

**CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, KUMASI**

**DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**



**THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ON THE  
METHODIST CHURCH AT ANTOAKROM IN THE AMANSIE WEST DISTRICT  
OF THE ASHANTI REGION.**

**PROJECT WORK  
(LONG ESSAY)**

**BY**

**HARRISON ASARE**

**JULY 2015.**

**THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ON THE  
METHODIST CHURCH AT ANTOAKROM IN THE AMANSIE WEST DISTRICT  
OF THE ASHANTI REGION.**

**BY**

**HARRISON ASARE**

**(10144205)**

**A long essay submitted to Christian Service University College, in partial fulfilment of  
the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theology with  
Administration.**

**JULY, 2015.**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this Long Essay has been prepared by myself, that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree, that the work it is record has been done by myself, that all quotations have been distinguished by either quotation marks or indentation and all the sources of information have specifically been acknowledged by means of footnotes.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Harrison Asare  
(Student)

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Mr. S. Bayeti Zuul  
(Supervisor)

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Dr. Robert Owusu Agyarko  
(Head of Department of Theology)

## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to my beloved wife Mrs. Priscilla Asare, my brothers and sisters, I love you guys. To my mum and dad Miss Josephine Dapaah Millicent and Mr. Osei Kofi Agyemang and to all the family.

Special dedication goes to my society steward Mr. Samuel Owusu Bonsu and the entire congregation of the Methodist Church at Antoakrom.

Lastly, the work is dedicated to the Very Rev. Charles Sangmoah who has been a father and a mentor to me and to all aspiring ministers of the gospel who might find my research work a useful in times of need.

May God bless you all according to His riches in glory. Amen.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am highly grateful to God who through His guidance has been with me up to this point of my life and for His provision of wisdom and knowledge that has brought me this far in my educational pursuit. It also gives me much joy to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who in diverse ways has added a spice of natural fulfilment in my life. I extend my warmest appreciation to Mr. Bayeti Zuul Samuel, my project supervisor, for making time for the authenticity of this research work despite his tight schedule.

The efforts of other lecturers at the Christian Service University College (CSUC) who, through their dedication and commitment has made me what I am today cannot be over emphasized. Mention can be made of the late Rev. Anthony Brefo who helped me in so many ways and showed me fatherly love. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

I am also grateful to my Dad Mr. Agyemang Osei Kofi and my Mum Miss Josephine Dapaah Millicent who through thick and thin has given me the best in life that one can boast of. Also to El-Shaddai Prayer Ministries which has been a divine support for me in life and to this fellowship I say love is the message and the message is love. And finally, to everybody who contributed in their own small way to the success of this research work and to all teachers and students of Omanadwareye D/A JHS, especially, Mr. Timothy Forkuo.

I say God bless you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGES
Title Page ... ..	i
Declaration ... ..	ii
Dedication ... ..	iii
Acknowledgement ... ..	iv
Table of Contents ... ..	v

### CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study ... ..	1
1.2 Statement of Problem ... ..	3
1.3 Research Question... ..	3
1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study... ..	4
1.5 Research Methodology ... ..	4
1.6 Significance of the Study ... ..	5
1.7 Scope and Focus of the Study ... ..	5
1.8 Literature Review ... ..	5
1.9 Organisation of the Study ... ..	8
1.10 Definition of Relevant Concepts... ..	8
1.11 Conclusion ... ..	15

### CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND TO ANTOAKROM AND THE METHODIST CHURCH

2.1 Introduction... ..	16
2.2 Background of Antoakrom ... ..	16
2.2.1 Geographical Location and Economic Profile ... ..	16
2.2.2 History and Origin of the People of Antoakrom ... ..	17

2.2.3 Social Structure and Political Organisation	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18
2.2.4 Religious Life and Thought	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	20
2.3 Brief History of the Methodist Church Ghana	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	22
2.4 The History of the Methodist Church, Antoakrom Society	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
2.5 Conclusion...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	26

