent impact on

Some of Wesley's more austere stipulations also began to fade from the Methodist lifestyle but the emphasis on moderation and industry was retained. Above all, the renewal of the image of God through the increase of love in the heart expressed in life remained the goal of sanctification and the *telos* of the whole movement (Coppedge 1980).

#### **3.2.5.1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE METHODIST SOCIETY**

The demise of perfectionism entailed that the 'Select Societies' were no longer required as there were fewer people with an entire sanctification to be maintained. The bands and penitential groups also declined with the classes taking the weight of the whole [3.2.3.1.2]. Nevertheless, the classes were successful for several generations in maintaining a disciplined people seeking to grow in love (Stafford 2003).

#### **3.2.5.1.4 LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATISATION**

Wesley ruled the Methodist Conference and its Societies with a benign autocracy. He argued that God had providentially placed the leaders of the 'people called Methodists' in his hands, although he had not sought it, which meant that he could not lay it down. All of the preachers, he insisted, had come to work with him knowing these circumstances and thereby implicitly accepted them. Any movement to democratisation within the Conference or the societies at large Wesley consequently viewed as a challenge to God's order. In response to the suggestion that issues at Conference might be settled on the basis of a vote, or that leaders might be chosen by the assembled preachers such a thing he stated might happen after he had died but not while he lived and continued to hold the God given responsibility of leadership (Wesley 2005AB). Yet Wesley had laid the foundations of democratic leadership without knowing it. Methodism was a veritable school of leadership at every level, especially as piety and sense were the main criteria rather than class or education. Leaders could rise according to their ability and commitment from being class leaders, to local preachers, to circuit preachers, and to district ministers. At each level these leaders would be mentored by their peers and superiors and improve their knowledge using the texts that Wesley provided and the intense teaching sessions that he and other educated Methodist clergy provided. Moreover, Wesley provided a formidable model of spiritual leadership and the exercise of practical love

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mainstream Methodism. Ultimately the emotional zeal of the perfectionist movement found its way into Pentecostalism. (Goodwin 1998).

himself. Following this pattern Methodism soon gathered a pool of able leaders who, in the very nature of things, sought to play a role in shaping the direction of the movement. In Wesley's own lifetime restlessness among leaders had led to a split in the Wesleyan Methodist movement and after his death it resulted in a more democratic and more representative conference but also to further divisions within the movement (Semmler 1974: 114-124).

### **3.2.5.2 WITHIN BRITISH SOCIETY**

#### **3.2.5.2.1 ESTIMATES OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF METHODISM**

What exactly was the effect of Methodism on wider British society? There are widely differing views on the matter (Keefer, 1990). The first, and often quoted opinion, is that the Methodist revival prevented a bloody revolution on the model of those in the American colonies and later in France. This view was probably first proposed by Methodist historians who held a heroic view of Wesley's generation and wanted to stress that Methodism was not a revolutionary movement. Socialist historians have concurred in this judgement arguing that Methodism pacified the working classes and diverted their emerging leadership into futile religious pursuits. The second view insists that Methodism actually had very little effect on British society as the numbers involved in the movement were always very small in relation to the rest of society, and, as a group, Methodists were marginal and suspect (Rack 1989: 443-445). Both of these views are probably exaggerations. Britain was not France and more liberal conditions already existed thanks to the earlier revolutions of 1640 and 1688. The power of monarchy was already limited and basic civil and religious freedoms already prevailed unlike France. A Revolution on the French model was therefore less likely. However, Methodists had an influence beyond their numbers. It has already been observed that they placed a very high value on social engagement. They were involved both in personal and organised philanthropy, in various campaigns for social reform such as child welfare, prison reform, education, and the abolition of slavery (Howse 1971: 116-165). In addition to this, as working class movements did begin to emerge, it was more often than not Methodists who led them. The Methodist system of leadership training provided leaders for radical movements as well as for the Methodist societies. Through their example and their involvement in various benevolent reform movements Methodism played a significant,

perhaps decisive, role in the transition of Britain to liberal democracy (Coleson 1972; Semmell 1974: 124-136; 169-198).

### **3.2.5.2.2 MAKING GOODNESS FASHIONABLE**

The example of Methodist self-help and philanthropy inspired many outside the movement to greater humanity and charity. They helped to generate a climate in which 'goodness became fashionable.' The impetus for this cultural change came from both religious leaders, such as the Evangelical aristocrats of the 'Clapham Sect'<sup>14</sup> and secular leaders such as those of the humanist utilitarian movement, but it was groups like the Methodist who sought to live lives of greater humanity who provided the substance. It was also the Methodists and others like them who had been influenced by the Evangelical revival initiated by Whitefield and Wesley that provided the foot soldiers for the various reform movements led by liberally oriented political leaders, especially the campaign for the abolition of slavery (Semmell 1974: 106-109; Rack 1989: 447-449; Keefer 1990).

### **3.2.5.2.3 THE DEMOCRATISATION OF SOCIETY**

Methodism through its discipline and organisation gave poorer people, many of them socially marginalised a sense of control over their own lives. Their ability to change their circumstances through their own behaviour led to a great sense of dignity. Methodism also

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<sup>14</sup> The 'Clapham Sect' was a group of wealthy and influential Evangelical Anglicans who were parishioners of Holy Trinity, Clapham (Clapham was then a village outside of London) from the 1780s to the 1830s. Their number included, along with William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton (1760-1815), a banker and financier who bankrolled many of the group's causes; Granville Sharp (1735-1813), a lawyer who secured the famous 1772 verdict that made slavery illegal on the British mainland; Hannah More (1745-1833) a pioneer of popular education; Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838) a one time governor of Sierra Leone and meticulous and tireless researcher of slavery and other social evils; and John Venn (1759-1813) the vicar and spiritual guide of the group. Wilberforce gave the group cohesion and direction and it declined after his death in 1833. The Clapham group was motivated by Christian compassion to campaign for a wide range of religious and social reforms. While their most notable achievement was the abolition of slavery, their causes included child welfare, factory reform, education, opposition to the vices of gambling, alcohol abuse, decorum in public behaviour, excesses in the practices of British trading companies, Bible distribution, religious education and foreign missions. From 1780 to 1844 they were responsible for establishing 223 institutions and societies in support of their causes. Politically, the group was conservative and sought to make the existing order operate in a more just and humane fashion. They were also highly pragmatic forming temporary alliances with even secular humanists like the Utilitarians (who defined goodness in terms of the happiness and welfare of the majority). (Hindmarsh 1997A, 1997B; Pierard 1997) As upper class evangelicals the members of the 'Clapham Sect' were disdainful of the emotional enthusiasm and collective spirit of the Methodists. They placed a greater emphasis on the Bible, a reasoned faith, and the spiritual struggle of the individual alone before God. However, there was a close friendship between the Wesleys and William Wilberforce. The Wesley's supported Wilberforce's causes and encouraged their followers to become involved in the causes sponsored by the Clapham group. (Meacham 1963: 93-94; Semmell 1974: 146-169) For a fuller discussion of 'The Clapham Sect' see Howse 1971.

encouraged people to be participants rather than passive bystanders or recipients. The success of Methodism in generating leaders has already been discussed. These factors taken together, suggest that Methodists and those influenced by them would be more likely to seek democratic reform and participate in, and provide leadership for, radical and reform movements such as Chartism.<sup>15</sup> The alliance that grew up between Methodists and other non-conformists and the Liberal Party and the prominence of Methodists inside the developing labour movement are indications of this (Semmell 1974:124-136; Keefer 1990).

#### **3.2.5.2.4 THE GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION OF BRITISH SOCIETY**

These dimensions taken together suggest that Methodism opted for gradual transformation rather than instantaneous change in social life as well in individual life. Methodism was most likely one important factor that helped Britain become a liberal society avoiding the bloodshed and anarchy that occurred elsewhere. It seems that the Methodist quest for holiness as perfect love thus had its social as well as its personal consequences (Wesley 2005H; Semmell 1974: 169-198; Hynson 1988; Keefer 1990).

#### **3.2.5.3 THE MISSIONARY LEGACY**

##### **3.2.5.3.1 THE MISSIONARY AGENDA**

The last dimension of Wesley's legacy that needs to be discussed here is his contribution to cross-cultural mission. Wesley's hope that the reform of British society would provide a

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<sup>15</sup> The Chartist movement emerged in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act which extended the franchise in Britain to the upper and upper middle classes but excluded the lower middle and emerging working class of artisans and factory workers. Those who were denied the vote felt themselves to be socially excluded, especially when an economic depression added to their woes. In 1836 the London Working Men's Association (which sponsored six Members in Parliament) published the *People's Charter* which contained six points: universal adult male suffrage, a secret ballot, constituencies of equal size, the abolition of the property requirement for Members of Parliament, a salary for Members of Parliament, annual General Elections. The *Charter* was presented to the House of Commons three times in 1839, 1842, and 1848. On each occasion it was supported by petitions containing millions of signatures, but on each occasion the Commons refused to hear the petition. Generally, those leading the campaign for the *Charter* sought to gain their ends by lawful and peaceful means, but fearful voices in the ruling establishment and radical voices on the fringe of the Chartist movement promoted the violence of oppression on the one hand, and that of insurrection on the other. Parliament's rejection of the charter led to calls for an alternative National Assembly to function as a rival to Parliament. An abortive attempt was made to establish such a body in 1848 (a year of popular revolutions throughout Europe) which did much to discredit the movement which subsequently lost momentum and support. By 1872 all the demands of the *Charter* except annual elections were fulfilled (Royle 1985; Chartism 2007). While Methodism provided a number of leaders, such as Rev. J. R. Stephens to the Chartist movement, the Wesleyan Methodist Church as such was indifferent and even hostile to Chartism because it felt that faith should be kept separate from politics and, by this time, the Church tended to identify itself with the established order for fear of being considered a radical movement. Stephens was later ejected from the Methodist ministry because of his fiery oratory in support of the Charter (Cook 1924; Yeo 1981).



foundation for mission was partially fulfilled through the various reform and philanthropic movements that altered much of the face of British society in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The same Evangelical political leaders that had lead social change also championed missions. Wilberforce, for example, was one of the directors of the Church Missionary Society and was an occasional guest of honour at the meetings of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. The Wesleyan Missionary Society itself was born out a sense that the work of evangelism was well advanced in Britain and that Methodist zeal now needed to be directed overseas that salvation and holiness might be brought to other lands (Semmell 1974: 146-169).

#### **3.2.5.3.2 THE LEGACY OF ABOLITION - MISSION AS REPARATIONS**

Slavery in British territories was finally abolished in November 1834, a few weeks before the arrival of the first Methodist missionary to the Gold Coast. Christian mission to Africa to transform the lives and circumstances of the same African communities that had been the victims of the slave trade appeared to many British Christians to be the appropriate response to the end of slavery. Missionary work was viewed as reparation for slavery (Semmell 1974: 168). In the mind of British Methodist Christians, the Gospel was their most precious possession. The greatest expression of love possible to their African neighbours, therefore, was to either come themselves, or send others, to be the messengers of the Gospel (Southron 1934:13-23).

### **3.3 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter a survey has been made of the Methodist moral tradition initiated by John Wesley in the light of MacIntyre's model. The *telos* of this tradition was identified as the realisation of the *imago Dei* in Christian Perfection understood as the pure love of God and neighbour. This *telos* was supported by rational and emotional *virtues* sustained by *practices* of an austere life, the 'means of grace', the class system, and the distinctive Methodist pattern of leadership. The next chapter, Chapter Four, will consider how this tradition developed among the Fanti people in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) under the direction of missionary and indigenous leaders.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION AMONG THE AKANS, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE FANTI PEOPLES, FROM 1835 TO 1965**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER**

The purpose of Chapter Four is to consider the career of the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana, initially developed by John Wesley in Britain, as it was implemented and developed among sections of the Akan peoples by Methodist missionaries and indigenous leaders in interaction with the Akan moral tradition. Particular attention will be given to the manner in which the Akan tradition may have challenged and modified Methodist moral discourse and practice.

This chapter covers the period from 1835 to 1965. The standard histories of Ghana Methodism (Southron 1934 and Bartels 1965) provide a general picture of the whole time under review. Particular material for the period from 1835 to 1918 was drawn from three main sources: the journals and biographies of Thomas Birch Freeman (Birtwhistle 1950 Freeman 1843; Milum 1893; Walker 1929; Wright 1968), Minutes of District Synods and Circuit Reports in the Archives of the Methodist Church, Ghana,<sup>16</sup> and S. K. Odamtten's study of the contribution of the main Protestant missions, including the Methodist mission, to Ghana's social and economic development until the 1880's (Odamtten 1978). As 1835 to 1918 were the formative time of the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana<sup>17</sup> they are discussed and documented in some detail. This is necessary to demonstrate that Methodist moral practice was shaping, and being shaped by, the lives of many ordinary people in a wide range of communities, and not merely by a few prominent individuals. Detail is also required to substantiate the existence and growth of a local Methodist moral tradition in interaction with Fanti moral practice. The influence of the Methodist moral tradition thus cannot really be considered apart from pertinent historical evidence. The period from 1918 is documented through two major studies of the life and work of the Methodist Church, an internal report commissioned by the Methodist Church, Ghana itself into the spiritual and moral state of its Societies in 1948 (Taylor 1948) and an external study undertaken by Robert Parsons under the

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<sup>16</sup> Archival research was conducted from June to August 2002 and January to September 2003. As some records from the period 1835 to 1918 were unavailable and others were simply too fragile to handle the records considered in this chapter constitute a comprehensive sample rather than a complete review. Thanks and appreciation are due to Reverend Daniel French, the archivist, for his invaluable assistance and advice.

<sup>17</sup> Prior to Independence on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1957 Ghana was also known as the Gold Coast and this historical usage is followed in this thesis as appropriate.

auspices of the Christian Council of Ghana covering the period 1918-1955. (Parsons 1963) These major studies have been augmented by Minutes<sup>18</sup> of pertinent Synod Meetings and other relevant literature.

This chapter focuses, although not exclusively, upon the formation of the Methodist moral tradition among the Fanti peoples (who are a subgroup of the Akan) amongst whom the first Methodist churches were begun in 1835.

A comprehensive study of the further development of the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana beyond 1965 was beyond the scope of the research undertaken for this thesis.<sup>19</sup>.

## **4.2 BACKGROUND: THE BEGINNINGS OF FANTI METHODISM**

The origins of Methodism in the Fanti lands lay with a group of young men connected with the Castle School at Cape Coast. They had formed themselves into a group for the study of the Bible and encouragement in the Christian life that was variously known as the Gold Coast Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (after the publisher of the literature that they used) or the Bible Band. This group was thirsty for a deeper knowledge of the Christian faith and even applied for a missionary from the Bishop of London. Their connection with Methodism was made when one of their number approached the captain of a merchant ship, Potter, to arrange a shipment of Bibles. The sea captain happened to be a Methodist and met with the Bible Band. He was impressed by the group which resembled a Methodist Class Meeting and upon his return to England urged the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (formed 1818) to send a missionary to build on the zeal and enthusiasm of the group (Southron 1934: 24-31; Bartels 1965: 1-13). The Society sent John Dunwell who arrived in Cape Coast in January 1835, a few months after the final abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Dunwell only survived for six months on the Gold Coast before he died but in that time he had organised the first Methodist Societies and begun a process of Church planting. Dunwell was succeeded by other missionaries who also died within a few months of their arrival (Southron 1934: 32-40; Bartels 1965: 14-30). It was only when Thomas Birch Freeman arrived at Cape Coast in 1838

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<sup>18</sup> After 1918 the number of Methodist circuits, and consequently circuit reports, increased considerably leading to logistical problems for an individual researcher. Fortunately, good quality secondary source material is available for the period 1918-1964 especially Southron: *Gold Coast Methodism* 1934, Parsons: *The Churches and Ghana Society 1918-1955* 1963, Taylor: *I Will Build My Church* 1948, and Bartels: *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* 1965. Where necessary archival material has been used to supplement these secondary sources.

<sup>19</sup> Such a study is undoubtedly required but would have required further archival and empirical research that was beyond the scope and resources of this particular project.

that the infant Church received decisive and long term leadership. Freeman set the course and character for Methodism in the Fanti lands and was the principal mediator of the Methodist moral tradition to Fanti culture. As such it is important to give some attention to Freeman's life and work to discover how he taught and modelled the moral tradition of which he was part (Southron 1935:32-40).

#### **4.3 FREEMAN AS AN EXEMPLAR OF THE METHODIST MORAL TRADITION**

##### **4.3.1 BRIEF OUTLINE OF FREEMAN'S LIFE<sup>20</sup>**

Thomas Birch Freeman was born in 1809 to an African Father and an English mother in the village of Twyford near Winchester. Freeman's parents were in service in one of the stately houses of the area, his father as a gardener and his mother as a maid. It is speculated that Freeman's father was one of those freed by the 1772 judgment by the High Court that slavery in the British Isles was unlawful. Freeman gained sufficient education to assume the post of head gardener and botanist to Sir Robert Harland on his estate, Orwell Park near Ipswich, becoming, in the course of his career, an expert in botany and horticulture. Freeman had also joined the Methodists as a boy and was active as a local preacher in visitation and preaching. The local vicar persuaded Sir Robert to give Freeman a choice between his faith and his post (Milum 1893: 9-16; Walker 1929: 11-15). Characteristically Freeman chose his faith and volunteered for missionary service with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Africa. The Missionary Society accepted Freeman's application with some enthusiasm as they felt that a man with some African blood would be better able to survive in the climate (Walker 1929: 16-21).

Freeman set sail for Cape Coast on the fifth of November 1837. When he arrived at Cape Coast on the third of January 1838 after a long voyage he found that all of his missionary colleagues had died and he had to continue alone (Walker 1929:2 1-28).

Once he had recovered Freeman commenced a whirl of activity that was to last for the next nineteen years as he organised, trained, planted churches, made a number of visits to the principle kingdoms on the West African Coast, engaged in various agricultural initiatives, and acted as friend and advisor to British governors (Milum 1893: 31-131; Walker 1929:3 2-199; Birtwhistle 1950: 1-92). By 1857 Freeman's wide range of activities and initiatives had

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<sup>20</sup> There are three biographies of Freeman: Milum 1893, Walker 1929, and Birtwhistle 1950. All of these are popular treatments of Freeman's life, no scholarly biography has yet been written.

plunged the Gold Coast Mission into serious debt that the Home Committee found it difficult to cover. Freeman felt that he had lost the confidence of the Committee in Britain and took the post of Civil Commandant of Accra with the colonial government (Milum 1893: 132-140; Walker 1929: 201-207; Birtwhistle 1950: 93-100). After a break of sixteen years by which time Freeman had retired from Government service and begun his own plantation he returned to the Methodist ministry as a circuit minister in 1873 taking successful pastoral charge at Anomabo, where he presided over the great revivals of the 1870s, and later at Accra. Freeman finally retired from the ministry in 1885. He died five years later in August 1890 (Milum 1893: 141-160; Walker 1929: 208-216; Birtwhistle 1950: 101-110).

#### **4.3.2. THE GOAL OF LOVE**

Freeman was not given to theological articulation and wrote very little aside from his famous Journals. In seeking Freeman's understanding of morality and moral motivation it is necessary to look at his actions, example, and expressions of sentiment. Hence while Freeman never anywhere gave a theoretical articulation of love as the goal of life in the manner of Wesley [3.2.1], there is evidence that he aspired after the perfect love that was at the heart of the Methodist tradition (Morrison 1985:22-27).

This was indicated in his sacrificial commitment to the missionary life. Freeman wrote to the Missionary Committee on 1837:

Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel and woe is me if I am not prepared to forsake home, and friends and all that I hold dear to me, to preach that Gospel to the heathen (Cited in Walker 1929: 21)

On his arrival in Cape Coast Freeman's greatest concern was how he might spend his life serving the Fanti people:

I could live and die among them. How shall I serve them most effectively?  
(Cited in Walker 1929: 38)

The single-mindedness with which Freeman sought to bring salvation and 'civilization' to people's lives by his evangelistic and philanthropic endeavours is reminiscent of Wesley [3.2.3.1] and seems to flow from the same motivation. This was certainly the impression he left with those he tried to serve. The final conclusion of the deeply suspicious Ashanti court was that Freeman had "come here to do us good..." (Freeman: 1843: 169).

### **4.3.3 HOLINESS**

Clearly, then, Freeman shared Wesley's aim of a life determined by love and he also seemed to share Wesley's convictions about perfection as an instant experience [See 3.2.1.2 to 3.2.1.3 and 3.2.3.2.1]. The Circuit Report for Anomabo in 1875, then under Freeman's leadership, states: "...the old and long established members sought, with prayerful earnestness for the rich benefits of the higher inner Christian life." (Anomabo 1875). The 'higher inner Christian life' appears to be a synonym for Christian perfection. It should also be noted that Freeman as the circuit minister would have written this report himself.

Freeman, again like Wesley, never claimed to have attained perfection, but according to his biographers, he, never-the-less, appeared to have attained a high level of moral performance:

Freeman was now in his seventy-fifth year—a very tall, straight, stately old man with silvery hair, perfect, courtly manners and a splendid presence. He was never anything but dignified, and everyone instinctively treated him with profound respect. Yet he had a fund of quiet humour, and always enjoyed a good joke. A buoyancy of temperament was one of his priceless assets. He had a fine flow of language; not only was his literary style good, but his spoken English also was polished and faultless in pronunciation and accent. To the African people and his colleagues in the ministry he was "Father Freeman." He was kind and courteous to all, always accessible, and wherever he went he was loved. Children ran after him in the street, and it was quite usual to see two or three of them holding each of his hands. Kind-hearted to a degree, he would always go out of his way to help people in need or to deliver the oppressed. Once he walked twenty miles to plead for the lives of two chiefs sentenced to death by their own people. (Walker 1929: 211-212.)

Freeman's death was also full of faith and peace (Milum 1893: 150-160; Walker 1929: 213-214; Birtwhistle 1950: 107-110). Both faith and peace were among the signs that Wesley sought as a sign of Christian perfection [3.2.3.1].

### **4.3.4 VIRTUE AND CHARACTER**

'Perfect' or not Freeman was still an outstanding character. Milum, Freeman's contemporary, describes him as gentlemanly, considerate, courteous and honourable (Milum 1893 : 9-16). Birtwhistle stresses Freeman's piety, courage and practical judgment (Birtwhistle 1950: 7-11). Freeman also excelled in the rational virtues of self-denial, humility, meekness, industry, austerity, and charity that Wesley established [3.2.2]. His life was certainly one of self-denial as he continually spent himself in Christian service, often at some risk to his health. Freeman's humility was evidenced in his submission to the judgment of the Missionary

Committee in 1857 to relieve him of responsibility for the District's finances and his willingness to serve under men many years his junior when he returned to the ministry in 1873 (Walker 1929: 201-205, 208-209; Birtwhistle 1950: 93-100, 101-103). Freeman's meekness was demonstrated in his ability to build relationships with African and European, Traditionalist and Christian and in many situations to act as a peacemaker (Walker 1929:39-54; Birtwhistle 1950: 9-10). Freeman's industry is indisputable as he compressed the accomplishments of three-life times into one. Freeman also lived a life of austerity which he only moderated (also following Wesley's advice and example) for the sake of the health of his family and colleagues (Millum 1893: 31-39; Walker 1929: 48ff). Lastly, Freeman was generous to a fault. He sought to respond to every situation of need and appeal and this, in terms of his use of mission funds, proved to be his undoing as he tried to compensate his African workers generously, establish schools and churches where they were requested, and develop means of economic improvement for the people (Walker 1929: 180-187; Birtwhistle 1950: 93-100).

Freeman did not lack the "passionate virtues." [3.2.2] He had a continual sense of God's presence around him (Birtwhistle 1950: 7-8), especially as this is expressed in nature:

Roll on, ye dark-brown waters, in obedience to the Almighty fiat! Help to swell the proud waves of that ocean which bears the messengers of peace and the glad tidings of salvation, to these dark and benighted regions; return gain in rain to water the thirsty earth: beautiful emblem of those showers of heavenly grace, which will in due time water the moral desert of Africa, and cause it to rejoice and blossom as the rose, the droppings of which are already felt and seen. (Freeman 1843:105)

Few people exceeded his zeal for the Kingdom of God.

#### **4.3.5 DISCIPLINE**

As a Methodist from his youth, and as a Methodist local preacher Freeman would have been formed by the Methodist system of discipline of personal study, prayer and spiritual discipline including visits to those in his class and Society and the sick and needy [3.2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.3]. In fact it was these very activities that cost Freeman his job as head gardener (Millum 1893: 9-16; Walker 1929: 11-15; Birtwhistle 1950: 1-7).

Upon his arrival in Cape Coast Freeman built upon his predecessors' work and established regular patterns of worship, devotion, discipline, and personal witness. (Walker 1929: 39-45). Indeed, in the midst of all his other activities Freeman never forgot these basics. Thus

immediately upon his return from his first trip to Kumasi Freeman plunged into activity designed to re-enforce Methodist discipline upon his flock:

There are characteristic Methodist duties to perform: he holds a Love Feast at Cape Coast; at Anomabo he finds two backsliders who have applied for readmission to membership, and he puts them on a month's trial; he warns the members at Cape Coast against 'custom-making',<sup>21</sup> and reads over and explains the *Rules of Our Society*; the old year is seen out in a watch-night service, and at the beginning of the next day they are holding a covenant meeting. (Birtwhistle 1950: 47)

Clearly, Freeman was establishing the same pattern of Methodist discipline among the Fantis in which he had been nurtured in England in which observance of the Society's rules and attendance at the Means of Grace were central. Class meetings, Sunday worship, Love Feast and Watch Night service were all promoted. Freeman continued this same pattern in his later ministry [3.2.3.2.3].

Even during the time of his 'retirement' from 1857 to 1873 Freeman remained a Methodist, a member of a local Society and a local preacher who sought to assist Societies wherever he could (Walker 1929: 205-207).

#### **4.3.6 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

That Freeman had a lively sense of the presence and power of God is evident from the expressions of prayer and praise that occur throughout his journals (Freeman 1843) however, no account of his own interior religious experiences, for example of his assurance of salvation or possible experience of sanctification, appears to be available. While Freeman was cautious about some aspects of the religious emotions he nevertheless taught, encouraged, and presumably practised, experiential religion in a similar manner to Wesley [3.2.3.2.1] (Milum 1893: 141-149; Walker 1929:208-209). As a circuit minister at both Anomabo and Accra he encouraged people to seek both assurance of salvation and entire sanctification and, like his colleagues, gauged the vitality of the Societies under his charge by the testimonies of religious experience he heard at his quarterly visits to the classes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The reference to 'custom making' probably includes the rituals and ceremonies connected with funerals and other 'rites of passage,' family occasions, and festivals.

<sup>22</sup> Freeman relates in his circuit report for Anomabo, 1875 that preachers in the circuit independently organized prayer meetings for the descent of the Holy Ghost. He reports that the revival began at Kuntu and spread with profound affects: "...the old and long established members sought, with prayerful earnestness for the rich benefits of the higher inner Christian life." In his report for the same circuit in 1876 Freeman indicates that the revival was continuing as the Holy Spirit was "deepening the piety of old established professors and



On top of all this it is Freeman who introduced and presided over many of the camp meetings that were such a crucial part of the revival of the late 1870's that relied on stirring preaching, testimony and prayer. Evidence from Freeman's journal indicates that these were intensely emotional events as this account of a Camp Meeting from Kuntu in 1878 shows:

It was the first time that meetings had been arranged for both Saturday and Sunday, and Freeman attributed the greater success of the venture to the fact that the people were together for two days instead of one. Here is his account of the testimonies that followed the Love Feast on the second day. "The culminating point of the entire Camp Meetings was that of the Testimonies. The Biscuit and water having been handed around, and the collection made, the Testimonies began at 4 p.m., and continued until past six. It having been decided that no restraint whatever should be placed upon the Testimonies the closing Prayer-Meeting had to give place to them. They were resumed at 7:15 p.m., and then followed a scene of wonder—the speakers crowded around the small platform...each anxious to speak their brief tales of wonder and delight to such an extent that 10 p.m. arrived and still they crowded on weeping and rejoicing—'Coming with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy upon their heads.' Speaker after speaker told of the wonders of redeeming love displayed to them. The assembly rose on their feet, and sang Doxology after Doxology, Doxology after Doxology. (Cited in Birtwhistle 1950: 108)

For Freeman and other Methodist leaders such emotional intensity was never an end in itself but served the higher purpose of growing in love and grace as defined by the Methodist teaching on sanctification [3.2.3.2.1]. In the particular case of the meeting at Kuntu its design was to restore peace and unity to the Church in the Anomabo circuit after a period of division and controversy (Walker 1929: 210-211; Birtwhistle 1950: 104-109).

#### **4.3.7 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

While Freeman lived for many years the single life that Wesley applauded, he did not share Wesley's views [3.2.3.3]. Freeman's predecessor Wrigley had recommended to the missionary committee that men serving on the West African coast should be married and so Freeman wedded Elizabeth Boot, housekeeper to his former employers Sir Robert and Lady Harland in 1837 (Milum 1893: 9-16; Walker 1929: 21-28). Elizabeth Freeman died during her 'seasoning fever' a few weeks after their arrival at Cape Coast while nursing Freeman through his illness (Walker 1929: 32-40; Birtwhistle 1950: 10-12). Freeman married again in

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enlarging the work by an increased ingathering of precious souls into the fold of Christ ..." Freeman continued in a similar vein when he was transferred to Accra as he writes in his report of the Accra and Aburi Circuits of 1882 that work in the circuit had arrived at "a point of advancement never before reached, and more especially so in the case of the society in Accra." Camp meetings at which perfection and the presence of the Holy Spirit was preached had a profound effect on the faith of believers.

1842, during his first furlough, to Lucinda Cowan the daughter of a Methodist Minister. Lucinda lived in Cape Coast for several months but also fell ill and died (Freeman 1843: 97-109; Milum 1893: 69-80; Walker 1929: 108-113; Birtwhistle 1950: 54-58). In 1854, Freeman married for a third time and began a successful union that lasted for the rest of his life:

Amid all the duties and anxieties that surrounded him, Freeman now took an important step in his private affairs. Since the death of his second wife he had known nothing of the joy and restfulness of home life. At times he had been unutterably lonely. His health was often poor; he had repeated attacks of fever, and sometimes could, for days altogether, take nothing but cocoa milk. [sic] Feeling the need of companionship and domestic joy, he now married an educated African lady, a devoted Christian and keen worker in the Church. 'She proved a most devoted wife and mother, but was so unassuming that only those within her intimate circle were fully aware of her intelligence and splendid qualities.' Soon four little faces brought joy and sunshine to the home—there were two boys and two girls. It was apparent to all who know Freeman's circumstances that he had taken the right step. (Walker 1929: 199)

This seems to have been a good relationship (Birtwhistle 1950: 98). The Third Mrs Freeman<sup>23</sup> seems to have been closely involved in her husband's ministry as it is she who called him back from Cape Coast to Anomabo to take over the leadership of the revival that had erupted there (Birtwhistle 1950: 101-103). She was at Freeman's side during his last illness (Milum 1893: 150-160; Walker 1929: 213-214; Birtwhistle 1950:107-110). Thomas, Freeman's eldest son, was sufficiently inspired by his father's faith that he joined him in the Methodist ministry, working as his assistant in Accra (Walker 1929: 211).

In contrast to Wesley's teaching and practice [3.2.3.3] Freeman married not merely for procreation or as a guard against temptation but for companionship. Wesley's strict teaching seems to have fallen out of favour in Methodism and Freeman followed the pattern that seems to have been the general recommended practise for Methodist missionaries, certainly in West Africa, to marry for the sake of companionship and to have a female helper in the work of the mission, especially for work with women and girls (Walker 1929:21-24). Thus, despite his own tragic experience, Freeman both recruited married missionaries and encouraged his colleagues to marry (Walker 1929: 104-107; Birtwhistle 1950: 47-53).

Like Wesley before him [See 3.2.3.3], and following what had become the orthodox position in the Methodist Church, Freeman opposed polygamy and regarded it as basically incompatible with Church membership. However, he also recognised the difficulties

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<sup>23</sup> Astonishingly none of Freeman's biographers offers the third Mrs Freeman the courtesy of naming her!

presented by the policy of the Methodist Church of excluding those in some form of marriage if their marriages had not been solemnized in church, if they were in polygamous relationships, or if they were slaves and their owners forbade them to have a Church wedding (Walker 1929:140-141).

#### **4.3.8 EDUCATION**

Education, for Freeman, as for Wesley [3.2.3.3], was not an end itself but an instrument of mission and ‘civilization.’ Freeman established schools wherever possible to induct African children into Christian faith and to use them as instruments of social change by introducing ‘civilized’ knowledge and ideas (Bartels 1965: 30-44). In the settlement of Beulah Freeman also attempted to repeat something along the lines of Wesley’s School at Kingswood [3.2.3.3] to separate the children from ‘paganism’ through isolating them from their cultural background (Bartels 1965: 66-75). Freeman looked upon the schools as a channel of evangelism and as a source of leaders and workers for the Church (Birtwhistle 1950: 14).<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.3.9 LEADERSHIP**

Freeman was also an outstanding example of the Methodist model of leadership, a man of both faith and practical reason. Freeman took Wesley’s injunction concerning the primacy of souls very seriously and conceived a visionary plan for the spread of the Christian Gospel [3.2.3.1.3]. His great scheme in his early years in West Africa was to establish missions in each of the powerful inland kingdoms with linking stations on the coast by which all of West Africa might be evangelised, Cape Coast and Kumasi was to be the first of these pairs. In the meantime as much of the coast as could be reached from Cape Coast was to be evangelised first and Freeman travelled hundreds of miles along forest paths and by ocean canoe preaching the Gospel and seeking to create openings for new stations, churches and schools (Milum 1893: 31-39; Walker 1929:39-54; Birtwhistle 1950:13-19; Bartels 1965: 30-44).

Freeman understood that zeal was not enough and that practical reason was also necessary. [3.2.3.1.3] This insight resulted in a pragmatic attitude to social institutions and cultural practices which he exploited as instruments for the end of saving souls and building the

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Freeman's comments in his report for the Accra Circuit of 1881 are quite revealing. He argued for an expansion of English language education rather than the vernacular as he believed English was destined to become the dominant language of the region and people preferred it. He insisted that youths should be trained and recruited to act as agents from the schools by first employing them as monitors. (Accra, 1881)

Church, concepts that he otherwise might have rejected as a self-conscious Englishman. Thus, wherever he went he endeavoured to establish good relationships with local rulers developing considerable diplomatic skills through which he resolved by negotiation many tense situations between Christians and traditionalists.<sup>25</sup> Freeman also understood that the faith and discipleship of new Christians needed to be sustained with schools for their children, new sources of income to raise their lifestyle, and a social and cultural transformation that would give greater room for the expression of Christian values. Thus, Freeman developed initiatives in education and agriculture, attempted to encourage the spread of 'civilisation' on the Western model. In order to encourage the latter Freeman cultivated good relations with European merchants, and especially with the colonial authorities with whom he co-operated quite closely at different times in his career. Freeman became a public as well as a religious figure. In all of these initiatives and relationships, however, Freeman was always seeking the future good of the Church (Milum 1893: 132-140; Walker 1929: 39-54, 186-199; Southron 1934: 41-51; Birtwhistle 1950: 9-10, 103-104; Morrison 1985: 38-62).

While Freeman's style of leadership, following the tenor of the times, was often authoritarian, it was not aloof (Wright 1962: xxvi-xxvii). He would frequently lead by example, doing first himself those things he wished his people to do (Walker 1929: 39-54). Freeman would participate in the building of a new chapel or in helping to spread the baggage on an extended trip (Freeman 1843: 97-109; Walker 1929: 114-120). He would also seek the best means of giving ordinary members 'ownership' of the work which he did through the chapel building programme. Freeman was endlessly patient and compassionate seeking to persuade rather than coerce. He would more often use humour than rebuke (Freeman 1843: 115-116). However, he was quite capable of single-minded and decisive action when the occasion demanded as displayed by his precipitous departure from Formena in the face of endless delays in receiving permission to proceed on his journey to Kumasi (Freeman 1843: 34-42).

Freeman was well aware that he could not lead alone thus he went to great lengths to recruit new co-workers from Britain and, more, importantly, sought to mentor African leaders. Thus

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<sup>25</sup> Walker comments: 'Freeman soon gained an almost magic influence over African chiefs. His sound judgement, his tactful manner of approach, and his never failing courtesy almost invariably triumphed, and he soon became known as the "great white prophet." Quickly learning the customs of the country, he adopted such as would serve his purpose. Thus, when going to visit a chief, he would send on before him (as a chief would do) a messenger with an official "stick" to announce his approach. Attention to such little courtesies and points of African etiquette greatly pleased the chiefs and opened the way for his great message. "He knows our customs," they said, as they prepared to received him.' (Walker 1929: 48)

he began to train the young men who had been part of the original Bible Band some of whom later served in different missionary situations themselves (Milum 1843: 69-80 Walker 1929: 39-54, 104-107, 180ff, 190-191; Birtwhistle 1950: 12, 47-53, 75-81; Dickson 1971: 171-174). Freeman was concerned with both souls and bodies, with accomplishing the task and drawing others into that task.

Freeman's leadership style seemed to parallel and converge with the leadership style practised by traditional rulers. This probably arose from his pragmatic and instrumental attitude to cultural traditions and institutions. His decision making was deeply rooted in the exercise of practical reason through which he sought the best for his community. Freeman also tried to draw others into the circle of leadership and decision making through dialogue and participation, especially those he wanted to nurture as leaders. In many ways, Freeman approaches the Akan model of the ideal *nana*. He was a moral paragon, who was revered by all, married, had children who followed his example, and preserved his memory which has also been sustained by his community even until the present day, and he died a natural death [2.4.3.2]. Freeman effectively becomes the *ebusuapanyin* of the Methodist family, setting its course and allocating resources on the basis of pragmatism and compassion after having listened to all. The figure that the Methodist community came to regard as their 'father' was effectively also their *nana* and subsequently became their hero-ancestor!

It appears that in pragmatically engaging with Akan rulers Freeman began to intuitively adopt their values and practices. Possibly, the reason that Freeman was able to relate to African rulers so well was that through his practice they recognised one of their own.

#### **4.3.10 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT**

##### **4.3.10.1 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**

Freeman had a deep love and respect for the Fanti people and as he sought to relate to them, he adapted to their institutions and practices. However, at the same time he regards Akan culture with Western prejudice. This gave him a kind of 'split level' response to Akan culture formally rejecting it at an intellectual level but embracing its values and practices at a pragmatic level. As a result of this Freeman's response to Akan culture was contradictory, and confused. Freeman was antagonistic to Akan traditional religion but admired and respected Akan people and their political institutions and customs, even to the extent that he adopted local leadership values and practices. Because much in Akan culture was not

separable from Akan traditional religion Freeman's response to this culture became confused and ambiguous.

Freeman saw the 'heathen' religion of Africans as one of the chief sources of their misfortunes and once these 'superstitions' were cast off enlightenment and morality would dawn on the continent.<sup>26</sup> Freeman, like other Europeans of his time, seemed to look upon traditional religion as a system of superstition kept alive by unscrupulous priests rather than an invention of the devil (Milum 1893: 31-39; Wright 1968: xxvi-xxvii, xxix-xxx; Morrison 1985: 22-37).<sup>27</sup> However, in his preaching, that often took the form of dialogues reminiscent of the Akan wisdom tradition,<sup>28</sup> Freeman would often make assumptions that seemed to rest upon Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace in that he assumed a knowledge of a single Creator and a deeper knowledge of good and evil by which he invited his hearers to critique their own religious practices [3.2.1.1 and 3.2.4] (Freeman 1843: 32-34; Walker 1929: 133; Birtwhistle 1950: 8, 14).

Perhaps this is the key to understanding Freeman's attitude to Akan people. He admired their enterprise and industry (Walker 1929: 38).<sup>29</sup> He complemented their achievements in dance (Freeman 1843: 145-150),<sup>30</sup> art, and architecture (Walker 1929: 90-92).<sup>31</sup> Freeman was careful to understand and respect the etiquette of Akan chieftaincy so that he could approach rulers without racial arrogance in an appropriate manner. In these and many other ways, including his marriage and his willingness to work along side the Akan labourers he employed, Freeman demonstrated that he assumed no superiority on his part over Akan people (Morrison 1985: 22-37). Freeman's humility and patience opened many doors and enabled him to build good relationships with African rulers because they felt he understood

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<sup>26</sup> The comment, quoted in the text above, from Freeman's journal concerning the "moral desert" of Africa was indicative of his intellectual attitude to Akan moral and religious traditions. This reference discloses Freeman's ignorance and low opinion of local moral and religious traditions (Freeman 1843: 105).

<sup>27</sup> Freeman was still open minded enough to entertain deeper insight into the Ashanti practices of human sacrifice and slavery. (Walker 1929:124-135; Birtwhistle 1950:58-65)

<sup>28</sup> After one session of negotiation, Freeman recorded that his Fanti partners in the discussion concluded that Christianity was a "good palaver," i.e. a good source of practical reason and wisdom. (Freeman 1843: 80-81)

<sup>29</sup> Walker quotes Freeman from his journal: "I find them [the Fantis] a loving and an enterprising people." (Walker 1929: 38)

<sup>30</sup> On the 3rd of January 1842 Freeman was summoned to the Asantehene's palace and granted the rare privilege of witnessing the King dance with his wives. Freeman reports that he found the dancing graceful and modest. (Freeman 1843:32-34)

<sup>31</sup> Walker writes: 'The Ashanti capital impressed Freeman as by far the finest native town he had seen in West Africa.' (Walker 1929: 90)

and empathised with them. This made it possible for him to reach negotiated settlements to a number of difficult conflicts.<sup>32</sup> As noted previously, Freeman seemed to have intuitively connected with Akan traditions of leadership through his inclusivism and use of practical reason. In his endeavour to learn how to relate to African leaders, Freeman seems to have imbibed something of the Akan leadership ethic. It is arguable from his practice that Freeman was influenced by the Akan moral tradition at this point. Yet despite all this Freeman never took the time to learn Fanti (Walker 1929: 98-103)!

Freeman regarded himself as an Englishman and was proud of England's achievements as a 'civilised' country (Birtwhistle 1950:5; Wright 1968: xxiv-xxv). Freeman saw Christianity as the source of this civilisation and like most Europeans of his generation did not distinguish between the two.<sup>33</sup> This made Freeman very keen to demonstrate the achievements of European civilisation in medicine, technology, and manufacture as benefits that came from Christianity.<sup>34</sup> From comments that Freeman makes in his later ministry it seems that he also regarded the English language as another of these benefits. In his circuit report for Accra in 1881 Freeman argued that the people really desire English and not 'native' language education. Freeman contended that vernacular education was inappropriate where English was destined to become the dominant language in the region, just as Methodism was "destined, if we be true to ourselves and our traditions, to be above all others the great motive power for good in these regions." (Accra, 1881).