### **CHAPTER THREE: TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AND THE METHODIST CHURCH AT ANTOAKROM**

3.1 Introduction	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.2 The Nature of the Traditional Beliefs and Practices	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.2.1 The Ancestral Cult	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.2.2 <i>Abisa</i> (Divination)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	34
3.2.3 Polygamy...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	35
3.2.4 <i>Bayie</i> (Witchcraft)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36
3.2.5 Sickness and Healing	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36
3.2.6 <i>Duabɔ</i> (Curses)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	37
3.2.7 (Aforebɔ) Sacrifices	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	39
3.3 The effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	40
3.3.1 Cultural Conflicts	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	40
3.3.2 Syncretism	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	42
3.3.3 The Sense of Christian Identity	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	43
3.4 Conclusion...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	44

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

4.1 Introduction	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	45
4.2 The Bible and Traditional Beliefs and Practices	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	45
4.3 The Church and Cultural Issues	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	46
4.4 Traditional Culture as <i>Preparatio Evangelica</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	48
4.5 Conclusion...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	50

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Summary of the Study	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	51
5.2 General Conclusion	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	51
5.3 Recommendations...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	52

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **APPENDICES**



## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The Great Commission that was given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28; 18-20 enjoins all Christian believers to go everywhere and proclaim the good news of salvation to everyone. This good news, otherwise referred to as the gospel is to be proclaimed to all people irrespective of sex, race, age, social status, ethnic identity or place of residence. Thus, people in urban as well as rural communities should be given equal opportunity of hearing the gospel and respond to it. It can be noted that the term nations referred to in the Great Commission does not connote present day political groupings such as Ghana, Benin, or Italy. Rather, as noted earlier, it refers to groups of people who share common ideologies and who have cultural distinctives of their own. The Bible considers the human race as divided along cultural lines, and as the gospel was revealed to humankind through the medium of culture, so it has to be proclaimed and accepted within the cultural contexts of the people it encounters.

Generally, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is divine, but he took upon himself a human form and was born into an existing human culture (Jewish Culture). He did not bring his own culture from heaven into Palestine where he was born and where he lived his life. Rather he accepted the culture he was born into and influenced it for God. Emmanuel Asante has intimated that “Jesus, being a Jew, made use of available cultural categories in his unfolding of the mystery of the Kingdom of God”. He concludes that had Jesus been born into some other culture he would have made use of the available cultural categories in his proclamation of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In this same sense, when Christianity moved from Jerusalem to Rome it encountered the Roman culture. This encounter affected Christianity positively in that it

---

<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Asante, *Culture, Religion and Development* (Kumasi: Wilas Press, 2007), 49.

enabled the Christian faith to adjust to suit its consciousness thereby making it comprehensible to the Romans.

The relationship between the Christian faith and traditional cultures has engaged the attention of many scholars and missiologists over the years and many of these have made contributions to the debate of the usefulness of traditional culture in the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel does not come to people in a vacuum rather it has to be proclaimed to people in their own context. Thus, what people know, that is their indigenous knowledge or their worldview which explains their perception of the universe and life in general, must all be taken into consideration in the proclamation of the gospel.

Cephas Omenyo has observed that when Christianity was first introduced on the African soil, the missionaries failed to recognise the significance of the indigenous cultures, and as a result the converts that they made were not able to match their new found faith with their traditional worldviews.<sup>2</sup> Omenyo calls this a “theological deficit” which has to be addressed. This seems to imply that when the gospel was proclaimed to the indigenous African people, it received varying responses. Their responses, therefore, were based on how they heard and understood the message that came to them.

It has been found out that in many African societies such as Antioch, religion is closely integrated into all facets of life, such as the political and family life, agriculture and medicine. African people explain issues of life in terms of religion which is very much interwoven with their identity as a people. The introduction of a new religion would lead to an inevitable change in many facets of society. This may well explain the responses that would meet the introduction of any new religion such as Christianity. Certainly, it seems to imply that there would be Christian converts who cannot be integrated within their traditional contexts, and rather identify with the missionary culture. There would be others who will see

---

<sup>2</sup>Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism* (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer, 2001), 1.