Freeman believed Africans to be equal in ability and potential to Europeans but they were handicapped by the encumbering 'superstitions' of traditional religion and the limitations of their own culture. Once they had cast aside these hindrances through embracing Christian faith and accepting the benefits of 'civilisation' their lives would be endlessly improved (Wright 1968: xxvi-xxvii; Morrison 1985: 38-62). While the charge of cultural arrogance could be laid at Freeman's door, because of his pragmatism his response was much more

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<sup>32</sup> This was amply demonstrated by the cordial relationship he formed with Kwaku Dua, the Asantehene and the friendliness which he was received by the traditional rulers of Badagery, Abeokuta, and Dahomey and his later employment by the colonial authorities to resolve situations of conflict. (Milum 1893: 40-68, 81-119; Walker 1929: 55-98, 114-139, 201-207; Birtwhistle 1950: 31-43, 58-62, 82-92, 101)

<sup>33</sup> Freeman made the following comment on one of his discussions with Kwaku Dua: 'We had a long conversation on Christianity and civilization: I pointed out the advantages resulting therefrom and answered several important questions on these subjects.' (Freeman 1843: 150)

<sup>34</sup> Examples of this would be Freeman's use of European medicine (Freeman 1843:153-167, Walker 1929:133-134), the carriage transported to Kumasi (a combination of both traditional 'dash' and token of European technological prowess) (Freeman 1843: 57-72, 186; Walker 1929: 105-106, 114-120) and the lathe used by Brooking, the Kumasi missionary (Freeman 1843: 187-188).

complicated. Toward the end of his first period in ministry Freeman seemed to connect with his emotional approbation of Akan culture and acknowledged that he had gone too far in advocating European culture, but by this point the die was cast (Dickson 1976: 171-174).

#### **4.3.10.2 SOCIAL ETHICS**

Despite Wesley's injunction that Methodist 'helpers' are to be concerned only with souls [3.2.3.1.3] Freeman was very much concerned with men's bodies and the liberty, safety and circumstances of their lives, just as Wesley himself had been [3 2.3.4].

Freeman, like many of his missionary colleagues, was motivated by a strong anti-slavery sentiment (another legacy from Wesley) [3.2.3.4.5] (Walker 1929: 16-21 Southron 1934: 13-23). He saw the proclamation of the Gospel and the spread of 'civilisation' across Africa as reparations owed by the people of England to Africa for the slave trade (Freeman 1943:86 ff). Freeman took every opportunity to urge the abolition of the slave trade and himself sought practical measures to frustrate or mitigate its practice, including freeing the slaves he received as a gift from the Asantehene (Walker 1929: 136).<sup>35</sup>

The human sacrifice connected with some rituals in Akan traditional religion, especially during funeral rites, filled Freeman with repugnance and served to fuel his antagonism to traditional religion (Freeman 1843: 10-29, 52-54). He urged the Asantehene and other traditional rulers to abolish such sacrifices along with slavery (Walker 1929: 121-135, 160-179).<sup>36</sup>

In addition to his passion for the rights to life and liberty Freeman was also concerned for people's economic welfare. He instigated a number of economic initiatives in agricultural and basic industry that were designed to pioneer ways for people to improve their standard of living and welfare that might produce prosperous communities. Unfortunately, none of these enterprises were successful and were partly responsible for the financial crisis in 1857 that proved to be Freeman's undoing.

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<sup>35</sup> Much of Freeman's discussions with the Asantehene were taken up with appeals and exhortations to abolish slavery (Freeman 1843: 130-132) and part of Freeman's purpose in visiting Egba and Dahomey was to seek an end of the slave trade in the area. (Milum 1893: 93-119; Walker 1929: 145-179; Birtwhistle 1950: 69-92) While on furlough in the United Kingdom Freeman also frequently addressed anti-slavery meetings (Birtwhistle 1950: 47-53).

<sup>36</sup> Even so Freeman was silenced when the Asantehene told him that many of those sacrificed were criminals and then asked him if the English did not also practice capital punishment. ( Walker 1929: 134-135) However, there is evidence that the King of Dahomey limited the use of the death penalty after Freeman's visit (Birtwhistle 1950: 82-86).



All the social reforms that Freeman wished to see take root in West Africa, the abolition of slavery, the end of human sacrifice, education, new economic opportunities were all part and parcel of what he considered to be ‘civilisation.’ Consequently, it was inevitable that Freeman would seek to work closely with the chief influence for ‘civilisation’ in the region, namely the colonial authorities in Cape Coast. The close partnership with MacLean, President of the Council of Merchants at Cape Coast, is well known and the two worked closely together on measures to restrict slavery on the West African coast, to extend British influence into Ashanti, secure religious freedom, and ensure law and order for the safe passage of the Gospel (Morrison 1985: 38-62). Freeman was also able to make an easy transition from missionary to colonial official because he was still engaged in essentially the same task of Christianising and civilizing the region. Freeman believed in what is now called a ‘holistic gospel’ aimed at changing the entirety of people’s lives not merely their spiritual state. The difference is that Freeman’s ambiguous attitude to Akan culture led him to believe at an intellectual level that Akan culture had to be displaced rather than reformed (even though his own practice was much more pragmatic). This led Freeman to a strong advocacy of colonial influence.

#### **4.3.11 LEGACY**

What is Freeman’s legacy? Freeman’s legacy cannot be separated from that of Gold Coast Methodism as he set its spirit and direction in its infancy. First of all, it is very clear that Freeman was a paragon of the Methodist moral tradition as developed and modelled by John Wesley himself. He was motivated by love, sought holiness for himself and others, displayed the distinctive Methodist ‘rational’ virtues of self-denial, obedience, humility, meekness, industry, austerity, and charity and the ‘emotional’ virtues of zeal, enthusiasm and piety. Freeman also strictly followed the pattern of discipline established by Wesley. While Freeman did not share Wesley’s views on marriage, he served as a single man for many years and always served with single-minded devotion. Like Wesley, he saw education as an adjunct to evangelism and a support to sanctification. In his leadership, Freeman followed Wesley’s injunctions to single-mindedness and the use of practical reason in the work of the saving of souls. It seems that some of Wesley’s more generous views of human cultures, based on Wesley’s theology of prevenient grace, seeped through Freeman’s cultural arrogance and emphasis on ‘civilisation’ through his pragmatism, born of practical reason, which led him to

accept and affirm significant aspects of Akan culture. Freeman was concerned with people's physical and social well being, as Wesley had also been. For this reason he continued Wesley's struggles against slavery and for the 'reformation of manners', and also sought to improve the material and social conditions of the people. The Methodist moral tradition, inaugurated by Wesley, was comprehensively embodied in Freeman who ensured that it formed the essential foundation of Gold Coast Methodism.

Gold Coast Methodism also imbibed both Freeman's convictions concerning the value and potential of African people and sought to fulfil them while at the same time holding an ambiguous estimate of their culture. This planted the seeds for future conflict, as later missionaries did not always share Freeman's estimate of African character and abilities while later generations of Akan Methodists had to struggle to reaffirm the unambiguous value of their own culture.

It is unclear whether Freeman's model of leadership was followed by his successors. Those he directly mentored such as Martin and De Graft may have embraced it but as Africans, their sphere of authority, while broad, was still circumscribed. Certainly few of Freeman's European successors were sympathetic to aspects of the Akan moral tradition in his manner. Freeman's split-level response to Akan culture was embedded in later Methodism in Ghana.

#### **4.4 THE MORAL PRACTICE OF EARLY FANTI METHODISM UNTIL THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

##### **4.4.1 RULES AND GOALS**

A clear continuity between John Wesley's moral teaching and practice in the eighteenth century and that of Freeman in the nineteenth has been established. Both archival records and histories of Ghana Methodism indicate that Freeman as the pivotal leader of the Methodist mission also entrenched this same practice in Fanti Methodism which, consequently, stands firmly inside the wider Methodist moral tradition.

Methodist moral teaching in Fanti Methodist Churches often seemed to be focused on rules rather than principles (Dickson 1981: 196) but behind these rules the *telos* and virtues that were crucial to Methodism are still to be discerned even though they were not always explicitly mentioned. The goal of perfection understood as 'pure Christ like love' remained at the root of the tradition within Fanti Methodism. The 'love of Christ' was a characteristic of

the original Bible Band, despite all of its conflicts and difficulties (Bartels 1965: 14-15) and was the chief and sincere goal that Methodist ministers sought to realise in their circuits:

We should like to see our people with an ardour of love, a really undaunted zeal, an energy of sacrifice to which they have not attained. (Report on Dontoh-Krom, Winneba, 1895)<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, insofar as Christian Perfection was taught the goal of ‘pure love driving out sin’ would also have been taught as part and parcel of it. In the circuit report for Adansee-Akim of 1878 the experience of Christian perfection is even described as the ‘baptism of love’ from the Holy Spirit. Clearly, Wesley’s vision of a humanity renewed in perfect love also became the supreme goal of Fanti Methodism.

#### 4.4.2 HOLINESS

District reports indicate Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection as an instantaneous experience was taught, sought, and, in the minds of some Methodist believers, wrought by the Holy Spirit in their lives. The blessing of perfection was referred to by a number of metaphors found in district and circuit reports between 1849 and 1898 such as ‘entire holiness,’ the ‘pearl of great price,’ ‘higher...Christian life,’ ‘full salvation from all sin,’ and ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit,’ among others.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Similar comments were made later in 1904 with regard to Societies in the following Circuits: Winneba: “... we have a good society, the members are rich in faith and active in works of Christian love.” Winneba, 1904; Axim: “... others have manifested such a godly zeal as provokes unto love and good works ...” Axim, 1904.

<sup>38</sup> A great many examples of language indicating teaching and experience of ‘entire sanctification’ can be found in circuit reports: Members were “seeking entire holiness.” (Cape Coast, 1849); “Some of our members here, profess to have experienced a present salvation.” (Anomabo 1860); a number of new converts were recorded as enjoying a “present salvation” (Akwamu, 1863); a number were seeking “full redemption.” (Cape Coast, 1874); “...the old and long established members sought, with prayerful earnestness for the rich benefits of the higher inner Christian life.” (Anomabo, 1875); “Our members have more than ever been alive to the need of the higher Christian life, the entire Christian life, the full salvation from all sin, and by earnest seeking in believing prayer, many of them have realised the blessing and are at present walking in the light, testifying by their daily life that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s son cleanseth from all unrighteousness.” (Cape Coast, 1875); the people were seeking “full deliverance from sin” and the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to better witness to their neighbours (Accra, 1876); “Many of our members have experienced the saving influence of the gospel, and are endeavouring to walk worthy of their Christian vocation.” (Secondi, 1876); At Papagya in 1877 the Circuit Minister related that “Some in this society [at Papagya] profess attainments in the higher Christian life.” (Ekoful, 1877); “members have hungered and thirsted for the ‘higher life’ and have received the ‘baptism of love’ from the Holy Spirit that so overwhelmed them that they lost the power of speech.” (Adansee-Akim, 1878); “And more than all, a spirit of earnest seeking after experimental Christianity, has characterised the majority of our members, not a few of whom have given proof of the realisation of the inestimable blessing.” (Elimina, 1878); “...the older members, especially the leaders and evangelists, have seemed to understand the importance of the injunction ‘Be ye holy,’ and are earnestly pressing forwards towards that mark of our high calling.” (Secondi, 1879); at Dixcove there was a process of revival, especially among the young some of whom are striving “to attain the entire Christian perfection.” (Dixcove, 1882); “The brethren were then exhorted by the

Perfection appears to have been taught and perused in the Class Meetings and in special meetings called for the purpose. As in British Methodism in Wesley's day, it seems to have been a blessing for which members struggled in prayer and in the daily conduct of their lives [3.2.1.3].<sup>39</sup>

Wesley also collected death bed testimonies as evidence that members had received entire sanctification before their death [3.2.1.2]. Circuit ministers on the Gold Coast also displayed a similar interest in accounts of saintly deaths, presumably for similar reasons.<sup>40</sup>

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Rev. A. W. Parker to preach more frequently and earnestly the Scriptural Doctrine of Holiness and to seek for a revival of God's work throughout the entire section." (District Meeting, 1884); "Many have experienced the true inward religion, and their attention and desire are in the direction of holiness." (Winneba, 1884); "At Denkyria we have a thriving society. Many heathen have been received. Several of these profess justification, old members are lively and concerned for sanctification...." (Anomabo, 1895); in Accra there were reports that a number were "rebaptised in the Holy Spirit at intercessory prayer meetings. One sister even taking the blessing to those with whom she shared a house ..." (Accra, 1898). It is noteworthy that much of the language and experience of Christian perfection occurs in the revival years following 1874.

<sup>39</sup> The ideal of Christian perfection was sought by members of the societies, often through special prayer meetings convened for the purpose as the following notes and extracts from circuit reports show. During 1865 the Abuadzi circuit experienced a year of "restoration" as many had returned to faith and the head teacher in the local school has also "joyfully found the great pearl of great price for which he has sorrowfully sought many years." (Abuadzi, 1865). In the Anomabo circuit in 1875 the local preachers independently organized prayer meetings for the 'descent of the Holy Ghost' that had profound moral affects: "...the old and long established members sought, with prayerful earnestness for the rich benefits of the higher inner Christian life." (Anomabo, 1875) A similar pattern occurred in the Cape Coast Circuit in the same year: "Our members have more than ever been alive to the need of the higher Christian life, the entire Christian life, the full salvation from all sin, and by earnest seeking in believing prayer, many of them have realised the blessing and are at present walking in the light, testifying by their daily life that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son cleanseth from all unrighteousness. Special services for the promotion of scriptural holiness, have been crowned with success. The all subduing power of God's presence has been felt in every such service; and eternity alone can discover the amount of good that has been done in the hearts of the people by these means." (Cape Coast, 1875). R. Y. Bruce, the catechist in charge of the Adansee-Akim Circuit in 1878 reported that "the members have hungered and thirsted for the 'higher life.'" (Adansee-Akim, 1878) The superintendent of the Secondi Circuit in 1879 reports that "...the spirituality of some of our people has much improved. The older members, especially the leaders and evangelists, have seemed to understand the importance of the injunction 'Be ye holy,' and are earnestly pressing forwards towards that mark of our high calling." (Secondi Circuit, 1879) In 1882 a revival was reported at Dixcove, especially among the young some of whom are striving "to attain the entire Christian perfection." (Dixcove, 1882) In 1882 Freeman held camp meetings in the Accra circuit at which perfection and the presence of the Holy Spirit were preached. (Accra and Aburi, 1882)

<sup>40</sup> The Circuit reports reveal an ongoing concern with 'deathbed testimonies' reminiscent of some of Wesley's proofs of sanctification. Some of these seem to suggest the same belief in the attainment of perfection just before death: "In November the wife of one of these men [lay leaders of the Mampon Society] died, after a very short illness. Just before her departure she called her husband, children and friends, and told them she was a sinner, but Christ had died for her, therefore her sins were forgiven, and she had peace and joy and was happy to be going home to her Father. She then urged them to seek the Saviour and commended them one by one to God. Her last words were 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me; thy rod and staff comfort me.'" (Mampon, 1868) In 1871 the death of a member at Beraku from smallpox was reported, but the people were confident of his salvation because of his "previously consistent and blameless life." (Beraku, 1871) Reverend Parker reports the death of 'Father Martin,' the 'patriarch' of the society at Amamful after a long and painful illness that "he bore with that fortitude and resignation becoming a Christian of his standing and experience. He quietly fell asleep in Jesus, in full assurance of faith and hope..."

### 4.3 CHARACTER AND VIRTUE

Virtues in Methodism, as has already been established, were of two types, rational and emotional. The rational virtues of self-denial, obedience, industry, austerity, and generosity were all designed to curb self-will in order that the will might be fully submitted to God and room would be made for the outpouring of the love of God in the heart of the believer. The blessing of entire sanctification itself was to be sought by the emotional virtues of zeal and piety, especially expressed in prayer and worship. [3.2.3.2] Given this interest on the part of Methodist leaders, a number of common features may be noted with regard to the circuit reports studied in connection with this project. Circuit ministers always began their reports with a general account of the moral and spiritual progress of their members. These accounts can be regarded as being reasonably objective in that they record both progress and reverses in the lives of members. Generally, there seems to have been a steady growth in Christian character, at least among a minority, in most stations and circuits. The moral character of the people was usually spoken of in general terms but particular, usually rational, virtues were sometimes identified such as ‘consistency,’ ‘zeal,’ ‘faithfulness,’ ‘maturity,’ ‘obedience,’ ‘generosity,’ and (occasionally) ‘love.’ All of these virtues are congruent with that pattern of virtue that has already been identified as part of the moral tradition of Wesley’s Methodism [3.2.2].

A number of persistent causes of moral failure also reoccurred in the range of district and circuit reports reviewed. Among these were alcohol (especially rum), ‘worldliness,’ funeral rites, sexual temptation, wealth, (especially in cocoa areas or during periods of ‘gold fever’) and polygamous marriages. Polygamy was a particular source of ‘backsliding.’ The Methodist Church saw it, among other things, as a form of sexual immorality, but it was hard for members, and prospective members, to adopt monogamy because polygamous marriage was such an essential part of the social structure. Young women were particularly affected by this as they often had little say in the arrangement of their betrothal.

Toward the end of the period in the 1880s and 1890s the conduct of younger members became more of an issue, they were particularly prone to practicing a formal religion and to the temptations of the dance hall.

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(Cape Coast, 1884) In 1885 the Society at Busia lost their oldest member who was regarded by both Christians and heathens as the society’s “best pattern of a true servant of God.” (Winneba, 1885).

Progress in moral practice was frequently connected with participation in the ‘means of grace’<sup>41</sup> of Sunday worship, class-meetings, love-feasts, covenant services, and so on. The standard response of Methodist leaders in the face of moral decline was to organise special services and to give greater emphasis to class-meetings.<sup>42</sup> There seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the frequency of class-meetings and moral growth and performance.

<sup>41</sup>

The following comments indicate the importance attached to the ‘means of grace’: “We often admire this Church in the wilderness [at Akoful] for the regular attendance of its members to all the means of grace, especially to the Class Meetings.” (Anomabo, 1849) The circuit minister at Jamestown reported a continuing need to apply Church discipline both for those that absent themselves from the means of grace and for those who commit overt sins. A similar situation existed in the rest of the circuit. (Jamestown, 1869) The Means of Grace were ‘enjoyed’ in Salt Pond, especially the watch night service. The conduct of the people remains ‘consistent’. (Salt Pond, 1873) The superintendent of the Dominasi Circuit had an interesting opening comment: “Notwithstanding the financial difficulties of this circuit it has had the advantages of a resident minister during the year and on the whole there has been no lack of evidence of the spirituality of religion on the part of its members. Their attention to the means of grace, the expressions of their experiences of the inner life at the quarterly visitations, and their consistent lives have been the source of great encouragement to us. The congregations on the Lord's Day have been good and the surrounding villages have also had the benefit of open-air services throughout the year. As a result religious knowledge has been wide-spread and even on the part of many who are outside the pale of the Church a better course of conduct is visible. Would that we could also report the same of its saving knowledge. Our number has not been increased as desired but we are thankful to report that much good has been done.” (Dominasi, 1881) At Assaka Reverend Plange reported that various “...indifferences [are] manifested by the people [to the means of grace] ; but we are thankful to say that such feelings are gradually dying out...” (Secondi, 1881) Ayerdu was reported to be in a bad state as the means of grace were neglected. A contrasting situation existed in Amian and Sedyi: “The increased attention to the means of grace, a better understanding of our polity, and the addition of one of the most influential Chiefs to the number in Society have been the leading aspects of our work here during the year.” (Dominasi, 1881) “We have had causes for anxiety. Worldly attractions have proved too strong for a few of our young people; some of whom attempted to march to our chapel as soldiers dressed in uniform, accompanied by their band to the disturbance of those devoutly disposed and others have been drawn away to spend their time in dancing to the neglect of the means of grace.. We have dealt with these as circumstances have required and believe our action has had the required result.” (Cape Coast, 1882) Conditions were less favourable in Elimina: “Judging from attendance at class meetings and at other means of grace and from public life generally, we regret to have to record the conduct of some of the members of this society who appear to have not even the form of godliness and are therefore strangers to the power of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Although the statistics for the year show a net decrease of only two members, yet during the year we have had the painful duty of striking off the church rolls some 26 members chiefly because of Rum-traffic and irregular marriage: which two prevailing evils seem to militate greatly against our progress. We, however, trust that this turning will make the Church bring forth more and better fruit. On the other hand, we observe with joy and thankfulness, that the year has been indeed a blessed one for the few that truly call the Saviour Lord, and are determined to know nothing among men save Jesus and Him Crucified, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” these have maintained the spirituality of the Church and are looking forward with joy and patience to that day when the Lord, the righteous judge, shall call them to receive their glorious reward.” (Elmina, 1895) Ten years later Salt Pond had made better progress: “The deepened spirituality of the majority of the members and their aiming at the higher life in religion, has this year been worthy of note. We must also note with gratitude the restoration of some backsliders of long standing as found in the case of the town's chief whose return indeed gladdens our heart. The class-meetings as also other means of grace have not been neglected.” (Salt Pond, 1905) But things were not as well in the Grand Kormatine Society where want of an agent at this station meant, among other ‘means of grace,’ “the class-meetings, the week-night prayer meetings which certainly are helpful to the Christian career ...” had been “irregularly prosecuted.” (Salt Pond, 1905)

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In its discussion of the ‘Work of God’: The Gold Coast District Meeting of 1870 resolved to hold special meetings to bring about the ‘quickenings’ of the Societies by the Holy Spirit and to emphasise open air

#### 4.4.4 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Methodist leaders did not expect meetings or rules by themselves to provide the motivation for moral behaviour. That was to be supplied by religious experience or “experimental religion” as they were pleased to call it. Moral behaviour, ideally, was to be rooted in a passion for spiritual holiness that sought the blessing of entire sanctification through prayer and petitions and the keeping of God’s commands (and the Methodist rules) as a preparation for God’s gift [3.2.3.2]. This passion was to be stirred up by the experience of personal and public devotion.

Following the British pattern, converts were encouraged to seek both assurance of salvation and entire sanctification as crisis experiences [3.2.3.2.1]. Certainly, these were works of grace by the Holy Spirit, but supplicants had to prepare to receive them by sincere desire, earnest supplication, and by godly living. One of the frequent indicators of the spiritual health or sickness of societies given in archival reports are the degree to which members were seeking, and receiving assurance and sanctification.<sup>43</sup>

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preaching and house to house prayer meetings. (District Meeting, 1870) At Elmina in 1880 special meetings were successful in remedying the problems of nominal and backsliding as many had seemed to be Christians but had only the form of Godliness but not the ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit.’ (Elmina, 1880) In 1904 the leader at Axim wrote “At our regular and special meetings there have been clear indications of God’s presence with us. Several have testified to their advancement in spiritual life and to their close communion with God; whilst the weak and, the weary have been strengthened some backsliders reclaimed and sinners converted to God.” (Axim, 1904) Special meetings were held for young women at Kpong in 1906 to encourage them to see the ‘eternal welfare of their souls’: “Our progress has been more in Spirit than in quantity of members enrolled, the matter of irregular marriage life (so predominant and hindering the young women from seeking the eternal welfare of their souls) is one of the social evils which have had our chief concern during the year. Special meetings have been held with young men and women respectively with a view to remedy the deficiency.” (Volta Mission, 1906)

<sup>43</sup> Methodist leaders were always pleased to report what they considered to be positive religious experiences: “But better than all, at these meetings seven of our people have been enabled to rejoice in the assurance of adopting grace, and they are maintaining a good profession.” (Jamestown, 1866) “On Sunday the 15th of November, we had a pleasant Love-feast service, and the experience of some of the brethren is that they have obtained a sense of the pardoning love of God.” (Domonasi, 1868) “The class and prayer meetings have also been well attended, and the fruits of the spirit are manifest among the members of the society, the gracious revival with which we were visited a few months since, has quickened into life numbers of dead souls. The number of members who found pardon at our special prayer meetings is no fewer than one hundred and twenty. Eighteen backsliders have been restored to the joy of their Lord; and two new classes have been formed.” (Dominasi, 1875) “Well attended services, earnest desire generally for spiritual blessings, awakenings, conversions, and other circumstances of deep interest, all indicate the presence of the Lord with His people.” (Winneba, 1881) “The spiritual state of the members [at Odumtu] is gratifying. The cause is still preserved, and has some degree of prosperity and great spiritual good have been the result among members of this station. At our various services most of them have experienced the sweet pardon of their sins through Christ. The zeal and character exhibited by our people afford considerable encouragement to labour on cheerfully...” (Winneba, 1885) “Thankfully we report that many a stagnant believer has been moved, and aspiring after the higher life ... At a revival meeting that we have in one of the quarters of the year, it was a pleasant time to witness the unpardoned with godly sorrows for sins - and with penitential tears crying for mercy and expressed the blessed experience of having interest in the Saviour’s blood for pardon. Another striking event is the influx of perishing souls into the fold; among which there are some back-sliders of very long standing, whose cases were almost hopeless; and

To promote the passion for salvation and sanctification the first Methodist missionaries, including Freeman reproduced the Methodist system of the 'means of grace' more or less in its entirety: Class-Meetings, Sunday Services, Love Feasts, Watch Night Services and covenant services. They also filled these meetings with the full panoply of Methodist 'Enthusiasm': passionate preaching, Charles Wesley's hymns with their emphases on the yearning for the gifts of pardon and perfection, the Methodist liturgy with its emphasis on penitence, a formal and extempore habit of prayer entreating God to pour out His special blessings by the Holy Spirit, and a practice of testimony to this work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, particularly in the special meetings called to rekindle the commitment and fervour of the people.

The Camp Meetings were a particular development of these special meetings that Freeman is credited with introducing during the revival of the late 1870s in which great numbers were converted and baptised in the Fanti-lands. These gatherings consisted of extended times of preaching, prayer, and testimony that would last one or several days, people finding makeshift accommodation for the duration of the event. The camp meetings were emotionally charged occasions and evoked a range of religious experience from participants, including some that Methodists would have interpreted as the blessings of pardon and perfection and others that contemporary Pentecostals might have described as healings and deliverances. Freeman passed the following judgement about Camp Meetings:

It may be deemed important to notice that the extraordinary success of the camp meetings in *feeding the revival* has been their suitableness to the national genius of the people. In their pagan life they are accustomed to frequent and extensive gatherings in their occasional and annual customs. Thus the national habits have been utilised to promote the spread of the gospel, and to uplift the Church of Christ into a higher atmosphere of Christian life. (cited by Milum 1893: 149)

With his customary pragmatism, Freeman developed a culturally appropriate institution in the form of camp meetings to further Methodist spiritual and moral practice among the Fanti.

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some of our scholars whose renouncing the pleasures of this world has been a wonder to many." (Salt Pond, 1904) "At our regular and special meetings there have been clear indications of God's presence with us. Several have testified to their advancement in spiritual life and to their close communion with God; whilst the weak and, the weary have been strengthened some backsliders reclaimed and sinners converted to God." (Axim, 1904)



#### 4.4.5 METHODIST PRACTICE

Methodist practice in its rules and church discipline provided a framework for the development of the 'rational' virtues of self-denial and self-control. The leaders of Methodism in the Gold Coast were fairly assiduous in the instruction and application of their Church rules.<sup>44</sup> They were one of the few documents to be translated at a fairly early date!<sup>45</sup>

The basic design of the Rules of Methodism, first established by Wesley, was to encourage a disciplined life in which interior passions and drives to sin and self-will are restrained and external temptations to immorality are avoided [3.2.3.1.1]. Thus 'worldly' company and pursuits such as singing and dancing, drinking and attending public entertainments were to be rejected. In the Fanti lands these prohibitions would have been extended to include attendance at customary festivals and funerals which to the eyes of Methodist missionaries would have appeared to be no different from public carousing in England.

The Methodist discipline, if followed strictly, would have produced a separated lifestyle in which African Methodists would have stood aloof from a range of relationships and activities (especially where the rule against polygamy was rigidly applied) that would have distanced them from much of the social and cultural life of their communities. This placed Methodist Christians in a complicated and challenging situation as they did not form geographically separated villages ('Salems')<sup>46</sup> as their counterparts under the Basel mission were encouraged to do. (Morrison 1985:136-155) This could lead to conflict on occasions when Methodists opted out of religious rites common to the community or refused to participate in funerals and wake keepings or make any contribution to their costs.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand Methodists were

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<sup>44</sup> The reading and explanation of the *Rules of the United Societies* (Wesley, 1743) to local societies was an important policy, even though its implementation in most years was irregular as the minutes answers to questions 21 and 22 in the District Meetings indicates. Copies of the Rules would also be given to literate members and some local societies reported their compliance with this policy: (Anomabo, 1866; Aburi, 1895).

<sup>45</sup> "The Methodist Rules, which have been printed in *Twi* are being sold .... to all the members, will, we believe, be the means of great blessing to our people." (Aburi, 1901)

<sup>46</sup> The Basel mission had a deliberate policy of gathering their converts into segregated Christian settlements in which they could be isolated from 'heathen' influences and traditional practices and enabled to develop a distinctly Christian lifestyle. (Middleton 1983)

<sup>47</sup> The leader at Elmina reported in 1880 that the increase in membership in the Society would have been even greater if a 'considerable number' had not been expelled at the beginning of the year for participating in a 'heathenish custom.' (Elmina, 1880) In 1883 the Cape Coast Quarterly Meeting asked the District Meeting to "advise the people with reference to the funeral customs of the country which lead to their spending the night in singing in the home where the corpse is." The Meeting responded that the "Brethren unanimously disapprove of the practice." (District Meeting, 1883) The leader at Salt Pond stated in 1900 "customs which are injurious to the people's welfare have been strongly opposed, and partially abolished." (Salt Pond, 1900) The work of the Mission Bands at Kuntu brought about a revival in this place converting 'scores' of people. However, the leader

expected to live as examples to their neighbours and offer them love and assistance as opportunity allowed<sup>48</sup> which gained them friends.<sup>49</sup>

The rigour with which requirements for membership were enforced, especially those regarding polygamy and ticket money, varied a great deal but the core requirements remained fairly constant and these seemed to have been more firmly applied as the time progressed. Certainly, during the revival of the late 1870s special catechumenate classes were formed to test the conversions and sincerity of faith of the great numbers of those who had become Christians on the great tide of revival emotions.<sup>50</sup>

The seriousness with which Methodist leaders took their rules was indicated by the steady stream of expulsions recorded in district and circuit records. Reasons for expulsions were not always given, but in the years prior to 1880 they seem largely to have been for sexual misconduct of different forms, participation in 'heathenish rites', presumably at funerals, and traditional festivals, but this might also include turning to traditional practitioners in times of crisis, and different forms of 'worldliness' that might include drinking, fornication, irregular marriage, and participation in traditional rituals.<sup>51</sup> After 1890 there was a greater

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there reported that after only a few months most had returned to traditional religion "through certain funeral customs of the worst kind ..." (Salt Pond, 1905)

<sup>48</sup> Circuit reports recorded a number of instances of such 'living witness': "[The] People at *Denhira* also examples of piety to their neighbours." (Domonasi, 1858) "[The] Christians at Akrah [are] setting a good example to heathens around them." (Anomabo, 1860) "The minister reported that the members at *Kuntu* were zealous and he expressed the hope that their example might influence their heathen neighbours." (Anomabo, 1863) "Earnestness characterizes the Church [at Tantum]. All the members are full of ardour. They have set a good and praiseworthy example to the heathen, and have kept themselves pure and unspotted." (Narkwa, 1881) "The members here [at Mankessim] are full of zeal and have been especially [sic] for the last year examples of godly lives to the heathens around." (Salt Pond, 1891) "One of the principle men of the town [of Koforidua] has been converted and showing a good example to the people around." (Aburi 1895) The conversion of an influential man was reported at Elmina in 1898 who it is hoped will be "a perfect example of the power of the Gospel ..." (Elmina, 1898)

<sup>49</sup> The Methodists seemed to find friends in many communities where they constituted a small minority. Reverend Hayford noted in 1878 that at Sibinsu the chief and people were friendly to the Gospel. (Assin, 1878) Busua in 1879 could boast of only a few converts, but "heathen friends' have also helped to build the chapel ..." (Dixcove, 1879) The circuit report for *Adansi*, *Fomina* recorded that "this is [sic] the chief village town of the whole Adansi tribe. We enjoy the confidence and friendship of the chief and the principal men of this place. They regard the mission an inestimable blessing as having been the means of their rescue from the troubles of their quarrelsome and adverse neighbours of Kumasi, they seem much to appreciate the Christian religion and to ignore fetishism." (Assin, 1879) Reverend Hayford noted in 1878 that at Sibinsu the chief and people were friendly to the Gospel. (Assin, 1878)

<sup>50</sup> Hundreds were converted in the revival of 1876 but native ministers and missionaries were cautious about accepting people into full membership, instead they formed them into catechumenate classes. (Cape Coast, 1876)

<sup>51</sup> Members were expelled from the Society for a variety of reasons. "Owing to the prevalence of fornication, the crying sin of this country, it has been deemed prudent, in order to check it, to deal rigorously with every member offending in this circuit. Consequently many have been expelled, and with but one exception, every one of them for fornication." (Cape Coast, 1844) The circuit Minister for Anomabo reports in

concentration on enforcing the rules on Christian marriage in which the tolerance of the earlier period was dropped, thus there were a great number of expulsions for failure to comply with rules about marriage.<sup>52</sup> At this time, there was also a great emphasis on the circuits becoming self-supporting and so expulsions over non-payment of ticket money also became quite widespread.<sup>53</sup> The temperance emphasis of the Methodist Church also grew in importance and those who drank or sold rum were also subject to Church discipline and often expelled from the Society.<sup>54</sup>

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1844 "... on my first visit to several of the outstations I was compelled to expel several of the members for disorderly conduct, principally for adultery and fornication, which is the greatest evil with which we have to contend." (Anomabo and Dominasi, 1844) In Jamestown in 1866 some were expelled for "grave immorality" (Jamestown, 1866) The leader at Abakrampa reported in 1871 that "... during the past year we have expelled through various evil causes fifteen persons from the Church fellowship ..." (Cape Coast, 1871) During the crisis created by the Ashanti invasion of 1874 many of the young men from the Society were recruited to assist the army and the experience told on their spiritual life. However, after a period of 'sifting discipline' it seems that piety and propriety were restored. (Cape Coast, 1874) The conditions of the war also brought about a number of "declensions." Many became backsliders and were expelled. However, the revival seems to have continued so that numbers were made up by restored backsliders and new converts. (Anomabo, 1874) Increase in the membership of the Society at Elimina in 1880 was undermined because a 'considerable number were expelled for their participation in a 'heathenish custom.' (Elmina, 1880)

<sup>52</sup> The stricter approach to the enforcement of the rules concerning marriage after 1890 had an impact on a number of societies: Dunkwa, 1894: "There has been declension in number of members; some Ashantis who joined us last year having been expelled for intemperance, and others having ceased to meet on account of the marriage question. The spiritual condition of the Church is however promising." (Aburah and Assin, 1894); Dixcove, 1894: "The rigid execution of District Resolutions [on] marriages has very materially affected our membership." (Dixcove, 1894); Anomabo 1895: "After filling up gaps caused by deaths and discipline the circuit has left on record 913 full and accredited members with 113 on trial a decrease of 38 which is accounted for the by fact that over 50 have been removed from church membership for non-conformity with the Christian rite of marriage." (Anomabo, 1895) Gyirankuma 1895: "At the close of the first quarter several members were removed from membership for not conforming to the Christian rite of marriage ..." (Anomabo, 1895); Salt Pond: "Among other things which have occasioned our losses and in some measure tested our work is non-conformity to the Christian rite of marriage the regulations of which were passed by the District Synod of 1893-4." (Salt Pond, 1895); Grand Kormantine, 1895: Here also members removed for 'non-conformity' with Christian rite of marriage. Only in this Church such discipline had a demoralising effect. (Salt Pond, 1895); Ayan Maim, 1895: "Here also we have had to disfellowship professed members refusing to conform to the Christian rite of marriage. Our prominent leaders and other influential members have been quickened and excited to a greater diligence and activity in the work of strengthening the weak, reclaiming backsliders and saving sinners. We wish them every success." (Salt pond, 1895); Worakesi, 1897: "The spiritual condition of the Church at this station is very encouraging. "the members, though reduced to a small number by the enforcement of the law of marriage, are sincere in their love to Christ & manifest a deep concern for the salvation of their neighbours." (Aburah, 1897)

<sup>53</sup> Defections arising from the rules concerning ticket money were noted by Freeman at Anomabo in 1878 (Anomabo, 1878), by the District Meeting in the same year (District Meeting, 1878) by Reverend Fletcher in Dominasi in 1878 (Dominasi, 1878), and by the leader at Adansi in 1881 (Adansi, 1881)

<sup>54</sup> Rum selling and dowry issues were reviewed at the District Meeting for 1876 which noted that "generally speaking there exists among our people a willingness to submit to the measures which were adopted ..." (District Meeting, 1876) The issue concerning Rum was revised in 1879 when it was observed that the rule against selling rum by officers was not being observed in Elmina. The meeting then urged that this rule be implemented. (District Minutes, 1879) However, rum selling continued to be an issue in the societies: "Much difficulty has been experienced in dealing with the Rum trade question. [The] Majority of members, however, have sustained [the] holy ambition spoken of last year ..." (Winneba, 1891); The correspondent reports the

'Backsliders,' those who had left or been expelled from the Methodist Societies for moral reasons, often created a negative impression in the local community and proved an obstacle to further conversions and commitments, especially where they had been leaders. They were also a great source of discouragement to the members. There were considerable efforts to win such persons back and reports indicate a steady stream of readmission.<sup>55</sup> In the 1909 District

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restoration of several members who had been involved in rum selling, including one who had sought to limit the drinking of his customers when they were tipsy. (Winnebah, 1892); "We have gathered in no less than 142 new members - a number unprecedented in our records for the last decade. Strict exercise of discipline on rum-sellers and ball goers, and a careful sifting of the rolls, resulting in the dropping of names of parties who have been travelling nobody knows where, together with a telling number of removals and deaths, have left us only an increase of 10." (Cape Coast, 1893); "Although the statistics for the year show a net decrease of only two members, yet during the year we have had the painful duty of striking off the church rolls some 26 members chiefly because of Rum-traffic and irregular marriage: which two prevailing evils seem to militate greatly against our progress." (Elmina, 1895). After 1891 the Methodist Church began to formally promote the Temperance movement in the Gold Coast through the appointment of a Temperance Secretary and sponsorship of Temperance Societies. The newly appointed Temperance Secretary soon found that he had an uphill task as in his first report he indicated that no Temperance Societies yet existed in any circuit connected with the Methodist Church. However, he noted that some of the youth were members of the 'Good Templars Lodge,' Temperance Sunday had been well observed and some rum sellers had been expelled or suspended. However, the secretary detected a lack of enthusiasm for the cause and some 'laxity.' Moreover, the superintendents of Cape Coast and Elmina did not respond to the Secretary's letter. (District Meeting, 1894)

<sup>55</sup> A fairly constant pattern of 'backsliding' and restoration was common in most Societies: Anomabo 1849: A number of expulsions occurred in Anomabo Town due to backsliding. The correspondent puts this down to three causes: "the force of early habits", temptations, and continual petty persecution by their families. (Anomabo, 1849); Anomabo 1863: Some backsliders had been restored and were now striving to "make their calling sure." (Anomabo, 1863); Jamestown, 1865: A number of members relapsed into "private and overt acts of transgression" and many were subsequently removed from the membership list. (Accra, 1865); "Several abuses have been corrected, several inferior agents dismissed, and a number of worthless members put out of the society ..." At the same time some backsliders were restored. (Anomabo, 1866); Abuadzi 1868: "Here we have some backsliders; this is the result of the War with Elmina. Some of the brethren having gone to the Camp conducted themselves in such a way that we cannot keep them in the Church as members. Still, we are glad to report that others who left us since two years, have returned to the Great Bishop of their souls." (Abuadzi, 1868); The correspondent reported continuing problems of "fanaticism" and misconduct of backsliders. (Assafa, 1869); Jamestown 1871: "Another occasion of backsliding has arisen out of the inducement offered to handicraftsmen at the oil rivers from the high rate of wages paid them and, as many of our members are of this class, not a few of them have been drawn thither for periods varying from twelve to eighteen months, at the end of which time they return, and, as is generally the case, bereft of all spiritual sympathies, and consequently lost to the Church." (Accra, 1871); Salt Pond 1872: "Mr. Plange from this town writes: 'the work of God at this station is of a most cheering character. A very gracious influence has attended the preaching of God's word, also the Class and Prayer meetings. The careless have been arrested and led to sue for mercy. Backsliders have returned with earnest desire to reunite with the people of God, and many half hearted professors have consecrated themselves afresh to his service. A few have died during the year but having witnessed a good profession.'" (Anomabo, 1872); Anomabo 1894: The conditions of the war with Ashanti brought about a number of 'declensions.' Many became backsliders and were expelled. However, the revival seems to have continued so that numbers were made up by restored backsliders and new converts. (Anomabo, 1874) Mankessim 1878: Several backsliders were reported as restored to the Lord's table. (Mankessim, 1878); Elimina 1880: A number of backsliders were reclaimed through special meetings. (Elimina, 1880); Anomabo 1881: John Plange reports a hard year in this district with nominalism, a number of exclusions and backsliders. (Elmina, 1881); Anomabo 1881: A pattern of indifference and even backsliding was recorded among the members some of whom possessed the 'form of Godliness, but not the power.' (Anomabo, 1881); Secondi 1882: It seemed that a large proportion of the population who were in Secondi at this time were lapsed Christians who gave a negative impression of the Church to their neighbours. (Secondi, 1882); Bayin 1898: "The Church is in a flourishing condition. The

Meeting it was even recommended that special classes be formed to accommodate them - a return to Wesley's practice [3.2.3.12].<sup>56</sup>

The Society's *Rules* provided a vital scaffolding within which the disciplined life and the virtues of holiness were constructed. The rigorous application of the rules had a measure of success in that significant numbers apparently internalised their values and intent and achieved a high level of moral performance while managing to avoid the hypocrisy of legalism.

#### 4.4.6 CLASS SYSTEM

As noted earlier in this chapter the Class Meeting lay at the foundation of Methodism as a means whereby members could instruct each other in the Christian faith and inspire and encourage each other in its performance. One of the first actions of Dunwell, the first missionary to Cape Coast was to establish class meetings (Bartels 1965:14-18). For De Graft and his friends this would not really have seemed such a great innovation as their group had functioned along the lines of a class meeting for many years, as Potter had noted (Britwhistle 1950:1-2).

As Methodism expanded along the coast the priority of establishing class-meetings continued. The goal of the district was to form class meetings in 'every place where we have preaching.' So important were the class meetings that it was one of the cardinal responsibilities of ministers to meet each class once a quarter<sup>57</sup> to become acquainted with each member and

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steadfastness of our members and their constant devotion to duty, the conversions from heathenism the reclaiming of backsliders the overflowing congregations the enquiries of many after the way of salvation, to some of whom admission into the Church is denied on account of improper marriage, and the general awakening of the church consequent upon the United Meeting held a few months ago have been the marked features of the work." (Axim, 1898); Axim 1898: "At our regular and special meetings there have been clear indications of God's presence with us. Several have testified to their advancement in spiritual life and to their close communion with God; whilst the weak and, the weary have been strengthened some backsliders reclaimed and sinners converted to God." (Axim, 1898); Komenda 1898: This town "still reports a decrease in membership, a large number of our lapses is attributed to moral obliquity - a circumstance we regret very much." (Elmina, 1898); Salt Pond 1905: "We must also note with gratitude the restoration of some backsliders of long standing as found in the case of the town's chief whose return indeed gladdens our heart." (Salt Pond, 1905).