the Christian faith as a detachment from their traditional values and systems, and as such is to be avoided. Again, there could be others who would identify with the Christian faith, but still hold on to their traditional beliefs and practices. For such people their only reason is that they want to increase their “power” so as to become invincible in what they describe as spiritually unsafe world. Such people might see the Christian faith as another means of getting spiritual blessings in this world, which needs to be assessed by everyone.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Many scholars especially those engaged in gospel and culture issues are of the view that conflicts on tension seems to arise when and wherever the gospel is communicated, especially in cross-culture situations. These tensions seem to arise from, firstly, a lack of understanding of the traditional beliefs and practices by the Christian missionary, and secondly, a lack of understanding of the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith by the indigenous person. The indigenous people have being shaped by their traditional beliefs and practices over the years. Any new religion coming to them will have to engage their traditional worldviews. There is therefore the need to examine the extent to which the traditional beliefs and practices have influenced the acceptance and practice of the Christian faith. In engaging traditional cultures, the gospel would either be accepted or opposed.

In the light of this, the study seeks to examine the nature and impact of the traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom.

## **1.3 Research Question**

The study seeks to find answers for the following questions.

- How did the members of the Methodist church at Antoakrom come to hear of the gospel message?
- What meaning did they make out of the message?

- What has been their response to the message?
- What impact has the gospel made in their lives?
- To what extent have traditional beliefs and practices influenced the members of the Methodist Church at Antokrom?

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

- The main aim of the study was to examine the influence of traditional beliefs and practices on Christian faith and practice with particular reference to the Methodist church at Antokrom.
- It seeks to ascertain how the Christian faith was communicated to the people.
- It also attempts to find out the meaning drawn by the people and how they responded to the message.
- It further examines the nature and impact of the traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodists at Antokrom.

#### **1.5 Research Methodology**

The study is a qualitative one, and employs a phenomenological approach in obtaining data. It makes use of primary and secondary sources in gathering information. The primary method involved interviews with key personalities who have relevant information and also from personal experience and observation. The researcher resides in the study area and has some knowledge about key issues by virtue of experience and which had been relevant for the study.

Secondly, the study made use of publications such as books, journals, magazines, brochures, as well as electronic sources such as the internet.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study which addresses the influence of traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom is relevant for the following reasons.

- It would help Christians to come to terms with traditional beliefs and practices and to appreciate their own Christian faith, in order to live authentic Christian lives.
- It would also help the church to assist its members to gain knowledge in the relationship between the Christian faith and traditional beliefs and practices
- Theological institutions offering courses in Gospel and Culture and comparative study of religion may also find this study useful.
- The study would also assist Christian missionaries working in indigenous or cultural settings to be relevant in their approaches.

### **1.7 Scope and Focus of the Study**

The study is limited to Antoakrom in the Amansie west district of the Ashanti region. It focuses on the Methodist church but does not address everything about the church. It only focuses on how some traditional beliefs and practices are influencing the church.

### **1.8 Literature Review**

Some scholars have made significant inputs into the discussion on the relationship between Christianity and traditional culture. It is therefore needful that we examine the views and opinions of such scholars so as to give a bearing or direction to the study on hand. The views of some of these scholars are examined in the following discussion.

According to John Stott, the word “mission” concerns God’s redeemed people and what He sends them into the world to do. He asserts that conversion must not take the convert out of the world, but rather sends him back into it; the same person in the world, and yet a new

person with new convictions and new standards.<sup>3</sup> The views of John Stott underscore the meaning and purpose of mission. But he does not disclose how the task of missions is to be carried out. Our task as far as this study is concerned is to ascertain how the gospel can be communicated to the indigenous people relevantly without losing its essential message.

David Bosch on his part maintains that mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers as the church moves towards the world. These frontiers, he says, may be ethnic, cultural, social, religious, geographical or ideological. For him, mission describes the total task which God has set for the church for the salvation of the world.<sup>4</sup> In the view of Bosch, the salvation of the world is the task of the church and this involves the proclamation of the gospel to people of all cultural backgrounds. However, Bosch does not tell us how this task can be carried out. This study seeks to examine how the Christian faith can be articulated in traditional settings to make it more meaningful to the people it encounters.

Other scholars have also addressed the significant role of culture in Christian missions and evangelisation. They are of the view that the mind-set of all humans has been formed by the culture in which they think and the degree of their receptivity or resistance to new ideas, are all largely determined by their worldview.