<sup>56</sup> "The Synod receives with thankfulness the report of Church membership, and notes the continued care which is exercised to maintain the Discipline and purity of the Church and to promote the development of trained life. In as much as many persons who are under discipline or have been expelled are lost to Christian influence through want of continued care and oversight it recommends that a special class be formed in the principle places under the direction of a suitable Leader, wherein such persons may be instructed and encouraged to true repentance and amendment of life." (District Meeting (Eastern Section), 1909)

<sup>57</sup> Question 22 of the *Agenda for District Meetings* is phrased: "Is sufficient time allocated in the arrangements of the quarterly visitation of the classes for the Preachers to acquaint themselves with the state of each member and to give spiritual advice to each?" It seems that some circuit ministers found this a difficult

learn of their testimonies and spiritual experiences. This seems to have been the high point of some leaders' ministry.<sup>58</sup>

This is not to say that the development of new classes was straight forward. In areas with a scattered agricultural or transient population forming classes that met regularly was an ongoing problem that was also reflected in areas where people travelled extensively for trade.<sup>59</sup> The second major difficulty confronting the implementation of the class system was the perennial shortage of good class leaders.<sup>60</sup>

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duty to fulfil which prompted the following rebuke from the Secretaries of the Missionary Society in their letter to the District Chairman in 1880: "It is one of the first duties of a Methodist minister to exercise pastoral supervision of his flock, and the meeting of the Society classes once a quarter for the renewal of tickets is a most important part of our work. If this duty has been neglected, we must insist upon its immediate resumption and faithful discharge. No brother can be continued in charge of a circuit who fails in this matter or delegates the duty to an agent." (District Minutes, 1880)

<sup>58</sup> Some Ministers wrote in excited tones about their class visitations: Enjira 1879: "Though few and but newly admitted into the church, the spiritual conduct and habits of the members here have been very encouraging. We have met in class some of them during our visit in the interior; and we could verily discern in operation the same work of grace whereby all are saved." (Assin, 1879); Girankuma 1881: "This is unquestionably the best society in the whole circuit. The continual struggle which our people here have to maintain against the inroads of Mohammedanism, which exists in their midst, has had to stimulate them to cling all the faster to the truth as it is in Jesus. their attendance at all services, their growth in grace as shown, not only by their expressed experiences in the class meetings, but by their consistent daily life, their attachment to our rules and discipline, and their willingness in giving for the support of the work, has been to us like an oasis in the crest of spiritual declensions all around." (Adansi, 1881); Cape Coast 1894: "Spiritual growth among our people generally has been steady. We have been edified and sometimes taken aback by the simple unadorned experiences of sins overcome, evil dispositions controlled, burdens cheerfully borne for Christ's sake and a life of daily and hourly dependence on Him for all things, and in all things, that have been born told in the quarterly visitation of the classes, not only be the most enlightened of our people, but often by some of the apparently feeble and obscure. Very often have we felt as we have listened in their surroundings and according to their light, our people are endeavouring to reach forth into perfect manhood in Christ. Whatever surface observers may say not withstanding." (Cape Coast, 1894)

<sup>59</sup> It was difficult to establish Class Meetings among communities whose members followed migratory occupations: Edubiasi 1878: "Our congregation here comprises nearly all in the village. We have about the same number of members as last year; but some of them being petty sellers and constantly absent from their home to the Andansi market and other places, are often without the social means of building each other up. We regard this a necessary reason, among others, for the more earnest and extensive prosecution of the work in these parts." (Assin, 1878); Salt Pond 1880: "The members here had become worldly giving more time to trade and business than to the evening meetings of the society with the result that their moral character has declined bringing the Gospel into disrepute." (Anomabo, 1880); Amissanu with Suprudu 1885: The scattered membership of this society only met on Sundays: "Hence the want of any steady progress in the career of this society." (Adansi, 1885); Abuasi 1890: The scattered population "makes the weekly Evening Services cold, and gives us a little drawback." (Aburah and Assin, 1890)

<sup>60</sup> Good leaders could make or break Class Meetings in local Societies: Dominasi 1879: Reverend Fletcher reports that some societies in his Circuit have suffered from the "wicked falls and inconsistencies of agents" and the circuit as a whole was hindered by a lack of local preachers and class leaders of sufficient religious experience and Godliness. (Dominasi, 1879); Assafa 1880: There was much indifference in the Society at Assafa which the Circuit minister put at the door of ineffective leaders. (Anomabo, 1880); Amissanu 1893: The Minister reported that "...Class meetings for Christian fellowship [had been] neglected..." The agent had departed and the leaders were admonished. (Salt Pond, 1893); Secondi 1895: "[The] society has been in a declining state numerically since last year. The expulsions of two class leaders for immorality, and of 15 class members during the year have occasioned us considerable anxiety." (Elmina, 1895); Esiam 1895: "At Esiam we

Having said this class meetings were remarkably successful in their purpose and produced all manner of other beneficial results as Kwesi Dickson remarks:

...the class meetings... encouraged free discussion and a sense of social responsibility by engendering to feeling that each member had a responsibility for the others, in sickness and health, in sorrow and in joy... (Dickson 1981: 199-200)

Unsurprisingly, the archival records reflect a correlation between the moral and spiritual prosperity of a Society and the vitality of its class meetings.<sup>61</sup> Arguably, the class meeting was at the root of the success or failure of a local Society.

#### 4.4.7 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage was a major concern for Methodism in the Gold Coast. Of all of the interfaces between Methodist and Akan moral traditions, this was the region of greatest conflict. The

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have had to exercise discipline. An inconsistent leader has been removed with a number of members refusing to abide by the District Regulations re the Christian rite of marriage. Life in the Church is vigorous. We have loyal members and a prospering Church.” (Anomabo, 1895)

<sup>61</sup> There is overwhelming evidence to indicate that vigorous Class Meetings led to a vigorous Church: Accra 1847: The correspondent reported that the class system was now working and that there were many signs in the members of an increase in knowledge and love of Christ. (Accra, 1847); Akoful 1972: “We often admire this Church in the wilderness for the regular attendance of its members to all the means of grace, especially to the Class Meetings.” (Accra, 1872); Ayendu 1875: “The Class is also well attended, and the members are striving to love and fear God” (Dominasi, 1875); Dominasi 1875: “The class and prayer meetings have also been well attended, and the fruits of the spirit are manifest among the members of the society ...” (Dominasi, 1875); Dixcove 1877: “The classes have been well attended, and the conduct of our members in general, have given us much satisfaction.” (Dixcove, 1877); Salt Pond 1900: “The class meetings are a distinct source of strength to the church, and many conversions have taken place.” (Salt Pond, 1900); Winneba 1904: “In the Winneba section class meetings have not been well attended, especially by the young people among whom a more decided consecration to God is needed.” (Winneba, 1904); Axim 1904: “The church has maintained its own in spite of worldliness and social evils which seem to prevail among young persons of the day. The minority of our members have given evidence of deepened and increased spirituality more particularly at their class-meetings, and their outward walk is also worthy of imitation. Some have passed through trials and temptations in a triumphant manner and have stood unshaken in their confidence which ahs great recompense of reward; others have manifested such a godly zeal as provokes to unto love and good works and their passion for souls has led them to the habit of preaching in the early morn at the populous quarters of the town with some gratifying results. Conversions have been frequent and in one quarter we had the privilege of enrolling 19 "on-trial" for membership.” (Axim, 1904); Mankessim 1905: “The class-meetings have been vivid, the Sunday congregations have been crowded, and the week-night services have been encouraging.” (Salt Pond, 1905); Axim 1905: “... the Great Head of the Church has graciously vouchsafed his special blessing upon every department. The sense of duty, the attention to the preached word, the attendance of the week-night services and prayer meetings, the willing co-operation, the loyal observance of instruction, the recognition of authority, the unabated zeal and the general feeling and confidence that have been manifest among officers and members are praiseworthy, and therefore need to be chronicled. Our Class Meetings and Love Feasts are seasons of joy and gladness.” (Axim, 1905) Aburi 1907: “While there are many encouraging signs there is cause for sorrow and anxiety. Immorality and intemperance still have a great hold on the people, causing us to lose many members. There is a lack of a true conception and a personal realisation of the religion of Jesus Christ in many of our people but we trust that when we are able to give the leaders a better training, and the members to set a higher value on the class-meeting, we shall see greater spiritual and moral results.” (Aburi, 1907)

areas that created the most confrontation were polygamy, the place of traditional, as opposed to Christian marriage rites, the implications of colonial legislation for the conduct of Christian marriage, and the place of bridewealth. Following Wesley's teaching all the missionaries on the Gold Coast were opposed to polygamy [3.2.3.3]. Church members were prohibited from contracting polygamous unions.<sup>62</sup> But what of those who had become Christians while in a polygamous relationship? In the early years of Ghana Methodism, some indulgence was extended to those in such marriages, the way of instruction and persuasion being preferred to coercion [See above 3.7].<sup>63</sup> But this was a hard discipline to follow because of the breach in family and community relations that it entailed. As the years progressed, the tolerance offered to polygamous husbands was withdrawn and polygamous women were only permitted to be members by the special permission of the circuit minister. In the 1890s<sup>64</sup> when the

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At the 1884 District Meeting these prohibitions were spelt out: "We resolve that no member of our society be allowed to marry a heathen man or woman, and that no woman being member of Society shall marry a man already married, both these being Scriptural principles. It was also resolved that no man having more than one wife should be admitted as a member of our church and that it should be left with the Superintendent minister to decide whether, on an investigation into the case, the wives of polygamists should be received into Society." (District Meeting, 1884)

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One missionary related that the 'marriage subject' was highly problematic: "It is true that I have had trouble with some of our members as it regards the marriage subject, and from experience I find it is a subject that must be treated with great caution as it well known that the greater-part of the members are living in a state of polygamy and when such persons are brought under the sound of the Gospel and get their mind enlightened by Holy Ghost it not do at once rigidly to enforce the marriage subject but by waiting a certain time until we ascertain that they are in earnest about their soul salvation, then they will listen to what we have to say about it, during the last twelve months I have married upwards of thirty couples, the greater part of whom were living in a state of 'concubinage'." (The writer seems to use the word 'concubinage' to describe the situation of those living together as married couples aside from the rites of Christian matrimony.) (Anomabo, 1842)

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In the 1890s the District Meeting passed a resolution that members had to marry according to the marriage ordinance. This generated a controversy that lasted for several years and was revisited in District Meetings over the next few years. In 1892 the Anomabo circuit sent a resolution asking that the matter be finally settled. The District Meeting for that year passed the following resolutions concerning the marriage issue in their representative session: "The Anomabo Quarterly Meeting's request that the question of marriage be finally settled was considered, and it was agreed that ministers render every assistance in their power to our members in procuring certificates of marriage and in framing petitions for divorce. Superintendents to purchase copies of Marriage Ordinance for use of the Societies. Rules concerning native marriages passed in 1890 should be set aside until confirmed by the missionary committee. Certain examples for guidance of ministers in the admission of wives of polygamists into society were ordered to be printed and to be inserted in our local book of rules." (District Meeting, 1892)

In the following year, 1893, the synod took an even stricter line: "(30) Resolved that as a Church we insist on the Christian rite of marriage. (31) Resolved that the measure be both retrospective and prospective. (32) That those members of the Church who have not conformed to the Christian rite be required to do so by the end of August." (District Meeting, 1893)

This hard stance provoked a wave of protest from across the district in the form of notes and memorials from different circuits. J. A. Martin at Aburi wrote: "The Marriage Ordinance cannot be enforced at Aburi unless we lose very many of our members, I could not during the year get one man and woman to join in matrimony at Aburi though I laid before the Quarterly Meeting the Marriage Ordinance part of the members of the meeting seemed to comply with the ordinance and part not, but the native marriage so there was no agreement among the members of the meeting." The Salt Pond Circuit sent the following Memorial: "That the



Church began to enforce its rules and principles far more strictly there was great loss of young female members after their (polygamous) marriages were arranged by their families.<sup>65</sup>

Polygamy was deeply entrenched in Fanti culture as part of the indispensable web of relationships and community between different families and clans. The prohibition of polygamy, more than any other teaching of Methodism, kept people outside of Church membership.<sup>66</sup> There was a great sympathy for the Christian faith in many communities and 'adherents,' who were probably polygamous Christian believers, often outnumbered Church

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circuit...further requests that the execution of the rule re Christian rite of marriage be suspended in the circuit at least this year." Anomabo made a similar plea: "That the Circuit after due consideration of the rule re Christian rite of marriage finds that its execution in the circuit by the end of August last was not advisable and requests that it be suspended for at least another year." The Synod agreed to this postponement: "The Synod granted the prayer of the Memorialists of Anomabo, Salt Pond & Accra re the Marriage question & allowed one year for carrying out the requirements of the Synod." (District Meeting, 1894)

<sup>65</sup> Both young women and their families were penalised for contracting polygamous marriages: Arkra 1893: "Arkra has decreased in numbers, this is chiefly owing to our expelling from the Church those who had married their daughters to heathen men." (Salt Pond, 1893); Enyiadu 1893: "Here we have been obliged to expel from the society a few of our members for having married their daughters to unchristian men." (Salt Pond, 1893); Cape Coast 1895: "The continued presence of young people of all classes in these and all other church meetings has been to us hopeful signs for the future. Our converts have been mainly from the ranks of these; a fact which must be to any church of Christ, as it has been to us, a cause of encouragement and rejoicing. But our rejoicing has not been without trembling. Not that we entertain the least doubt as to the genuineness of the conversion of these young disciples. Of that, we have proof sufficient in the testimony of their consistent Christian lives, according to their light; - despite attractions and enticements to a contrary course - and also in their zealous evangelistic labours. We tremble because of the ordeal that lies before them when the time comes for them to settle in life. These young people, of ages ranges from 18 to 22, must soon enter into the marriage state. The majority are females connected with heathen families who must, under pressure of parents and relations, be married according to Native Custom and thus lose the privilege of Church fellowship. This has been the experience of the past year which accounts in the main for the large number returned as ceased to meet. Under these circumstances we are brought face to face, as we said in our last Report, with a serious problem of far reaching results, demanding a calm, tough and all-round consideration and immediate solution." (Cape Coast, 1895); Cape Coast 1879: In 1879 a decline in membership was reported at Cape Coast as many of the young people were lost to church membership. The young women largely marry 'according to native custom' while the young men migrate in search of employment in centres of trade and industry. (Cape Coast, 1897); Kpong 1906: "Our progress has been more in Spirit than in quantity of members enrolled, the matter of irregular marriage life (so predominant and hindering the young women from seeking the eternal welfare of their souls) is one of the social evils which have had our chief concern during the year." (Volta Mission, 1906)

<sup>66</sup> There were many examples of Akans (and Gas) who were sympathetic to the Christian faith but barred from Church membership because of their polygamous situation: Cape Coast 1870: "Polygamy, the prevailing sin of Africa, is the great obstacle in the way of many in this town giving themselves to God, as well as the great stumbling block over which so many fall. Many who are in other respects useful and intellectual people are, by this sin, excluded from the Church." (Cape Coast, 1870); Akra 1871: "As with other places in the circuit, so in Akra, polygamy is the great evil which hinders the Gospel." (Akra, 1871); Sibinsu 1878: "The principal difficulty which seems to be in the way of Chiefs and people preventing them joining our society in polygamy. This is generally the bane of the Akan tribe, in the way of salvation." (Assin, 1878); Adansi, Fomina: "We enjoy the confidence and friendship of the chief and the principal men of this place. They regard the mission an inestimable blessing as having been the means of their rescue from the troubles of their quarrelsome and adverse neighbours of Kumasi, they seem much to appreciate the Christian religion and to ignore fetishism. Their only difficulty seems to be the Christian form of marriage as opposed to polygamy. Lately a man of importance and position in the tribe seriously contemplated dismissing seven out of eleven wives if the missionary would let him keep the three and bring them all to "school" with him. We pray, for them further enlightenment in Christian principles, and that to them also may be granted them soon converting grace unto life." (Assin, 1879)

members in many places. On occasion circuit ministers observed that Methodism could have great numbers of members if the rules on polygamy had been relaxed.<sup>67</sup>

A second area of conflict was between traditional and Christian marriages rites. The Methodist Church sought, at the very least, to have monogamous relationships legitimised under traditional rites and customs, blessed or solemnized in Church. Frequently, one of the spouses or their families would object to this and further tensions would arise, especially when this was made a condition of church membership. The leadership of the church, especially the missionaries, did not regard customary marriage as a truly authentic marriage while the Fanti people saw their traditional rites as a 'real marriage' as it celebrated the union of two families rather than two individuals. This produced another occasion of obstruction to, and loss of, membership.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The Methodist Church's prohibition of polygamy was a major brake on its growth: "- but doubtless the great obstacle to the spread of the Gospel here is Polygamy, the result of which is a widespread immorality; we could get as many followers as we like if we would allow them to keep their old habits, but the purity of our Gospel will allow of no compromise with the vices of Paganism." (Accra, 1874)

<sup>68</sup> The refusal of the Methodist Church to recognise traditional marriage ceremonies caused great and widespread difficulties for both Church membership and for family life: Secondi 1870: "There are several couples anxious to be married according to Christian usage ..." (Cape Coast, 1870); Attoaboe 1876: The correspondent reports a case of a couple enduring persecution after their baptism and marriage from their relatives who cut off from some family privileges. (Dixcove, 1876); Elmina 1890: "It is mark-worthy that with so many newly received members we should report an increase of only 25; but this chiefly due to the unsettled state of the marriage question. Many who have left us did so on account of unchristian and improper marriages; and backsliders who would have been re-admitted have been shut out on the same grounds. We consider that it is high time that this subject should be brought to a decided and successful issue." (Elmina, 1890); Cape Coast 1893: "Besides, scores there are whose hearts beat in the right place, but who would not enter into church fellowship on account of the marriage question - a question which is still hampering our work in this circuit perhaps more than any other." (Cape Coast, 1893) Aburi 1893: "The marriage ordinance could not be enforced at this place unless we lose very many of our members, which, we cannot at present do till further instruction from the District Synod." (Aburi, 1893); Cape Coast 1894: "Without, there are scores who attend our ministry whose life and conversation are apparently influenced by Christian Principles, but who are yet outside simply for the marriage question. A question which is growing in importance and difficulty every year and has become in Cape Coast an impediment in the way of many an honest and intelligent young Christian, who might otherwise be in the Church, and have scope to utilize his gifts and graces for the benefit of others. With regards to these, we are brought face to face with a serious and far reaching problem, demanding a calm, thoughtful and all-round consideration and immediate solution." (Cape Coast, 1894); Dunkwa 1894: "There has been declension in number of members; some Ashantis who joined us last year having been expelled for intemperance, and others having ceased to meet on account of the marriage question. The spiritual condition of the Church is however promising." (Aburah and Assin, 1894); Discove 1894: "Some expulsions have arisen from non-compliance with the ordinance marriage rightly or wrongly imposed on our members. The uncertainty enshrouding the marriage question is without controversy doing irreparable injury in our churches. We sincerely wish some way out of the difficulty may be found soon, so as to save the circuit from needless unrest and disquietude." (Dixcove, 1894); Anomabo: "After filling up gaps caused by deaths and discipline the circuit has left on record 913 full and accredited members with 113 on trial a decrease of 38 which is accounted for the by fact that over 50 have been removed from church membership for non-conformity with the Christian rite of marriage." (Anomabo, 1894); Gyirankuma 1894: "At the close of the first quarter several members were removed from membership for not conforming to the Christian rite of marriage, but we are glad to see spirits rise in the professed Christians." (Anomabo, 1894); Esiam 1894: "At Esiam, we have had to exercise discipline. An inconsistent leader has been

A further objection to Christian marriage was the expense it engendered. A Christian marriage in Church was regarded as a European marriage with all the attendant ephemera of rings, special dress, and lavish receptions. The district synod finally had to try and impose limitations upon expenditure.<sup>69</sup>

After the proclamation of the Gold Coast Protectorate in 1874 the colonial government began to introduce legislation to regulate marriage. In principle, the Church favoured this as the Marriage Ordinance was based upon Christian assumptions of monogamy and life-long partnership.<sup>70</sup> However, the Church ran into two ongoing problems with the legislation. The fact that few Methodist chapels qualified for licenses for the conduct and registration of

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removed with a number of members refusing to abide by the District Regulations re. the Christian rite of marriage.” (Anomabo, 1894) Salt Pond 1894: “Among other things which have occasioned our losses and in some measure tested our work is non-conformity to the Christian rite of marriage the regulations of which were passed by the District Synod of 1893-4.” (Salt Pond, 1894); Grand Kormantine 1895: Members were removed from this Society for ‘non-conformity’ with the ‘Christian rite of marriage’. Only in this Church such discipline had a demoralising effect. (Salt Pond, 1894); Ayan Maim 1894: “Here also we have had to disfellowship professed members refusing to conform to the Christian rite of marriage.” (Salt Pond, 1894); Tantom and Legoo: “Tantom and Legoo have been the greater sharers in the loss of members who have not abode by the regulations of the District Synod relating to marriage. The regulations besides agitating the minds of some, are quite misunderstood by several. They have told sadly upon the work.” (Salt Pond, 1894); Worakesi 1879: “The spiritual condition of the Church at this station is very encouraging, the members, though reduced to a small number by the enforcement of the law of marriage, are sincere in their love to Christ and manifest a deep concern for the salvation of their neighbours.” (Aburah, 1897); Bayin 1898: “The Church is in a flourishing condition. The steadfastness of our members and their constant devotion to duty, the conversions from heathenism the reclaiming of backsliders the overflowing congregations the enquiries of many after the way of salvation, to some of whom admission into the Church is denied on account of improper marriage, and the general awakening of the church consequent upon the United Meeting held a few months ago have been the marked features of the work.” (Axim, 1898); Attuaboe 1898: “The aggressive labours of the agent and the office-bearers among the towns people and in the surrounding villages have proved a failure. A dislike to conform to the Christian rite of marriage and the corrupting influence of apostasy together with worldliness exerting itself in various ways have been a barrier to our cause.” (Axim, 1898); Beyin 1898: “The Church needs a general awakening. There are only a few members who are indeed working out their own salvation, the marriage question has been a stumbling block to many, and the falling off in membership is chiefly due to relapses.” (Axim, 1898); Aburah and Assin 1905: “We have during the year solemnized no marriage, almost. The members of this circuit prefer [the] native custom of marriage by which we have expelled some members from us. Indeed we are quite helpless in this matter.” (Aburah and Assin, 1905) Despite all of these difficulties, no recognition of traditional marriage rites was forthcoming. In 1914 the District Meeting again restated its position: “The Marriage Rite which has not been adhered to in many cases was reaffirmed.” (District Meeting, 1914)

<sup>69</sup> “The Synod views with grave concern the expensive habits associated with Christian marriages and regrets to find that thereby many are prevented from contracting such a marriage or incur serious debts as the result. It resolves that, in continuation of previous legislation on the subject, the cost of Christian marriages shall not exceed the sum of £10 ... for [traditional] cloth for ladies [and] £25 for those wearing European dresses. This amount to include all expenses.” (District Synod, 1906)

<sup>70</sup> “The only question which came up for discussion was the state of the marriage laws both in the Colony and out of it: The new marriage ordinance was read clause by clause and discussed fully.” (District Meeting, 1884)

marriage<sup>71</sup> and the fact that divorce for adultery or other causes that the Church might regard as legitimate was a prohibitively expensive legal process.<sup>72</sup> The Synod held continual negotiations with the Governor over both these issues without, it seems, gaining any satisfactory outcome.<sup>73</sup>

The Methodist understanding of marriage and family [3.2.3.3], in line with its European roots assumed paternal rather than maternal patterns of inheritance as in Akan culture. In Akan culture when a man died his property was inherited by his nephews on his sister's side. This sometimes led to the situation where a man's family would leave his widow and children destitute ignoring their customary obligation to provide for them. Where a Christian husband died intestate, the Church sought to recommend and mediate a three fold division of the estate between the deceased's family, his widow, and his children.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Marriage under the ordinance required that the ceremony be performed in a registered building and few Methodist Chapels seemed to qualify. For example the society at Aburi was attempting to complete its chapel which was of particular importance as this would be the only chapel registered for marriages in the mountains. (Accra and Aburi, 1884) The District began a correspondence with the colonial administration concerning licensing of chapels under marriage ordinance. (District Meeting, 1885) This correspondence was still continuing twenty years later in 1905: "Resolved that the Synod approach His Excellency the Governor:- (1) To obtain permission, subject to the approval of the Home Committee, to solemnize, in any of our churches, marriages with the issue of a certificate; that such marriages be regarded by the Government in all respects as native marriages under the native law." (District Meeting, 1905)

<sup>72</sup> Issues concerning divorce exercised both Circuit and District Meetings: "The marriage question seems to tell very seriously upon our interests. During the year we have had only one marriage throughout the circuit, whilst we have had several marriage cases brought before us at our quarterly visitations. From the investigation of these marriage disputes, we gather these facts: (1) that a 'marriage divorce ordinance' to match the present 'marriage ordinance' is all that is sorely needed; and (2) that unless the District Meeting recommend some facilities of divorce, we shall still be working under great disadvantages. It does not work while to give instances; seeing the case of divorce is more or less in every circuit" (Anomabo, 1891); "The divorce question still engages our attention: there have been cases to which we have not been able to turn a deaf ear, and unless the district recommends facilities of divorce we shall have much to impede our progress." (Anomabo, 1892); "The Anomabo Quarterly Meeting's request that the question of marriage be finally settled was considered, and it was agreed that ministers render every assistance in their power to our members in procuring certificates of marriage and in framing petitions for divorce." (Representative Session, Appendix II. District Meeting, 1892); "That as the process of obtaining Divorce in the courts under the Marriage Ordinance of 1884 is both lengthy and costly, the Government be asked to devise measures whereby the divorce of persons guilty of fornication, when married under the ordinance, might be facilitated." (Capital E, Miscellaneous: Questions III District Meeting, 1905)

<sup>73</sup> Over the years the Colonial Government proved to be singularly unhelpful over matters of matrimonial legislation: "Concerns about marriage ordinance passed to colonial Secretary." (District Meeting, 1891); "The chairman read a copy of a memorial addressed to the new Governor of the Colony signed by himself and the Rev. J Muller the Superintendent of the Basel Missionary Society, bearing on the Marriage Ordinance. An answer to the memorial has not yet been received but is promised. His Excellency has intimated his fears that he is powerless to help us in the matter but has no objection to communication being opened with the Colonial Office." (District Meeting, 1895)

<sup>74</sup> "That the Synod authorize the Chairman to consult His Excellency the Governor as to the possibility of amending the marriage Ordinance of 1884 in such as way as to admit of the division of property between the wife and children on the one hand, and the family on the other, in the event of a person dying intestate." (Capital E, Miscellaneous: Questions II District Meeting, 1905)

In the 1880s and 1890s the Methodist Church gave greater attention to the forms of marriage, matrimonial ceremonies, and patterns of inheritance while remaining largely silent on the substance of married and family life. Was this simply a matter of putting legalistic forms before the values that should inform Christian relationships? Not entirely, as the forms of marriage and matrimony are frequently expressions of substantive values. Life-long monogamy, and the Christian marriage service with its profound vows and promises are practices that attempt to establish the virtues of mutual care and fidelity. Of course, these values were also important in traditional Fanti marriages, with the difference that the commitments made were shared by families, and not just individuals.

While the application of Methodist rules in other areas had beneficial effects in encouraging Christian living when applied to marriage they had the reverse effect as their strict application seems to have created obstacles rather than helps to the development of Christian practice in this area.

#### **4.4.8 EDUCATION**

Education in Methodism is best understood as an extension of the Methodist discipline to the childhood years. It was to restrain self-will and sin and to prepare the way for conversion and holiness. [3.2.3.3; 4.3.8]

Methodist missionaries saw education as an essential part of their missionary activities and gave it a high priority at the very outset. Freeman's predecessor Wrigley laid the foundation for Methodist education, making a particular point of extending education to girls to ensure a Christian influence in the home when they became wives and mothers (Birtwhistle 1950: 2-3; Bartels 1965: 20-30). In many ways education was an almost natural adjunct to evangelism. Methodism gained an opening in many communities by its offer of bringing education to its children. Many chiefs invited Methodist Church workers into their towns and villages and contributed to their salaries for this very purpose (Odamtten 1978:62-65). However, once a school was opened the Methodist agent would also begin to evangelise and a church would also be formed. On occasion this would lead to conflict with the traditional rulers who were really only interested in education.<sup>75</sup> The schools themselves placed a very high emphasis on

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<sup>75</sup> Many traditional rulers welcomed the Methodist mission for the educational opportunities that it brought to their communities. The Methodist mission, on the other hand, saw its educational work as an opportunity for evangelism. These different expectations between rulers and missionaries sometimes created tense situations: Asaka 1879: "The chief has built a house for a teacher which has been placed at the disposal of

religious education with the aim of converting their pupils to Christian faith (Odamtten 1978: 100-115).

Methodist schools were rudimentary affairs with a limited curriculum. Instruction was in English and concentrated upon Christianity, especially the Bible, and the arts, particularly language skills, and mathematics. The teachers in the schools were mission agents or volunteers who themselves only had a basic education. As a result the academic achievements of Methodists schools were always rather modest and were severely criticised by colonial authorities when they began to pay greater attention to the standard of education in their territories in the 1890s (Bartels 1965: 102-131). Sunday schools were also an important aspect of the Methodist educational enterprise, especially where there was no day school, and these concentrated in teaching Bible and literacy, especially in the vernacular.<sup>76</sup>

The poor standard of education was also a cause of great concern to Methodist lay leaders who called for centres of excellence to be established that might raise the standards of all Methodist schools through the provision of better educated teachers and agents. Such centres were established both by the mission and by private individuals who placed them under the guidance of the Church (Bartels 1965: 89-101). The curriculum of these new institutions was a matter of dispute in the 1890s between indigenous leaders who favoured a highly academic curriculum and the missionary leadership under John Kemp who favoured technical and vocational education both for social reasons and out of a feeling that such education was 'more appropriate' for Africans (Bartels 1965: 102-131).

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the mission." (Secondi, 1879); Axim 1893: "At Kikam and Essamah we have had the privilege of baptising several of our school children all of whom are now either members on trial or in the junior classes. At the ministration of baptism the chiefs and elders of the respective towns were present and took great interest in the proceeding - solemnly vowing to keep the children from fetish worship and from other native customs repugnant to Christian law and teaching." (Dixcove, 1893); Sehwi Mission 1895: "The Native Missionary reports that a number of prominent people have sent some of their children to be educated and trained as Christians." (Cape Coast, 1895); Enyeme 1895: "Not only Christianity [sic] is being highly valued by the people, and is therefore easily finding its way into all neighbourhoods, but that too civilization with its privileges and blessings is fast becoming appreciable in the locality. It is amusing to know the attempts made by the impatient parents to get their children in the school to be taught." (Winneba, 1895); Akyim 1904: "King Ahim-Kusa, who invited us to Akyim Swedru, being displeased with the good results of the work, has withdrawn his financial assistance to the mission, stating that he did not invite us to preach the gospel nor to make disciples of his subjects, but simply to teach his children the principles of education. He is therefore using every means to impede the progress of the work. Notwithstanding we are going on with our work cheered by many conversions." (Winneba, 1904); Myera 1904: The correspondent reported that the chief of Myera had built a chapel at his own expense, and the people are willing to build a house for an agent. The community had many children ready for school. (Accra, 1904); Dunkwa 1904: "The possibilities here and at Dunkwa are great, the chiefs are wanting teachers in their villages and promising financial help." (Gold Mines Mission, 1904)

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The Meeting agreed to open vernacular Sunday schools in all principal circuits and to have the Gospel read in the vernacular in Sunday Services. ('The Work of God' District Meeting, 1878).

Despite their shortcomings, Methodist schools were remarkably successful. William West, Freeman's successor, described them as the 'nurseries of the church' as most of the members of the Church, and all of its leaders and workers had been recruited into the Church and drawn to faith through the schools.

In social terms Methodist education also had a significant impact (Bartels 1965 :89). A culture of literacy began to grow up on the coast that began to place greater emphasis on the written rather than the oral word. Publications, both religious and secular, began to emerge and traditional rulers began to appoint secretaries to assist them in the conduct of their business with the colonial authorities that was increasingly conducted through correspondence rather than delegations (Odamtten 1978: 134-145). An African 'white collar' middle class also began to grow up that provided the bulk of clerical workers for commerce and government. This class formed a kind of mediating link between the bulk of the traditional population and the European culture of government and commerce, despite their dislocation from their own culture (Dickson 1976: 175-176; Odamtten 1978: 145-152).

Methodist education actually had a widespread effect on both the Church and society. It provided the Church with a steady stream of members and a literate leadership. At the same time it produced a class of educated Africans who soon began to fill clerical and administrative positions, some of them quite senior, in commerce, law, and government (both traditional and colonial). In time a number among these educated individuals began to emerge as leaders of African commerce, society, and politics in the urban coastal centres of the Gold Coast, and they were to have a profound influence on events after 1860, especially in movements toward greater national unity and self-determination such as the Fanti Confederation and the Aboriginal Rights Association (Kimble 1963: 61-124, 135-141).

#### **4.4.9 LEADERSHIP**

Methodism attempted to reproduce its discipline of leadership [3.2.3.1.3] in the Gold Coast not only in the lives of its missionaries, but also in the lives of its African leaders. Much rested on good leaders for they had the responsibility of cultivating Methodist practice and discipline in their members. For this reason the formation, education, and discipline of its leaders was a matter of very great concern. Accordingly, this topic is considered in some detail here.

Gold Coast Methodism was dependent upon African leadership from the very start. African leadership had begun the initiatives that brought the Methodist Mission to the region in the first place. The leaders of the Bible Band were also the first Class Leaders and local preachers who sustained the Methodist societies in the early years when missionary leadership was so intermittent. Moreover, even when there was a more permanent missionary presence their numbers were always very small and it was only possible to sustain the life and ministry of the church through local leadership both voluntary and professional. In any case Methodism tended to be decentralised, the core of its leadership consisting of local church leaders occasionally encouraged and supervised by an itinerant minister (Southron 1934: 13-51).

The Committee of the Missionary Society also believed that the role of a 'native ministry'<sup>77</sup> was crucial for the evangelisation of Africa because of their knowledge of the vernacular and their insight into their own cultures (Dickson 1976: 166-167).

At the local level societies were particularly dependent on their voluntary leadership, especially that of class leaders and local preachers as they had daily influence over members lives and could raise and sustain the faith and zeal of the people in the absence of any minister or full time agent. In fact they often had to pick up the pieces of society life after an agent had been found wanting and either left his post or been dismissed.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Missionary Secretaries in London stressed the role of the 'native agency': "The converted African must convert Africa. The foreigner may largely help in this work by the training and organising of a native agency, but the great bulk of the work must be done by men of the soil." (District Meeting, 1878)

<sup>78</sup> Lay leadership played a crucial and indispensable role in early Methodism in Ghana: Anomabo 1847: "... it gives me pleasure to say that the steadiness of several of the members; the excellent spirit which they display; and the disinterested views which the leaders appear to have, ... prove that the spirit of the Lord is working in the people both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Anomabo, 1847); Secondi 1870: This Society was being led by two lay leaders who held it together. (Secondi, 1870); Mampon 1871: "The Church members here continue to make a good profession. Having no agent here the society is kept up by two leaders of sterling piety." (Cape Coast, 1871); Twakor 1872: There were many deaths at this station due to small-pox, including prominent members and agent. The "...Society [was] kept together and edified by some young exhorters in the place..." (Cape Coast, 1872); Denkyira 1872: The Society in this town suffered because its three best leaders died or moved. (Dominasi, 1872); Ayerdu 1872: "The Class is also well attended, and the members are striving to love and fear God. Here also one of the members has found the pardoning grace of God during the year. We are thankful to report that the Chief of this place is our leader." (Dominasi, 1872); Abudzi 1873: Ten were lost by death in this Society "among whom was one of our oldest and best Leaders, Chief Solomon Gaisie." (Dominasi, 1873); Secondi 1879: The superintendent reports that "... the spirituality of some of our people has much improved. The older members, especially the leaders and evangelists, have seemed to understand the importance of the injunction 'Be ye holy,' and are earnestly pressing forwards towards that mark of our high calling." (Secondi, 1879); Assafa 1880: There was much indifference in this Society which was put at the door of ineffective leaders. (Anomabo, 1880); Parker reports a general lethargy in the society at *Narkwa* with the exception of one sister "who is a leader. Her piety, zeal and influence are such, that with her at work, under God's blessing, we may yet see better state of things." (Narkwa, 1881); Attaoboe 1881: The correspondent describes this as the "most interesting Church in the Appolonia Circuit." It had suffered through the immorality



Professional leaders were identified by different titles at different times but generally there tended to be three categories: school teachers, catechists, and ministers. In many situations there was little difference in the roles played by the first two types of worker and they are often referred to generically in circuit reports as ‘agents’ who were responsible for both the school and the church on their station. The quality of an agent had important consequences for a local Society. They were essential for opening a new station and good workers could cause a society to thrive. Ministers were responsible for a circuit and held considerable authority over the agents and societies under their supervision answering only to the General Superintendent (always a European) and the Synod of the District (Dickson 1976: 171-175). The Methodist Church sought to choose appropriate individuals for their societies who had both the ability and piety and character to be effective spiritual leaders. This was reflected in Circuit Reports<sup>79</sup> and in discussions at District Meetings.<sup>80</sup>

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of its agent who was removed whereupon the ‘principal leader’ took charge and the Society was sustained with a few losses. A new agent was subsequently appointed. (Dixcove, 1881); Amamful 1882: “A veteran Christian leader acts as pastor, counsellor and friend and keeps the Society in its prosperous state.” (Cape Coast, 1882); Assafa 1885: The efforts of a restored backslider were restoring the church in this place. (Anomabo, 1885) Denkyira: “Leaders are exemplary in consistency and zeal.” (Anomabo, 1893); Kuntu 1893: “There are in this society old and experienced leaders who yearn for the prosperity of the Church and whose energy in strengthening the weak, in reproofing the disorderly and preserving peace and harmony in the Church is commendable.” (Salt Pond, 1893); Papagya 1898; “Another of our faithful leaders has fallen a victim to the king of terrors. His removal is a blow to the work. We are, however, cheered by the fact that his devoted life is an influence for good on the mind of his spiritual followers.” (Aburah, 1898); Gyahadzi 1896: “In the early part of the year the only Leader here - a man of faith and good works - & whose simplicity and godly sincerity ought to declare him worthy of note - was suddenly struck by a heavy sickness, such as that his recovery was altogether miraculous. He is alive presently and in sound health and is filling yet his important office of a Christian Leader with gratitude.” (Winneba, 1896) Dixcove 1900: The piety and devotion of the women leaders of the Society was a “splendid example to the weak and lukewarm members.” (Dixcove, 1900); Essiamah 1904: “Christianity has been winning its way amongst the benighted people. the church has held its own against every opposition, the members are earnest and liberal, the office bearers are devoted and exemplary in their life, aiming at nothing but the extension of the Messiah's kingdom.” (Axim, 1904); Akyiasi 1905: The Society had suffered through the death of a leader but members continue to live a life of ‘spiritual purity.’ (Agona and Akyim, 1905)

<sup>79</sup> The quality of local agents was a constant concern of Circuit Ministers: Arkrah 1872: The Circuit minister of laments lack of ‘suitable agents’ (Arkrah, 1872); Anomabo 1873: Freeman comments in 1878: “Our paid agents as a class of Christian men are becoming more spiritually intelligent and earnest than some [of] those of former times and the same features are exhibited in the greater number of our Leaders and influential men in the societies.” (Anomabo, 1873); Aburi 1879: In contrast to his earlier remarks Freeman complains about the want of suitable young men to serve as agents. (Accra and Aburi, 1879); Dominasi 1879: Reverend Fletcher reports that some societies had suffered from the “wicked falls and inconsistencies of agents” and the circuit as a whole was hindered by a lack of local preachers and class leaders of sufficient religious experience and Godliness. (Dominasi, 1879); Ayerdu 1879: This society now had a new agent who was “a better more sensible man than his predecessor, who has not been neglectful of his charge ...” (Dominasi, 1879); Aburi 1907: “There is a lack of a true conception and a personal realisation of the religion of Jesus Christ in many of our people but we trust that when we are able to give the leaders a better training, and the members to set a higher value on the class-meeting, we shall see greater spiritual and moral results.” (Aburi, 1907)

<sup>80</sup> In response to comments made by the Missionary Secretaries the 1873 District Meeting made the following remarks:

Local leaders would have emerged through the class system and be expected to have distinguished themselves as class-leaders and exhorters before becoming local preachers. Most often, they would be products of Methodist Schools. It was usual for those recruited into full time leadership to have worked their way up through the organisation of the local society to become local preachers and it was expected that they would be able to give testimonies of both their assurance of salvation, and their call to full-time ministry.<sup>81</sup> Teachers and Catechists were expected to have at least completed a basic education, and in later years a high school education was also desirable.

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1st. That notwithstanding the long delay in the payment of the salaries of the subordinate agents occasioned by the lamented death of Mr Waite, and the fears we entertained as expressed in the Chairman's letter of the 10th October that several of them might withdraw from the mission, have happily not been realized.

The brethren are far from being indifferent as to the moral character of agents whom they employ at the various mission stations; none but such as are members of the society are employed, the majority of whom we believe are soundly converted to God, and other earnestly seeking so to be. The Brethren have repeatedly rejected the offers of qualified young men to become teachers in our schools, on account of the absence of religious principles. The qualifications of the majority of our present teachers for the duties in which they are employed are by no means adequate to the demand, and until we are aided into the establishment of a high class school in the District we are not likely to have a superior staff of teachers.