In line with this, Cephas Omenyo has noted that “the failure of historical Christianity to enter into a constructive dialogue with African traditional culture and religion has long been recognised”. According to him “the consequence of this theological deficit is the inability of most African Christians to reconcile their worldview with the type of Christianity professed by western Christian missionaries in Africa.”<sup>5</sup> From the assertions of Omenyo, it implies that African Christians did not fully understand the Christian faith at that time because of the way it was presented to them. But his views fall short of recommending ways of addressing the

---

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 19.

<sup>4</sup> David Bosch, *Witness to the World* (London: Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1980), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*, 1.

problem of what he refers to as “theological deficit” and to improve the dialogue between the Christian faith and African traditional cultures. This study is set to do just that.

Writing on the impact of missionary activities on African cultures, Emmanuel Asante observes that “in their missionary activities they sought to promote their own native cultures. They advertently and inadvertently sought to separate the African Christian convert from their own community and culture”.<sup>6</sup> We agree with the assessment of the negative impact of the early Christian missions in Africa, but what is not well understood is whether the entire culture of the African people was to be rejected by Christian converts, or that they were to make a distinction between those that were compatible with Christianity and those not compatible. This study seeks to examine the significance of traditional cultural forms in the articulation of the Christian faith.

On his part, Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi maintains that the denial of the spirit-force (witches, sorceress, fetishes, magic, charms, and the local deities) in the early missionary enterprise in Africa radically undermined the work of missions at that time. In that process, they ended up producing two-world Christians with double allegiance. He concludes that this situation normally arises because Christian converts still possess a fear of witches and ghosts and also believe in the spirit of the ancestors and the potency of the fetish in times of crisis.<sup>7</sup> By these assertions, Larbi seeks to point out that the gospel can make the needed impact if bridges are made with African traditional cultures to make Christianity culturally relevant.

According to Kwame Bediako, when the gospel is preached, the resultant community does not dissociate itself from the old rather it becomes the fulfilment of the aspirations of the old. He concludes that the Christian gospel is not opposed to African religious ideas, but rather is

---

<sup>6</sup> Asante, *Culture, Religion and Development*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: CPCS, 2001), 29.

the “crowning glory of African religiosity”.<sup>8</sup> This is significant in the understanding of traditional culture as a gateway to authentic Christianity in Africa. Thus, culture is not an enemy of Christianity.

Andrew Walls is also of the view that conversion to Christ does not isolate the convert from his or her community; rather it begins the conversion of that community. For Walls, the African Christian does not live his life in isolation. His life is to be lived in the context of the community.<sup>9</sup> The assertion by Walls however, falls short of showing how the conversion of communities can be carried out. This study seeks to examine how Christianity can affect the values, beliefs and practices of traditional societies.

Kwame Bediako in another work asserts that “if the Christian way is to stay in Africa, then African Christianity should be brought to bear on the fundamental questions of African existence in such a way as to achieve a united worldview which finally resolves the dilemma of an African uncertain of his identity, torn between the impact of the west and the pull of its indigenous tradition.”<sup>10</sup> Bediako’s call is in the right direction, since Christianity, which is a universal faith has to be made relevant to the African terrain and find deep roots in the African soil. In line with this, the study seeks to examine the significance of religio-cultural categories in the transmission of the Christian faith.

## **1.9 Organisation of the Study**

The research work is presented in five (5) chapters. The first chapter addresses the general overview of the entire research which consists of the background to the study, statement of problem, research questions, aims and objectives of the study, research methodology, significance of the study, scope and focus of the study, organisation of the study, literature review and the definition of relevant concepts.

---

<sup>8</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 310.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*: (Mary Knoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996) 51.

<sup>10</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: A Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 5.



The second chapter examines some background issues relating to Antoakrom and the Methodist Church which consists of the background to Antoakrom, the brief history of the Methodist Church Ghana, and the history of the Antoakrom society of the Methodist Church Ghana.

Chapter three examines the traditional beliefs and practices of the people of Antoakrom and how they affect the Antoakrom Methodist Church. The fourth chapter is an evaluation and analysis and captures the theological implications of traditional beliefs and practices for Christianity. Chapter five is the final chapter deals with the conclusion of the research work which addresses the summary, conclusion and the recommendations of the study.

## **1.10 Definition of Relevant Concepts**

### **Culture**

Culture from the German *kulter* has accumulated a plurality of definitions throughout the centuries. Culture existed since the existence of the *Homo sapiens* since it is that which makes the human person truly human. The human person is, strictly speaking, a cultural animal. There is really nothing new to this. The present day novelty lies in the understanding of culture as an anthropological reality.<sup>11</sup>

According to Luzbetak, one of the earliest definitions of culture was suggested by Sir Edward B. Taylor, who is considered to be the father of modern anthropology. In 1871 he published his work *Primitive Society* where he defined Culture as a complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other abilities and habits acquired by people as members of society.<sup>12</sup> All agree that as a collective psychological phenomenon culture is to a large extent unconscious. As a psycho-social reality culture is an attribute of

---

<sup>11</sup> L. J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures. New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Orbis, Maryknoll 1988<sup>2</sup>) 133-149.

<sup>12</sup> Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures. New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*, 134.

both of the person and of society because there is a constant interaction between individual and collective consciences.

In the view of P. C. Phan, culture is understood as the world vision of a group, its manner of perceiving the human person and its destiny, of working, of recreation, of expressing oneself through art, of transforming nature through its techniques and inventions, of interpreting life and the universe, of celebration, of tradition and faith, of characteristic attitude and behaviour. These embody meanings and beliefs, ethical norms and customs and traditions and express themselves in institutions and systems as well as in symbolic forms in the most varied kind.<sup>13</sup> In short culture is the manner of thinking, of perceiving, of acting, of relating of, a specific group of people. This definition does not promote *cultural relativism*, rather it eliminates any conception of a superior or primitive culture. With this definition the theory of cultural superiority falls apart.

## **Religion**

A religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that aim to explain the meaning of life, the origin of life, or the Universe. From their beliefs about the cosmos and human nature, people may derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle.

Many religions may have organized behaviours, clergy, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, holy places, and scriptures. The practice of a religion may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of a deity, gods, or goddesses), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation,

---

<sup>13</sup>P. C. Phan, *Spiritual Direction in a Multicultural Church. Helping Others Encounter God in Their Own Culture*, *New Theology Review*, XIII, No.1 (2000), 18.

prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. Religions may also contain mythology.<sup>14</sup>

The word *religion* is sometimes used interchangeably with *faith* or *set of duties*;<sup>15</sup> however, in the words of Émile Durkheim, religion differs from private belief in that it is "something eminently social".<sup>16</sup> A global 2012 poll reports 59% of the world's population as "religious" and 36% as not religious, including 13% who are atheists, with a 9% decrease in religious belief from 2005.<sup>17</sup> On average, women are "more religious" than men.<sup>18</sup> Some people follow multiple religions or multiple religious principles at the same time, regardless of whether or not the religious principles they follow traditionally allow for syncretism.<sup>19</sup>

## Church

If you were to ask people what they think of when they hear the word church you would get many differing responses. Some responses may be accurate and some may not be accurate. However, most people are surprised to learn what the Bible definition of the church is and what the Biblical view of the church is. Church is commonly defined as a building used for public worship.<sup>20</sup> However, many people refer to a church as an organization. Examples are the Catholic Church, the Church of England, and the Southern Baptist Church amongst many others.

The word church in the Bible comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*, which means a called out company or assembly. Wherever it is used in the Bible it refers to people. It can be a mob

---

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 853.

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 177.

<sup>16</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), 10.

<sup>17</sup> "Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism" (PDF). WIN-Gallup International. 27 July 2012. Retrieved 24 August 2012.

<sup>18</sup> *Women More Religious Than Men* retrieved 14 July 2013.

<sup>19</sup> *New poll reveals how churchgoers mix eastern new age beliefs* retrieved 26 July 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Williams, L. Michael, *Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church. Bible Doctrines: An introductory study of the doctrines of the Bible* (2014), Chapters 12 & 13.