2nd The brethren fell deeply pained at the remarks bearing on the "affectation and self indulgence in dress, mode of life and behaviour of our native young men who are represented as servile imitators of the follies and vices of Europeans:" we would simply observe that however applicable to some other parts of this Coast such remarks might be, they do not apply to the native young men of the Gold Coast Mission, and we regret that the secretaries had not better informed themselves on this subject before they had written. We feel assured that if we had but an ordinary amount of sympathy shown us from our friends at home, there will be no cause for fear. We think there never was a brighter prospect of success than at the present time. (District Meeting, 1873)

In the 1879 District Meeting Reverend James Fletcher, then the District Chairman laments the lack of suitable young men to send as agents. (District Meeting, 1879)

<sup>81</sup> The selection and training of future leaders usually began in the circuits and the schools. In Abudi Reverend Rossall comments in 1878 "Our society here contains a goodly number of young persons, whom we are training with a view to their becoming the future leaders of the church." (Accra and Abudi, 1878). In much of his 1881 report for the Accra Circuit Freeman argues that youths should be trained and recruited to act as agents from the schools by first employing them as monitors. (Accra, 1881) However, it was the District Committee that took responsibility for actually appointing such leaders. In 1873 A special district committee was convened to conduct interviews of prospective assistant native missionaries. All three men had been raised in Christian families and their parents earnest desire was for them to become preachers. Two had passed through a time of worldliness and were convicted of sin by the Spirit. All had passed through the different stages of leadership as exhorters, class leaders and local preachers. (Special District Committee, 13th May 1873) The testimony of E. P. Dentoh was appended to the minutes of the District Meeting of 1879. Dentoh was accepted in the 'native ministry.' He gives testimony that he joined the Wesleyan Society because he feared the last judgement and through his class leader came to a sense of pardoning grace. He later experienced a baptism of the Spirit. (District Meeting, 1879) The testimony of Isaac Hayford, candidate for the ministry was appended to the minutes of the District Meeting for 1881. Hayford writes that he was raised in a Christian family but went into secular work where he was discontented and returned to the Methodist Society and sought an experience of salvation after which he began to devote himself more fully to Christian work. He became a catechist and local preacher before applying for the ministry. (District Meeting, 1881)

Ministers were generally recruited from existing full-time workers and were put through a programme of further education. This programme was haphazard and *ad-hoc*. It could consist of personal mentoring by a leader in the manner that Freeman sought to train De Graft and Martin [4.3.9] or it might have a more formal structure as under Shipman (Bartels 1965: 60-66). The ministerial course was basically a programme of guided reading that consisted of three elements: a general education with emphasis on English language and literature, theology, largely consisting of Wesley's sermons, and translation from English into Fanti. Dickson believes that work in the vernacular was done half-heartedly reflecting the missionaries own indifference to the local language (Dickson 1976: 168-171). It is questionable whether this largely Western oriented education was the most appropriate for enabling African ministers to engage with their own culture and society. District and circuit reports paid particular attention to the discipline of Church leaders when they erred. This probably reflected their key role in the decentralised Methodist organisation. When local leaders failed, they were simply dismissed from their posts by the agent or minister and subject to the usual channels of church discipline where appropriate. However, the consequences of short comings in local leaders were often more profound than when they occurred in agents or ministers who would most likely be strangers to the community. The lapse of local leaders, because of their indigenous connections with both Church and community, could be far more serious as it would appear to the people that one of 'their own' had failed! The church and community would also be reminded daily of this failure as the former leader continued to live and work among them.<sup>82</sup>

The Gold Coast District seemed to have had great difficulty with its 'agents' who were frequently disciplined or dismissed for various misdemeanours, among them immorality, abuse of funds, or abuse of office. Sometimes they would simply desert their posts. The presence of a poor agent at a station, or when, an agent lapsed, could also seriously damage

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<sup>82</sup> Lapsed leaders had a highly adverse effect on the morale of local Societies: Ayemdu 1863: "The members have felt much the loss of their principal leader, who has fallen away into sin." At the time of the report there were only seventeen left in the Church a decrease of twenty-two. (Ayemdu, 1863); Abakrampa 1880: "We have had to lament over the barrenness of this society in particular and much, the indifference, earthliness and sin, which have made desolate this once flourishing station. Some of this must be laid at the door of some of its leading men ..." (Ekroful, 1880); Darman 1898: "Things here are not so cheering as we could wish, & the present low state of things is due to the evil example of a resident of this town who was once an office bearer in the Cape Coast Church. His manner of life has been a stumbling stone at which some of the poor heathen converts have stumbled and made shipwreck of faith." (Aburah, 1898); Mandu and Esiakyir 1898: "Earnestness in their new Chapel work of a few poor Christians in the former Church is encouraging but the misconduct of our principal member in the latter gives us much cause for anxiety." (Abasa, 1898)

the work of a society by ruining its reputation with the local community or by discouraging members in their own moral and spiritual walk. The discipline of agents seems to have been in the hands of the circuit ministers.<sup>83</sup>

'Native ministers' also, on occasion, erred. The major charges recorded in district records include adultery, abuse of office, theft, and conflict with European authority. These charges were usually investigated very carefully by a specially constituted tribunal - a 'Minor Synod' which scrupulously investigated charges by interviewing witnesses in the presence of the accused who also had opportunity to reply to the charges. Minor Synods<sup>84</sup> seem to have

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<sup>83</sup> Unreliable agents were a continuing problem for local societies: Tupundi 1877: Reverend Freeman reports the dereliction of duty by the agent at this station (Anomabo, 1877); Abuadze and Kwaman 1877: Reverend Fynn reports large defections at these stations largely due to unfaithfulness of the agent. (Dominasi, 1877); Essicoomah 1879: The agent at this station had harmed the work but has now been removed. (Mankessim, 1879); Dominasi 1879: Reverend Fletcher reports that some societies had suffered from the "wicked falls and inconsistencies of agents" and the circuit as a whole was hindered by a lack of local preachers and class leaders of sufficient religious experience and Godliness. (Dominasi, 1879); Denkyira 1879: This society survived the 'most shameful' fall of its agent and even continued to give generously. (Dominasi, 1879); Ayerdu 1879: This Society had a new agent who was "a better more sensible man than his predecessor, who has not been neglectful of his charge ..." (Dominasi, 1879); Essaman 1879: This Society also sustained damage from the "unfaithfulness and disgraceful fall of the agent, lately in charge." (Dominasi, 1879); Sedzi and Amian 1879: These Societies had been on the way to being self supporting but the 'inconsistencies' of the agent had caused "some mischief and want of cordiality among the members." (Dominasi, 1879); Edubiase 1879: The discipline and dismissal of errant agent in this station impressed upon the people the seriousness of Methodist principles - and gave greater assurance and confidence in the mission. (Assin, 1879); Aguna 1880: The Agent at this station had deserted his post. (Elmina, 1880); Abakrampa 1880: "We have had to lament over the barrenness of this society in particular [sic] and much, the indifference, earthliness and sin, which have made desolate this once flourishing station. Some of this must be laid at the door of some of its leading men; principally to the account of an agent recently in charge, whose foul hypocrisy had well nigh ruined the people. But blessed be God there have been a few names even in this church, which have maintained their integrity, such as have not dallied with the world. These with an efficient, pious agent, may be the means of restoring the straying ones in time to come." (Ekroful, 1880); Winneba 1881: A number of societies appeared to be in decline which Reverend Hayford generally put at the door of poor agents. (Winneba, 1881); In Abanku 1881: "The unfaithfulness of our agent has tended to exercise baneful influences on the work at the place." (Anmanbu, 1881); Mardie 1885: The agent here became a rum seller! (Salt Pond, 1885); Narkwa 1892: "This station is in a wretched condition owing to a law suit amongst the people, the falling of the chapel, and the unprincipled charger of the Agent who has left." (Salt Pond, 1892); Charma 1893: "During the year the agent in charge of this station was removed for moral obliquity ..." (Elmina, 1893); Krobuw 1894: "An inebriate agent has blacked the hopes wherewith we entered upon the work of the year; but like a smoking flax, the torch is still burning and a new agent is gone to wave it wide." (Elmina, 1894); Brooffu 1894: "The Society here had the disadvantage of having two agents who successively [sic] misconducted themselves." (Winneba, 1894); Appam 1910: "Speaking generally, the work of God in this circuit has not prospered as it should have done. Unfaithfulness and inconsistency on the part of the agents and office-bearers have done much harm." (Appam, 1901); Tekiman 1904: "The work in this very important village has suffered during the past year through the misconduct of the agent in charge who is at present undergoing a sentence of imprisonment for crime. We are trying to provide a substitute for his place." (Ashanti Mission, 1904); Odobin 1905: A 'Fallen Agent' still resident in the community had damaged the Church. (Agona and Akyim, 1905)

<sup>84</sup> The following cases offer good examples of this procedure: Reverend John Plange 1878: John Plange, an African minister was reduced to supernumerary status because of unspecified offences and was to be given further consideration if his character and conduct improved. Basically he seems to have been charged with incompetence, rebelling against European authority and theft. (District Meeting, 1878); Reverend F. E. Wood 1880: Wood, the African Minister at Mankessim was accused of adultery. The investigation seems to have been

made fair judgements on the bases of the evidence before them – reaching acquittals as well as convictions. In the 1890s this admirable system seems to have broken down and ministers were encouraged to contest accusations against them in the courts.<sup>85</sup>

African leaders, both clergy and lay, actually had a great deal of authority and responsibility in the decentralised Methodist societies. While ultimate authority and control was concentrated in the hands of the British missionaries, one of whose number the Missionary Society would appoint as General Superintendent of the District their numbers were always

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quite thorough with several witnesses heard, including the girl involved. Wood was found guilty and suspended with the recommendation that he be dropped from the list of preachers. (Minor District Meeting Mankessim, 16th March 1880) F. E. Wood was duly dropped from the preachers' list following recommendation of the minor synod. (District Meeting, 1880); Reverend E. P. Dontoh 1882: Dontoh was charged with adultery but there was insufficient evidence so that the charge failed. However, he was found guilty of impropriety. (Minor District Meeting at Anomabo, 1882); Reverend J. Plange and J. J. Bentil 1883: Bentill had accused Plange of withholding his salary and assaulting him. The panel found insufficient evidence for the charges and so dismissed the case. (Minor District Meeting at Cape Coast, 1883); Reverend L. Plange 1884: Charges had been brought against Plange by one of his agents of assault, withholding pay, and verbal abuse. These charges were investigated by a Minor Synod and found baseless. (District Meeting, 1884); E. P. Douth and J. B. Freeman 1886: The results of Minor District Meetings concerning E. P. Douth and J. B. Freeman junior were read to the full District Meeting and accepted. Both Douth and Freeman were cleared in Minor District Meetings, the evidence in both cases being found insufficient to sustain charges of immorality, although some of the circumstances were questionable. (District Meeting, 1886)

This same system seems to have been applied also to British missionaries: Reverend Morris 1899: "Damaging statements have been made against Bro. Morris, at present unsubstantiated, but under investigation." (European Synod, 1899) Reverend Thomas Marshall 1906: Marshall was found guilty of wholesale mismanagement of funds including unauthorised appointment of agents and was required to repay £73 to the Committee. (District Meeting, 1906)

<sup>85</sup> The policy of involving legal proceedings in the disciplinary affairs had mixed, and sometimes unhappy, results: Reverend Henry Anaman 1891: John Halligay, Chairman of the District in 1891 wrote "The charges in which ... the moral character of Henry Anaman was involved were heard before the District Commissioner, Henry Eyre Esq. at Axim on the 24/2 who gave judgement in his favour also awarding him five pounds for damages. I have therefore appointed him to the new Salt Pond circuit." (District Meeting, 1891) Reverend E. K. Assam 1896: A charge of adultery had been preferred against E K Assam who was suspended pending his taking legal proceedings against his accuser within one month. (District Meeting, 1896) Reverend S. R. B. Solomon 1899: The 1899 District Meeting heard that Solomon had resigned after being found innocent of seducing a girl and fathering her child. In a letter of 17th February 1899 to Henry Ellis, District Chairman, Solomon wrote that he resigned because he believed he would have faced disciplinary measures otherwise, despite being exonerated by the Courts. He argues that there was unchristian prejudice against him because he went to court in defence of his reputation without the permission of Synod which also, he claims, had refused to call a minor synod. Solomon cited other cases in which ministers (Mark C. Hayford, and Henry Anaman, acting under the advice of Synod) had cleared themselves of accusations in court and were accepted by the Synod and of another (Egyir-Asaam) who was unable to follow the Synod's instruction to take his slanderer to court and was dismissed by the Synod as a result. Solomon stated that he was resigning in order to avoid conflict and controversy that might damage the Church and its work. (District Meeting, 1899); Reverend Jacob B. Annaman 1906: Objections were raised in the 1905 against Anaman because of an estrangement between himself and his wife. (District Meeting, 1905) In 1906 the Synod learnt that Anaman was still estranged from his wife but now accused of adultery. Synod was unable to stage its own investigation as Anaman was suing his accuser and the case could be prejudiced. Anaman was relieved of ministerial work. (District Meeting, 1906) It seems that Anaman must have lost his case as a Minor Synod was convened to examine the charges against him on the 24th April, 1906. The Synod followed very exacting procedures hearing all witnesses and found Anaman guilty of adultery and of abusing his ministerial authority by expelling those leaders who tried to pursue the matter with him. (Cape Coast Minor Synod, 24th-27th April, 1906)

too small to exercise the kind of tight control that they would probably have preferred. Circuit ministers and local societies must have enjoyed a great degree of latitude as missionaries would have been just too stretched to maintain strict control. Out of necessity, more and more responsibility and authority would have been seceded to them to the degree that in 1880, John Fletcher, then the General Superintendent, proposed to the Missionary Society that the Gold Coast District become totally self-supporting and autonomous (Bartels 1965: 89-101).

After 1880 missionary sentiment seems to change. Until the 1880s African and European ministers met together in synod but from 1880 the Europeans held their own separate meeting to discuss their own financial affairs.<sup>86</sup> In 1906 this committee assumed responsibility for the detailed apportioning of the Missionary Committee's Grant for Native Ministry instead of giving it 'en bloc' to the District Synod<sup>87</sup> while at the same time rejecting a request for native representation. It seems that the missionary 'supervision' of the work increased rather than eased as time went by.<sup>88</sup>

To what extent did the Akan leadership tradition influence the Methodist practice of leadership as it had with Freeman? [4.3.9] It is unlikely that such an influence would have affected the practice of Freeman's missionary successors as they lacked his sensitivity and sympathy for local models of leadership. But it seems almost inevitable that Akan and Methodist practices would have enriched each other in local societies for three reasons: Firstly, local leaders would have been guided by models of leadership most accessible to them and this would have been the *Nana* tradition of their own culture. Secondly, many traditional leaders were also leaders in the local societies and they would have brought their leadership practice with them.<sup>89</sup> Thirdly, Methodist leadership practices had much in common with

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<sup>86</sup> European missionaries to henceforth "sit in committee to consider their own accounts." (District Meeting, 1879)

<sup>87</sup> "This Local Committee proposes that in future the Committee's Grant for Native agency be apportioned in detail instead of being handed over "en bloc" to the District Synod." ("Local Committee" (of the Missionary Committee) Meeting, 1906)

<sup>88</sup> "We consider that the time has not yet come for the introduction of native ministers or laymen to this Committee, and would suggest that such questions as deal with purely Native work shall continue to form a part of the business of the District Synod." ("Local Committee" (of the Missionary Committee) Meeting, 1906)

<sup>89</sup> There were a surprising number of traditional rulers who also became Church leaders: Abuadzi 1849: "An interesting little society is already formed with the chief at its head; who has renounced the errors of Paganism; broken thro' trammels of Polygamy, and embraced the truth as it is in Jesus. A few days back, I had the satisfaction of performing the ceremony of his Public Baptism in the chapel at Dominasi." (Dominasi, 1849); Ayendu 1872: "The Class is also well attended, and the members are striving to love and fear God. Here also one of the members has found the pardoning grace of God during the year. We are thankful to report that the

Fanti leadership practices. Both stressed inclusiveness in decision making in which the fundamental value and equality of all as human beings was affirmed. Both Fanti and Methodist traditions prized decisive, authoritative leadership arising from such inclusive processes of consultation. [2.3.3]

Kwesi Dickson's description of the position of the minister in his circuit sounds strangely like that of the *Nana* in his council :

the organization of the Methodist societies... placed the minister in the position of the first among equals and hence fostered the spirit of give and take, with its consequent mutual strengthening ... (Dickson 1981: 199-200)

Methodism went to great lengths to establish its leadership practice among the Fantis through a careful process of formation and discipline within the Methodist society. Through interaction with the Akan *nananom* practice the Methodist leadership practice began to be contextualised. This process of contextualisation overcame some significant barriers such as inappropriate Western oriented patterns of theological education, (Dickson 1976: 176) the substitution of the Courts for Minor Synods, and the growing arrogance and paternalistic attitudes of European missionaries after 1880.

#### **4.4.10 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT**

##### **4.4.10.1 CULTURAL ISSUES**

The cultural and social impact of the Methodist moral tradition in the Gold Coast as a whole is a little more complicated as Freeman's attitudes might suggest. [4.3.10.3] While Freeman's missionary colleagues continued to follow the tradition largely as he had applied it to the Fanti-lands their Fanti co-religionists began their own, sometimes separated and private discourse in which they developed the moral tradition differently, especially in the area of politics.

Like Freeman Methodist missionaries were advocates of 'civilisation' as well as Christian faith. As already noted, they looked down upon Akan culture to the extent that they were reluctant to learn the local language. They sought to show the superiority of Western ideas, practices and technology to those of Akan culture. To this end they opposed polygamy, the practice of funeral rites, and many other traditional customs and rituals. Missionaries sought

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Chief of this place is our leader." (Dominasi, 1872); Abuadzi 1873: Ten were lost by death "among whom was one of our oldest and best Leaders Chief Solomon Gaisie." (Dominasi, 1873); Bisadzi 1893: The death is recorded of a Christian chief who acted as a father to the society. (Anomabo, 1893)

to instil this same attitude to their converts through preaching and education (Odamtten 1978: 58-70; Dickson 1981: 195-196).

Under this pressure from Methodism the traditional religion of the Fantis lost a good deal of its credibility. In one case of conflict between Methodist Christians and traditional priests in the 1850s at the shrine of the Fanti national gods at Mankessim the priests were caught out in a religious deceit and they, and their gods seem to have been generally rejected by chiefs and people (Milum 1893: 119-131; Walker 1929: 180-200; Bartels 1965: 54-60). From the 1890s onwards there seem to have been a fairly steady flow of traditional priests<sup>90</sup> renouncing their 'deceits' and converting to Christianity. Some circuit ministers also wrote in their reports of traditional religion being forsaken by the people.<sup>91</sup>

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Ministers seem to have taken some delight in recording the defection of their traditional counter-parts: Komenda 1890: A traditional priest converted to Christianity on the moral grounds that his practice was dishonest. (Elmina, 1890); Elmina 1892: The circuit report records the conversion of some traditional priests who exposed some of the 'tricks' of their profession. (Elmina, 1892); Bren-Akyinin 1892: This was the home of some converted traditional priests who received great pressure and inducements to return to their former occupations which turned to persecution upon their refusal. They confess the 'power of Christianity' and the deceits and tricks of their priest craft. (Elmina, 1892); Winneba 1892: A traditional priest converted to Christianity after his fetish failed to save the life of his brother. (Winneba, 1892); Edu-Kronu 1893: "Our work is prospering indeed, there has been during the year a very remarkable conversion of six fetish priests among whom was the chief's spokesman whose fetishes were handed to our agent and sent to me at Aburi. An attempt to prevent them from casting in their lot with us has been vainly made by the chief." (Aburi, 1893); Kikam 1894: "During the year one member has been received. Our services are, however, well attended, the converted fetish priests themselves setting a noble example in this respect." (Dixcove, 1894); Mampong 1900: "At Mampong one of the chief Fetish priests has embraced Christ." (Aburi, 1900); Oyoko 1907: "At *Oyoko* the chief fetish Priest, with his wife, (the Priestess and a girl whom they were training), have surrendered all their fetishes, and are now under instruction for membership. Several others have also surrendered or burned their fetishes." (Aburi, 1907) Particular comment on the conversion of traditional priests was made in the District Synod in 1913: "Two features are deserving of special reference, on the one hand, many notable conversions from heathenism that have take place, and which include several Fetish priests who have renounced their idols and turned to the Living God. And on the other hand, increase of faith, and a heightened sense of moral obligation and the renewed consecration of life consequent there from among many of those who had already enjoyed the privilege of Church Membership." (District Minutes, 1913) It is significant that traditional religion is depicted in terms of 'deceit' rather than in terms of 'power-encounter.'

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Circuit reports chronicled significant defections from traditional religion in a number of communities: Komantine: "Though notorious for their attachment to the Fetish the awakening has been so great that the Chief with thirty-seven others have thrown away their idols to give themselves to the Lord." (Komantine, 1872); Assin 1878: Reverend Hayford writes: "As regards fetishism, it is in many quarters exploded." (Assin, 1878); Adansi-Fomina: "this is the chief village town of the whole Adansi tribe. We enjoy the confidence and friendship of the chief and the principal men of this place. They regard the mission an inestimable blessing as having been the means of their rescue from the troubles of their quarrelsome, and adverse neighbours of Kumasi. They seem much to appreciate the Christian religion and to ignore fetishism." (Assin, 1879); Anomabo: "We look around, and behold ancient idolatrous institutions abandoned, once much frequented tracks to superstitious groves overgrown with bush, and our Christianity unobtrusively shaping the ideas of the people generally, and exercising silent, yet persistent and potent influences on the moral and social condition of the masses." (Anomabo, 1881); Accra 1881: "We are thankful to the Lord for the impression made on the heathen mind during the year. Of the fifty-two persons shown in the schedule as received into full membership, more than two-thirds have been won from paganism. We have now among those under instruction for baptism, a pagan woman who has abandoned her hereditary, profitable and trained-for calling, and escaped initiation into the



It has already been noted that Methodist Christians were called to live a distinctively Christian life, which distanced them from elements of their culture but not from their neighbours [3.2.3.4.1; 4.4.5]. ‘Salems’ on the model of the Basel mission were rejected as it was important to the Methodist model of mission that members of the local societies lived in the midst of their neighbours as examples and witnesses to Christ and mediators of his love.<sup>92</sup> There were a few cases where whole villages became Christian through conversion as a result of this presence.<sup>93</sup> In many other places, Methodists enjoyed such good relationships with

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mysteries of the Fetish priesthood, ‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’” (Accra, 1881); Kwaman 1883: “Kwaman appears to be the last station but one occupied in this circuit and like all others turned to God through the instrumentality of some of the natives having been first brought to the knowledge of salvation through Christ elsewhere. It was one of the strongholds of Satan but the people cleared their fetish grove immediately they embraced the religion of Christ to provide a site for the mission house and chapel built by themselves.” (Obuasi, 1884); Enyeme 1885: “Among the newly admitted was one who was a fetish man. But he has cast his idols into the moles and unto the bats and is now a chapel keeper; his object of becoming such being that his people may see and know that ‘an idol is nothing.’” (Winneba, 1885); Poni 1890: “The services however are already producing a change. They now often say ‘Come again we will listen to you; Truly our fathers were in thick darkness; but our children will not remain what our fathers’ children are.’ They have lately declared their fetish priests to be liars and desired that there should be no more heathen dances in the streets.” (Accra, 1890); Ampia Edwimaku (Ampia Ajumako) 1891: “Among the converts we note with joy the case of the chief of this place. Chief Agua commands about one third of the whole Edwimaku District, and on his conversion he ordered all his fetish and idols to be cast away. At our meeting held at Mandu he received his baptism and gave a thrilling account of his early life, resolving at the same time to consecrate himself and all he has - even his troops - to the service of his new Lord and God. The attendance now of his subjects at the house of God is a clear sign of a gracious work the Lord is doing among us.” (Anomabo, 1891); Enyinasie 1894: “Here also the people are losing all confidence in their priests. One priestess being on the point of death, her anxious friends sought the services of a neighbouring Priest who readily came full of pride - boastfully assuring the excited spectators that by his wonder-working fetish, he could effect immediate cure. Thereupon he began to play and he continued dancing until he dropped down dead himself within the space of an hour. The sudden death of this would be saviour followed by that of the patient almost immediately afterwards greatly impressed the people; still for all that, they would not come over to us; some would even create disturbances in our services which they attend in large numbers. We pray these may be forgiven: for they know not what they do. (Dixcove, 1894); Nkum 1895: “We thank god for a good year during which He has crowned our labours at this station with success beyond our faith. Among the year’s converts were the king of the place and a notable fetish man. The former received the rite of Christian baptism during a last visit of mine there, and is now much enjoying all the Christian privileges. It may be remarked too with interest that the latter, to show the genuineness of his conversion by means of no one, personally set all his fetishism on fire before the people of the town without the least reserve. Apart from the foregoing facts, we have other cause to be thankful to God by the increase of membership and large and regular attendances at all the services, to say nothing of the truth that is influencing the minds and lives of the hearers.” (Winneba, 1895); Tunkwa 1905: This was a new station established by evangelism. Many influential leaders of the community were converted, some of whom publicly burned their fetishes. (Salt Pond, 1905)

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See notes 31 and 33 in this chapter.

<sup>93</sup>

Circuit records suggest that Methodists came to constitute a majority in a few communities: Edubiasi 1878: “Our congregation here comprises nearly all in the village.” (Assin, 1878); Papagya 1878: “Papagya is as interesting as ever; here like Dunkwa one feeling depressed and cold with the lukewarm monotony of other places has but to be present at the society’s prayer meetings to get warmed and refreshed. A poor people in a poor out of the way little village you find them always willing and ready for gospel duties as well as blessings. There is hardly a heathen person in all the village now.” (Ekroful, 1878); Taidu 1905: “Taidu is a healthy condition of spiritual life especially the young women exhibit great piety and much Christian zeal and energy,

their traditionalist neighbours that they even helped them construct their chapels.<sup>94</sup> In other places, there was persecution but even here, the fortitude of believers won them friends and sympathy.<sup>95</sup>

The positive impression created by Methodist societies might also help to explain the relatively high incidence of conversions among chiefs and councillors recorded in circuit reports. Some chiefs made the transition to a new faith in the face of strong opposition, but retained their stool,<sup>96</sup> others become Church members with no difficulty at all, and some even introduced Sabbath laws<sup>97</sup> banning drumming, dancing, and drinking on the Christian's holy

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and they contribute more to the spiritual strength of the Society than the men. The village contains not one heathen, a circumstance very remarkable and rare." (Anomabo, 1905)

<sup>94</sup> There were a number of examples of such assistance: Kwaman 1868: The correspondent reports that the traditionalists assisted in the building of the Methodist chapel. (Dominasi, 1868); Komenda: 1879: The respondent reports that restrictions placed on people listening to the Gospel by fetish priests were removed and people came to hear the Gospel either at the preaching shed or in the market. The whole community, both Christian and heathen was engaged in building the chapel. (Elmina, 1879); Mamful 1879: "The community has also helped to erect the chapel in this place also, but few have openly become Christians." (Secondi, 1879); Busua 1879: The leader here reported that 'heathen friends' helped to build the chapel. (Dixcove, 1879); Dunkwa 1882: "Chief and men have been engaged in the repairs of their chapel." (Aburah, Assin, and Adansee, 1882); Bisadzi 1898: "Here also a help has come to us from an unexpected source. The Chief of this place has had sympathy with the people and undertaken the repairs of our Chapel at his own cost. He intends soon repairing the Mission House also." (Abasa, 1898)

<sup>95</sup> There were also a few situations in which members of the Societies face persecution for their faith and practice: Assafa 1860: The correspondent reports that the people built up in their faith after time of persecution. (Assafa, 1860); Edukrom 1892: "It is a matter of thankfulness that most of the members are earnest and are determined to live for Christ. Towards the close of the year a storm of pitiless persecution from the Chief and the townsmen burst over this little flock which unquestionably made some of our members low sa it swept by. Though the oppositions here abound yet they bear their testimony in boldness." (Aburi, 1892); Mpeseduadzi 1905: The traditionalists in the town tried to force the Christians to assist in constructing new House of the Gods. They refused and endured through persecution that followed. (Salt Pond, 1905); Anomabo 1905: At Anomabo 1905: "Spirit of contentment" reigns despite persecution. (Cape Coast, 1905)

<sup>96</sup> The stool of the founder of a royal lineage what the symbol of a traditional ruler's authority and the symbol of the identity and unity of the community.

<sup>97</sup> Circuit reports indicate that there were a significant number of Christian traditional rulers between 1855 and 1905: Dominasi 1857: "I am happy to report that the King (Solomon) of this place whom the Lord graciously brought back to his fold last year, is using his influence for the honour of our God. Lately he has decreed that no drumming and native dancing should be performed on Sundays in this town, which is a great blessing to the town, for the above mentioned amusements tend very much to oppose our work here, they hinder the heathen to attend to our instructions and they have been also a grand bait of Satan here to draw some poor souls from the good way to the world. The king married according to the Christian fashion at the opening of Abuasi Chapel. Such an act of an African chieftain is the first, or ever known, and it has proved to all the effect of the blessed influence and power of the Gospel in this country." (Dominasi, 1857); Abuadze 1859: Reverend Laing reported death of Daniel Hope 'their good old Christian chief' and his replacement by his brother Solomon, also a Christian who "manifests the same fostering care to our church here." (Abuadze, 1859); Abuadze 1860: John Plange reports death of "the late chief Solomon Hope, who was a Christian indeed" as a result of which some have returned to heathenism. (Abuadze, 1860); Anomabo 1864: The circuit minister reported that the Missionary Meeting at Anomabo Town was chaired by the new Chief Charles A. Amonu who was a member of the Methodist Society and who delivered an impressive speech. (Anomabo, 1864); Dixcove 1866: The circuit minister reports that some had been excluded who had been 'walking disorderly' but others united themselves to the society. This included a 'young chief' who burnt his fetishes. (Dixcove, 1866);

Komantine 1872: "Though notorious for their attachment to the Fetish the awakening has been so great that the Chief with thirty-seven others have thrown away their idols to give themselves to the Lord." (Komantine, 1872); Ayendu 1872: "We are thankful to report that the Chief of this place is our leader." (Dominasi, 1872); Abuzi 1873: It was reported that ten died during the year "among whom was one of our oldest and best Leaders Chief Solomon Gaisie." (Dominasi, 1873); Ayendu 1875: "The chief of this place who is a member of our society, has during the year found pardon through faith in Christ." (Dominasi, 1875); Narkwa 1878: The respondent observes that while Narkwa was reputed to be the centre of the 'Fanti fetish' one of the key leaders of the society had become the chief of the town. (Narkwa, 1878); Abakrampa 1879: "The attendance at the society meetings has been satisfactory. The Chief of this place contributes to our funds annually and regularly attends our public services on Sundays. He has also rejoined the observance of the Lord's Day on all his people." (Ekroful, 1879); Enjira 1879: "Early in the last quarter of the year the chief of this village, an elderly and intelligent man, and his next in position, with two others renounced idolatry, and joined our society. This is a great and significant fact; and our very hearts bounds with real joy at these marvellous things." (Assin, 1879); Enfua 1880: "... over and above the good report made of this station last year, we have to add the baptism this year, after due trial, of six adult heathens, with an infant girl of our evangelist, into full church membership. This number includes the old chief of the place and his apparent successor, both of whom had, during a season of severe trial, manifested a noble adherence to the profession of Christianity, in opposition to the threats and entreaties of their pagan friends." (Assin, 1880); Amain and Sezi 1881: "Increased attention to the means of grace, a better understanding of our polity, and the addition of the most influential Chiefs to the number in Society, have been the leading aspects of our work." (Dominasi, 1881); Anomabo 1884: "In one or two places the work is not healthy but in most societies there is much cause of thankfulness in the face of many difficulties. Observe the conversion of a notable chief Olmia and the exemplary conduct of the Christians at Lagoo in a disturbance in the town." (Anomabo, 1884); Appolonia 1884: The correspondent reports that the work in *Applonia* is still in 'the day of small things'. The King of Alloabu is now favourably disposed to Church after recovering from an illness after prayers were offered on his behalf by a subordinate chief who was a Christian. (Appolonia, 1884); Obuasi 1884: This was a new circuit being a merger of Dominasi and Ekroful Circuits which included Kumasi. The Superintendent gave a detailed account of the history of the churches in each place. What is notable is the role played by native Christians spreading the Gospel to their neighbours and establishing the Church. In a number of places, in particular Abuasi and Papagya, the chiefs were converted and encouraged their people to become Christians. (Obuasi, 1884); Papagya 1884: "Sprung up from the Abakrampa society and has a fine chapel at the entrance of the village. The chief is a consistent member of society and has the childlike simplicity to learn of Christ. He exercises a good influence over his people and the whole village is Christianised." (Obuasi, 1884); Swedru 1884: "One of the new converts is a captain and an influential man in the town" (Obuasi, 1884); Bountry 1891: "The Chief who was the means of the establishment of the work here has passed away to his master's joy. The remaining are still earnest and working out their souls' salvation with fear and trembling." (Dixcove, 1890); Komenda 1891: The Circuit Minister reported that the Chief and his household converted and baptised. (Elmina, 1891); Ampia Edwimaku 1891: "Among the converts we note with joy the case of the chief of this place. Chief Agua commands about one third of the whole Edwimaku District, and on his conversion he ordered all his fetish and idols to be cast away. At our meeting held at Mandu he received his baptism and gave a thrilling account of his early life, resolving at the same time to consecrate himself and all he has - even his troops - to the service of his new Lord and God. The attendance now of his subjects at the house of God is a clear sign of a gracious work the Lord is doing among us." (Anomabo, 1891); Bisardzi 1892: "Bisardzi has sustained a great loss in the death of Chief Baa through whose influence the society has been self-supporting for the last six years" (Anomabo, 1892); Darman 1893: "The chief who is also a member of the Church has erected for us a preaching shed during the year." (Aburah and Assin, 1893); Moree 1894: "Ata Ego, the newly enstooled chief of Moree had secretly become a Christian in Cape Coast and had resolved that if he should become the Chief of his community that he would rule in accordance with Biblical principles. Upon being enstooled he announced that he would not make the traditional sacrifices to the titular gods and made a public demonstration of his application for membership into the Methodist Church." The circuit superintendent reports that many in his town followed his example by destroying their idols and joining the Church. "The good work is spreading and causing a revolution in the minds of the people. They say to our workers 'Your religion has silenced our gods. They do not answer when we pray to them.'" The Cape Coast congregation sacrificially put forth people and resources to take advantage of this situation. (Cape Coast, 1894); Nkum 1894: The respondent reports that the Chief of this community was converted and baptised. (Winneba, 1894); Essiamah 1894: "In no other station have there been such good results as at this place. The sound conversion of the Head Chief, with almost all his household, including Queen, Prince and Princess has wonderfully cheered us. The old chief assured us that he had long waited to see his people

day. There were also incidences of Christians becoming chiefs and in 1906 Synod even modified the rules of the Church to accommodate them.<sup>98</sup> Christian faith in the form of Methodism was having a considerable cultural and social impact in many situations but how wide spread was this? Was there any significant transformation of Fanti society?

The Ashanti court in 1876 believed, with considerable alarm, that Fanti society had been considerably Christianized. In their conversations with Picot the Asantehene and his advisors made the following comments:

It is your religion that has ruined the Fanti country, weakened their power and brought high man on a level with the low man.

The Fantis can do without polygamy, and without slaves but we cannot. As men differ in their complexion, so in religion. Your God is not like our God and if you send us your missionaries a thousand time on your present condition we shall refuse and if you send 20 missionaries you will not get one Ashanti man to be a Christian. It is trade we want – only trade we cry for. (Cited in Odamtten 1978: 197-198)

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worshippers of the true God and not of dumb idols: he has long remonstrated with them as to the foolishness of idolatry but in vain; he could not remember any time in the past when he believed in fetishism and now that he has joined the Church, he tells us, his one determination is to witness a good confession for Christ, even if that course would cost him his all. The insults and persecutions of his offended and disappointed subjects have given him not a moment of pain and it rejoices our hearts to see him and family repairing to the House of God at the sweet hour of prayer. The exposures of the revolting crimes in connection with infants originated from this station. When the Commissioner's strict warnings were set aside and the child killed, the old chief was so enraged that he ordered the summary disposal of all the idols in the town. In carrying out this mandate our agent showed so much zeal that one priest deliberately spat upon his face several times and was severely beaten by a goodly company of infuriated priestesses. He was in fact so roughly handled that we were forced to seek protection from the court. Fines were accordingly imposed on the women and the Priest was sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour. This wholesome lesson has already produced favourable results which we trust will last for sometime." (Dixcove, 1894); Attuabu 1895: The Minister reports that the Paramount Chief ordered the public burning of most of the charms and idols in the town. (Dixcove, 1895); Essiamah 1895: The Paramount Chief and family were publicly baptised which greatly impressed his subjects. (Dixcove, 1895); Dunkwa 1898: The Chief of Egyir-Kroom was converted and the members endured through the ensuing persecution. (Aburah, 1898); Krofu 1904: The "Society has been greatly privileged this year with remarkable conversions. Among the converts who are all distinguished persons of the town is the chief whose surrender is indeed a sacrifice of no small value" (Salt Pond, 1904); Esuekyin 1904: The Chief of this community became a Christian despite the opposition of the traditional priests. (Winneba, 1904); Abodom 1904: "Some of the principal men, the owners of the town, have been won for the master." (Winneba, 1904); Anomabo: The circuit minister at Anomabo reports that a number of 'head men' became Christians at Mampon, Oboadzi, Ogokrom and the "Chief of Anumansa himself a member is in temporary charge of the little flock lately collected at his village." (Anomabo, 1905); Salt Pond 1905: "We must also note with gratitude the restoration of some backsliders of long standing as found in the case of the town's chief whose return indeed gladdens our heart." (Salt Pond, 1905); Krofu 1905: "It is encouraging to note that the chief of this town who last year gave himself up is regularly seen to join the worship of the only true God." (Salt Pond, 1905) Mankessim 1905: A revival occurred at Mankessim in this year in which several of the king's councillors were converted. (Salt Pond, 1905)<sup>98</sup>

"While fully recognising the fact that it does not interfere with the rights of the people as citizens, and that the rules provide, that in dealing with the time honoured customs of the people 'we must not be severe with them beyond their lights' the Synod resolves that Christians, who are members of our Church, may be allowed to be made Captains of Companies of Chiefs of Stools, and that each case of discipline be dealt with on its own merits." ('Native Institutions' District Synod, 1906). This appears to be the only occasion that the Society Rules were modified in relation to participation in indigenous customs or institutions.

A degree of significant change must have been underway in the Fanti lands for the Ashanti court to consider Fanti society as characterised by equality, monogamy, and liberty.<sup>99</sup> While the Methodist mission may have appeared to separate its converts from their own culture and its institutions, the choices made by communities and their leaders indicate that Fanti people might have been making and owning cultural and social changes themselves rather than merely being acquiescent to missionary pressure. Perhaps the divided loyalties that Forson (Forson 1993) identifies could be explained as a symptom of social change as the debate within the Fanti-Akan moral tradition takes a new direction over several generations rather than just a case of inadequate theological contextualisation. In fact, such ‘split level’ commitment to Christian faith could be understood as the counter-part to the ‘split level’ response to Akan culture that was endemic in Gold Coast Methodism since Freeman. Perceived in this light the process of change described here could be understood as the gradual reconciliation of this contradictory response to Akan culture in favour of Freeman’s pragmatic relational attachment.

#### **4.4.10.2 SOCIAL ISSUES**

Due to the communal nature of Fanti society in which the Fanti *ebusua* supported its members through times of illness and economic hardship there was not the same need, as there was in Britain, for acts of individual philanthropy [3.2.3.4.2-3.2.3.4.3]. Methodism in the Gold Coast directed its attention more to issues of freedom and justice [3.2.3.4.5]. The Methodist Church as whole, both African and European, seems to have adopted the anti-slavery sentiment that was such a motivating factor for the early missionaries [4.3.10.2] even to the extent of attacking domestic slavery, and bonded servitude (pawn) (Balmer 1925: 19-33; Southron 1934: 13-23; Odamtten 1978: 65-67, 152-155). The horrors of human sacrifice were also confronted, sometimes with some courage, by Africans and Europeans (Freeman

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<sup>99</sup> These comments were made in 1876, the height of the revival. Christian marriages increased dramatically during this period : 288 in 1876, 210 in 1877, and 283 in 1878. (District Statistics, 1876-1878)

1843: 192) alike,<sup>100</sup> as the campaign to rescue tenth born children in Appolonia, demonstrates.<sup>101</sup>

The introduction of colonial rule largely resolved these major humanitarian issues (Balmer 1924: 135-146; Odamtten 1978: 214-215) and so the Church turned its attention to the 'reformation of manners' [3.2.3.4.4] and focused on other evils such as drunkenness and licentious entertainments, among which Methodists would have classed some traditional festivities as well as the attractions of the European ballroom.<sup>102</sup> At first these forms of immorality are addressed by preaching and public education through the formation of temperance societies<sup>103</sup> (after the Wesleyan tradition of rebuking one's neighbour [3.2.3.4.4])

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In Akwamu the resident missionary intervened in the funeral rites of a woman of royal blood to prevent the sacrifice of three human beings. Later, when the traditional priest told the king that the gods wanted the missionary driven out the king responded by telling him that there were too many other missionaries who would oppose such an action and that they should rather call upon the gods to remove the missionary. Anyone else who tried would be prosecuted. (Akwamu, 1862)

<sup>101</sup>

In Appolonia it was customary for the tenth born child of every mother to be sacrificed to the deities. The Methodist Church struggled with this issue for at least ten years. Appolonia 1885: The Circuit Minister reports that the *Appolonia* area was resistant to the Gospel because of the strong grip of traditional religion. One woman was persecuted by her family when she destroyed her idols. Some members of the Methodist Society saved four tenth born children who would normally be ritually killed. "The families now fear for their survival but their mothers are happy.." (Appolonia, 1885); Attuabu 1894: "We have been able to bring to the notice of Her Majesty's Government certain atrocities and revolting customs in connection with the birth of tenth children in all *Appolonia*. From time immemorial it appears that these unfortunate infants have been murdered at the instigation of fetish priests, who attribute all family disruptions, deaths and troubles to their existence. We hope the Legislative Council of the Colony will heartily respond to our earnest appeals and extend to them legal protection. We are happy to report that through the timely interference of our agent at Attuabu, the king of Nubua, in consultation with their parents has presented the mission with two of these new born babes and one of our female leaders in the *Attuabu* Society has been detailed to nurse them." A creche was opened in the same year to accommodate these children. (Dixcove, 1894)

<sup>102</sup>

The menace of the ballroom rivalled that of traditional entertainments in the minds of Methodist leaders: Accra 1881: Freeman complains that some members were lost to 'the attractions of the ballroom' while other members were also still not free of the 'superstition and ignorance' of the pagan population. (Accra, 1881); Cape Coast 1884: Reverend Parker reports large congregations in the circuit, was distressed that many of the young people in the society are distracted from spiritual matters by the ballroom and similar attractions. Traditionalists still form the majority in the area and seem have little concern for the Gospel despite the evangelistic efforts of the Church and its workers. (Cape Coast, 1884)

<sup>103</sup>

Temperance was constantly discussed at the District Meeting in the 1890s as it had become a set question in the Meeting's Agenda: 1891: The Synod agreed that the first Sunday in November be observed as Temperance Sunday. (Question XXXVII. Temperance, District Synod, 1891); 1893: "It was felt that the work of Temperance was not so closely allied with our Church as was desirable." A District Temperance Secretary was therefore duly appointed. (Question XXXVII Temperance: District Meeting, 1893)

1894: "The Temperance Secretary Furnished his report the discussion of which resulted in our resolving that Temperance Societies be formed in our Circuit Towns with as little delay as possible." (Question XLII Temperance, District Meeting, 1894); This was the first temperance report. The Temperance Secretary reported that no Temperance Societies existed in any circuit connected with the Methodist Church. It was noted that some of the youth are members of the 'Good Templars Lodge.' Temperance Sunday was well observed and some rum sellers had been expelled or suspended. However, the secretary detected a lack of enthusiasm for the cause and some 'laxity.' The superintendents of Cape Coast and Elmina did not even respond to the secretary's letter. (Report of the Temperance Secretary, District Meeting, 1894)

but by the 1900s Synod is calling upon the government to legislate against the import of rum and the singing of offensive songs (Odamtten 1978: 214-215).<sup>104</sup>

In these areas and others Fanti Methodists followed the pattern of engagement with the world established by John Wesley himself [3.2.3.4].

#### 4.4.10.3 POLITICS

While Fanti Christians accepted much of the missionary agenda concerning different areas of Methodist practice and ‘civilisation’, they did not accept their political agenda. The missionaries supported colonial rule as the principle means of establishing ‘civilisation’ and gratefully welcomed it once it was achieved (Balmer 1925:194-200; Odamtten 1978:70-73). The Fanti Methodist leadership, however, was of a different mind. Through the education gained in Methodist schools, the training and experience of leadership gained through the Methodist organisation (probably enhanced by traditional leadership practices), and the debates they enjoyed with missionaries, the Fantis developed a sense of responsibility and independence that they desired to see applied in the political dimensions of their lives as well as in their religion. The first expression of this desire came about in the Fanti

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1898: It seems that Temperance did not enjoy the full and official sponsorship of many circuits as few submitted reports but many Methodists nevertheless joined the Band of Hope and other Temperance Societies. A high incidence of membership is reported among Sunday School scholars and that even those who have not signed the pledge of total abstinence subscribe to its principles. Many too, the author claims, have renounced moderate consumption for abstinence. The Temperance Secretary stresses that the need for conversion is frequently stressed at Temperance meetings. (Report on Temperance Work, District Meeting, 1898)

<sup>104</sup> Calls for legislation to regulate hard liquor began in the 1900s and continued to the eve of the First World War: 1906: “Re the Liquor Traffic, The Rev. J. R. Addo conveyed an oral message from the Chief of Krobo asking the assistance of the Synod in the suppression of the importation of ‘Elephant Gin’. The Synod being fully alive to the evil in question requested Mr Addo to obtain a letter from the said chief upon which the necessary action could be taken. With regard to the other social evils constant efforts are being made in our discipline and in our preaching to suppress them.” (District Synod -Eastern Section, 1906); 1907: “It was again reported to the Synod that the use of Elephant Gin and Rum in some of the towns and villages in the Volta Mission was working great havoc among the people, and the Synod resolved that representations be made to the Colonial Government with a view of securing the suppression of the issue of Spirit Licences to the villages and smaller towns.” (District Synod -Eastern Section, 1907); 1911: “The Synod decided to approach the Government so that the singing of improper songs, the playing of objectionable music and the taking part in immoral dances should be prohibited.” (District Synod -Eastern Section, 1911); 1914: “A letter was read from the Basel Mission Society telling us what measures they are taking in abolition of spirituous liquors. The Synod views with grave concern the alarming increase of drunkenness throughout the Colony and especially in the mining and cocoa Districts. The increasing importation and unchecked sale of spirituous liquor and gin is leading in serious measure to the [decline in the] morale of the people and in the interest of the religious, moral and sound life of the colony, respectfully urge upon his Excellency the Governor the necessity of immediately taking steps to check the havoc ...they wrought. We appeal for a considerable reduction of the number of licences and the abolition of spirituous liquors in the small villages where liquor had not been introduced.” (District Synod, 1914)

Confederation,<sup>105</sup> a political union of the Fanti peoples that was born in 1868 out of the threat of a further Ashanti invasion and a rumoured British withdrawal from the coast. While the Confederation began as a defensive pact, it grew to become a national government with a constitution that contained a unique fusion of traditional and democratic elements. The Confederation was to be ruled by an assembly of traditional rulers and literate representatives from each community, the latter to be appointed by democratic processes. The assembly would elect an executive president and executive. R. J. Ghartey, later, King Ghartey of Winneba, a devout Methodist layman, was the first President of the Confederation. Among its first acts the Confederation developed policies for universal education and widespread

<sup>105</sup>

J. H. Brew in his 1872 submission to Governor J. Pope Hennessey on the Fanti Confederation traces the movement toward the Federation back to 1863 when the British authorities, represented by Richard Pine, then the Governor at Cape Coast, advised the Fanti Kings that they would receive no British support in the event of an Ashanti invasion and he advised them either to see to their own defence or make peace with the Ashantehene. The report of the Select Committee in 1865 appeared to continue in a similar vein when it stressed that the British has no real authority or legitimate power beyond their forts. (The Select Committee also raised questions about the continuation of the British presence on the Gold Coast and recommended that the 'native' population should be encouraged to assume greater responsibility for their own government (Kimble 1963: 223-224)). This created the impression that the local population in the interior were really responsible for their own affairs. However, Brew notes that the actual spark for the formation of the Confederation came in 1867 when the British and the Dutch exchanged territories along the coast without consulting the local rulers. Many communities formally under British rule suddenly found themselves unwillingly under Dutch sovereignty (a situation compounded by the fact that the Dutch were generally friendly to the Ashantis, the traditional enemy of the Fantis and their neighbours. (Ward 1966: 243. ff.; Agbodeka 1971: 25-30) The Dutch sought to enforce their rule by military means which caused the Fanti kings to assemble at Mankessim, their main religious centre, in order to mobilise their forces against the Dutch. The combined Fanti armies subsequently besieged the Dutch and their allies at Elmina, the headquarters of the Dutch administration. Brew records that the then Administrator of the Gold Coast, T. H. Ussher initiated negotiations and persuaded the Fantis to withdraw in 1868. Thereafter, according to Brew, Ussher recognised the Confederation and its President and conducted discussions with its representative. Brew asserts that Ussher's replacement J. H. Simpson also recognised the Confederation and treated it with respect. In his account it was only C. S. Salmon, who succeeded Simpson, who was antagonistic to the Confederation. When the representatives called on him to submit the freshly drafted Constitution of the Confederation for the consideration of the British authorities in November 1871 he accused the leaders and representatives of the Confederation of treason and of misleading the Fanti rulers and had them arrested and imprisoned. In fact both Ussher and Simpson, along with Salmon, were deeply antagonistic to the Confederation. They held inflated ideas concerning British jurisdiction and sovereignty and were inclined to regard the Fanti kings and their people as British subjects rather than protected neighbours and allies. The Fanti rulers they regarded with contempt as childlike and venial, incapable of managing their own affairs. However, these officials reserved their greatest spleen for the educated Africans who advised the rulers who were vilified as being ignorant and self-seeking and accused of manipulating the rulers for their own ends (Kimble 1963: 224-229). The local administrators did all they could to destroy the Confederation (Sarbah 1906: 104: 30-33 ). The Governors in Chief based in Freetown, especially J. Pope Hennessey, tended to have a more sympathetic attitude to the Fanti cause but while Pope-Hennessey promised to give sympathetic consideration to the Confederation acting as a partner with the British authorities in the governance of the area he rather recommended an extension of British rule. Whitehall rejected this proposal on financial grounds but discounted the Confederation on the basis of doubts and prejudices against the abilities and motives of educated Africans (Ward 1966: 257-260). The Confederation later faded away through a lack of recognition by the British authorities which also removed its abilities to gather revenues to sustain itself. Kimble and Ward both agree that the Confederation was a viable organisation that could have been a valuable partner to British colonial rule. Matters were later overtaken by the Ashanti war of 1873 and the subsequent royal proclamation by which Britain assumed direct sovereignty over the whole region (Kimble 1963: 261-263; Ward 1966: 260-264).



agricultural reform along the lines already pioneered by the Methodist mission<sup>106</sup>. Many of the leaders of the Confederation were Methodist Christians and its policies reflected Methodist concerns. The constitution also represented a fusion of Akan and Methodist leadership practices. The Methodist mission, to its credit, supported the Confederation, and the colonial authorities, reluctantly, promised to give the scheme sympathetic consideration. Unfortunately, the fledgling state was swept away by the Ashanti invasion of 1873 and finally obstructed by the British declaration of a colony in 1874 (Hayford 1903: 327-344; Balmer 1925: 147-158; Bartels 1965: 83-89; Odamtten 1978:183-193).

The second expression of Fanti nationalism was in the Aboriginal Rights Society and the early nationalist movement of the 1890's many of whose prominent leaders were, once again, Methodist Christians (Parsons 1963:181-192; Bartels 1965:132-183 ). On the Gold Coast, as in Britain, Methodism, despite itself, became the cradle of democratic movements [3.2.5.2.3].

#### **4.4.11 LEGACY**

Dickson notes that while much of Methodist practice encouraged independence of thought and freedom it also encouraged individualism by focusing upon the individual's spiritual and moral state at the expense of his wider relationships (Dickson 1981: 207-208). While such individualism could be negative, it is questionable if it was really able to undermine the strongly communal social structures and sentiments of Fanti culture to quite the degree Dickson suggests. For one thing, the intuitive acceptance of Akan social institutions established by Freeman remained, and would counter such a development, and, for another, with its small group system, Methodism itself had strong communal tendencies which would serve to reinforce similar emphases in Fanti culture.

The positive legacy of the Methodist moral tradition in this period was three fold. Firstly, the beginnings of a significant change in Fanti society in favour of Christian ideas about freedom,

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<sup>106</sup> Some of the inspiration for the Constitution of 1871 came from Dr. Africanus Horton, a Sierra Leonean physician serving with the British army in the Gold Coast. He strongly advised the educated African leadership of the area to organise the petty states of the area into federations for mutual defence and for improved government in the face the uncertainty of British policy. A short lived 'Accra Republic' was formed at the same time as the Fanti Confederation, but it was only the Confederation that persisted. Horton had recommended that the legislature of the Confederation should consist both of traditional rulers and of educated commoners but whereas he recommended that they sit in separate bodies, the Fantis had them sit together in one Representative Assembly. This indicates that there were good relationships between the traditional rulers and their educated advisors. (Kimble 1963: 229-249) The Methodist background of the framers of the Constitution would have given them a favourable disposition to Horton's ideas but the social and economic policies embodied in Article 8 of the 1871 Constitution (Fanti Confederation 1871: 200-201) appear to have been their own.

equality, the value of life, matrimony and the quality of life achieved largely through education and Christian witness emerged. Secondly, the rise of democratic movements seeking national self-determination emerging from Methodist organisational practice and the *Nananom* tradition developed. Thirdly, a significant interaction and synthesis between the Akan and Methodist leadership practices expressed in the constitution of the Fanti Confederation surfaced.

The one aspect of Akan culture that Freeman embraced, as noted earlier, was its leadership practice. Chieftaincy also seems to have been the one indigenous institution that Freeman's colleagues and successors never attacked. Following Freeman's example *African* leaders enriched their leadership practice by drawing upon the indigenous *Nananom* tradition assisted by the presence and example of Christian chiefs. This resulted in a synthesized leadership tradition that found expression in the political sphere in early nationalist and independence movements. The *Nananom* practice depends upon many other aspects of the Akan moral tradition from which it cannot be readily separated. If the *Nananom* practice was readily accepted by Fanti Christians then so must many other aspects of that tradition. This raises the question of how deep the 'alienation' of Fanti Christians from their culture really was.

## **4.5 DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1918**

### **4.5.1 THE DOMINANCE OF EDUCATION AND THE DECLINE OF METHODIST PRACTICE**

One of the key sources of success in the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana proved to be the root of its crisis in the years following the First World War. Prior to colonial times the main purpose of education in Gold Coast Methodism had been to support conversion, the development of the Christian life, and the enhancement of the leadership of the Church. As the Methodist Church became one of the main providers of education, funded by the colonial authorities, so its educational practice began to assume pre-eminence absorbing a disproportionate amount of the Church's resources and personnel. Circuit ministers and other leaders virtually become educational managers and were greatly distracted from their tasks of pastoral care and evangelism (Parsons 1963: 141-151, 206-209).

Education no longer played its role in the complex of practices in the Methodist tradition. It ceased to be an adjunct of Methodist discipline designed to encourage conversion and Christian service and the majority of pupils leaving its schools abandoned the Church and its

practices. The over-emphasis also had a disruptive effect on the other practices in the Methodist moral tradition. In particular, leadership became distracted from its focus on 'souls' - their conversion and holiness. Without this emphasis leadership tended to become rather secularised and Akan patterns and perspectives of leadership began to predominate and began to operate without reference to, or qualification by, distinctively Methodist leadership virtues or goals. What had been a synthesis in the area of leadership practice became a syncretism on the side of Akan leadership practices (Taylor 1948: 60-63 ; Bartels 1965: 209-237).<sup>107</sup>

Without the direction provided by the leadership practice the other Methodist practices also began to lose their focus. The rules of Methodist discipline no longer functioned as a framework for developing virtue but were perceived as ends in themselves and sufficient as requirements for membership aside from any experience of conversion or inner commitment. Legalism and its corollary of hypocrisy began to take root (Taylor 1948: 35-41). Worship became a formal exercise separated from the cultural life of the people and perhaps even from religious experience (Taylor 1948: 31-34; Parsons 1963: 112-114; Forson 1993:239-241). The case for Christian marriage and family life was not made clearly and the movement toward monogamy suffered a reverse. Both traditional marriage and polygamy continued among Methodist Christians, presumably because these continued to offer a more coherent and attractive pattern of family life within the Akan *ebusua* (Parsons 1963: 98-111).<sup>108</sup> On the social front Methodism remained largely preoccupied with alcohol and public entertainments while many other, arguably, more crucial issues, were often overlooked. Evangelism, too, seems to have become a marginal activity at this time (Parsons 1963:152-155).

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<sup>107</sup> The authors of *I Will Build My Church...* record that class leaders often saw their role as being parallel to the Elders of the community who assisted the Minister to rule the society as the Chief did the community. (Taylor 1948: 60-63)

<sup>108</sup> Although some attempt was made to accommodate to traditional marriage ceremonies in 1933: In their Report the Marriage Sub-Committee adopted the 1930 Lambeth Conference definition of Marriage "The essence of a valid marriage consists in the consent before witnesses of two persons, who are competent to marry, to live together as man and wife." On this basis Customary marriage was to be accepted although the parties were encouraged to seek a Church blessing. Christians who had a customary marriage would need to have a minister or other leader present for it to be valid. All leaders had to have a Church marriage or blessing, others were to be encouraged to do so. "In every case, however the marriage is contracted, it is a condition of Church membership that the scriptural principle of monogamy and life-long fidelity be obeyed." Divorce was to be permitted only for adultery which had to be proved before a Church Court. Anyone who divorced their partner without such provision was to be suspended from membership for three years. Extravagant weddings were to be discouraged. (Appendix No. 4 , Report of the Marriage Sub-Committee, District Synod, 1933)

During the interwar period Ghana Methodism became a victim of its attachment to European culture as its programme of spreading western culture, largely through education, displaced Methodism's defining moral vision of perfection and holiness with a secular agenda of individual advance and general social improvement. Not only did this shift alienate Ghanaian Methodism from its own roots but removed it further from traditional culture with its essentially spiritual conception of life. Thus, the gulf between Methodism and traditional culture deepened further not, necessarily, because of any essential conflict between Christian faith and the Akan tradition, but because of the fundamental incompatibility of the Akan vision of the cosmic community with the secular agenda then apparently adopted by Methodism.

#### **4.5.2 ATTEMPTS AT RENEWAL**

##### **4.5.2.1 RE-ESTABLISHING METHODIST PRACTICES**

The decline of the Methodist moral tradition in Ghana came to a head in 1941 when the Social Welfare Committee of the Synod tabled a memorandum that publicly acknowledged widespread immorality among Church members.<sup>109</sup> A special Commission on the Life of the

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The Committee's Memorandum was as follows:

During the social welfare Committee a discussion was opened on the whole question of the moral life of the members of our Church. Great concern was expressed by laymen and ministers from several different parts of the country at the low level of conduct of members both in their ordinary life and within the Church itself. This concern was felt so deeply because it was a sign of a lack of real spiritual life among the individual members and among groups inside the Church. The Committee was deeply moved by the challenges presented to it and wished to pass it on to all members of Synod that together we might respond to it.

We can respond to it first by acknowledging that we all, laymen and ministers, European and African, bear the responsibility for this state of affairs. Accepting this responsibility before God we come to him to ask for pardon and then for guidance and strength to deal with the future. We can then take this challenge and the spiritual experience God gives us here back to our Churches and members.

This whole problem is not new to any member of Synod. We all know what is happening in our Churches though we don't often recognise that much of it is contrary to the will of God and a stone of stumbling to those outside the Church.

One particular element in the conduct of members that was especially mentioned was the relation between men and women in the Church. The widespread immorality (in the narrow sense of the term) is affecting very seriously, the life of the Church and of our young men and women. The home life of our members and leaders, the relation between men and women in Church societies, the lack of moral character amongst the boys and girls in the years immediately following after leaving our schools, and many similar things were mentioned as not at present upholding the true Christian standard. People who are outside the Church can often say 'If that's Christianity, we don't want it.' What we want to be said of us is that 'People take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.' This will be said if the moral standard of every member is what Christ can make it. The Church has a strong disciplinary system, but that will never of itself produce a strong Christian morality amongst its members, only the

Church was formed to examine this situation and recommended a twofold strategy for renewal: the re-establishing of the practices of the Methodist moral tradition and a more creative engagement with Akan culture (Bartels 1965: 209-237).

The commission presented its report in 1948 and sought to place the Methodist *telos* of perfect love at the centre of the Church's moral thinking once more and called for a renewed emphasis on holiness. The commission also reaffirmed the traditional 'rational' virtues of Methodism of austerity and sobriety expressed in advice on the careful use of leisure and money, the avoidance of drink and gambling, and proper Sabbath observance (Taylor 1948: 116-123).

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working of the Spirit of God in the hearts, minds, and wills of each member who has truly given the whole of his life in every part over to Christ will create Christian Character. If this consecration has taken place in each person's life then he can begin to learn what is the true way of life not only in relations between men and women, but in business, in money matter, in dealing with the questions of drink, gambling, abuse, quarrels, and all other affairs of social life both inside and outside the Church.

All of us who are leaders and ministers are called first to bring people to Christ and his Church and then to teach them what it means to be a church member. The first of these we know, the second we often fail to recognise or achieve. No one can learn the meaning of membership of Christ's Church automatically, but only if he is taught fully and adequately. We already have the necessary organisation in the Church. We do not need to increase the number meetings of meetings we hold. We do need to find a way of approach to these meetings so that the one aim in them all is the deepening of the spiritual life of members, by bringing them close to God. the questions we would ask all members to think about and answer for themselves are as follows:-

What are the measures to be take to make the moral life of our members fully Christian?

How can we deal with our Class Meetings so that they become centres of the spiritual life of each individual Church and places where each person can learn to grow in Christian Character?

Shall we all find out how to lead the young people of our Churches, especially those who have just left school, to know and to follow Christ in all the details of their daily life, and shall we determine to help them in this at all costs?

How can we make certain that all our members can read the Bible so that they have a source of help and guidance from the Scriptures which are the basis of our faith and practice?

How can we so preach that people may know in Whom they have believed and how He calls upon them to conduct themselves in life?

How can the ministers of our Church be helped to set apart adequate time for essential pastoral work and for the preparation of their preaching so as fully to meet the needs of their members?

Can the ideals of Christian Social Welfare be kept before the members in the churches, as for instance, in the regular monthly Social Welfare meeting or by using aright the monthly Christian Service meeting of the Guild?

As a Church, we, ministers, laymen and women, are called these days more than ever to practise what we preach to others, and humbly to seek spiritual grace to enable us and all our members so to act that we show Christ daily to the world about us. The suggestions we have given above are all possible and a great uplift in the whole life of our Church is possible if we and all our members are consecrated afresh to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose we are and Whom we serve. ('Memorandum on Moral Behaviour', District Synod' 1941: 102-103)

The Commission did not believe that any particular requirements for membership should be relaxed, especially those of monogamy and literacy (in the vernacular). However, they did place a renewed emphasis on the rules and conditions of membership as a framework for inward faith and the spiritual life should be established (Taylor 1948: 35-41).

Class-meetings in many places had become Bible studies or weekday services attended by large numbers of people rather than meetings for mutual examination. The Commission recommended that Class Meetings be held in leaders' homes and become a "common endeavour in fellowship by a small number" that might attract educated youth. Class leaders themselves should have a more spiritual and pastoral motivation (Taylor 1948: 60-63, 147).

Worship needed to be designed to engage with peoples' ordinary lives and reconnected with a new emphasis on religious experience arising out of thankfulness and the believer's personal relationship with God. Such religious experience should also be the (renewed) basis for the cultivation of the fruits of the spirit and the life of holiness (Taylor 1948: 23-34; 169-170).

The Commission felt that any compromise with polygamy would only weaken the Christian idea of the family. They recommended the stricter applications of existing restrictions and recommended that members marry in Church 'under the ordinance' as such marriage provided a better legal framework for Christian family life. At the same time, greater attention should be paid to teaching members about the sacramental nature of Christian marriage as partnership in the life of faith and of the family as a setting for the expression of Christian love and the formation of Christian virtue (Taylor 1948: 66-90).

According to the Commission, the success of Methodist day schools in preparing young people for conversion had drastically declined (Taylor 1948: 11-14). Consequently, the Commission recommended that Sunday Schools should become the main setting for the religious instruction and formation of young people. However, they were unwilling to abandon public education entirely and suggested attempts should be made to improve religious education there also (Taylor 1948: 96-105).

The Commission also noted a crisis in leadership at different levels. There were too few leaders at all levels and full-time leaders were often overwhelmed with educational administration or teaching in schools. Four measures were recommended to address the shortage of ministers. Firstly, to stress, the 'nobility' of the ministry at a time when youth are motivated by high ideals; secondly, to appeal to the Akan *ebusua*, especially its Christian members, to offer some of their sons to the Methodist ministry; thirdly, ministers should be

relieved of administrative burdens so that they might devote themselves wholly to their spiritual tasks; lastly, there should be an improvement in minister's pay and conditions (Taylor 1948: 44-52). Catechists, whose leadership was essential in many village situations, should also be relieved of obligations to act as school teachers so that they could function as church and community leaders and give themselves completely to the work of the Church (Taylor 1948: 52-60). School teachers, on the other hand should be encouraged to become local preachers and help to fill the gaps in this level of the Church's leadership (Taylor 1948: 63-65).

People were often appointed class-leaders on the basis of their prominence in the local community and they often saw their role as being parallel to the Elders of the community who assisted the Minister to rule the society as the Chief did the community. The authors felt that it was desperately important that the Class Meetings were restored to their original purpose and that Class Leaders be recruited from those with a spiritual and pastoral motivation who could then be appropriately trained and resourced. The Commission insisted that this should be one of the main responsibilities of ministers (Taylor 1948: 60-63).

We believe that the Methodist Church in this country can only be rebuilt if the class meetings in every Society achieve today the purpose for which they were created. (Taylor, 1948: 61)

The Commission also stressed the importance of the inclusion of two marginalised groups in the leadership of the Church. Special education programmes should be established for women, who constituted the majority of the Church's membership, and who should also be admitted to the full ministry. Young people should also be given a greater voice in the Church's decisions (Taylor 1948: 91-105).

Finally, the Commission called for a renewal of evangelism, in conjunction with philanthropy and social welfare. Evangelism should have a dual focus; personal evangelism, especially important in the face of growing nominalism, and then mission in the wider world. However, evangelism was not to be separated from issues of social welfare. Of particular concern were the matters of personal behaviour that had always been on the Methodist social agenda, concerning which Methodists have always felt a responsibility to advise their neighbours, such as the use of Sunday, drunkenness, gambling, and extravagance in dress (Taylor 1948: 112-116). On the more social level the Commission also placed great priority on the provision of affordable housing that would provide a more friendly environment for the development of Christian families (Taylor 1948: 88-90,120-123).

#### 4.5.2.2 A MORE CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURE

The second prong of the report of the Commission on Church Life was to propose a more positive approach to culture that contrasted with the emphasis on ‘civilization’ of the past. New missionaries coming to the field were to be required to acquire language and to study the local culture. Nevertheless, the Commission felt that the Church’s emphasis had to lie with Christianising African culture, rather than Africanising Christianity (Taylor: 1948: 15-22).

The Methodist Church’s inhibitions over the vernacular had been overcome some years before and the Missionary’s Committee’s exhortations had at last been heeded in 1871<sup>110</sup> and an increasing volume of publications, including a translation of the Bible in *Fanti* had issued from the Methodist Book Depot. The Commission applauded this tendency and suggested it be extended to health and other subjects. They felt that the vernacular was important because only a few would learn English, and the vernacular was the medium of home and community life and all informal education takes place in the vernacular. As such the Commission saw the vernacular as a far more effective means of communication. It was recommended that the church conducted literacy education in the vernacular. For the same reason it was anticipated that most worship would also be conducted in the vernacular (Taylor 1948: 23-31; 124-135).

In the past the Methodist Church had been very reluctant to incorporate elements from Akan culture into worship. The Commission, however, considered that there were many life cycle rituals and traditional festivals that could be given a Christian content or that Christian alternatives to them could be devised (Taylor 1948: 31-34). Some festivals, like that of *Asaase Yaa*,<sup>111</sup> however could not be countenanced because they involve the worship of deities and the use of secret rituals (Taylor 1948: 124-135).

Some aspects of African religion, the Commission believed, could also be a starting point for evangelism as the Gospel is sometimes best served by moving from the known to the unknown. It was suggested that the transcendence and immanence of God and the reality of life after death might also be regarded as particular points of contact. More than this the Akan belief in the life of the *ebusua* that is extended into the next life could well be a point of connection with the Communion of Saints under the Rule of the Eternal Father. Rituals and memorials to the ancestors could be considered as legitimate if they were seen as the

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<sup>110</sup> Serious work on translation and publication dates from 1871 when the agreed form of the Fanti alphabet was finally established. (District Synod, 1871)

<sup>111</sup> An annual festival to the Akan goddess of the earth.



veneration of noble examples rather than as worship (Taylor 1948: 109-110; Parsons 1963: 91).

#### **4.5.2.3 PROGRESS IN RENEWAL**

The Church's progress in implementing the Commission's report and renewing its moral life was uneven. Most of the commission's recommendations found their way into the 1964 Constitution of the Methodist Church, Ghana. 'Scriptural Holiness' was given pre-eminence as the chief end of the Church's life (Methodist Church, Ghana 1964: 2). The need for personal discipleship, virtue and spirituality on the part of members beyond the formal requirements for membership was affirmed (Methodist Church, Ghana 1964: 13, 101-102). The ideals of Christian marriage were commended (Methodist Church, Ghana 1964: 102-105). The Minister's central role of spiritual leadership in the Societies was stressed (Methodist Church, Ghana 1964: 12, 29-40, 73-74, 95-97). Certainly, the framework of Methodist moral practices was clearly established in the constitution but to what degree were they realised?

The Church's success in re-vitalising its moral tradition was limited. The situation of many members did not change. There were insufficient resources for educating people for membership and so many remained 'on trial' (Bartels 1965: 264-292).

In 1948, the Methodist Church initiated a study into the use of resources from African culture into worship but they concluded that there was little that could be incorporated into the services of the Church. The result of this was that public worship remained western and formal (Parsons 1963: 9-80).

However, the Church did seem to make greater progress in the area of marriage as Parsons records that monogamy was the preferred form of marriage among the young. Monogamy was especially favoured by educated women (Parsons 1963: 110-111).

In the 1960s education was still the dominant ministry of the Church - taking much of the Church's resources while failing to furnish the Church with a new generation of leaders. This situation might have improved but the state increasingly relieved the Churches of their responsibility for public education (Bartels 1965: 264-292).

In the late 1940s, greater attention was also given to the education of leaders with the foundation of new educational institutions such as Trinity College and the Women's Centre, and a greater emphasis on the training of lay-women, catechists, and evangelists. Despite the

increased numbers of leaders, they remained too few to cope with the requirements of Christian discipleship. While ministers were not always educated up to graduate level they were at least more familiar with local language and culture (Bartels 1965: 209-263; Dickson 1976: 176-179).<sup>112</sup>

Lastly, it cannot be said that the Church took up the Commission's challenge to make a more serious engagement with indigenous cultures. This was a task that remained uncompleted in the period under consideration. Perhaps the preference for 'civilisation' remained (Dickson 1981: 201-208; Forson 1993: 276-277).

## **4.6 CONVERGENCE AND CONFLICT**

After this extensive survey of the development of the Methodist tradition in Ghana from 1835 to 1965 it is possible to indicate the manner in which the two traditions converge and conflict and to what an extent they may have reached a synthesis.

### **4.6.1 *TELOI*: PURE LOVE AND THE COSMIC COMMUNITY**

There would appear to be a high degree of congruity between the supreme good of both the Methodist and Akan traditions. The fulfilment of the *Imago Dei* in the pure love of both God and man in Methodism accords well with the quest for the harmony of the cosmic community in the Akan moral tradition as it seeks human well-being and peace with God. If followed, the Methodist ideal would build the harmony in the human and supernatural community that the Akan tradition desires. The most significant area of conflict is over the extent of the supernatural community with Methodism placing an almost exclusive emphasis on God.<sup>113</sup> This led to considerable disagreement with the Akan tradition, although towards the end of the period under study Methodism opened the door to some accommodation with the Akan understanding of ancestors by stressing the similarity of this concept to that of the communion of saints.

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<sup>112</sup> But Dickson reports that better qualified ministers were often reluctant to work in the rural areas. (Dickson 1981: 179 n.35)

<sup>113</sup> Although in later Methodism there was the beginning of an accommodation with the ancestors in the idea of the Communion of Saints. (Taylor 1948: 20-22; Parsons 1963: 91-92 )

#### **4.6.2 VIRTUES: DISCIPLINE AND PERFECTION**

A further high degree of congruity also occurs in the virtues that sustain the goals of both the Methodist and Akan traditions. Selflessness, self-restraint, and care and compassion for others within and without the boundaries of the community are central to both traditions. Both traditions also believe in, and aim at, moral perfection. For Akans perfection is achieved through the disciplined life while for Methodists the disciplined life is the necessary precursor to the perfection that is a gift of God's the grace. Methodists sought the gift of perfection through spiritual zeal and religious enthusiasm while Akans relied on the inspiration and guidance of the ancestors. It is not clear that there is any equivalent to the zeal and enthusiasm so prized by the Methodists in Akan culture nor is there any indication that perfection could be wrought instantaneously in a person's heart as a gift of God. Methodist and Akan perceptions of perfection also differed. Perfection as understood by Methodism was one of intention and affection. The perfection of the Akan tradition was one of wisdom and judgement that often entailed hard choices. Wesley was very careful to exclude this kind of perfection from his account of entire sanctification [3.2.1.3-3.2.1.4].

#### **4.6.3 THE SOCIETY AND THE *EBUSUA***

The Methodist Church or society, especially in the class-system, and the Akan *ebusua* also had similar aims. Both sought to provide a framework for the identity and life of the individual and both endeavoured to nurture him or her into the virtues and practices that defined the collective identity and life of the group. Both the Society and the *ebusua* understood themselves as spiritual realities whose goals and existence were supernatural as well as natural. It is at this point that the two institutions come to a point of tension. Methodism is concerned with the salvation of the individual's soul and with the expansion of the Church as an expression of the reign of God. The Akan *ebusua* is concerned with the coherence and continuity of its community in the past, present, and future; in the mundane world and the supra-mundane world of the ancestors. It is hard to see how these concerns might be reconciled, especially as they generate conflicting loyalties. Certainly, Methodism stressed that an individual's first loyalty had to be to the Church and did not seek any real engagement with the *ebusua*. On the other hand, while individual Akans might have been Society or Church members it was still the *ebusua* that remained the decisive influence in matters such as marriage and vocational choice.

#### **4.6.4 LEADERSHIP: CONVERGENCE**

The practice of leadership was crucial for both the Methodist and the Akan traditions. In the former it was directed toward the saving and perfection of souls and in the latter it was concerned with steering a wise course for the life of the *ebusua*. Methodism found that to further the life of individual souls it was necessary to have a far wider focus than just souls themselves - their material and social circumstances also had to be addressed along with their life as part of the Christian community. Methodists understood that none of their members could progress without the wider community just as Akans saw that individuals by themselves were beleaguered. Freeman understood all of this and in the course of his relationships and encounters with Akan traditional rulers developed an inclusive leadership style totally infused with practical wisdom. Freeman became an exemplar of both Methodist and Akan leadership practices - a saint and a *Nana* who died full of years and whose memory is venerated by later generations. In Freeman Methodist and Akan leadership practices reached a synthesis.

This synthesis is reciprocated on the Akan side in the constitution of the Fanti Confederation that gave the Methodist criteria of leadership of literacy and education a place alongside the traditional qualifications of character and practical wisdom. There are signs that Akan leadership practice continued to inform Methodist practice. The position of the minister within the Methodist circuit even today remains analogous with that of the chief in this community.

#### **4.6.5 YI MA, OMA, AND AHOOFE**

The Akan practices of *Yi ma* (reciprocity), *Oma* (generosity) and *Ahoofe* (beauty) also find their counterparts in Methodist practice. Methodists were placed under an obligation to speak truthfully and deal fairly with all of their neighbours whom they were also to assist in time times of adversity and distress deliberately reserving both time and substance for this purpose. The correspondence between the Methodist and Akan sense of beauty is less clear. Akan Methodists were discouraged from finding beauty in traditional art, music, or dance because of the antipathy of missionary Methodism to Akan culture. However, the beauty of a wise and loving character is likely to have remained common to both traditions.

#### **4.6.6 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE VERSUS THE *EBUSUA*, AN UNNECESSARY CONFLICT?**

Marriage and family life constituted an area of major conflict. Methodism stressed that marriage was the union of two individuals in a companionship of common faith and service as a 'sacrament' rather than as contract, as in the Fanti tradition. Likewise, Methodism tended to focus narrowly upon the nuclear family formed by the couple as the setting for the expression and nurturing of Christian values. This contrasts greatly with the preference for the Akan *ebusua* for a traditional ceremony that stresses the relationship between families and clans constituted by a marriage. Polygamy expressed the complex relationships between many families and allowed the daughters of the *ebusua* to bring the *ebusua* wealth and strength through their marriages in terms of wider social alliances and their children. Children really belonged to the *ebusua* and so the extended family of maternal grandparents, aunts, and uncles was essential for nurturing children in the values of the *ebusua*. Methodism was always bitterly antagonistic to polygamy and seems to have operated with a narrowly Western model of the family. While minor compromises were made with polygamy there seems to have been little or no attempt to Christianise the *ebusua*. The considerable overlap between the virtues that both Methodist and Akan traditions seek to nurture in children of obedience, truthfulness, love, and duty might have provided a starting point for such a synthesis. Moreover, the prospect of care and guidance from Christian aunts and uncles and not just from parents would surely enrich any child's life.

#### **4.6.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In many respects being a good Methodist and being a good Akan amount to the same thing. Both Methodists and Akans desired and sought perfection in serving others and to bring practical love and peace to the communities of which they were part. However, there was disagreement over one's ultimate religious destiny, the nature of the community by which one was to define one's life and identity, and the nature of marriage and family life. In the midst of these disagreements, however, the Methodist and Akan traditions found a strong affinity and even synthesis in their leadership practices and one wonders if this might not be the basis of a renewed engagement between the two traditions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN LEADERSHIP AMONG THE FANTI**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **5.1.1 REVIEW OF ARGUMENT**

In the first chapter the argument was put that the tradition model of moral discourse developed by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* was the most helpful framework for conceiving and understanding ethics within an African context and for understanding the interaction between traditional and Christian moral traditions within that context. In the second and third chapters reconstructions of Akan and Methodist moral traditions based upon MacIntyre's model were presented. These reconstructions laid the background for the fourth chapter which described the historical development of the Methodist tradition in the Fanti-lands in interaction with the indigenous Akan tradition. In the conclusion of that chapter it was argued that the Methodist and Fanti traditions had actually influenced each other and began to form a synthesis, at least at the level of leadership values and practice. This synthesis was expressed in Freeman's pragmatic adoption of Fanti leadership practices, and the Fanti also democratising traditional rule under Methodist influence in the Constitution of the Fanti Confederation.

#### **5.1.2 PLACE OF THE CURRENT CHAPTER**

The historical evidence identified supports the contention that MacIntyre's tradition model has great validity as a heuristic tool in comparative and cross-cultural ethics and that his 'synthesis' paradigm provides a useful basis for considering the contextualisation of Christian ethics. This is substantiated by clear indications of a beginning of a synthesis between Fanti and Methodist moral traditions around the values and practice of leadership. All of this gives plausibility to the case that was made in the first chapter of this thesis that MacIntyre's tradition model of ethics provides a most helpful basis for conceiving, understanding, and enabling the contextualisation of an incoming Christian moral tradition through interaction and synthesis with an indigenous local moral tradition. However, simply to rest the discussion at this point is deeply unsatisfactory as it leaves too many issues unresolved concerning the permanence and continuation of these instances and processes of synthesis. These issues will be addressed in this chapter.

## **5.2 METHODOLOGY AND EXECUTION OF THE FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **5.2.1 HYPOTHESIS**

The only satisfactory manner in which to resolve the outstanding questions of this research was to conduct a field research project among Fanti Christians involved in traditional or (Methodist) Church leadership among the Fanti peoples. The hypothesis to be tested in this research is based upon the questions left hanging in the fourth chapter: concerning whether or not a synthesis between the Methodist and Fanti moral traditions continues to the present day and whether it is shaping current leadership values and practice in traditional rule and the professional ministry of the Methodist Church.

### **5.2.2 THE BASIC METHOD: THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

#### **5.2.2.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: CHOICE OF METHOD**

The semi-structured interview method of social research presented itself as the obvious choice for this research project. More detailed information was required than a broad questionnaire based survey would yield, while not being so 'open' that it would afford no basis of comparison. Consequently, an interview framework around specific areas of questioning was prepared. This had the advantage of eliciting responses that were susceptible to comparison, but which provided no obstacle to exploring any interesting lines of enquiry that might emerge during the progress of the interviews (May 1993: 91-110; Foddy 1993: 126-152; Kumekpor 2002: 185-207; Bryman 2004: 320-325).

#### **5.2.2.2 THE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE AND QUESTIONS**

##### **5.2.2.2.1 THE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE**

The basic framework of each interview consisted of five main areas of questioning: Formation, Moral Principles, Leadership Role, Practice of Leadership, and Attitude of Family/Church. The focus of these areas varied depending on whether the respondent was a Methodist traditional ruler or a Methodist minister. The general design of the interview structure was to discover how the backgrounds of these leaders influenced their leadership practice. The concern was to ascertain to what degree the traditional rulers were influenced by their Methodist faith, and to what degree the ministers from royal lineages were influenced by their roots in Akan culture. The design of this structure of questioning was to track the sources, influence, and implementation of different moral ideas connected to the practice of

leadership. These five areas were articulated in two interview guides that were circulated to potential respondents (Appendices One and Two) which were later developed into two collections of sample questions that were provided to respondents to give them a general idea of what to expect in research interviews in this project (Appendices Three and Four).

#### **5.2.2.2.1.1 FORMATION**

The purpose of this area of questioning was to discover what influences may have been significant in the formation of the respondents' outlook and character in their childhood and youth that might have a bearing on their leadership style. Respondents were asked about their formation as leaders through their childhood experiences in family and school (especially where these had a strong Methodist orientation) and through their involvement in the Methodist Society in Class meetings, in other groups, and in any leadership roles they held in the Methodist Society.

#### **5.2.2.2.1.2 MORAL PRINCIPLES FROM METHODIST OR FANTI BACKGROUNDS**

Questioning in this area sought to discover the values and examples that respondents may have retained and developed from their Methodist (in the case of traditional rulers) or Fanti (in the case of Methodist ministers) backgrounds that were significant for their practice of leadership. Respondents were asked to give their views on Methodist/Fanti principles such as principal moral lessons they felt they had learnt from their backgrounds, the virtues they believe their backgrounds encouraged, the main lessons about leadership they felt they had learnt from their different backgrounds, and the areas in which they found that Methodist and Fanti principles agreed, or disagreed with Methodist/traditional values.

#### **5.2.2.2.1.3 LEADERSHIP ROLE**

The concern in this area was to establish how respondents defined their leadership role and style, especially in relation to the virtues and values they held to be most significant for their style of leadership. The respondents' views of the contemporary role of a traditional ruler/minister were sought, particularly regarding the goals or ends of that role. The issue of the relationship of the traditional ruler/minister to the Methodist faith/traditional *ebusua* and to the Methodist community was also raised and respondents were asked if they perceived



that there are greater or a lesser number of Christian traditional rulers/ministers from royal lineages now than in the past and what the reasons for this might be.

#### **5.2.2.2.1.4 PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP**

The intention here was to have respondents articulate exactly how they exercised leadership by identifying leadership styles and their attendant virtues. This would reveal more about the sources of their leadership ideas and also whether their practice conformed to the ideals they had expressed in the previous area. Respondents were asked to discuss their practice of traditional leadership/Methodist ministry by identifying the most important virtues and principles necessary for traditional leadership/Methodist ministry, the sources of guidance and authority they use in decision making, the place and influence of Methodist/Fanti principles and their Methodist/Fanti backgrounds upon their practice of leadership, and whether they had found any areas of conflict between their practice of traditional leadership/Methodist ministry and their Methodist faith/Fanti tradition.

#### **5.2.2.2.1.5 ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH/*EBUSUA***

The rationale of this section of the interview process was to discover the role that the Church or family plays in supporting their members who are leaders in different contexts. If these institutions were supportive then they would continue to exercise a formative role on the respondent in their practice of leadership and so continue to contribute to the transformation of traditional or church leadership. This would mean that the process of interaction and synthesis was continuing. Respondents were invited to give their view of the response of the Church/*ebusua* to their role - where the Church/*ebusua* seems supportive or antagonistic to their role as traditional leaders/Methodist ministers and to identify the steps the Church/*ebusua* might take to encourage them in their role.

### **5.2.3 THE SAMPLES**

#### **5.2.3.1 DEFINING THE SAMPLES**

In order to best test the hypothesis, research was projected among two groups: traditional rulers who were from strongly Methodist backgrounds and had continuing connections with the Methodist Church, and Methodist ministers from royal lineages. If there were any synthesis between Methodist and Fanti leadership principles and practices it would most

likely occur within these groups. It could be anticipated that the traditional rulers might draw upon elements in their Methodist background to inform their leadership within their traditional context. Likewise ministers who came from a royal lineage and who may have been trained for the stool might also use resources from their traditional background in their ecclesiastical leadership. In either case an expectation of a synthesis between traditional and Methodist leadership practices was feasible. As this research project was more concerned with establishing ‘proof of concept’ rather than bringing comprehensive and conclusive results it was considered that a sample consisting of a minimum of four traditional rulers and four ministers with the appropriate backgrounds drawn from different districts of the Fanti-lands would be adequate to discover any processes of synthesis that might be underway and broad enough to indicate whether or not these were isolated phenomena. Any samples smaller than these would not be adequate sources of information (c.f. Kumeckpor 2002: 130-154).