(Acts 19:30-41), the children of Israel (Acts 7:38), and the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:25, 32).

We see the word church used in three different ways: First, as the body of Christ, the church is often defined as a local assembly or group of believers (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1-2). Second, it is defined as the body of individual living believers (1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13). Finally, it is defined as the universal group of all people who have trusted Christ through the ages (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23-27).<sup>21</sup>

### **Society**

The society is the local organisation of the Methodist Church, meeting as one congregation for public worship, and organised into Classes under the supervision of the leaders' meeting. The Society consists of the Junior Members and Full Members, who are members of the Methodist Church. Connected with the Society, there are also the Catechumens and the Adherents, and the term "Christian Community" is used to denote the Members, Catechumens and Adherents together.

Junior Members are those who have been baptised in infancy or childhood and who continue within the fellowship of the Methodist Church. When they are old enough, they are encouraged to become Full Members.

Full Members are those who have received baptism and confirmation, and have been admitted into Full membership of the Church and also admit to Holy Communion.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Michael, *Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church. Bible Doctrines: An introductory study of the doctrines of the Bible*, Chapters 12 & 13.

<sup>22</sup> *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*. Revised Edition, (Accra: Wesley Printing Press, 2000), 86.

## **Sunday School**

These schools, also known as Children Education, are mainly for children in which instruction, now primarily religious, is given on Sunday; they are usually held in conjunction with the congregation. The Sunday School of the Methodist Church is established for the Junior Members. It is aimed at preparing these members of the Methodist Church to become full members. That is, the children are taken through catechesis.

## **Catechist**

In the early church, the word was used to describe the person who taught catechesis (the teaching and instructions giving to Christian catechumens who were being prepared for baptism) to the catechumens – converts to Christianity being prepared for baptism.

In modern times, it has been used (by missionaries) of native pastors, teachers, or preachers and sometimes in the western world, of those who teach children of Christian faith – especially in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Catechists, therefore, were those responsible for church planting, and overseers of the native Societies of the Methodist Church in the absence of ordained ministers within a specified area. They served as contemporary Methodist Evangelists.

## **Caretaker**

The Caretakers are those who serve as resident pastors of the Methodist Church, take charge of the day-to-day administration of a Society in the absence of an ordained minister. They are appointed among the Full Members, and may serve in the same Society in which they are appointed. The Caretaker presides over Leaders' Meetings and report to the Superintendent Minister the proceedings of the Church. He or she represents the Society at the Staff and Quarterly Meetings of the Circuit.

## **Society Steward**

The Society Steward is appointed from among the Full Members in the Society by the Leaders' Meeting. The appointment is normally made at the last Leaders' Meeting of the previous year. The Society Steward shall receive the preacher before the service and, if he or she fails to come, to make suitable arrangements for the service. The Steward sees to it that announcements are made in the proper order, and oversees the finances of the Society and enter them in the book provided for that purpose, and forward them without delay to the person authorised to receive them, or the bank account of the Society and have the totals announced on the following Sunday.<sup>23</sup>

## **Conference**

The governing body of the Methodist Church Ghana is the Conference constituted and meeting biennially as hereinafter provided. It meets at such time and place, as the previous conference determined. If for any reason it becomes impracticable to meet at the time and place fixed, the presiding Bishop shall decide the time and place for the meeting. On account of grave emergency, the presiding bishop considers it necessary, he may summon an Extraordinary meeting of the conference at such time and place, and by such reasonable notice. The conference consists of a Representative Session and a Ministerial Session.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Leaders' Meeting**

The Leaders' Meeting serves as a Court of Discipline inquiring into the character of the leaders and the Christian Community. It is presided by the Circuit Superintendent Minister or any Minister, Catechist, Caretaker having pastoral responsibility for that Society.

---

<sup>23</sup>*The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 91.

<sup>24</sup>*The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 20.

The Leaders' Meeting assists the minister in the pastoral oversight of the Society and generally advice on all matters concerning it.<sup>25</sup>

### **Quarterly Meeting**

The Quarterly Meeting is the chief administrative body of the Circuit (one or more Societies under the Pastoral care of one or more Ministers) and is charged with the oversight of Societies in both spiritual and material concerns. Its jurisdiction is limited to the Circuit to which it belongs.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.11 Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter covered the general overview of the study. Issues addressed include the introduction and background to the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, aims and objectives of the study, significance of the study, the research methodology, the scope and focus of the study, literature review, organisation of the study and the definition of relevant concepts.