#### **5.2.3.2 THE ACTUAL SELECTION OF THE SAMPLES**

The initial attempt to gather the samples using a ‘snowball’ technique (in which one contact leads to another) (Bryman 2004: 100-102) was made through contacts with the Methodist hierarchy. These contacts led to the interviews with Dr. Samuel Ghartey,<sup>1</sup> but did not lead to any further viable candidates for either of the samples. At this point two graduates of Ghana University Christian College (where the author is a lecturer) Kennedy and Victoria Baah-Binney rendered invaluable assistance for the research project. Reverend and Mrs Baah-Binney both came from Methodist families (although they are currently involved in Pentecostal Churches) and themselves are members of royal lineages. Mrs Baah-Binney used her good offices to arrange appointments with traditional rulers of Methodist backgrounds in the Ajumako area, especially in her home village of Twiekukrom. At the same time Reverend

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Ghartey's father and grandfather were both Kings of Winneba: King Ghartey IV (1820-1897). (Sampson 1937:112-128; Ephirim-Donkor 2000:85-89) and King Ghartey V (reigned 1946-1977) sought to introduce Methodist values and principles into their rule. King Ghartey V in particular was a Methodist minister when he was unwillingly seized to become king. Ghartey V only agreed to be enstooled on the conditions that he was free to practice his Christian faith without compromise and that the Winneba State Council agreed to the abolition of the public forms of traditional religion connected to the state. The State Council seems not to have fulfilled this last condition. The King's refusal to perform the various religious ceremonies connected with traditional rule later became the basis for litigation on the part of a rival claiming succession to the Winneba stool on the basis of matrilineal rather than patrilineal descent. As a Guan people the Effutu of Winneba traditionally practiced patrilineal inheritance in contrast to the matrilineal customs of their Fanti neighbours (Ephirim-Donkor 2000: 103-109).

Baah-Binney traced a number of Methodist ministers of royal lineage in the same area and set up concurrent appointments with them. The contacts made during field research in the Ajumako district led to further candidates for the sample, namely Reverend Yedu Bannerman and King<sup>2</sup> Ababio III *Omanhene* of Ampiah-Ajumako traditional area. Reverend Baah-Binney also arranged an interview with his grandfather King Kenie III Omanhene of Twifu Praso Traditional Area. Reverend Baah-Binney was also present at many of the interviews as interpreter and assistant. By the end of the research exercise it was possible to conduct interviews among two samples of five ministers from royal lineages drawn from different areas of the Fanti-lands and seven traditional rulers. As three of the traditional rulers were concentrated in one community and six in the same traditional area seven rather than five rulers were included in the sample in order to ensure greater reliability. One of these seven was sought outside of the Ajumako area to act as a control case for the sample. The five ministers originated from various parts of the Fanti-lands.

#### **5.2.4 EXECUTION OF THE RESEACH PROJECT**

The field research for this project was conducted over a period of six months from June 2005 to December 2005. Reverend Dr. Samuel Ghartey kindly agreed to be interviewed twice, on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005. During 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> August 2005 an intensive research exercise in the Ajumako area was conducted in which three ministers and five traditional rulers were interviewed.<sup>3</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> October 2005, a long session with Reverend Yedu Bannerman<sup>4</sup> was conducted and on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2005 Reverend Bannerman's protégé King Ababio III was interviewed. The field research culminated with the interview with King Kenie III of Twifu Praso on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

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<sup>2</sup> 'King' is used here, and elsewhere in this chapter, as the equivalent of *Omanhene* the paramount ruler of a traditional Fanti state (now officially known as a 'Traditional Area') who would exercise full sovereignty over his realm.

<sup>3</sup> Reverend Baah-Binney's assessment of the Ajumako research exercise is appended as Appendix Five

<sup>4</sup> Yedu Bannerman is a unique figure who not only incorporated Akan practice into his leadership as a Methodist minister, but also sought to incorporate Christian practice into traditional leadership. A separate case study of his work is included in 5.4.3 below.

## 5.3 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

### 5.3.1 INTERVIEWS WITH TRADITIONAL

#### RULERS

##### 5.3.1.1 THE COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

The members of the sample<sup>5</sup> of traditional rulers<sup>6</sup> were as follows: *Nana Affenyi I, Nifahene*, (Right-Hand (flank) Chief) of Twiekukrom (Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Twiekukrom); *Nana Amo Otsiam II Nkosohene* (Development Chief) of Twiekukrom (13<sup>th</sup> August 2005 at Twiekukrom)<sup>7</sup>; *Nana Kwame Amoah III, Onwanehene* (14<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Ajumako-Onwane); *Nana Twieku III, Twiekukromhene* (Paramount Chief) of Twiekukrom (14<sup>th</sup> August 2005 at Twiekukrom); *Nana Okofo Otsiwa III, Adontenhene* (16<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Abaasa); *Nana Kobina Oguah Ababio III, Omanhene* of Ampiah-Ajumako Traditional Area (5<sup>th</sup> November, 2005 at Ampiah-Ajumako) *Nana Kwasi Kenie III, Omanhene* of Twifu Praso Traditional Area (8<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 at Twifu Praso) (The transcripts of these interviews are included as Appendices Seven to Thirteen.)

##### 5.3.1.2 THE RESPONSES OF THE SAMPLE

###### 5.3.1.2.1 FORMATION

All respondents were at least third or second generation Christians. Religious practice in the home had been a significant factor only in the cases of *Nana Kenie III* and *Nana Otsiwa III*. In the case of *Nana Otsiam II* his grandfather, a strong Methodist, had acted as a mentor to him as a child. For most of the sample the influence of the Methodist Schools appears to have

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<sup>5</sup> As the population of all traditional rulers with a Methodist affiliation among the Fanti people was unknown, a non-probability sampling method of 'snowballing' was employed that relied on personal contacts and social networks (Bryman 2004: 102). Essentially two criteria were employed: that the subjects were traditional rulers with a Methodist affiliation and that they were willing to participate in the research exercise. Clearly, this sample is in no way representative of the sample frame, but it is sufficient to demonstrate whether or not a process of synthesis between Methodist and Fanti traditions is taking place and, if so, whether or not this is an isolated phenomenon.

<sup>6</sup> Two texts provide the background for the discussion of traditional rule conducted in this chapter: Kwame Arhin *Traditional Rule in Ghana: Past and Present* Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1985 and *Nana Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III* (Paramount Chief, Akuapem Traditional Area) *The Institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana -The Future* Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004. While these texts are written at the popular level they build on earlier scholarly works and focus on the contemporary situation of traditional and its future prospects, the latter from the perspective of a reigning Paramount Chief. Arhin and Dankwa also explore the historical context and social purpose of chieftaincy institutions and practices. Many earlier writers omitted this study focusing upon their outward features and religious mystique (Arhin 1985:ix-x; Dankwa 2004: xi-xiv).

<sup>7</sup> Three of the traditional rulers I interviewed came from the small community of Twiekukrom. Such a high concentration of Christian traditional rulers arguably warranted a special case study which is included 5.4.2 below.

been the strongest factor in shaping their faith and values. The respondents' comments also indicate that mentors were important influences in the formation of traditional rulers and continue to be so. Three of the respondents had teachers or ministers who served as mentors and role models: the Reverend Yedu Bannerman is the advisor to *Nana Ababio III* [5.4.3], Reverend Samuel Ghartey Sr. (later King Ghartey V) made a considerable impact on *Nana Kenie III*, and *Nana Otsiam II*'s Class Leader nurtured the latter's faith. Six of the respondents had early experiences of formal or informal leadership in the Church which they continue to the present day. The lessons the respondents felt they had gained from their Church background included: leadership and community involvement, honesty, integrity, 'Methodist discipline,' generous giving, prayer, and sympathy.

#### **5.3.1.2.2 METHODIST PRINCIPLES**

Respondents generally interpreted the question about the kind of character inspired by Methodism in terms of rules, especially concerning behaviours that would encourage social integration and harmony: the restraint of anti-social behaviour, obedience, and generosity. Only *Nana Ababio III* identified any religious virtue, in his case 'dependence on God.' No single common moral lesson learned from Methodism was identified by the respondents and their responses varied from the highly religious ('Jesus is our all in all.') to the moral, ('[Be] careful how to live, do not repay evil with evil,' 'Love and empathy,' 'generosity,') to the practical ('Wisdom and decorum). However, there was some convergence in the respondents' understanding of the beneficial influences of Methodism on their leadership. All felt that their Methodist background gave them their framework of authority and mode of behaviour as rulers: '[The Christian] God establishes the King,' (*Nana Ababio III*) and wisdom and prayer guide him in his decisions. The King also learns sympathy, truthfulness, and good relations, administration and organisation all from the Church. *Nana Kenie III* even declared that 'Methodism and Kingship are the same.' Both, he insisted, require that a person observes a particular path of moral and religious discipline to maintain their holiness and sacral status. Most of the rulers in the sample identified the ritual obligations of chieftaincy as their major area of tension with Methodist teaching and practice (see section 5.3.1.2.4 below) rather than any purely moral issues, except in the case of polygamy that was traditionally associated with the stool. *Nana Twieku III* felt that the tendencies to litigation of chiefs in the past, caused

unnecessary conflicts, was un-Christian and stood in contrast to the peacemaking he seeks to practice.<sup>8</sup>

#### **5.3.1.2.3 THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS:**

The respondents displayed remarkable agreement on their ideas of the contemporary role of traditional rulers. Most of the respondents indicated that because of the spread of the Christian faith and the decline of traditional religion the leadership style of traditional rulers was becoming more democratic and advisory. They also indicated that traditional rulers are now more focused on the development of their communities, especially in the areas of formal and non-formal education. Some even believed that they should encourage the spread of Christianity! The rulers also identified development as one of the highest priorities of their office along with cultivating sincerity, transparency and the trust of the people. Two respondents (*Nana Twieku III* and *Nana Ababio III*) placed a heavy emphasis on Christian faith as the key to achieving these priorities. When asked about their relationship to the Christian community all of the respondents identified themselves as Christians and indicated that they would relate to the Christian community on the basis of common fellowship. The rulers also felt that it was their task to encourage the Churches to participate and contribute to

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<sup>8</sup> The institution of Traditional Rule has been blighted by disputes and litigation in recent years. Arhin sees this as a sign that chieftaincy is still regarded as a matter of great importance in the country (Arhin 1985: 136). The cause of such conflicts are questions about the legitimacy of rulers and their failure to live up to their oath. Succession to Royal Stools among the Akan is matrilineal and a range of candidates from within the matrilineage can be considered for the Stool. Usually the senior female figure in the family, the *Ohemmaa* or Queen mother will, after consultation, nominate a candidate to the Traditional Council of the community who, acting as Kingmakers, will elect him to office after considering his suitability. If the Council find that the candidate is unsuitable they will ask the Queen mother for another candidate. She can make up to three such recommendations after which the council will make an election independently of her. Disputed enstoolments occur if the candidate is not really a member of the royal lineage, a matter best understood by the Queen mother as she would be able to trace the candidate descent back to their common ancestress, otherwise the proper procedures in nomination and election have not been followed. For example, the Queen mother might nominate a morally unsuitable person and refuse to reconsider her choice at the request of the Council. The Council may simply sell the chieftaincy to the highest bidder. Dankwa believes that where procedures are followed properly and the candidates are men of exemplary character much litigation can be avoided (Arhin 1985: 28-39; Dankwa 2004: 19-22, 111-123). No divine right to rule ever existed among Akan rulers and if they failed to perform according to the expectations of the community as expressed in their oath they could be removed from office or 'destooled,' (Arhin 1985: 82-85; Dankwa 2005:4-5). This could also lead to legal proceedings (as in the case of King Ghartey V of Winneba who was arraigned on the basis that he did not perform the traditional rituals, a condition he had made before reluctantly accepting election the Stool in the first place (Ghartey 2005a). Currently, such disputes are adjudicated by the relevant Regional House of Chiefs. Dankwa strongly urges that only the those with the responsibility for electing the ruler should be able to bring charges against him and instigate his removal. The kingmakers, often being traditional rulers themselves, should also have to prove that their constituency embodied in their own Traditional Council, also support their position (Dankwa 2004: 120-123). This was also the judgement of the panel hearing King Ghartey's case (Ghartey 2005a).

the life of the community, especially in festivals of consolidation such as the *Akwambo* festival,<sup>9</sup> and, in some cases, tolerate traditional religious practices. On the other hand, at least two of the rulers wanted to encourage evangelism! There was a general consensus that the number of Christian traditional rulers was increasing and that Christians were now being sought as rulers because of their character and education.

#### 5.3.1.2.4 THE PRACTICE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Interestingly, the respondents all described the ideal character of a traditional ruler in strongly Christian terms that stood in contrast with the received model which would include, among other things, aloofness and polygamy. The respondents stated that a ruler should be dignified, a faithful monogamist, sympathetic, courteous, trustworthy, peaceable, respectful, intelligent, spiritual, educated, understanding, just, compassionate, an honest person who can act as a model, peacemaker and exemplary leader. He must also be someone who understands the Word of God. All in all he should be a 'good Christian'.<sup>10</sup> From the comments of the sample it would seem that communities are seeking virtuous, and able Christians. The virtues that

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<sup>9</sup> The *Akwambo* Festival is celebrated annually by the Borbor section of the Fanti which would include the communities of Gomoa, Ajumako, Beman, Enyan, Abora, Ekumfi and Agona. *Akwambo* literally means 'clearing the paths' and the festival commemorates the path finding work of the Fanti ancestors who led the people through the forests to their present homes. Prior to the festival proper the traditional rulers enter the Stool House where the Black Stools of the ancestors are kept so they may ritually cleanse them. The festival itself begins with the clearing of the paths around the village, especially to the shrine of the community's deities and ends with a general gathering or 'durbar' of the people and their traditional rulers at which funds are raised for the projects planned for the community during the coming year. It is also an occasion when those whose work takes them away from the town, including the rulers, return home. It was thus a very useful opportunity for the research connected with this project. For more detail on the *Akwambo* Festival see Appendix Six: 'Notes on the *Akwambo* Festival' by Mr. Charles Kobina Biney,

<sup>10</sup> One of the traditional prerequisites for nomination and election as a traditional ruler was an exemplary moral character as rulers were supposed to be role models of manhood and conduct for their communities. Although the Akan rule of succession was primarily based on the hereditary principle, the Akan also allowed themselves a choice among the eligible members. They were then enabled to select a man of character; a man of character was one likely to carry out the wishes of the people spelt out in the advice to the elected person at the installation ceremony. That advice also carried an intimation that, just as the peoples' representatives had elected him, so they could also destool him. This contained an implied sanction against the possible abuse of power (Arhin 1985: 39).

A Chief should be a man of good character who can carry out the wishes of his people as spelt out in the advice normally given at the installation ceremonies. A chief is the embodiment of what is proper and is a role model of the community; for, a man with a blemished past can neither command the moral authority nor serve as a shining example to his subjects. People with questionable character should therefore be discouraged from becoming chiefs. The attributes stated above are the traditional qualities required of chiefs (Dankwa 2004: 23).

There would appear to be an overlap between Christian and Akan ideas about the character of leaders.

respondents identified as being important for their practice of leadership included the following: 'Fear of the Lord,' 'Following Christ,' dignity, patience, 'chameleon like' adaptation to people, generosity, and forgiveness. Of these, patience was considered of greatest importance, being stressed by five of the respondents. The responses of the sample indicate that traditional rulers have to have the skills to build relationships, inspire, and act as counsellors and models to their communities, especially as their traditional functions have been eroded.<sup>11</sup> The rulers identified a number of sources of authority for their decisions: traditional sources such as the proverbial tradition and the 'Old Lady' (*aberwa*). Christian sources such as prayer and the Bible; moral and pragmatic sources such as the priorities of the community and the requirements of justice and peace; 'scientific' sources in social science and psychology.<sup>12</sup> Yet, what is probably of greater importance than the sources of authority for traditional leadership are the *processes* of authority in which decisions are made through discussion and consultation that draw upon all identified sources. In the words of one respondent 'Authority is team-work.' Christian influences proved to be important to all the members of the sample in their conduct as rulers. All identified guiding examples from the Bible and described how the Bible informed traditional wisdom and pragmatic considerations. Mentors and advisors, such as Reverend Yedu Bannerman, though, appear to have been of greatest significance for the spiritual formation of these men.

Most of the respondents remarked that they found tension between the ritual practices connected with their office and their Christian faith.<sup>13</sup> Christians of Fanti royal lineage are

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<sup>11</sup> Both Arhin and Dankwa believe that the authority of a traditional ruler rests on a kind of social contract made with the first occupant of a Stool, his family and the families of the community. They postulate that position of the first ruler was based on one of three factors: he was the first to settle in an area and so was regarded as the 'owner' of the land; he led a large group of migrants to settle in the area; he emerged as a charismatic leader who enabled the community to overcome some crisis. In selecting the man the community would also select the family or lineage to provide them with further leaders of the same calibre (Arhin 1985: 13-14; Dankwa 2004: 1-2). The ruler was supposed to provide security from internal and external threats, arbitrate over disputes, especially concerning land, and provide visionary and inspirational leadership in confronting the issues that faced the community. His rule was to have a 'democratic' character in that it was to be based upon consultation and participation of the leaders of the other families in the community, he was not to rule in an arbitrary manner. All of this was implied in the ruler's Oath, the admonition given to him at his enstoolment and the Black Stool itself (Dankwa 2004: 2-3). While the defence and police functions of the chief have been displaced his role of moral leadership remains and the basis of his authority as the head of a hierarchy of family leaders remains intact.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that none of the respondents, not even *Nana Otsiwa III* who was most favourable to traditional practices, mentioned divination of the wishes of the royal ancestors at the Stool House. *Nana Dankwa* even considers this practice at odds even with the traditional role that the ruler's Council play in advising him, though this view might be atypical in view of his secular emphasis (Dankwa 2004: pp. 64-65).

<sup>13</sup> There are a number of rituals connected with traditional rule, such as libation, sacrifice, sprinkling of blood, and offerings of food, that are related either to the ancestors of the Stool or the deities that watch over the



faced with the a dilemma: do they become rulers and compromise with what they would consider to be idolatry or do they maintain their ritual integrity and pass over the opportunity to establish and practice their Christian values in public office? The rulers in this sample have developed three responses to this dilemma. The first response was to develop a dual commitment and practice in which traditional religion is practiced alongside Christianity so that 'that which is Caesar's' is given to Caesar.<sup>14</sup> *Nana* Otsiwa believed that this approach had great advantages in that it provides 'two ways to God.' ((*Nana*) Otsiwa III 2005). The justification offered for this position is that traditional religion remains an important part of culture for many Ghanaians. (Arhin 1985: 131) A second response is to delegate the performance of Fanti traditional rituals to another official such as the *Okyeame*. The rulers of Twiekukrom adopted this approach following a precedent that one suspects has been followed by the traditional rulers of many other communities ((*Nana*) Affenyi I 2005). The third response is that of *Nana* Ababio III and his mentor Reverend Yedu Bannerman. They have set out to abolish traditional rituals after a process of education and persuasion (Bannerman 2005; c.f. Bannerman 2003: 115-119). Whichever of these approaches is followed it is clear that the position of African Traditional Religion in the practice of Traditional Rule is being seriously questioned.<sup>15</sup>

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Stool. Traditionalists insist that all these rituals are an essential and indispensable part of traditional rule but they pose great problems for Christians as in their minds such rituals imply polytheism, idolatry, and the breach of the great taboo Christians hold against the ritual shedding of blood. Such rituals present a profound dilemma for Traditional Rulers with Christian commitments. Should they participate in such rituals, offend their own consciences and alienate themselves from the Christian community or should they abandon the opportunity they have of serving their community by ruling according to Christian principles? On two occasions after I had concluded my interviews and switched off my tape recorder the rulers I had been interviewing and their elders raised just these kinds of issue. As Christians they really wanted to dispense with the ceremonies connected with traditional religion but felt unable to do so because of the entrenched place of such rituals in the practice of traditional rule, and the strength of opinion of those who still held to traditional beliefs. Christians involved in traditional rule in Ghana have developed a range of responses to this dilemma.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus words in Matthew 22:21 ('Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' RSV) are often used by adherents of traditional religion to justify the practice of traditional religious rituals alongside those of Christianity. The argument runs that as God created the deities and ancestors (who play an intermediate role between the Creator and humanity) then it is right to give them their 'due' in terms of libation, sacrifice, and the observance of taboos.

<sup>15</sup> *Nana* Dankwa III of Akuapem has developed a forth option in his secular reinterpretation of the rituals of traditional rule. *Nana* Dankwa distinguishes between rituals related to ancestors and those connected to traditional religion. He sees the first as purely social and symbolic, as the ancestors (or the memory of them) are considered part of the living community, and therefore non-religious. Ceremonies concerning the deities are religious but he argues that these are quite distinct from the institution of traditional rule and are the independent concern of the priests and practitioners of traditional religion, just as special Christian services of thanksgiving and prayer for the reign of a traditional ruler are the concern of ministers and church members (Dankwa 2004: 62-64, 68-70). Dankwa argues that the Black Stools of the Akan are 'social documents' that symbolise the social contract between the ruler and his lineage and the community that is contained in the ruler's oath. The

### 5.3.1.2.5 THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

The majority of the respondents felt that the Church accepted them, especially where they had either rejected, or found ways around traditional ritual practice. However, *Nana Otsiwa III* felt slighted by the Methodist Church because of its position on his polygamy and the reluctance of Christians to compromise with traditional rituals, although he noted exceptions to this reluctance. Even so, the majority of the respondents found that the Church was sympathetic and supportive of their role in the community. While the rulers felt that the Churches were co-operative in community labour they also believed that they needed to make a greater material contribution to the life of the community.

### 5.3.1.3 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES OF TRADITIONAL RULERS

In pre-colonial times the Fanti rulers, especially the *Omanhene* (Paramount Ruler of the State) exercised full sovereignty and leadership over their communities. They were responsible for maintaining the peace and prosperity of their communities through the maintenance of order and harmony, the administration of justice (often interpreted in terms of arbitration and reconciliation) and the promotion of the economic and social development of the people through agriculture and commerce (Arhin 1985: 13-26; Dankwa 2004: 1-4, 10-18).<sup>16</sup>

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Stools are also memorials to the lives of exemplary rulers. These rulers are still part of the living community as ancestors. While the ancestors and the Stools that symbolise their presence are honoured, they are not worshipped. They are merely given the respect that is due to elderly and distinguished members of the community. Consequently, Dankwa argues that this is a social rather than religious matter (Dankwa 2004: 62-74). Likewise, the libation offered to the ancestors is also social. Ideally, water should be poured as it is offered to wash the feet of the invited ancestors as they symbolically make themselves present (Dankwa 2004: 79-84).

<sup>16</sup> Since the nineteenth century the forces of globalisation, among them Christian mission, colonialism and post-independence nationalism, have limited the sovereignty of traditional rulers and forced a redefinition of their role. The sovereignty of traditional rulers was first of all abridged by the colonial policy of Direct Rule and then abolished by nationalist governments after independence. As the economy of the region diversified through education, cocoa farming, mining and trade the exclusive economic privileges and powers of rulers were undermined and commoners began to acquire wealth which rivalled that of the rulers. Education and economic success also provided an alternative basis for leadership that challenged the principle of heredity and produced a new class of leaders who questioned the right of the traditional rulers to exercise social and political leadership in the new situation. Lastly, the 'supernatural' sanction that the rulers had over their subjects was weakened when the British authorities at Cape Coast insisted that Christians should not be forced to respond to, or swear, the traditional oath. In order to bring a matter before a ruler's court an aggrieved party would swear by some past calamity that had befallen a ruler's family or community. In order to appease the ancestors and deities who would be offended by the swearing of the oath animals would be slaughtered in sacrifice and the parties involved in the dispute that had led to the oath would be summoned to the ruler's court for the matter to be investigated. It was a means of filing a case against a party and having them summonsed to the traditional court. Christians were alienated by the religious implications of the oath, especially where it involved the shedding of blood which breached a serious taboo for Christians. However, Dankwa argues that since this oath concerned the ancestors it was social rather than religious. An oath to a deity might be added to stress the truthfulness of the one so swearing but this was a separate oath. A Christian, he argues, would be free to swear an oath to God on such an occasion (Arhin 1985: 23-25 Dankwa 2004: 84-85).

Traditional Rulers were far more than war leaders, but defence was one of their primary functions and so their court was organised along military lines in order to ensure success in battle, but also efficient administration in peace time (Arhin 1985: 13-16; Dankwa 2004: 29-32).<sup>17</sup> The rulers in this sample with their Christian faith, education and concern for development are themselves products of the process to which they also attempt to adapt their office. It was the Methodist School and the Methodist Society, both Western innovations, rather than the home that were the most important elements in the formation of the Christian rulers interviewed. Mentoring was another crucial factor in the spiritual journey of these men, and school and church also often provided the framework of these relationships rather than the *ebusua* or traditional community. Most of the traditional rulers interviewed regarded their Methodist faith and background as the defining framework and fundamental resource in their reinterpretation of their role as traditional rulers. All of the rulers in the sample were 'modernisers' in that they understood that traditional kingship needed to be adapted to new social and cultural conditions if it were to survive. It seems that they sought to pursue this 'modernisation' in terms of their Christian faith.<sup>18</sup> First of all, it appears that Biblical

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<sup>17</sup> However, aggressive warfare was one of the means by which rulers could advance themselves and their Stool and the peace enforced by British colonialism obstructed this (Arhin 1985: 88-89). British power also prevented the emergence of large and powerful states in the region which, instead, was characterised by a patchwork of small autonomous states (Dankwa 2004: 5-7).

<sup>18</sup> Arhin and Dankwa both argue that traditional rule should continue because of the continuing role of the Chief as the social leader and figure head of his community. In a changing political and social environment he is a continuing source of identity, stability and trust, a role which is emphasised by the part he plays in traditional festivals (Arhin 1985: 129-136; Dankwa 2004: 123-124). However, these authors also agree that some modernisation of the institution is necessary for this to be possible. Both concur that measures should be taken to minimize chieftaincy disputes and to democratise the institution through the chief using his powers to appoint suitably qualified 'commoners' to his council. But, whereas Arhin stresses the need for traditional rule to be independent administratively and financially from central government Dankwa argues that some of the traditional powers and revenues of traditional rulers should be restored within the framework of local government (Arhin 1985: 136-141; Dankwa 2004: 109-110, 111-123). The major area of disagreement between Arhin and Dankwa would seem to be over the role of traditional religion. Dankwa sees African traditional religion as an antique and declining form of religion. The attachment of Chieftaincy to traditional religion, he believes, has obscured the meaning of the institutions and practice of traditional rule and alienated Ghanaians of Christian, Muslim, and non-religious backgrounds from the institution of Traditional Rule. Consequently, for chieftaincy to have a viable future it needs to be detached from traditional religion so that it does not share the continuing decline of that faith and so that it may include other sections of the community, now the majority, who are not followers of traditional religion. His preferred path for this detachment is not the Christianisation of the institution, the route followed by some of my respondents, but its secularisation on the basis of his revisionist 'social' model of traditional rule and its practices (Dankwa 2004: 55-85, 110-111).

The need therefore for modifications of some of the paganised practices cannot be overemphasized. For, if chieftaincy as an institution should continue to be attached to the apron strings of the so-called African Traditional Religion, a religion which is likely to change, the institution might be adversely affected by the changing times. It is for this reason that it is being suggested that the institution of Chieftaincy, if it is to survive in the future,

resources on governance and models of kingship provided an alternative sacral legitimisation to that offered by traditional religion. Secondly, the respondents still believed that the rulers should be an exemplar of virtue to the rest of the community, but defined after the pattern of Christian virtues, especially as these relate to community building and peacemaking.<sup>19</sup> Thirdly, the experience of leadership within the structures of the Methodist Society has made it easier for the respondents to develop the more democratic style necessary for contemporary traditional kingship. The Methodist Society is not the only source of democratic influences. Traditional rule among the Fanti has also played a role as it has always been participatory and cases of extreme autocracy were rarely endured for long by a community's elders and kingmakers (Arhin 1985: 75-85; Dankwa 2004: 14-18). Furthermore, Fanti culture as long been exposed to democratic ideas because of its lengthy encounter with European cultures.<sup>20</sup> Yet most of the respondents in the sample seemed to have gained their first experiences of a democratic style of leadership within the Methodist Church which seems to be important for formation and initial experiences of leadership, but apparently offers little support to Methodist rulers once they are on the stool. The examples and style of leaders in Methodism inevitably play a key role in the manner in which these rulers endeavoured to apply

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should start distancing itself from pagan practices. While calling for changes in the institution of Chieftaincy to ensure progress and its survival, caution is necessary to make sure that such changes, as would be made, should be supportive rather than destructive of the existing structures. (Dankwa 2004: 111)

<sup>19</sup> There also seem to be echoes of Methodist teaching on Christian perfection in this discourse on moral paragons. This may be an indication of another point of convergence between the two traditions.

<sup>20</sup> This participation operated through the hierarchy of councils in Fanti (Akan) traditional rule. At the very base of the structure of traditional governance was the meeting of the local clan or extended family presided over by the *ebusuapanyin* (Senior Elder) who would represent the views of his people on the village council. The ruler of the village, the *Odikro* would then represent his community and its families on the Council of the divisional ruler, the *Ohene*, who then in turn convey the feelings of his constituency to the Council of the *Oman* or state chaired by the *Omanhene*. It was rare for traditional rulers, at any level, to go against the opinions of their communities as expressed in the advice of their Councils, as this would be considered a breach of their oath and could lead to their destoolment. Every member of the state had the opportunity to participate in the decisions of the State council through their families. In addition to this, particular sections of the population such as the young men and women, had specific representation at village, divisional, and state level as the Captains of the *Asafo* or militia companies of the young men and the Queen-mothers of each community had seats on these Councils (Arhin 1985: 14-17; Dankwa 2004: 11-18).

... in accordance with the original contract, the leader can only perform with the advice and consent of the heads of various sub-divisions and consequently the heads of family; the representatives of the community, to a great extent are also leaders. This is a practical demonstration of grass-roots participatory democracy. There is a popular Ghanaian saying which, translated into English means that "the nature of a chief's administration is always a reflection of the quality of advice offered by the immediate elders." It means that if you have good elders, it follows that you would have a good chief. Under the chieftaincy system, the unity of purpose within the natural diversity of views is the watchword. (Dankwa 2004:15)

democratic principles and processes in their practice of traditional rule. Traditional and pragmatic elements are obviously present in the new configuration of traditional leadership being developed by these leaders but there is strong evidence that Christian faith is the catalyst and basis for this new configuration. This arguably indicates a change in the respondents' worldview - a paradigm shift in thinking rather than a dual or 'split-level' commitment between Christian faith and traditional religion.

### **5.3.2 INTERVIEWS WITH METHODIST MINISTERS**

#### **5.3.2.1 MEMBERS OF THE SAMPLE**

The five ministerial members of the sample were as follows: Reverend Dr Samuel Ghartey (16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005 at Winneba); Reverend Emmanuel Mensah-Bonso, Methodist Minister at Anomabo (14<sup>th</sup> August 2005 at Anomabo); Reverend Lawrence Amartey, Methodist Minister at Enyan Denkyira (15<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Enyan Denkyira); Reverend Daniel Sekyi, Methodist Minister at Ochiso (15<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Ochiso) Reverend J. Yedu Bannerman (24<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 at Tema). (Transcripts of these interviews are included as Appendices Fourteen to Nineteen.)<sup>21</sup>

#### **5.3.2.2 RESPONSES OF THE SAMPLE**

##### **5.3.2.2.1 FORMATION**

All the respondents except J. Yedu Bannerman indicated that they came from third or fourth generation Methodist families. It soon became obvious that the family background of respondents was a significant factor in their faith. The evidence of this small sample would suggest that ministers might be less likely to come from families of royal lineage in the first, and perhaps second generation Methodist families. Again, in all but Bannerman's case there were strong devotional practices in the homes of respondents and the parents of respondents almost all had some role as Methodist leaders, as either ministers or Society officials. The modelling of Christian life and leadership in the home was thus an important element in nurturing further Methodist leaders. All of the respondents attended Methodist schools, but with the exception of Bannerman none identified their education as being the most formative episode in their Christian lives. In the case of most of these ministers, the home was much

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<sup>21</sup> See 5.2.3.2 above on the sampling method. The criteria for the ministerial sample was that the subjects were serving Methodist ministers who were both Fantis and came from a royal lineage.

more important. Most of the respondents indicated that their experience in the Methodist Society or Church in their home town was an important preparation for their later ministerial leadership. In a number of cases they were mentored by ministers or other leaders. The only exception to this pattern was Bannerman who went virtually from school to the ministry with only a brief interlude as a local preacher! For most of the respondents, then it was their involvement in the Methodist society that was the key for their call to the ministry. The example and initiative of their ministers was often a key factor.

The interviews with Methodist ministers also disclosed the likely pattern of formation of those who were considered likely candidates for the stool by the royal *ebusua*. This formation apparently consists of a process of non-formal education that includes tutoring in the proverbial tradition and observing court proceedings at the palace (see section 5.4.3.2.2 below) (Bannerman 2003: 7-8; Bannerman 2005, Mensah-Bonso 2005). Mensah-Bonso comments:

The fact is that in the palace that is where things take place. Cases are brought, day in and day out, and as the elders sit in judgement on these cases if you are there observing you have to sit down and see how our elders go about it. Now if you bring this principle into your ministry it will help you to judge cases that are brought to you. It is something that every minister who has this royal background can use effectively in his ministry. (Mensah-Bonso 2005)

#### **5.3.2.2.2 FANTI PRINCIPLES**

The respondents felt that the Fanti *ebusua* encouraged the virtues of responsibility (and intelligence) for care for the family (Armartei), service to the clan (Bannerman), respect for the elderly (Mensah-Bonso), obedience to the elderly who are supposed to be dignified role models and advisors to the young (Sekyi). These answers suggest that the Fanti character is oriented to the *ebusua* in terms of responsibility for the family, service to the clan, deference to its elders for the governance of the clan, so that one might learn from them. The elderly are to model the positive values of the family to the younger generation. Respect for authority and tradition were the predominant lessons the respondents stated that they had received from their tradition, but they also identified honesty, impartiality, sympathy, community, compassion and justice as being secondary studies. The respondents also stressed the convergence of traditional and Biblical values. The chief difference between them being that these different systems of values are enforced or reinforced differently. In African traditional religion the gods or ancestors would visit swift retribution on those who outraged the mores

of the community whereas in the Christian tradition values are sanctioned by conscience, church discipline, and ultimately by God's judgement after death. The virtues important for the leadership of clan and community, responsibility, truthfulness, humility, patience, respect, impartiality, and industry, are given considerable weight. The use of traditional wisdom and judicial process in particular, appear to have been transferred to the service of the Church by the respondents in their ministries. No conflicts between Fanti and Methodist values were identified by the members of the ministerial sample except the internal motivation of Christians stands in contrast to the external (supernatural) sanctions or rewards anticipated by traditional Fanti people. The usual conflicts over ritual and taboo were identified, particularly over the ritual shedding of blood and use of alcohol. The former is a strong taboo for all Christians and the use of the latter is a specific taboo for Methodists. Dr Gharthey felt that concern for status in the practice of the Methodist ministry had undermined the sense of community fostered by African culture.

#### **5.3.2.2.3 THE ROLE OF A METHODIST MINISTER**

The members of the sample defined the role of a minister in the community variously as development, education (in the broad sense expressed as 'enlightenment'), organisation and empowerment, and servanthood in leadership. All in all the ministers defined their role in terms remarkably similar to those of the traditional rulers. However, the respondents still felt that evangelism was the highest priority for their ministry but that education and development were essential adjuncts of evangelism. All the respondents, apart from Dr. Gharthey, were of the opinion that Methodist leaders could develop some kind of constructive and transforming engagement with traditional culture. Mensah-Bonso and Sekyi felt that confrontation with traditional culture was sometimes inevitable but where this had to occur they sought to manage it in as diplomatic and non-aggressive manner as possible. There was no clear perception among the members of the sample as to whether there was any increase of royals in the Methodist ministry, they all knew of a few other ministers with similar backgrounds to themselves. This evidence suggests that there is a significant minority of Fanti royals in the Methodist ministry who have emerged as natural leaders. Further evidence from interviews indicates that this might be as a result of the preparation for leadership that suitable male children would receive in royal lineages in case they should succeed to the Stool [3.2.2.1]. Moreover, the first loyalty of these leaders is to the ministry and they are highly nervous of

any involvement in chieftaincy as they feel that this would be incompatible with their Christian vocation.

#### **5.3.2.2.4 THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP**

The ideal character of a Methodist minister was described in terms remarkably similar to those of a traditional ruler: dignity, responsibility, probity, humility, impartiality, cordiality, prayer, spirituality. In particular, the respondents stated that ministers needed to be particularly careful of Church money, Church women, and pulpit pride!<sup>22</sup> The most important virtues for ministers were identified as patience, humility, obedience and respect for others and their opinions. In the words of Sekyi: “To be a democratic servant is quite comfortable.” Again, the responses of the ministers show considerable convergence with those of traditional rulers - especially regarding patience and understanding of others. The ministers in the sample indicated the following sources of authority that guides them in their leadership: Scripture, the rules of the Church, proverbs, and the needs of the community. The processes of decision making included the following: prayer, spiritual discernment, consultation, and collective decision-making. Respondents identified conflicts between their office as Methodist ministers and their Fanti background in the areas of traditional religious practice. They were resolute in their refusal to participate in these practices themselves but their way of addressing these in their families and communities ranged from persuasion and consensus building to outright confrontation.

#### **5.3.2.2.5 ATTITUDE OF THE *EBUSUA***

Most of the respondents’ extended families had hoped that the respondents would become traditional rulers. Consequently, they were generally disappointed at the respondents’ career choice, as ministry and chieftaincy are still seen as broadly incompatible. However, there are some compensating factors in the support that they could give to the eventual occupant of the stool. The respondents went on to state that their families were generally supportive after they had made their choice as the Methodist ministry is generally seen as a responsible and honourable vocation. This perception seems to be higher for those in the sample who had

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<sup>22</sup> This seems to be a piece of wisdom passed from one generation to another of Methodist ministers in Ghana as they face the problems of money, sex and power common to Christian leadership.



been careful to build bridges with their families. Most of the ministers interviewed professed themselves generally content with the level of support from their respective *ebusua*.<sup>23</sup>

### 5.3.2.3 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF MINISTERS' RESPONSES

In contrast to the traditional rulers it was the home, rather than the school, that was of greatest importance in the formation of ministers from Fanti royal lineages, especially where the parents were heavily involved in Church leadership themselves. This meant that respondents would have not only been exposed to patterns of devotions, but also to models of Christian leadership in the home which they internalised. All this would have occurred alongside the preparation and non-formal education they would have received from the *ebusua* as candidates for the Stool. All of the ministers interviewed in this project saw themselves as Methodist leaders first and foremost whose primary responsibilities are evangelism and the pastoral care of their members. However, they also applied Fanti royal leadership principles and practices to their ministry which they felt were similar, if not identical to Biblical principles and practices. Moreover, while the respondents' extended families were disappointed in their children's choice of vocation they never-the-less still supported and empowered them in their leadership role. Given the importance of the family in the formation of these men it does seem likely that they also imbibed Fanti leadership principles from their extended families, which they also saw combined with Methodist values. Consequently, it was quite natural that they would apply these same principles and procedures to their Christian leadership roles in the Methodist ministry. Moreover, most of these ministers were also consciously seeking to interpret their Christian faith in the light of their Fanti culture and to infuse the practice of their faith, especially in the area of leadership, with Fanti values and insights. It is also significant that most of the respondents' *ebusua* support them in their leadership roles, further reinforcing their Fanti cultural ties.

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Dr. Ghartey, however, remains estranged from his clan over the burial of his mother. When Dr Ghartey was making the preparations for the burial of his mother, a royal in her own right, the current King of Winneba indicated his wish to participate in the funeral. However, the King insisted that the customary sacrifice of a sheep be made so that its blood might be used for purification. As this would oblige Dr. Ghartey to break one of the strongest of Christian taboos he refused, noting that neither his grandfather or father had ever required such a thing when they were traditional rulers of Winneba. The King and his elders responded by preventing the burial of Dr. Ghartey's mother in the royal plot and so to this day her official grave remains empty. (Ghartey 2005b)

### **5.3.3 OVERVIEW OF RESULTS FOR RULERS AND MINISTERS**

#### **5.3.3.1 FORMATION**

As noted above, schools were important for the spiritual and moral formation of the majority of rulers interviewed whereas the home was far more significant for the ministers. This might simply be a reflection of the fact that the ministers had a deeper Methodist background than the rulers had, but is also significant for the kinds of influence that the different groups were bringing to their roles [5.3.2.2.1]. It is likely that all received an intentional orientation to traditional leadership throughout their childhood from their *ebusua*. The traditional rulers were consciously seeking to reform traditional leadership practice with an external tradition emanating from Methodist schools and Societies, while the ministers were seeking to contextualise the practice of ministry within the framework of the Fanti leadership practice and its values that they would have imbibed from their childhood. This practice and its values the ministers would have assimilated within their family life as members of royal lineages. The Methodist Society proved to be the ‘nursery’ for many of these leaders, both ministers and traditional rulers. The Society would have provided a framework for observing models of Methodist leadership and for learning to become Methodist leaders themselves as they worked their way through the Methodist system. The traditional leaders interviewed who had exercised some formal or informal leadership role in the Methodist Society all indicated that they were applying the lessons they had learnt at that time in the practice of their chieftaincy. Mentoring is also disclosed as a vital element in the formation of respondents many of whom were able to identify figures who acted as mentors for them at different stages of their lives. In some cases these were teachers or chaplains in their schools, but most often they were ministers or other church leaders. The traditional mentors of Fanti society, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers also play a significant role in the formation of these, especially in the case of Bannerman and *Nana* Ababio III, but the impact of Christian role models seems to have been greater.

#### **5.3.3.2 PRINCIPLES**

There seems to have been a fairly profound interaction and exchange between Methodist and Fanti values with concepts of servant-leadership, forgiveness, and peacemaking informing traditional rule and traditional wisdom, communalism, and participatory decision-making guiding the work of the ministry. Respondents indicated a convergence of values and virtues

in which it is hard to track down what has come from where. This would also suggest that the two moral traditions were already close to each other.

#### **5.3.3.3 LEADERSHIP ROLE**

This convergence of principles is also expressed in the convergence of leadership roles. Rulers and ministers are concerned with the same things: development of the community, education, and even the evangelisation of the community. King Kenie III stated that he was often called 'Pastor' by his subjects because of the spiritual advice he sought to give them from the Bible. Reverend Armarley has an agenda of development for his community worthy of a *Nkosohene*! In addition to this, Methodist rulers sought to legitimise their office from within a Christian framework [5.3.1.2.4].

#### **5.3.3.4 LEADERSHIP PRACTICE**

The convergence of the leadership roles of Methodist ruler and royal minister is further evidenced in the leadership practice of both. Both ruler and minister seek to be servant leaders who lead in obedience to the Word of God and for the welfare of the people, building peace and development in their communities, and leading by advice and consultation.

#### **5.3.3.5 ATTITUDE OF CHURCH/EBUSUA**

The point at which this convergence of leadership practice seems to breakdown is in the area of the support of the Church. The Methodist Church seems to give fairly limited guidance and encouragement to those of its members who become traditional rulers. This stands in contrast to the moral support that most of the royal ministers reported that they received from their families.

#### **5.3.3.6 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter began with the argument that historical evidence suggested that a synthesis between Methodist and Fanti leadership practices was taking place among the Fanti. The results of field research appear to give strong support to this hypothesis. Royals among Fanti Methodists (both as rulers and as ministers) are maintaining their position as the natural leaders of the community but are informing and transforming their practice by Christian values and virtues from the Methodist moral tradition. This is expressed in the palace by

kings consciously defining their role and practice in Christian terms, by adopting a servant-leadership style in their rule that is highly dependent on virtues of peacemaking, humility, and fairness, and by setting the education and development of the people and community as their priorities. In the manse the ministers strive to express their cultural identity and training as royals in the work of the ministry by emphasising and honouring what they believe to be the positive aspects of traditional values and through a participatory style of leadership that coheres well with the Methodist system.

## **5.4 CASE STUDIES**

### **5.4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES**

In the course of the field research exercise some fascinating patterns of transformation were exposed. Two of these recommended themselves for further study as they give deeper insight into the processes of interaction and synthesis between Methodist and Fanti traditions demonstrated already in the interviews of the two samples. The first case study examines the assimilation and impact of the Methodist moral tradition on the life of one particular community. The second focuses on the efforts and example of one individual to synthesize Methodist and Fanti moral traditions in three areas: first, in his own life and practice as a Methodist minister; second, as a traditional leader in his community; and third, in the life of his community. Both cases are instructive. On the one side one community's experience of change through several decades is tracked, on the other there is living demonstration of how individuals can be catalysts of change in setting the terms of moral conversation for their tradition. These give further support to the hypothesis of this chapter that there is a synthesis of leadership practice between the Methodist and Akan traditions among the Fanti people. They are included here as further evidence of the emergence of a Fanti-Methodist practice of leadership which in itself is most probably part of a wider nascent Fanti-Methodist moral tradition.

### **5.4.2 CASE STUDY ONE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF TWIEKUKROM**

#### **5.4.2.1 HIGH INCIDENCE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AMONG THE TRADITIONAL RULERS OF THE VILLAGE**

Of the seven Christian traditional leaders interviewed as part of this research project three were in the village of Twiekukrom. This concentration of such leaders in one small village

was highly suggestive and warranted some further investigation. The data for this case study was drawn from the interviews conducted with the Twiekukrom rulers (*Nana Twieku III*, *Nana Affenyi I*, and *Nana Amo Otsiam II*) and from an interview with *Opanyin Kwobina Esirtie*, an elderly gentleman, now in his nineties, who for many years was the Methodist Church Caretaker in Twiekukrom. (The transcript of his interview is included as Appendix Twenty.)

#### **5.4.2.1.1 BACKGROUND AND LOCATION OF THE VILLAGE**

The village of Twiekukrom is located in the Central Region of Ghana in the Ampiah-Ajumako traditional area near the town of Onwane. The village has experienced two waves of settlement in its history. The second formed the majority in the community and so their royal families supplied the chiefs and elders of the village. This arrangement led to conflict with the descendents of the original settlers, the ‘landowners,’ which was expressed in lengthy litigation that resulted in the stool of the town being vacant for many years until the appointment of the present paramount chief *Nana Twieku III*. Currently, the village is in a depressed state as it lacks electricity and many of its young people have migrated to the larger towns and cities seeking work.

#### **5.4.2.2 THE CHRISTIANISATION OF TWIEKUKROM**

##### **5.4.2.2.1 THE CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED**

*Opanyin Esirtie* related that the Methodist Society had a long history in the village as it was established before his birth which was around 1909. Originally, the congregation met under a temporary shelter, but a school master and another brother worked for a permanent structure to be erected. This enabled the Church to grow. A second factor in the growth of the Church identified by *Opanyin Esirtie* was a woman who conducted a healing ministry within the Church. In her time up to two thirds of the community attended the Methodist Church. She later moved to another town where she continued to work within the Methodist Church. While a number left the Church after her departure, a sizable congregation remained.

##### **5.4.2.2.2 MORAL TRANSFORMATION**

Once people became Methodists their behaviour and conduct changed. In particular, the *Opanyin* stressed that people ceased to repay evil with evil and became peaceable. Perhaps

this new spirit helped to heal the historic tensions in the community between the ‘landowners’ and ‘latecomers.’

#### **5.4.2.2.3 CHANGE IN THE ECONOMIC BASE OF THE COMMUNITY**

The Church also brought economic change to the community. Formerly the economy of the village had been based on the production of palm wine. Under the influence of Methodist teaching on temperance the palm trees were felled and replaced by staple crops such as corn and cassava. These new crops, along with a new spirit of sobriety and industry, brought a new prosperity to the town.

#### **5.4.2.2.4 THE CHURCH BRINGS EDUCATION**

Education also came to the town through the efforts of the Church. The *Opanyin* and the local circuit minister successfully petitioned the local authority for a school to be opened in the village. The *Opanyin* comments that [sic] ‘Even though it was local authority, it was still a Methodist School as it came through the Church’s efforts. The school was also started in the Methodist Church building.’ (Esirtie 2005)

#### **5.4.2.2.5 THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS BECOME INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITY AND LEADERSHIP**

The successful effort of the Methodists to bring education to the community demonstrates the active role they and their leaders were beginning to play in community affairs. *Opanyin* Esirtie noted that the Church was always cooperative in communal labour and other community affairs. The Church leaders became key figures in the community whose advice and support would be sought by the chiefs. The respondent recalls one occasion when the Church leaders brought the mason who had built their chapel to the village to help the paramount chief construct a second story for the palace.

The next stage in Methodism’s integration into Twiekukrom is that Methodist lay leaders began to assume traditional roles of leadership within the community.

### **5.4.2.3 CHRISTIANITY AND TRADITIONAL RULE IN TWIEKUKROM**

#### **5.4.2.3.1 ACTIVE RECRUITMENT OF METHODISTS INTO THE CHIEFTAINCY**

As Methodists were playing such a prominent role in the community one can surmise that they began to enjoy the favour of the kingmakers. The first Methodist to become a traditional ruler in Twiekukrom seems to have been the grandfather of *Nana* Otsiam II, the current *Nkosohene*. This gentleman was also one of the principle leaders in the Methodist Society in the village. While *Nana* Twieku III, the paramount chief, is not a Methodist, his parents, especially his mother, were also prominent leaders in the Society. *Nana* Twieku III himself is a prominent Catholic laymen being president of the Catholic Men's Society. Once on the stool *Nana* Twieku sought out other Christians to share the burden of rule with him. The two men he chose both had parents or grandparents who were Methodist leaders and themselves had played some leadership role, formal or informal, in the Methodist Church. *Opanyin* Esrifu identified *Nana* Otsiam II (the *Nkosohene*)<sup>24</sup> as a leader of the youth and *Nana* Afienyi I (the *Nifahene*) as a class leader.

#### **5.4.2.3.2 THE EFFECTS OF CHRISTIAN RULE: PEACEMAKING AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE**

From the information provided by the respondents the rule of *Nana* Twieku III and his Methodist associates seems to have two chief characteristics: peacemaking and a democratic style of rule. *Nana* Twieku III has evidently gone out of his way to reconcile the different factions of the town through sympathy, patience, and a forgiving spirit. He has also endeavoured to cultivate a more democratic style to his rule in his attempt to be a servant to the people. In the course of his interview, *Nana* Twieku traced these characteristics of his rule back to his Christian faith. He even expressed doubts whether someone who was not a Christian could actually rule in this manner and not be overcome with greed, partiality and despotism! *Nana* Twieku's colleagues confirmed his assessment of their role as traditional rulers. Both *Nana* Afienyi and *Nana* Otsiam stressed that wise judgement, patient listening

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The position of *Nkosohene* appears to be a recent innovation in traditional rule as I have found no reference to this position in Arhin and Dankwa's descriptions of Royal and Service Stools. (Positions related to functions in the administration of traditional rule rather than strictly hereditary positions (Arhin 1985: 28-29).) It seems likely that the position of *Nkosohene* is a service position as *Nana* Otsiam succeeded to the position of his paternal grandfather (Otsiam II 2005). According to Arhin patrilineal succession to service stools seems to have been a common pattern (Arhin 1985: 39-45). Such an innovation, of course, is a sign of the continuing vitality of traditional rule.

and persuasion, rather than authoritative dictates, were central to their role. They both traced these qualities back to their common background in Methodism. *Nana* Otsiam in particular stressed that his office as *Nkosohene* called for generosity and service rather than greedy selfishness and that he had learnt such generosity in the Church. In the day to day issues that matter Twiekukrom's Christian rulers found that their faith was an asset to their rule and that their offices could be a very effective vehicle for the expression of their faith. In fact all three insisted that Christian faith and character was a necessary qualification for chieftaincy.

#### 5.4.2.3.3 THE DILEMMAS OF RITUAL PRACTICE

The main area of tension between their faith and their role as traditional rulers for these men was the area of ritual practice. There was some inconsistency among the respondents over how this was handled. *Nana* Otsiam simply declared that the rituals had been abolished now that Christianity had brought 'Enlightenment.' *Nana* Affenyi indicated that the ritual ceremonies were performed by the *Okyeame* and some of the elders. However, he later went on to say that

But now [sic] we have stopped doing these things. Some things we have abolished it. You see, because when we go according to how they say. They used to frighten us: if you don't do this now so and so will happen, but we have learned now that if you don't do, these things won't happen on you. To pour libation for your father or grandfather who has died years ago will come, or something like that. I felt this, so you don't do it. You don't trust it. We have stop it.' ((*Nana*) Affenyi 2005)

However *Nana* Twieku himself gave the impression that he observed the chief's ritual obligations:

Ah well, I say it is in the Bible. When the disciples asked Jesus Christ: 'Do we have to pay some levy to this?' Then he asked them to bring some coins and asked them whose head then he said 'Do what belongs to God, and do what belongs to Caesar.' So normally, it is the religion for our forefathers, you see.<sup>25</sup> So if you are a Christian, and you do accept the position that is given to you, there is some certain aspect of it that you have to perform. I accept that I am a chief and you do whatever you have to do for his ancestors. So if you accept that you are a chief you know that this is the performance that you have to do yearly or annually. So if you are not prepared to do it you don't have to accept it. But in so far as you accept it and the thing is there, then you do it. ((*Nana*) Twieku III 2005)

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See note 14 above on the interpretation of 'Give unto Caesar.'



*Opanyin* Esirtie confirmed that the Christian rulers delegated ritual observance to the *Okyeame*. However, he felt that this was still a compromise with traditional religion since to send someone is just like going yourself! The *Opanyin* was inconsistent here as when questioned he revealed that this was also his practice as *ebusuapanyin* of his clan.

#### **5.4.2.4 THE TRANSFORMATION OF TWIEKUKROM**

##### **5.4.2.4.1 THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIANISATION**

A progression can be discerned in this case study of the influence of Methodism upon the village of Twiekukrom. In the first and second generations the faith was established and the moral conduct of the community was gradually changed through the influence of the Methodists, and the old divisions of the village begin to be mended. By the third generation Methodist influence had transformed the economic base of the village and brought greater industry and prosperity. By the fourth generation the Methodists were established as an essential part of the community and played a prominent role in its public life, especially with regard to establishing a school in the village. In the fifth and current generation the Methodist leaders have become the traditional rulers of the community. In so doing they reinterpret and transform the practice of traditional rule according to Christian values and standards and legitimise their rule in Christian terms. The traditional religious practices connected with chieftaincy, however, remain a problem. The fact that these Methodist rulers regard them as a problem that they would rather discard, suggests that they are under threat and that a later generation might quietly ignore them. It could be argued that the values by which these men rule can be found in the Fanti as well as the Methodist tradition. However, the fact that these rulers choose to place them in a Christian rather than a traditional frame of reference would tend to indicate that a paradigm shift towards a Christian model of moral discourse is occurring.

##### **5.4.2.4.2 THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VILLAGE**

As regards the present circumstances of Twiekukrom, *Nana* Twieku III and his colleagues have a great challenge before them to restore the economic and social life of their community. They will surely need all of their resources of faith and wisdom, Christian and Fanti, to face this daunting task.

### **5.4.3 CASE STUDY TWO: REVEREND J. YEDU BANNERMAN**

#### **5.4.3.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF REVEREND J. YEDU BANNERMAN<sup>26</sup>**

Several of the traditional rulers interviewed during the field research exercise in the Ajumako area made reference to a retired Methodist minister who made himself available to advise traditional rulers and to pray at various ceremonial and informal occasions for the welfare of the people and their rulers ((*Nana*) Twieku III 2005, (*Nana*) Amoah III 2005) Upon further enquiry it was discovered that the minister in question was Right Reverend J. Yedu Bannerman now living in retirement in Tema Community Five. Reverend Bannerman proved to be an important figure for the particular focus of my research project as he came from a royal lineage himself and acted as an adviser to traditional rulers. As a minister, as an *Ebusuabaatan*, and as a close advisor to his nephew Ababio III, *Omanhene* of Appiah-Ajumako Traditional Area, Bannerman has consciously sought to integrate values and lessons from his background in traditional culture and from his strong Methodist faith. In many ways he is the ideal subject for this research.

#### **5.4.3.2 J. YEDU BANNERMAN'S TRADITIONAL ROOTS**

##### **5.4.3.2.1 FAMILY BACKGROUND**

Bannerman was born on or around 15<sup>th</sup> March 1927 of royal parents. His mother, Efua Mansa was the daughter of Aberwa Abena Yamoawa the leading traditional priestess (*Obsomfo*) of the Asona royal clan of the town. His father, Yaw Boama, was *Ebusuapanyin* of the royal Yoko clan of Edwumako Asaasan. Yaw Boama served as the senior state linguist (*Akyeamehene*)<sup>27</sup> to the *Omanhene* (paramount chief) of the Ampiah-Ajumako traditional area for many years before migrating to Odoben to work as a tenant cocoa farmer (Bannerman 2003: 7).

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<sup>26</sup> The sources for this study of J. Yedu Bannerman are as follows: Interviews with *Nana* Twieku, *Nana* Amoah, and *Nana* Ababio conducted in August and November 2005; Interview conducted with J. Yedu Bannerman in October 2005; Bannerman's own autobiography (Bannerman 2003).

<sup>27</sup> The *Okyeame* or 'linguist' for the traditional ruler and his council. His task was to interpret and communicate their decisions to the community and to be the public voice of the ruler who only ever speak softly, if at all, in public. The *Okyeame* had to be a master of traditional rhetoric and wisdom and a perceptive judge of people and situations. The *Okyeame* frequently acts as the ruler's representative, and in pre-colonial times would also have functioned as a diplomat (Dankwa 2004: 32-33).

#### 5.4.3.2.2 ACCULTURATION INTO THE FANTI TRADITION

As a boy Bannerman received a thorough grounding in the Fanti moral tradition from his (maternal) grandfather, (maternal) uncle and father. The latter were both *mpanyimfo* of their respective clans. Bannerman explains:

My father and my uncle taught me linguistic language, speaking through proverbs, I have written a book of proverbs which was used as a textbook,<sup>28</sup> this contains all that I learnt from my father and grandfather, who was a traditionalist. (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman's father used to carry the young Yedu on his shoulders the two kilometres from the family home to the royal palace where he served as *okyeame*. There the boy would sit quietly at the feet of his father listening to the proceedings of the *Omanhene* court.<sup>29</sup> Bannerman comments: 'That was why at an early age I imperceptibly was able to imbibe some Akan philosophical expressions and proverbs in the stool house.' (Bannerman 2003:7-8) There were no Christian influences in Bannerman's home as his parents both followed traditional religion. The practice of traditional religion by the family was almost inevitable in the light of the public offices held by Bannerman's parents, especially by his mother when she became priestess of the clan deity after the death of her mother. The young Yedu only encountered Christian faith when he began formal education.

#### 5.4.3.3 BANNERMAN'S METHODIST FORMATION

##### 5.4.3.3.1. YEDU'S INITIATIVE TO GAIN EDUCATION

The young Bannerman was the first to receive a formal education in his clan. This came about through his own initiative rather than through that of his parents or uncles. During the family's yearly visits to Nyakrom, Yedu became fascinated by all that was being learnt by his friends, the Yawson brothers, and he became determined to join them. The would-be pupil persuaded his mother who then persuaded his grandfather and uncles (Bannerman 2003:9-12).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bannerman 1989

<sup>29</sup> This appears to have been part of the leadership preparation for those in royal lineages as Reverend Emmanuel Mensah-Bonso seems to have had a similar experience (See section 5.3.2.2.1 above).

<sup>30</sup> In the Akan matrilineal system the education of children, whether academic or vocational, is largely the responsibility of the maternal grandfather or uncle. Bannerman's uncles were Ahmadiyyah Muslims.

#### **5.4.3.3.2 CONVERSION EXPERIENCE**

Yedu was baptised and later confirmed into the Methodist Church as a matter of form as he attended a Methodist school.<sup>31</sup> It was only later at a Good Friday Service at Nyarkrom service when listening to the sermon preached by Reverend Samuel Q. G. Ghartey (Later King Ghartey V of Winneba), the Circuit Minister, on 'The Seven Words of Christ from the Cross' (Bannerman 2003: 26) that he had his conversion experience 'and what had been a formality for me now had some real meaning, thus I began my Christian journey.' (Bannerman 2005)

#### **5.4.3.3.3 MENTORS**

Bannerman completed his secondary education at Mfantsipim, the Methodist secondary school at Cape Coast where his growth in the Christian faith continued. As this was a Methodist secondary school the pupils were grouped into weekly Methodist Classes. Bannerman's recollection in his interview was as follows:

Every Wednesday we were given Bible explanation and background. Beside that everyday was begun by devotion in the Assembly Hall by the Principal and the teachers. Sometimes a minister was invited from town to come and help. All of these, imperceptibly passed into me formulating my future love of Christ. (Bannerman 2005)

At Mfantsipim Mr M. D. Rawlton, Yedu's Class Leader, became an important mentor and role model for him. As Bannerman relates in his interview:

He really took time to explain things to us. We read the Bible together, and he understood the Bible, although a layman, but he really enriched my understanding of the Holy Scriptures he helped a lot. He was an honest man, he had a lot of patience, he would take time to explain things to you. Some teachers are very temperamental and they start either abusing you! This man was really a solid, steady person - a Christian gentleman! So you could approach him without any fear whereas with some of the teachers you are afraid even to go near them, or if you see them coming, you dodge! But this man was really a father to us. (Bannerman October, 2005)

While at Cape Coast Bannerman came under the influence of Reverend Gaddiel R. Acquaaah, who later became the first African Chairman of the Gold Coast District. Reverend Acquaaah became a further role model for the young Bannerman (Bannerman 2003: 19-20) and his preaching further deepened and formed the young man's faith. Reverend Acquaaah's

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<sup>31</sup> 'The whole procedure more or less, looks like the children being conscripted into membership of the church. Yet this was quite a normal accepted practice for membership drive in those days. (Bannerman 2003:18-19).

preaching made a deep impression on the young man who began to compare the things he heard with his traditional beliefs. By stages, he moved away from his indigenous roots to accept Christian monotheism (Bannerman 2005).

#### **5.4.3.3.4 CALL TO THE MINISTRY**

During the interview Reverend Bannerman recollected a childhood accident in which he had fallen into a fire while playing with his sister and was seriously injured before his mother was able to rescue him from the flames. Bannerman comments in his interview:

I was about to leave Mfantshipim I said to myself many people will have an accident like this, and die eventually. I could see that God had spared my life and preserved me to do something for him, so I did not decide to become a barrister, or an engineer or any thing, but so that I finish I will dedicate my life to his cause. I decided this at the last form at Mfantshipim.’ (Bannerman 2005; c.f. Bannerman 2003: 26-27)

Clearly, by the final year of his secondary education Yedu’s orientation to Methodist faith was complete as it now provided the framework through which he interpreted the key events of his life and set his goals for the future - even to the extent of identifying himself with John Wesley as a ‘brand plucked from the fire’ (Bannerman 2003: 26).

#### **5.4.3.4 BANNERMAN’S INTEGRATION OF THE METHODIST AND FANTI TRADITIONS**

##### **5.4.3.4.1 IN CHILDHOOD**

One of the features that makes Yedu Bannerman’s person and influence unique is his talent for integrating the Fanti and Methodist traditions. The roots of this ability are probably to be found in some important childhood experiences. Yedu’s uncle took especial care that his nephew did not lose his traditional roots while receiving a Western-style formal education. During his interview Reverend Bannerman recalled how his uncle would present his nephew to the elders of each of the ten ‘gates’ or subgroups of the *ebusua* when he returned home from school. The returning pupil would relate all that had befallen him at school and in turn, the elders would inform the young man of developments in the community during his absence. During these interviews his uncle would correct his speech and mannerisms insisting that he use the appropriate words and gestures. ‘So he would teach me ... how to

address the elderly with the right words. So even the art of speaking was taught me by the *ebusua*' (Bannerman 2005).

An incident in the parental home reinforced the same lesson. At school young Yedu had learnt to eat from an individual plate with cutlery and he was extremely anxious to display his newly developed sophistication to his family so at the meal time he used a spoon to eat from the common bowl while his father and brothers were all using their hands. His father declared, sarcastically, 'It is a great pity that an old crocodile like me has given birth to a sibling who has no stumpy mouth!' (Meaning that his child had no teeth and so could not eat properly!) (Bannerman 2003: 21-22) Bannerman continues (in the Interview):

I did not understand. My elder brother said, 'Don't you hear what Dad has told you?' So I dropped my spoon and used my hand like everyone else. Later on I could not ask my father, but I rather asked my elder brother. 'Why was I not permitted to use my spoon?' He said, 'According to our tradition when your father is using his hands, it is too rude for his son to use a spoon. We are using our hands, why should you use a spoon? That was why our father used that proverb.' So, henceforth in a community like this 'When in Rome...' There is nothing wrong in using a spoon, but before your elders that is prohibited, and that was another lesson I learnt with me. (Bannerman 2005)

As a young man then, Bannerman was forced to reconcile the influence of the western culture he encountered in his school with that of his Fanti family background. It seems that both his uncle and his father worked hard to ensure that while the young man was receiving an advanced formal education he still maintained his appreciation and respect for his Fanti culture and its traditions in the non-formal education they provided.

#### **5.4.3.4.2 FANTI VALUES IN THE METHODIST MINISTRY**

##### **5.4.3.4.2.1 IN THE CHARACTER OF A MINISTER**

Bannerman's commitment to traditional values continued to be reinforced during his years at Seminary in Trinity College, Legon, when he heard Dr. Busia talk about his decision to become a sociologist and study his native Akan culture. Dr. Busia told the story of how when he was visiting a friend in Oda he ignored a lady frying plantain at a roadside stall as he was searching for his friend's house. On failing to find the place he was forced to return to the lady to seek directions. She rebuked him with the words:

When you came and passed here at first you thought that I was a stump of wood! You didn't greet me. Now that you are in distress, you come back to consult me! There is the house, pass this way and go! (Bannerman 2005)

Listening to Busia, Bannerman was strengthened in his resolve to respect and practice the positive values of his Fanti culture. (c.f. Bannerman 2003: 33-34) . He continued:

...this kind of learning more about our own culture, and combining this with a westernised way of life and Christian teaching helped build in me something that I, and I think everyone else, appreciates. Don't ignore, don't neglect your origin, but use it as basis to learn new things. It was more or less the foundation on which I grew up and accepted the Christian teachings comparing, contrasting, and accepting that which I think would be best for my future and the future of my family. (Bannerman 2005).

For Bannerman the humility and obedience instilled into him from his Fanti background have been indispensable in his ministerial career. The respondent related how, in the Akan tradition a young man makes the transition to adulthood with his father establishing him with a livelihood, a home, and a wife. Once this has happened he takes his place in the deliberations of the clan. 'So,' says Bannerman,

you have the cultural procedure on one side, the religious or Christian procedure on the other and I see it as complementary. You have to go stage by stage, step by step, before you become what you want to be. If you are climbing a ladder you must not go to the top and climb down, you must go to the base and climb gradually. These two things are parallels, they are complementary. It has helped me to understand my culture and play my part well, it has also helped me to play my part as a Methodist minister by going through all of these stages of leadership role. (Bannerman 2005)

However, at the beginning of his ministry Bannerman faced some serious tests of his humility and obedience. First of all his posting to the Gambia was one that required great sacrifice on his part. While there he studied for his 'A' Levels in preparation to attend University. The second challenge came when Bannerman wrote to the District Chairman and he was told that he would not be permitted to enter University because the Church had assigned him a ministry in Tema. 'It nearly [sic] break me, but I said, "I must obey".' (Bannerman 2005). Bannerman's decision would seem to have been vindicated because now Tema is a flourishing Methodist diocese which has grown from the seeds of his early work.

#### **5.4.3.4.2.2 IN PASTORAL PRACTICE**

During his second term of service in the Gambia as District Chairman Bannerman inherited responsibility for an old house which required renovation. Through a process of consultation with the District Committee, the Quarterly Meetings and the Leader's Meetings of the various societies and organisations it was agreed that the house should be renovated from the savings held by various organisations and the principle repaid from the rental for the renovated

property. Bannerman stresses that this was not his decision, but that of the Church. This plan was carried through and the funds duly repaid. Nevertheless, questions were raised about this and when the auditor from the Methodist Missionary Society in London paid his annual visit to the Gambia he gave particular attention to this issue. However, everything was resolved when he asked to see the District Minute Book and found that the matter had been duly agreed. Bannerman sees this as an example of the participatory style of leadership he witnessed and learnt from the Palace:

You see chieftaincy is democratic, but sometimes chiefs become very autocratic. On an occasion like this you don't confront him there, but when you go home, you tell him, no this shouldn't be so. Even though you are a chief you must act with regard to the views of your elders, you must try to convince them. This, and what happened to me, are very complementary so I acted out of that background. It was very helpful to me. (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman also found the processes he witnessed in the Palace an invaluable resource in the counselling role he had to play as a Methodist minister as he became 'aware of the procedures of how to settle a case.' Thus when he came to the Methodist ministry Bannerman found that he had already

... got a training as a counsellor, somehow, which would help me to settle case between husband and wife, between two friends, between two church members. This idea of jurisdiction has also become part and parcel of my makeup.' (Bannerman 2005)

It seems that this idea was also present in the subject's ultimately successful work to bring about reconciliation in the troubled Winneba District of the Methodist Church in the 1990s where the influential Winneba Society and some of its prominent members found themselves in conflict with the Conference over the appointment of a District Chairman. Bannerman endured through much conflict and eventually helped to make peace between the District and the Conference (Bannerman 2003: 81-85).

#### **5.4.3.4.2.3 IN THE RITUALS OF THE CHURCH**

Bannerman has also used his insight into traditional culture to bring the traditional Akan naming ceremony (a ceremony common to many of the people groups of Ghana) into the Church. On the eighth day after the birth of a child the *ebusua* gathers at dawn. The *ebusuapanyin* will take the child in his arms and ask the father to name the child. After approving the child's name the uncle will dip his finger three times, first into a tumbler of water and then into a tumbler of rum which are set before him and touch the child's tongue.



Each time he will say: 'If you say water, let it be water! If you say rum, let it be rum.' The child will then be given an appellation to his or her name and will be returned to the father. This concludes the ceremony and refreshments are served.

Bannerman comments:

I have brought this within the teaching of the Church, in that the naming ceremony will no longer take place in the family house, but we invite the family of the mother, the family of the father of the child to come to the church. The church elders will be seated around. And then you ask the family elder of the father 'Would you like to perform this ritual yourself or would you like the minister to do it for you?' The minister is usually asked. You let them understand, in the Methodist Church you don't take strong drink so we are using Coca-Cola instead of red wine or rum, and water as usual. And the minister will take this child from the father and go through the ceremony as usual. Instead of pouring libation we will offer prayer. Sometimes when that is done they ask for us to baptize the child at the same time. And so that will follow. This has become more or less the rule in the Methodist Church. Cultural background, transformed, in a way, into the Church.<sup>32</sup> (Bannerman 2005)

#### **5.4.3.4.3 METHODIST VALUES IN THE *EBUSUA* (BANNERMAN'S ROLE AS *BAATAN*)**

While Bannerman brought many traditional values and practices into the Church he also brought Methodist principles into his *ebusua* when he inherited his uncle's position as *Ebusuabaatan*.<sup>33</sup> Alcohol plays an important part of the proceedings in traditional councils and courts. Spirits are accepted from either side of a dispute as part of the judicial processes of reconciliation and settlement, and for the religious actions of pouring libation to the deities and ancestors. On occasion this could lead to drunkenness in the court of the Traditional Ruler. As a Methodist minister Bannerman's commitment to temperance would not allow him to participate or encourage this practice. Instead Bannerman managed to have his *ebusua* to agree to a practical reform. Instead of expensive *apatashi* gin each member of the council receives a bottle of Malta Guinness when drinks are appropriate and the balance of the monies received from different parties is then shared among the members of the council to support their families. Bannerman concludes:

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<sup>32</sup> Variations of this practice are now quite common in many different churches and denominations in Ghana but Bannerman may well have been its instigator.

<sup>33</sup> The *Ebusuapanyin* is the head of the clan or extended family or clan, but he may appoint an *Ebusuabaatan* to act as his deputy, especially if he wishes to take more of a backseat in family affairs.

And with a sober mind we shall be able to go through the proceedings without becoming boozed! This also has become effective. It is part and parcel of the teaching I'm trying to inculcate in my elders. (Bannerman 2005)

In another, more pastoral, case Bannerman described how one of his grand nieces was suspected of being possessed by one of the local deities and the family wanted to make her a fetish priestess through various rituals of libation and animal sacrifice. He met with the family and established matters for himself and advised them:

If you think that this is the solution, you know that as a Methodist minister, I cannot be part of it... I don't say that this my grand niece, I have abandoned her, but if you think that this is the solution, go ahead, I won't contribute a thing! But from my own point of view, I'll keep on praying for her. Let her come over to me at Tema, I'll pray for her each day. I've found a friend nearby who will send her to a prayer camp. But if you think you cannot agree one hundred per cent with me, carry on! (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman left the family council to their deliberations and returned after three or four weeks when he took the girl to Ajumako (the district capital) and left her with the local Methodist minister who agreed to pray with her. Bannerman summed up the outcome of the case with these words:

The child is now sober! They went and did their ritual, - I had no part in it but I went and did my part by praying for her. It is more or less a clash, but no condemnation. If you condemn it and the girl dies or something, then you are... Let them see your stand, you let them carry on, but this is the part I can play.' (Bannerman 2005)

The most dramatic example of Bannerman's application of Methodist principles in his *ebusua* was the destruction of the clan fetish. As the royal house of the *Omanhene* of the Ampia-Ajumako traditional area Bannerman's matrilineage were keepers of a deity which traditionally guarded the king's stool and provided a focus of medicinal healing for the community with the priestesses acting as herbalists. Bannerman had baptised his mother into the Christian faith in 1951 and she abandoned her priestly activities. The fetish was watched over by two elderly sisters who had also become Christians and its role in the community had been declining for years. At a family conference Bannerman's *ebusua* subgroup or 'gate' agreed that as Christians they could no longer tolerate the presence of the fetish in their family house. Early the next morning, Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2001 Bannerman led a service of 'Removal' in which the contents of the fetish bowl were exposed, scattered and destroyed by fire to the accompaniment of prayers, hymns, and Bible readings.

The wider *ebusua* was highly disturbed when news of this action reached them and so as *Ebusuabaatan* Bannerman convened a meeting with the *ebusuapanyin* and the clan's elders at which he reported on the morning's events. While there were protests that the *Baatan* had acted precipitously without consultation the family accepted his action after he offered to pay a token donation of ₦100,000 Cedis for 'pacification.' The clan elders then sent for schnapps to pour a libation to the ancestors and the spirit of the 'deceased' fetish. The family meeting then ended with Christian prayers (Bannerman 2003:115-126). In reality it seems that all the other members of the Bannerman's *ebusua* were relieved at the departure of the fetish, but none dared to raise the issue themselves because of the influence of these particular traditions.

#### **5.4.3.5 EDUCATING TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR RULERS**

##### **5.4.3.5.1 MINISTRY OF EVANGELISING AND EDUCATING COMMUNITIES**

Bannerman sees the work of the ministry as more than evangelising and nurturing individuals within the Church. It extends to the evangelisation of the community and its culture, especially in the area of traditional leadership. He understands this as a process of slow and persistent persuasion and education rather than imposition and confrontation. The role of the minister is 'Educating and influencing to get away with this superstition that is attached to chieftaincy which is preventing Christians from entering into it with their people.' Bannerman sees this as another stage in evangelisation - it is the evangelisation of 'the community. You have to do it gradually. You will have objections here and there: "Don't do that!" But gradually you will succeed.' Bannerman stressed that it is a quiet process that has to be done through the community and its leaders, especially through the chief: "Yes, through the chief. You mustn't try to impose yourself as the chief, but through the chief, and they expect this from the chief, not knowing that this was you who was doing this." (Bannerman 2005)

##### **5.4.3.5.2 EXAMPLE OF THE AMPIAH-AJUMAKO TRADITIONAL AREA**

###### **5.4.3.5.2.1 TESTIMONIES OF LOCAL RULERS**

Bannerman has consistently applied this policy in his own traditional state of Ampiah-Ajumako. *Nana Amoah III the Onwanehene* identifies him as a role model:

Yes, we were having one Yedu Bannerman he was giving us some advices to be on good behaviour, to serve the Church. On so many occasions we have been going out for Bible classes so it has helped us a lot during our young

time. In fact he was very gentle and humble, he has taken Christianity very serious and he had been teaching us all about the Bible. (Amoah III 2005)

*Nana Twieku III* identifies him as a willing, but not aggressive, counsellor:

I know one Reverend minister who is a retired Methodist minister [Reverend Yedu Bannerman]. He do give counsel, you see. When the chiefs are ready he do go to give. He involve himself, every time we call upon him he is able to come. So there are some certain ministers who are prepared to assist if only the chief is prepared to accept them. (Twieku III 2005).

#### **5.4.3.5.2.2 ROLE AS MENTOR TO NANA ABABIO III, OMANHENE OF THE AMPIAH-AJUMAKO TRADITIONAL AREA**

As *Ebusuabaatan* of the royal *Twidan* clan in his home town Bannerman has played a most influential role in his traditional area. Bannerman is one of the kingmakers of his community and as the new paramount ruler is his direct nephew, the son of his elder sister, Bannerman has the influential role of being the king's closest advisor. When he approached his nephew to become king the nephew indicated his willingness to occupy the stool but expressed his opposition to some of the ceremonies connected with being enstooled, especially the pouring of the blood of a slaughtered sheep on his feet. Bannerman's response was consistent with his view of ministry:

I said, I agree with you, but let us not impose it. Let us bring all the sub chiefs of the twelve towns together and educate them about this. It may take two or three months for them to understand before your enstoolment can take place. Putting blood or shedding blood is against our Christian conviction but it is part of the chieftaincy practice. In order not to recreate some friction education is necessary. So we met these sub chiefs and I started putting this across: 'Most of you in the future will become Christians, and if not in your cases, your nephews who inherit you may become Christians and if we don't start now to make an education or an evolution in the right the time will come when we have no Christian to occupy the stool. But to be a chief is a matter of leadership. When you order a parcel, from the U.K. for instance. It may be a camera in the parcel, but you have to remove the wrappings and throw the wrappings away. What is most important is the camera itself. Our chieftaincy is like that. Leadership is most important, and putting blood on the chief's stool, pouring libation, slaughtering this, are all wrappings and I want us to understand that it is the kernel we are after, and not the shell. So my nephew is ready to accept responsibility for leadership, with his background, with his knowledge and experience and I want you and me to support for this is why we have come together. Let them go and think about it, and in time we come and give ideas.' It took us about three months to discuss and discuss and discuss, and this had been accepted. But you go to other palaces, and this will not be

accepted, because the right education has not been followed. (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman's influence continues now that his nephew is enstooled as *Nana* Ababio III, his nephew relies on him for advice and guidance especially in his public speeches at the major festivals. Bannerman describes his role:

I will examine the issue, and help him to write his address putting in what I think is more helpful. Communal labour, those of you who are part of us and have come and gone, please, we ask you to pay something to help build the market, to help dig the pit latrine. This is acceptable and helps the community to develop. That's how I see it. (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman has clearly implemented his strategy and effected some profound changes in the practice of traditional leadership in his community.

#### **5.4.3.5.2.3 TESTIMONY OF NANA ABABIO III TO BANNERMAN'S INFLUENCE**

King Ababio III confirms the influence and example of his uncle whom he has adopted as his mentor. Firstly, he is impressed by his uncle's faith and piety which he wants to incorporate into his service as a traditional ruler.

By influence Bannerman saw the idolatry of the idol practices of the predecessors. He was there, so he met it. When he grew up he destroyed all that. He told the community, these are not good things, they will not help us. Yedu Bannerman trained as a professional minister of the Gospel and he advises him by the word of God. But he, *Nana*, studies him by conduct, by character, by behaviour, and the steps he takes in doing all things. So, this is the influence that Reverend Bannerman has done on him. He abolished idolatry, so he is also following him, he is walking as Bannerman. His way, is his way. (*Nana* Ababio 2005)

He was also impressed by his uncle's powers of persuasion, his single-mindedness, and perseverance

Reverend Bannerman knows how to speak to people, to have influence over them, to [sic] conform them, and to have them to change from their old habits. So that is what he has learnt from him in his practice. Yedu Bannerman is elderly, he knows so much, especially in the worshipping of God. He doesn't joke with it, he doesn't downplay it, even though he is on pension he is still uphold as if he is still on active service as a minister and that is something he is following. You can see that the uncle suffered in those times to bring change but now we are in the computer era, and things are not so difficult to change. The uncle did so much, every body is mentioning his name, what is it about him so what is it him? So he wants to take the things the uncle did up, so that his name might also be mentioned! Maybe more the uncle!' (*Nana* Ababio 2005)

*Nana* Ababio was especially taken by his uncle's Christ-likeness which he is trying to emulate.

*Nana* responds that they are trying to follow the steps of Christ. It is difficult for them. The Reverend Bannerman has done so much and has such strength of character that he will find it difficult to follow all. He do so much, but he too is doing something. Maybe you wouldn't know it but in future he will outclass the Uncle, or he will be just like the Uncle. That is what is his working on doing now. (*Nana* Ababio 2005)

The uncle's influence over his nephew has obviously been profound. It seems that together they have formed a unique partnership in which they are pioneering a Christian style and practice of traditional rule. This was amply confirmed in *Nana* Ababio's sense of vocation and in the priorities he has set for his reign. Through *Nana* Ababio, Yedu Bannerman is attempting to establish a Christian practice of Fanti kingship<sup>34</sup>. It would be fascinating to see whether *Nana* Ababio is able to set the mould and direction for future generations of rulers.

#### 5.4.3.5.3 BANNERMAN'S INFLUENCE OUTSIDE OF HIS EBUSUA

The respondent has also sought to apply this same, quiet, persuasive strategy to situations outside of his own *ebusua*. Firstly by encouraging Christians from royal lineages to assume or continue in positions of traditional leadership:

A friend of mine was invited to become the *ebusuapanyin* of his clan, and he declined. He said 'No, I don't want to meddle with superficial things.' He had already said 'No' to the people before he had consulted me. If he had consulted me first I would have encouraged him to accept it and use it as an opportunity to educate the people and change things. Some are not prepared to soil their hands with this sort of thing: I'm a Christian and I don't want to go this way. Nothing cultural, nothing traditional to involve me. Some are having that background of thinking. (Bannerman 2005)

The respondent related another case of a Queen Mother from the Akwapim traditional area who visited one day and announced: '*Osofo*,<sup>35</sup> I want to abdicate because I am the leader of the Christ Little Band', [one of the organisations within the Methodist Church], 'When I go home they take me to the idol house or stool-room, they pour libation, they do this, and this conflicts with my conscience.' Bannerman replied 'Don't abdicate but find the minister in that area, or if you like, have them invite me and I will explain things to them, but use your

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<sup>34</sup> The language in which *Nana* Ababio describes his dependence on Christ in his kingship is reminiscent of Bujo's idea of Christ as the Proto-Ancestor or, in Fanti terms, founder of the Black Stool. See Bujo 1992: 77-92

<sup>35</sup> *Osofo* is the equivalent of 'priest' in Twi and is applied to ordained ministers of the various Churches.

influence to correct these practices, but if you abdicate, you give them the freedom to do what they like, and will continue for time immemorial, don't abdicate.' He concluded 'I think as Christians we must slowly, but persistently bring this education' (Bannerman. 2005)

Bannerman indicated that he was also willing to advise ministers who have similar backgrounds and challenges to himself, but in all the years of his long ministry he has only been approached on two occasions. Both concerned Fanti royals confronted with the practice of traditional rituals. He urged his colleagues to adopt his strategy of patient education and to attempt to convince their people themselves.

I tell them, go and explain to them, if you are convinced but I won't come, unless they invite me. I am not going to come and do it for you. That is wrong principle, go and do it yourself. If you are in difficulty and the people ask for further advice. (Bannerman 2005)

Bannerman's boldest step in his 'educational' strategy was to attempt to instigate a dialogue between Methodist ministers and the paramount rulers of Ashanti. He explained that five years ago he was invited to preach at the funeral of the Queen Mother of Koforidua who had been a member of his congregation. He commented to the assembled Ashanti traditional rulers that belief in life after death is a feature of both traditional and Christian belief and he added this appeal to them

Why don't you invite us as Methodist ministers to come and discuss with you and we can see how far we can understand one another and marry the two. *Nana Etusi Yeboah*, paramount chief of *Jadu*, in Ashanti, said, after the service, '*Osofo*, This is a good idea, and one day we shall find an occasion for it.' But four years, and he has not yet reacted. (Bannerman 2005)

#### **5.4.3.6 BANNERMAN AS A MODEL OF INTEGRATION**

Yedu Bannerman is a synthesis of Fanti and Methodist leadership practices all in himself! His royal background gave him profound knowledge and insight into the practices and processes of traditional leadership and the tradition of practical (proverbial) reason that supports it. His practice of leadership, from his own statements, has been informed by the basic virtues of humility and obedience he received from his Fanti background. His work as a counsellor and advisor has been enriched by his skill in the proverbial tradition and his understanding of traditional jurisprudence which have probably enabled him to work his way through the tangle of human relationships, hopes and hurts. When placed in situations of senior leadership Bannerman seems to have easily fallen into the pattern of participatory rule, characteristic of the Fanti council. This manner of leadership has apparently enabled him to

transcend accusations and help to bring peace to different situations. On the other hand Bannerman became a stalwart Methodist through his education and the influence of his ministers and teachers, especially Reverend Samuel Ghartey, under whose preaching he was converted, Reverend Gaddiel R. Acquah, who formed and deepened his faith, and his teacher Mr M. D. Rawlton, who was a mentor, example and even father figure to him. Later in his life and ministry Bannerman gained an international exposure to the Methodist tradition, especially in the United Kingdom where he trained as seaman's and urban missionary, and where he ministered for five years (Bannerman 2003: 36-41, 59-68, 72-83). Quietly, persistently, methodically Bannerman sought to introduce Methodist values into his *ebusua* in the areas of temperance, faith, and spirituality. He has also encouraged others to do the same. Moral traditions and practices do not exist abstractly, they must be embodied in people, or they die. Bannerman is an embodiment of a clearly emerging Fanti Methodist practice of leadership. He is attempting to induct his nephew into this tradition so that it grows and continues. Some of the other individuals in the samples also embody the tradition, but not in as complete a sense as Bannerman, but the fact that this tradition can be identified in specific individuals is ample evidence that it exists, is alive, and is growing.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

### **5.5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This field research has revealed a continuing process of synthesis between Methodist and Fanti moral traditions at the level of leadership practice that confirms the hypothesis that was presented at the beginning of the chapter.

### **5.5.2 TRADITIONAL RULERS**

Most of traditional rulers who spoke to the author were consciously seeking to adapt their style of leadership to contemporary conditions and to the prevailing faith of themselves and their people. This often means that modernisation, setting new tasks and priorities for traditional rule such as development, education, and community relations, is rarely separated from Christianisation as in the minds of these rulers Christian faith brings the 'enlightenment' necessary for modernisation to occur. Traditional rulers were also endeavouring to define their office and role in Christian terms. Some, especially *Nana Ababio III*, are trying to define the sacral legitimacy of their rule in terms of the Christian God rather than the



traditional deities. The exemplary character expected of kings and other rulers is increasingly defined within the framework of the Christian tradition of virtue. The ruler maintains his position through the practice of Christian, rather than traditional virtue.

### **5.5.3 METHODIST MINISTERS FROM ROYAL LINEAGES**

While some traditional rulers are seeking to Christianise their practice their counterparts, the royals in the Methodist ministry are seeking to contextualise their practice of Christian leadership within the framework of Fanti culture. In contrast to traditional leaders the ministers seem to be seeking to redefine the concept, rather than content, of the leadership role of the minister in the light of indigenous leadership practice. This means that the minister's position as an exemplar to the congregation is emphasised and that all decision making must involve a participatory process, just as in the palace. As traditional rulers seek to give Christian content and definition to their leadership roles, and Methodist ministers from royal backgrounds seek to express their Christian leadership through the traditional models that they have imbibed. It is possible to discern a convergence of traditional and Methodist patterns of participatory leadership. The Methodist and Fanti traditions already had clear parallels because of their mutual emphasis on exemplary virtue among leaders and participatory decision making and it seems that these parallels have converged in a synthesis, perhaps made possible by the proximity of the pre-existing parallels.

### **5.5.4 TWIEKUKROM: A WINDOW INTO THE PROCESS OF SYNTHESIS**

The community of Twiekukrom provides a window into this process of synthesis. Christian moral values, virtues, and leadership practices were assimilated into the life of the community and transformed its life over several generations through the life and practice of Methodist Christians. An emphasis on forgiveness brought reconciliation to a divided community. The Methodist emphasis on temperance and industry brought a shift in the community's economic base and resulted in economic empowerment. The concern of the Christians for the future of their children meant that the Church worked to bring education to the community which brought further transformations in its wake. As this process continued Christians have exercised an increasing influence over the community and its leaders. The research encountered this process at the point at which the Christians were beginning to exercise influence from within positions of traditional leadership and were attempting to transform

these leadership roles through the realisation of Christian values and priorities in and through these roles. Again, the reality of the synthesis of Methodist and Fanti practice and tradition is visible.

#### **5.5.5 REVEREND J. YEDU BANNERMAN, A PERSONAL CONFLUENCE OF THE METHODIST AND FANTI MORAL TRADITIONS**

One of the important lessons that MacIntyre has established is that moral traditions are ‘extended conversations’ among people rather than abstract norms. That is to say, they are part of a continuing discussion and debate led by real people confronting real problems. Moral traditions are changed and directed by people in the course of these debates. Often these arguments take place within a person before he initiates that debate with others. This debate is clearly occurring in the mind and conscience of Yedu Bannerman who arrived at his own internal synthesis of Fanti and Methodist traditions which has consistently formed and guided his own leadership practice. Bannerman is also seeking to give external expression to this synthesis by seeking to set a new agenda for the conversation about leadership among Fanti traditional rulers by attempting to redefine traditional leadership in Christian terms. On the other side, he extends the debate about traditional paradigms of leadership into the Methodist ministry by his own practice and by the example and advice he gives to others. In many ways Bannerman himself represents the paradigm of the synthesis of the Fanti Methodist leadership tradition of the hypothesis set out at the beginning of this chapter. If he is able to persuade others to accept his terms of moral discussion, the tradition will become firmly established and identified.

#### **5.5.6 EMERGENCE OF A NASCENT TRADITION**

Taken together all of these cases provide evidence of the emergence and existence of a nascent but living and vital tradition. There is an earnest conversation taking place about the nature of Fanti Christian leadership. At the moment this seems to be occurring only in isolated pockets and thus far the tradition has not fully come to a sense of its own identity. However, there appear, to be individuals, such as Yedu Bannerman who are already articulating that identity in a highly coherent manner. If these individual conversations continue, and influential persons can facilitate their definition and spread, then the wider Christian tradition will be enriched by the new insights brought into the practice of Christian

leadership by the debates of Fanti Christians. On the other side the Fanti tradition will also be enriched through the incarnation of the leadership of the Christ, the Servant of all peoples.

## **CONCLUSION: NEW MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT**

### **6.1 THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY**

#### **6.1.1 REVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT**

The argument of this thesis began with the question of how best to understand the contextualisation of Christian ethics in a West African context. The single difficulty in answering this question was a lack of any adequate model for understanding such a process. Many moral theologians regard moral values as universal and so for them the question would not even arise. It was suggested that Alasdair MacIntyre's moral theory might be such a model as it recognised the diversity of moral traditions while at the same time identifying their common features of a supreme good supported by a range of virtues based upon sustaining practices. This model was examined within the context of the discussion by African moral philosophers and theologians about the nature of ethics in African culture. MacIntyre's theory allowed the identification and analysis of these traditions while other approaches, such as those inspired by Kant, had no basis for even recognising them [1.2.4]. Accordingly, a number of African thinkers have either adopted MacIntyre's theory or developed very similar models. In the course of this discussion it was also found that MacIntyre provided a helpful account of the interaction between cultures and that the contextualisation of Christian ethics could be understood in terms of a synthesis between a particular Christian tradition, and the particular local tradition it encounters. Having established the viability and applicability of MacIntyre's model for the African context it was then used as a heuristic tool to study the Akan and Methodist moral traditions and their interaction within the Fanti-lands. It was found through historical study that a synthesis had occurred between the Fanti and Methodist traditions at the level of leadership practice. Empirical research established that this synthesis was continuing among Fanti Methodist ministers and traditional rulers.

#### **6.1.2 FINDINGS OF RESEARCH**

The argument and research presented in this thesis have produced a number of important findings concerning the value of MacIntyre's model of ethics, the cross-cultural study of ethics, especially with regard to the interaction of moral traditions, and specific developments within the traditions that were the particular focus of investigation.

#### **6.1.2.1 THE VALIDITY AND UTILITY OF MACINTYRE'S MODEL OF ETHICS**

In the first place, the research presented in this thesis provides a significant demonstration of the validity of MacIntyre's model. This model is seen to be useful in the analysis of non-western moral traditions in Africa. It allowed for the identification and delineation of the Akan and Methodist moral traditions and also provided a framework to consider their interaction. This achievement provides strong support for the veracity of MacIntyre's model and its considerable utility as a cross-cultural tool for the study of diverse moral traditions.

#### **6.1.2.2 A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

A new, and perhaps for the first time, satisfactory basis for understanding the contextualisation of Christian ethics has been established. Moral contextualisation should be understood as the interaction, and hopefully creative, synthesis between a particular Christian moral tradition and the moral traditions this Christian tradition encounters in the locus of its engagement and mission. This new insight will allow for the study, evaluation, and sensitive strategizing of ethical encounter and contextualisation.

#### **6.1.2.3 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN FANTI AND METHODIST MORAL TRADITIONS**

The validity of conceiving of the contextualisation of Christian ethics in terms of a creative synthesis between moral traditions is further sustained by the historical and empirical evidence of a synthesis between the Fanti and Methodist traditions in the area of leadership practice. This process has been underway in both traditions throughout the period of their encounter and has manifested itself in various ways including Freeman's leadership style, the democratic impulses of the Fanti Confederation, the mediation skills of Methodist ministers from Fanti royal lineages, and the peacemaking of Fanti traditional rulers with a Methodist background or affiliation. There is even some evidence, furnished by Reverend Bannerman [4.4.3.6], and *Nana* Ababio and *Nana* Kenie [4.3.2.3], of the beginning of some kind of reconciliation between the *teloi* of the Fanti and Methodist traditions in terms of exemplary leadership (understood as forms of holiness and perfection) being the means of reconciling the community and enhancing its life after the pattern of Christ who now becomes the proto-Ancestor for both the Church and the community.

## **6.2 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The findings identified above generate an important range of implications concerning the cross-cultural study of ethics, the further contextualisation of Christian ethics, the practices of the Ghana Methodist Church, and for the teaching of Christian ethics, especially in cross-cultural situations.

### **6.2.1 THE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF ETHICS**

#### **6.2.1.1 A NEW MODEL FOR THE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF ETHICS**

The results of the research of this thesis have established MacIntyre's moral theory as an important heuristic model for the study of moral traditions across cultures. This model will enable a more coherent comparison of moral traditions both in terms of their differences and in terms of their commonalities. Differences can be correctly identified arising from different understandings of the highest good, and the weight and orientation that are subsequently given to different virtues and practices. Commonalities can be likewise identified in terms of the shared structure of a moral tradition and in terms of parallel practices and virtues. MacIntyre's model will also allow, as demonstrated in this thesis, the study of the interaction and mutual transformation of moral traditions as they engage with each other.

#### **6.2.1.2 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Using MacIntyre's model as a tool for comparative ethics has a number of implications for further research. First of all further work needs to be done on the interaction of the Fanti and Methodist moral traditions. This thesis basically establishes a principle which needs to be investigated further. Is a synthesis occurring between other practices in these traditions, for example between family and *ebusua* practices? Is there a growing rapprochement between the highest good of the Fanti and Methodist traditions so that it really does become possible to talk about a *unique* Fanti Methodist moral tradition? Secondly, there is scope for parallel studies to investigate the manner in which other moral traditions have also interacted with the Fanti tradition such as the different Muslim moral traditions present in Fanti-land. Thirdly, it is of course possible to go much further and suggest that this work might be a starting point and a pattern for similar studies in any context where an encounter and interaction between different moral traditions is taking place.

## **6.2.2 THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

### **6.2.2.1 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

MacIntyre's model first of all gives Christian moralists a tool by which they may first identify, analyse and evaluate their own moral traditions. This is an essential first step in any engagement with another moral tradition and may well be salutary in that the exercise of analysing the goal, practices and virtues of a particular tradition may well expose weaknesses from the perspective of the wider discourse on Christian ethics. It is difficult to engage in conversation with another moral tradition without first understanding the strengths and weaknesses of one's own moral argument. Secondly, this model will allow the moral theologian to trace the contours of the moral tradition or traditions of their cultural context so that they can correctly understand and appreciate the arguments and concerns of the tradition with which they wish to engage.

### **6.2.2.2 MAPPING AND STRATEGY**

The process of interaction and synthesis described in this work between Fanti and Methodist traditions was haphazard and intuitive and probably even hidden from many of the participants. However, the model recommended here offers the possibility of mapping the practices and virtues of moral traditions to establish where the best points of engagement and discourse between them might be, and then to monitor the process of this interaction. The essential task in this process would be to identify the areas in which the traditions in dialogue might best enrich each other and perhaps generate a new tradition that preserves the strengths of both. An example of such an exercise is to be found at the end of Chapter Two [2.5] MacIntyre's model creates the possibility of making informed strategic decisions about the direction and path of the engagement and discussion between traditions that could empower moral pioneers like J. Yedu Bannerman [4.4.3] who are seeking to bring about the kind of synthesis between the Christian and their own local moral tradition that would qualify as a good contextualisation of Christian ethics in the terms discussed in Chapter One. [1.3-1.4]

## **6.2.3 THE PRACTICES OF FANTI METHODISM**

These brief comments concerning contextualisation raise a number of issues with regard to the engagement of Methodism with the Fanti moral tradition especially in concerning the *ebusua* and *nananom* practices.

### **6.2.3.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FANTI *EBUSUA***

#### **6.2.3.1.1 ESTABLISHING CHRISTIAN PRACTICE WITHIN MATRILINEAL FAMILY STRUCTURES**

Due to Wesley's ambiguous attitude to marriage and his draconian views on the nurture and education of children the practices of marriage and family life were never great strengths of Methodism [3.2.3.3]. It was also from this fairly weak base that Methodism sought to oppose marriage and family as practiced by the Fanti *Ebusua*. This led to a number of futile confrontations, especially over traditional marriage rites and polygamy which only served to weaken Methodism [4.4.7, 4.6.6]. A far better policy would have been to have engaged more constructively with the Fanti *ebusua*. The *ebusua* has valuable lessons to teach Methodism in the mutual support of family members, and particularly in the raising of children. Methodism, for its part should have sought to Christianise the *ebusua* practice from within and encouraged the rise of a Christian *ebusua* rather than emphasising the patriarchal nuclear family. Christian values and virtues are not enshrined in any particular structures but largely in the manner in which the structures function. Moral engagement in this area needed to take the form of a dialogue over how the matrilineal family structures of Fanti could best express Christian values, rather than seeking their replacement. Such an engagement remains a possibility, as traditional family structures seem to have maintained their resilience in many places.

#### **6.2.3.1.2 SEEKING CHRISTIAN LEADERS FROM THE FANTI *EBUSUA***

A more creative engagement with the Fanti *ebusua* would have also led to an increase in the availability of able people to the Methodist Church as leaders, both lay and clergy. A Christian oriented *ebusua* would be more likely to encourage and support its able young men and women to enter the Christian ministry as a noble vocation on a par with any other, including that of traditional rule. Again, it is still possible to address this situation but the Church's appeal for leadership should not simply be addressed to the young people it wishes to recruit, but also to their elders and family heads in a deliberate and considered manner [4.6.3]. Special attention should be given to the elders of royal lineages as the non-formal education given to some of their young people in preparation for traditional rule also provides an invaluable resource for Christian leadership [5.3.2.2.1].



### **6.2.3.2 ENGAGING WITH THE *NANANOM* PRACTICE**

#### **6.2.3.2.1 HONOURING THE *NANANOM***

In order to engage more creatively with the Fanti moral tradition Methodism needs to find a way to engage more creatively with the *Nananom* who are at the head of the Fanti moral vision [2.4]. While Methodist theology prohibits any worship or even veneration of ancestors Methodism certainly has its roster of saints and heroes such as John and Charles Wesley, Thomas Birch Freeman and Kwesi Dickson who are honoured for their contribution to the life of the Church. At the very least Methodism can, in a similar fashion, encourage and support the commemoration of those who have founded and prospered their communities and families.

#### **6.2.3.2.2 SUPPORTING AND TRANSFORMING THE *NANANOM* PRACTICE**

It is possible for the Methodist Church to go even further and positively support the *Nananom* practice. The sacrificial service of the neighbour and the community are an important element in the Methodist tradition just as they are for the Fanti tradition. Methodists should be encouraged to serve their neighbours, their community, and humanity through acts of leadership and good works under the inspiration of noble examples so that they might become examples themselves. This is compatible with both the Methodist practice of benevolence and the Fanti *Nananom* practice. For traditional Fantis it is an expression of the leadership and service that promotes the highest good of securing the balance and increase of the life of the community [2.4.6] while for Methodists it is an expression of the holiness and love that are the true fulfilment of the *Imago Dei* [3.2.1.4]. Indeed, it is possible to envision a convergence between these two practices and their respective goals in which the *Nananom* practice might be transformed with a new content from the Christian tradition, especially if Christ was accepted as the highest example and exemplar of love and service.

#### **6.2.3.2.3 SUPPORTING TRADITIONAL RULERS**

It is within this context that the Church could offer greater support to those of its members who become traditional rulers. The office of traditional ruler needs to be understood more as an opportunity for Christian social benevolence and less as a trap of polygamy and idolatry. The Methodist Church would do well to develop a specific pastoral ministry tailored to the needs of traditional rulers such as that modelled by Yedu Bannerman. [5.4.3.5] Such a

ministry would assist these rulers in their particular religious and moral dilemmas and draw them out of their isolated situations into a wider fellowship in which they could begin to develop new patterns of Christian traditional leadership [5.5.2, 5.6]. The Methodist Church could also place its considerable experience in education and development at the disposal of its members who serve in this office and be partners with them in enhancing the life of their communities.

#### **6.2.3.2.4 CHRIST AS THE GREAT ANCESTOR**

The basis for this engagement and possible transformation of the *Nananom* practice is to present Christ, as Bujo suggests [1.3.1.4], as the great Hero or proto-Ancestor who by his life of loving service and his sacrificial death has brought the ultimate increase of life through his Resurrection from the dead. In doing this he has laid a new foundation of life, not only for the Church, but for every human community. By his life, death and resurrection, Christ has become the Great *Nana* and men and women who would be true *nananom* themselves must likewise seek the increase of life through loving service. In this all, from the ordinary family member to the *Omanhene*, can find the purpose of their lives and vocations.

#### **6.2.3.3 LEARNING FROM THE NANANOM PRACTICE**

##### **6.2.3.3.1 TRADITIONAL PROCESSES OF MEDIATION**

Not only must the Ghana Methodist Church engage with the *Nananom* practice but it must also learn from it for its own practice of leadership. Empirical research discovered that those ministers who learnt skills of discrimination and mediation from observing proceedings in the ruler's palace found themselves better placed to resolve the pastoral problems of their members in a culturally appropriate manner. Clearly, this would be a desirable skill for every minister. The Church would do well to ensure that its ministers received some form of orientation to this skill through case studies, a period of observation in the palace of a traditional ruler, or through a course of instruction by an experienced traditional ruler or *okyeame*. The second of these options would probably be most beneficial.

##### **6.2.3.3.2 PROVERBS AND RHETORIC**

A number of the respondents, both among the ministers and traditional rulers, stressed the value of the Akan proverbial tradition and the practical reason it embodied [2.3.3.2].

Bannerman went even further and stressed the importance of the principles of traditional rhetoric he had learnt from both his uncle and his father who were *akyeame* in the courts of their respective rulers. There would also be great advantages in making these skills available to every minister and experienced *akyeame* should be sought who might be willing to educate Christian leaders in traditional methods of debate, public speech, and the use of proverbs. This would be wholly appropriate as a Christian minister is ultimately an *okyeame* of the Christ Paramount Ruler of all!

## **6.2.4 TEACHING CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

### **6.2.4.1 TRADITIONS RATHER THAN ISSUES**

The primary lesson for the teaching and learning of Christian Ethics that should be drawn from this work is that courses in Christian Ethics must first of all be an induction into the moral discourse and practice of the Christian tradition as expressed in one of its component communities rather than an abstract discussion of issues. The tradition provides the basis that determines the weight that will be given to different problems and the encompassing framework of ends, virtues, and practices within which they will be resolved. In order to address particular issues students need to be aware of the ground on which they stand, the horizon to which they aspire, and the character and stature they wish to attain. To attempt to resolve issues without this is to attempt to place bricks in the air! Christian ethics must first of all be a voyage of self-discovery in which students discover the contours of the moral tradition to which they are heirs as part of the community of faith.

### **6.2.4.2 TRADITIONS IN CONTEXT**

The study of the Christian tradition by itself is insufficient. It is clear from this study that the Christian tradition rarely, if ever, exists in a vacuum by itself. It always has an interlocutor, another tradition with which it must engage, argue and debate; as a partner, as a rival, or even as both. The study of Christian Ethics must therefore include the study of the other moral traditions that the students will encounter in their context. Such knowledge is necessary if students are to understand and respond to the contrasting moral agendas that surround them. This knowledge will also serve to make the arguments and contentions surrounding different 'issues' comprehensible as they usually relate to the different way that traditions approach and resolve these problems, rather than the problems themselves.

#### **6.2.4.3 THE MISSIOLOGICAL FOCUS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

Comfort in the practice of one's tradition and understanding of the traditions of others are insufficient by themselves. Christian Ethics is also missiological, as it seeks to interact and reach a synthesis with the moral traditions it encounters. Its students must be equipped not simply to understand the traditions of their context but also to engage with them and address both their issues and priorities through the creative use of the resources of the Christian tradition. Their task is to build bridges of respect and partnership through which the reconciliation of Christ might be expressed so that He might be all in all.

## GLOSSARY OF TWI WORDS USED IN THE TEXT AND NOTES

The Fanti usage is largely followed in the glossary with Asante usage, where it differs, given in parentheses

<b><i>Aberwa</i></b>	(Asante: <i>aberewa</i> ) ‘Old Lady’ consulted, sometimes metaphorically, as a source of wisdom over difficult issues.
<b><i>Abosom</i></b>	(Plural of <i>obosom</i> ) Lesser deities or divinities subject to God ( <i>Nyame</i> ) but most generally worshipped.
<b><i>Abowmu bodze</i></b>	(Lit. ‘knocking fee’) A donation paid by a suitor to gain permission to enter his intended bride’s family house and officially identify himself to her family.
<b><i>Adae</i></b>	(Lit. ‘resting’.) A festival celebrated by the Ashantis commemorating their royal ancestors and heroes.
<b><i>Adom</i></b>	Grace, favour.
<b><i>Adontenhene</i></b>	See <i>Ohene</i> below
<b><i>Akwambo</i></b>	(Lit. ‘Clearing the paths’.) A festival celebrated by the Fantis commemorating their migration from the Sahel to the coastal region of West Africa.
<b><i>Akyeamehene</i></b>	The senior Okyeame or Linguist in the ruler’s palace.
<b><i>Asantehene</i></b>	Paramount ruler of the Asante or Ashanti section of the Akan people.
<b><i>Ahoofe</i></b>	Great beauty, extremely beautiful.
<b><i>Akontan sekan</i></b>	(Lit. ‘brother-in-law’s knife’) A gift given by a groom to his bride’s brothers in recognition of their power of protection over their sister.
<b><i>Anobuensa</i></b>	(Lit. ‘mouth opening drink’) A donation paid by a suitor to his intended bride’s father whose acceptance of the gift represents his agreement for the suitor to court his daughter.
<b><i>Asaase Yaa</i></b>	The Akan goddess of the earth and fertility.
<b><i>Asafo</i></b>	Company of warriors or militia, usually composed of the men of the community.
<b><i>Asamando</i></b>	(Asante usage. The Fanti usage is <i>samanadze</i> .) The world of the spirits and departed ancestors which is similar to the temporal world and connected to it.
<b><i>Awar</i></b>	(Asante <i>aware</i> ) The act or state of marriage.

<b><i>Baatan</i></b>	See <i>Ebusuabaatan</i> .
<b><i>Bone</i></b>	Bad
<b><i>Bonfakye</i></b>	Forgiveness of sins or evil deeds.
<b><i>Bowdotowa</i></b>	(Lit. Tobacco for the early morning.) A gift given by a groom to the father of his bride.
<b><i>Ebusua</i></b>	(Asante <i>abusua</i> ) Matrilineal family or kindred.
<b><i>Ebusuabaatan</i></b>	The senior family elder who acts as the deputy to the <i>Ebusuapanyin</i> and may actually take a more active role in many of the family's day to day affairs.
<b><i>Ebusuapanyin</i></b>	(Asante: <i>Abusuapanyin</i> ) Ruling elder of the family.
<b><i>Gye Nyame!</i></b>	Unless God!
<b><i>Mogya</i></b>	Blood, which a person is believed to inherit from their mother.
<b><i>Mpanyimfo</i></b>	Plural of <i>Opanyin</i> – a number of senior elders.
<b><i>Nana</i></b>	This word has different usages and may designate a grandparent or ancestor, a grandchild; a title of respect or honour in addressing rulers.
<b><i>Nananom</i></b>	Plural of <i>Nana</i> often indicating the community of elders and ancestors.
<b><i>Nifahene</i></b>	(Lit. 'Right hand chief.') The deputy of the paramount ruler who rules in his absence. In times of war, the <i>Nifahene</i> would command the right-hand flank of the army in the Akan military formation.
<b><i>Nkosohene</i></b>	(Lit. 'Development chief.') Elder or ruler responsible for social and economic development in the community. This was a 'service' rather than a 'royal' position on the council of the traditional ruler so persons would usually be appointed to this position rather than succeed their maternal uncles.
<b><i>Nkrabea</i></b>	The individual's destiny or 'message' from God.
<b><i>Nton</i></b>	(Asante <i>ntoro</i> ) spirit or energy than a person receives from their father.
<b><i>Nyame</i></b>	(Asante <i>Onyame</i> ) The Supreme Being, the Creator.
<b><i>Nyansafo</i></b>	Wise people.
<b><i>Obosomfo</i></b>	A priest or priestess of a deity in Akan traditional religion
<b><i>Obra</i></b>	Manner of life, conduct, or behaviour.

<b><i>Odikro</i></b>	(Asante <i>odekro</i> ) Owner or ruler of a town or village.
<b><i>Ohemmaa</i></b>	‘Queen mother’, usually an elderly and respected woman within the royal lineage of the paramount rulers of the community or state.
<b><i>Ohene</i></b>	Ruler of a major town, district or autonomous section of a state. The particular domain of a ruler is often reflected in his title e.g. <i>Tweikukromheme</i> , <i>Onwanehene</i> , <i>Asantehene</i> .
<b><i>Okra</i></b>	A person’s soul that pre-exists their birth.
<b><i>Okyeame</i></b>	A speaker, reporter, or interpreter. One of the elders of a community often called a Linguist who has the office of being the spokesperson and informant of the ruler and his council.
<b><i>Oma</i></b>	Giving, – generosity.
<b><i>Omanhene</i></b>	Ruler of a traditional Akan ‘state’ ( <i>Oman</i> ), or in present usage ‘area’.
<b><i>Onwanhene</i></b>	See <i>Ohene</i> .
<b><i>Opanyin</i></b>	A respected senior elder of an <i>ebusua</i> or community.
<b><i>Osofo</i></b>	A priest or minister of God. This word is given as a title to Christian leaders.
<b><i>Pa</i></b>	Good
<b><i>Suban</i></b>	A person’s nature or character.
<b><i>Subanpa</i></b>	Good or strong character.
<b><i>Sunsum</i></b>	The personality, soul, or spirit of a man that he passes onto his children.
<b><i>Twidan</i></b>	One of the ancient family or clan groupings among the Akan which are scattered among the Akan people. Different clans would constitute the royal lineage in various communities depending upon the circumstances of settlement and history that might establish their precedence over other families.
<b><i>Tambobaa</i></b>	A gift from a groom to the mother of his bride
<b><i>Tsiadze</i></b>	A donation paid by the suitor to the bride’s family to place a legal seal on the marriage sometimes described as ‘bridewealth.’
<b><i>Tsinsa</i></b>	(Lit. ‘head-drink’) A donation paid by a suitor’s father to the father of the intended bride and indicates a commitment to proceed with the marriage with the approval of both families. This is usually in the form

of alcoholic drink.

***Tweikukuromhene***    See *Ohene*.

***Yi ma***            Taking and giving: reciprocity.



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**CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IN A WEST AFRICAN CONTEXT:  
A STUDY OF THE INTERACTION AND SYNTHESIS OF METHODIST  
AND FANTI MORAL TRADITIONS AS A MODEL FOR THE  
CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

**BY**

**BRIAN KEITH JENNINGS**

**APPENDICES**

## SECTION I: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND NOTES

### APPENDIX ONE

#### RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN METHODIST AND AKAN PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP; INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEETINGS WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS

Rev. Brian Jennings, M.Phil.

#### INTRODUCTION

This guide is an introduction to a field research project being conducted by the Reverend Brian Jennings (M.Phil.) of Ghana Christian College and Seminary in connection with his doctoral research programme with the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. This programme seeks to explore the interaction between the Akan and Methodist moral traditions, especially in the Fanti lands, as a model for understanding the relationship between incoming Christian moral traditions and indigenous African moral traditions, especially with regard to the degree to which they influence and change each other. Significant interaction seems to have occurred at the level of leadership practice as evidenced by Thomas Freeman's adoption of Akan leadership practices, the democratic features of the Constitution of the Fanti Confederation (largely written by Fanti Methodist laymen), and the relatively high incidence of practicing Methodist chiefs among the Fantis prior to 1914.

The purpose of this present research project is to discover whether this interaction between Methodist and Akan leadership principles and practices continues today and, if so, the manner in which the two traditions continue to enrich each other. To ascertain this the researcher intends to interview a number of Akan traditional rulers who are practising Methodists and a number of Methodist ministers who come from Akan royal lineages. It is preferable that subjects be Fanti because of the long history of the Methodist Church in the Fanti lands.

The goal of the interviews is to establish the degree to which traditional rulers from a Methodist background and Methodist ministers from a royal background combine Methodist and traditional principles in their practice of leadership.

The method followed in these interviews will be that of the guided interview. In contrast to the structured interview which relies on 'closed questions' that admit only a few possible responses, the guided interview relies on more open questions around a number of issues that give greater freedom of response to respondents and allows the possibility of exploring issues with greater flexibility and depth. It would be most helpful it were possible to record these interviews (which is usual practice in such research). The interviews will focus on the following areas:

#### AREAS TO BE ENCOMPASSED IN INTERVIEWS

- 1. Formation** Respondents will be asked about their formation as leaders through their childhood experiences in family and school (especially where these had a strong Methodist orientation) and through their involvement in the Methodist Society in Class meetings, in other groups, and in any leadership roles.
- 2. Methodist Principles** Respondents will be asked to give their views on Methodist principles such as the most important moral lessons they felt they have learnt from Methodism, the virtues they believe Methodism encourages, the main lessons about

leadership they feel they have learnt from their Methodist backgrounds, and the areas in which Methodist principles agree, or disagree with traditional values.

**3. Role of Traditional ruler** The respondents' views of the contemporary role of a traditional ruler will be sought, particularly regarding the goals or ends of that role. The issue of the relationship of the traditional ruler to the Christian faith and to the Christian community will also be raised and, if they perceive there are a greater or lesser number of Christian traditional rulers now than in the past, and if so what the reasons for this might be.

**4. Practice of leadership:** Respondents will be asked to discuss their practice of traditional leadership by identifying the most important virtues and principles necessary for traditional leadership, the sources of guidance and authority they use in decision making, the place and influence of Methodist principles and their Methodist background upon their practice of leadership, and whether they have found any areas of conflict between their practice of traditional leadership and their Christian faith.

**5. Attitude of the Church:** Respondents will be invited to give their view of the response of the Church to their role - where the Church seems supportive or antagonistic to their role as traditional leaders and to identify the steps the Church might take to encourage them in that role.

## APPENDIX TWO

### **RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN METHODIST AND AKAN PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP;INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEETINGS WITH METHODIST MINISTERS FROM A ROYAL BACKGROUND**

**Reverend Brian Jennings, M.Phil.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This guide is an introduction to a field research project being conducted by the Reverend Brian Jennings (M.Phil.) of Ghana Christian College and Seminary in connection with his doctoral research programme with the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. This programme seeks to explore the interaction between the Akan and Methodist moral traditions, especially in the Fanti lands, as a model for understanding the relationship between incoming Christian moral traditions and indigenous African moral traditions, especially with regard to the degree to which they influence and change each other. Significant interaction seems to have occurred at the level of leadership practice as evidenced by Thomas Freeman's adoption of Akan leadership practices, the democratic features of the Constitution of the Fanti Confederation (largely written by Fanti Methodist laymen), and the relatively high incidence of practicing Methodist chiefs among the Fantis prior to 1914.

The purpose of this present research project is to discover whether this interaction between Methodist and Akan leadership principles and practices continues today and, if so, the manner in which the two traditions continue to enrich each other. To ascertain this, the researcher intends to interview a number of Akan traditional rulers who are practising Methodists and a number of Methodist ministers who come from Akan royal lineages. It is preferable that subjects be Fanti because of the long history of the Methodist Church in the Fanti lands.

The goal of the interviews is to establish the degree to which traditional rulers from a Methodist background and Methodist ministers from a royal background combine Methodist and traditional principles in their practice of leadership.

The method followed in these interviews will be that of the guided interview. In contrast to the structured interview which relies on 'closed questions' that admit only of a few possible responses, the guided interview relies on more open questions around a number of issues that give greater freedom of response to respondents and allows the possibility of exploring issues with greater flexibility and depth. It would be most helpful if it were possible to record these interviews (which is usual practice in such research). The interviews will focus on the following areas:

#### **AREAS TO BE ENCOMPASSED IN INTERVIEWS**

**1. Formation** Respondents will be asked about their formation as leaders through their childhood experiences in family and school (especially where these had a strong Methodist orientation) and through their involvement in the Methodist Society in Class meetings, in other groups, and in any leadership roles.

**2. Akan Principles** Respondents will be asked to give their views on Akan traditional principles such as the most important moral lessons they felt they have learnt from their traditional background in a royal lineage, the virtues they believe the Akan tradition encourages, the main lessons about leadership they feel they have learnt from their Akan backgrounds, and the areas in which Akan traditional principles agree, or disagree with Methodist values.

**3. Role of a Methodist Minister** The respondents' views of the contemporary role of a Methodist Minister will be sought, particularly regarding the goals or ends of that role. The issue of the relationship of a Christian minister to the Akan tradition and to the *ebusua* will also be raised and, if they perceive that there are greater or lesser number of Methodist ministers from royal lineages now than in the past, and if so what the reasons for this might be.

**4. Practice of leadership:** Respondents will be asked to discuss their practice of Christian leadership by identifying the most important virtues and principles necessary for Church leadership, the sources of guidance and authority they use in decision making, the place and influence of Akan traditional principles and their Akan background upon their practice of leadership, and whether they have found any areas of conflict between their practice of Christian leadership and their Akan traditional heritage.

**5. Attitude of the Ebusua:** Respondents will be invited to give their view of the response of the *ebusua* to their role - where the *ebusua* seems supportive or antagonistic their role as Christian leaders and to identify the steps the *ebusua* might take to encourage them in that role.

## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN METHODIST AND AKAN PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP; SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR MEETINGS WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

**Rev. Brian Jennings, M.Phil.**

Respondents will be asked to say a little about themselves at the beginning of the interview.

#### **A. FORMATION**

1. How, and for how long, has your family been involved in the Methodist Church?
2. What role did Methodist faith play in your family when you were young?
3. Did you attend a Methodist School? If so what was your overwhelming impression of the school?
4. What role did you play in the Methodist Society as a young person? Please describe any particular lesson you felt that you learnt at this time.

#### **B. METHODIST PRINCIPLES**

5. Please describe the kind of personal character that Methodism encourages.
6. What, if any, are the most important moral lessons do you feel you have learnt from Methodism?
7. Are there any experiences or principles from your Methodist background that have assisted you in your leadership as a traditional ruler?
8. In your experience, are there any areas in which Methodist moral teaching and practice conflicts with traditional values?

#### **C. ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS**

9. Briefly describe the role that you feel traditional rulers should play in contemporary Ghana.
10. What is the most important thing a traditional ruler should do?
11. Describe the way you believe that traditional rulers should relate to the Christian community.
12. Is the number of Christians who are traditional rulers greater or lesser now, than in the past? Why do you think this is so?

#### **D. PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP**

13. What is the ideal character of a traditional ruler?
14. What virtues have you found most important in your exercise of leadership?
15. What considerations guide you in your decision making?
16. Describe the ways, if any, your Methodist/Christian background has influenced your conduct as a traditional ruler.
17. Are there any aspects of the office of traditional ruler that you feel may be in tension with Christian faith? How do you resolve any such tensions?

#### **E. ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH**

18. What do you perceive to be the attitude of the Methodist Church to those of its members who are traditional rulers?
19. Have you found the Methodist Church at i) the local level and ii) the national level to be antagonistic or supportive of your role as a traditional ruler?
20. What things could the Methodist Church do to support you in your practice as a Christian in the office of a traditional ruler?



## **APPENDIX FOUR**

### **RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN METHODIST AND AKAN PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP; SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR MEETINGS WITH METHODIST MINISTERS**

**Reverend Brian Jennings, M.Phil.**

Respondents will be asked to say a little about themselves at the beginning of the interview.

#### **A. FORMATION**

1. How, and for how long, has your family been involved in the Methodist Church?
2. What role did Methodist faith play in your family when you were young?
3. Did you attend a Methodist School? If so what was your overwhelming impression of the school.
4. What role did you play in the Methodist Society as a young person? Please describe any particular lesson you felt that you learnt at this time.

#### **B. AKAN PRINCIPLES**

5. Please describe the kind of personal character that the Akan *ebusua* encourages.
6. What, if any, are the most important moral lessons do you feel you have learnt from your family background?
7. Are there any experiences or principles from your background in a royal lineage that has assisted you in your leadership as a Methodist Minister?
8. In your experience, are there any areas in which traditional moral teaching and practice conflicts with Methodist values?

#### **C. ROLE OF A METHODIST MINISTER**

9. Briefly describe the role that you feel Methodist ministers should play in contemporary Ghana.
10. What is the most important thing a Methodist minister should do?
11. Describe the way you believe that Methodist ministers should relate to the values and practices of the Akan tradition.
12. Is the number of Methodist ministers from a royal lineage greater or lesser now, than in the past? Why do you think this is so?

#### **D. PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP**

13. What is the ideal character of a Methodist minister?
14. What virtues have you found most important in your exercise of leadership?
15. What considerations guide you in your decision making?
16. Describe the ways, if any, your background as a member of a royal lineage has influenced your conduct as a Methodist minister?
17. Are there any aspects of the office of a Methodist minister that you feel may be in tension with the Akan tradition? How do you resolve any such tensions?

#### **E. ATTITUDE OF THE *EBUSUA***

18. What do you perceive to be the general attitude of the Akan *ebusua* to those of their members who become minister, especially if they come from a royal lineage?
19. Have you found your *ebusua* to be antagonistic or supportive of your role as a Methodist minister?

20. What things could Akan ebusua do to support their members who are in the (Methodist) ministry?

## **APPENDIX FIVE**

**This Appendix not available in the Web version**

## APPENDIX SIX

### NOTES ON THE AKWAMBO FESTIVAL

**By Charles Kobina Biney, Personnel Officer, Ajumako Esiam Eyan District Administration.**

#### THE AKWAMBO FESTIVAL

Akwambo, which literally means “clearing a path” is an annual festival that is celebrated by a section of the Fantis. It is mostly celebrated the Borbor Fantes i.e. Gomoas, Ajumakos, Bremans, Enyans, Aboras, and Agonas. It is celebrated in remembrance of the ancestors of the Fantis who led them during their migration to their present places.

The festival is preceded by an annual ritual called *Eguatodo* which means cleansing the stools of the ancestors. During this time, the chiefs and elders for once enter the ancestral room which contains all the stools of the departed kings.

They offer sacrifices and pour libation to the ancestors for protection and guidance.

During the *Akwambo* festival, the people begin by clearing the path they led to the fetish where they believe their god lives.

A day before the festival they visit the fetish along the paths they cleared. Then, led by the chief fetish priest, they enter the shrine and offer sacrifices and pour libation to the gods of the land and the ancestors.

On the day of the *Akwambo*, the people process through the principal streets of the towns led by the *Asafo* group. The *Asafo* group is composed of people who are known as warriors who defend the state in times of war. They sing and chant war songs and slogans to display their strength and aggression and their readiness to defend the state at all times.

They appear in all forms of strange dresses and apparels wielding various forms of traditional musketry.

The rest of the community follow the *Asafo* Group changing various songs and expressing them selves in a joyous mood. They welcome visitors and readily ask them to join them in the celebration.

At the end of the procession, they throng to the traditional meeting place where the chief sits in state with his elders.

At this point, the *Asafo* team and the people enter the meeting place where they pay homage to the chief and the elders. There is a display of traditional drumming and dancing when every member of the community dances to the tune of the drumming and dancing. The chief linguist then pours libation to the ancestors and the gods of the land for their protection throughout the year and to ask them for further protection and guidance in the ensuing year.

The final stage of the celebration comes with a fund raising gathering of the people. During this time, every member of the community appears in their best dresses. They offer donations to raise funds for the development of the community...

The general importance of the *Akwambo* festival is that during this period the inhabitants of the community for once come from far and wide to pay a visit to their towns and villages.

They take the opportunity to resolve family disputes, engage in marriages and contribute to the development of their homes and towns.

## **INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE CELEBRATION OF FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES, ESPECIALLY THE AKWAMBO FESTIVAL**

Christianity has been a great social force which has exerted great influence on traditional religion and practices by introducing new morality.

The main aim of Christianity is to bring all men to a Christian experience and fellowship with the Church.

With the introduction of Christianity the belief of the people in the worshipping of God through lesser gods and ancestors are now considered paganistic, primitive, animistic and bad.

Through Christianity, most of the inhabitants have been introduced to formal training and character development which has greatly influenced their way of thinking and involvement in traditional celebrations.

For example they could now give scientific explanations for natural occurrences such as draught, epidemics, famine, etc. which were explained by traditional religious leaders as the anger of the gods and the work of witches which necessitate the performance of such festivals to cleanse the community and to pacify the gods and ancestors.

Many of the family heads and traditional religious leaders have become converted and as such, they refuse to attend to their ancestral shrines. They refuse to offer sacrifices, pour libation and prayer or perform other traditional practices associated with the festivals during such occasions.

Most of them avoid the state gathering and ceremonies which have no Christian religious significance. They also refuse to take part in the traditional drumming, dancing, and the indigenous songs which they regard as heathen practices.

Christian families refuse to go to the places regarded as sacred shrines on such occasions and have also refused to go by most of the traditional ways of doing things during festival times.

Even though most Christians come home during the festival, the reason is not necessarily to indulge in the traditional practices being performed but rather they use it as an occasion to reunite with their respective families for once.

- They meet old friends and reconcile with each other.
- They use such occasions to select suitable partners.
- Family issues are also resolved.

The community at large use the last day of the occasion to organise non-denominational church services during which both traditional religious leaders, elders, opinion leaders, invited government functionaries and distinguished personalities are invited to join the Christians and the churches to offer Christian prayers for God's blessing, protection, and guidance for his blessings and protection for the past year.

During this time no traditional rituals are performed. It is a period of sharp departure from traditional practices. This time the name of Christ assumes full control of affairs. They then raise funds to tackle socio-economic issues like the rehabilitation of roads, school buildings, provision of public places of convenience, creation of an education endowment fund, construction of market, provision of electricity, etc.

Even though the celebration of the *Akwambo* annually is purely a traditional rite, the introduction of Christianity has weakened and undermined most of the traditional practices associated with the festival.

## **SECTION TWO: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH TRADITIONAL RULERS**

**Appendices Seven to thirteen not available in this web-version**

### **SECTION THREE: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH METHODIST MINISTERS AND LEADERS**

**Appendices Fourteen to Twenty not available in this web version.**