---

<sup>25</sup>*The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 89.

<sup>26</sup>*The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*, 76.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BACKGROUND TO ANTOAKROM AND THE METHODIST CHURCH**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter addressed the general overview of the study. It dealt with the introduction and background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, literature review and the scope and content of the study, organization of the study and definition of relevant concepts.

This chapter examines some background issues relating to the study. It considers the background of Antoakrom with emphasis on its geographical location and economic profile, history and origin of the people, social structure and political organization, religious life and thought. It also addresses the history of the Methodist Church Ghana and the emergence of the Methodist church at Antoakrom.

#### **2.2 Background of Antoakrom**

##### **2.2.1 Geographical Location and Economic Profile**

Antoakrom is a community in the Amansie West district of the Ashanti region of Ghana. It is located along the Kumasi Manso-Nkwanta road and is also about 15km off the Kumasi – Obuasi road. Also Antoakrom is one of the major towns in the district, and it is described as the central route of the district because it has link roads that connect all the other parts of the district including Manso, Peki and Bontefufuo areas. It is located at about 22km from Kumasi and about 10km to Manso-Nkwanta.

The town is the centre of the area council offices including the Agric Department, Cocoa Services Division of COCOBOD and other organisations including Kuapa Cocoa, Almajaro, Akuafo Adamfo and Produce Buying Company. These offices serve not less than 10



communities including Kwakokrom, Abodom-Domi, Abodom, Akropong, Nsiana, Bensaso, Asarekrom, Atobrakrom, Peki-Keniago, Yawhemenkrom and Siabotere.

Antoakrom also has one basic school which has a large population. This is because it is the only one that serves the surrounding villages such as Kwakokrom, Atobrakrom, Abodom-Domi, Bensaso and Mpraniase. Another notable institution in the town is the Amansie West Rural Bank Limited which serves the neighbouring communities. Antoakrom is the head office of the bank that has many branches extending to the Kumasi metropolis.

Antoakrom is a very Populated community which inhabits not only the indigenes but also settlers from many places including Ghana, and the neighbouring West African countries such as Togo, Burkina Faso and La Cote d'Ivoire. The inhabitants are predominantly peasant farmers with some others in cocoa production. A small number of the populace are into small scale mining popularly known as *galamsey*. Apart from these, there are also civil servants who work at the area council offices, and others working in the other companies and institutions located in the community. Again, there are some who are into trading, including petty traders who deal in foodstuffs, and other products at the local market, and some who own shops that sell hardware, building materials, electric and electronic gadgets such as television sets, radio sets, pressing iron and others.

### **2.2.2 History and Origin of the People of Antoakrom**

It is evident that every person, group of persons, society or social group in existence has a history of some sort concerning their origin or formation as a group; so it is with the people of Antoakrom. The community did not just emerge from nowhere, or descend from the heavens. According to Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Antoakrom area was a forest and was first occupied by their forebears – Nana Antoa Bonyinah and his brother Antoa Nyinah. Nana

Antoa Bonyinah was a traditional priest at Kumasi Antoa.<sup>27</sup> According to tradition, Okomfo Antoa Bonyinah was instructed by his shrine to move to “Pekyi stool land” for settlement. He then moved to Pekyi with his brother Antoa Nyinah.

The Chief and the council of Elders of Pekyi relocated them to this piece of land, which was a forest. According to Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Nana Antoa strategically chose this area because it was a point or route which connected several villages, which was an opportunity to serve the surrounding villages. His shrine, nevertheless, soon attracted many people from the near and far villages for divination, prosperity and spiritual protection. The visitors to the shrine would often say “I am going to ‘Antoa’ ‘Krom’. *Antoa* (*personal name*) and *Krom* (*town*), hence, Antoa-Krom or Antoakrom. Thus, the village was named after the founder Okomfo Antoa.<sup>28</sup>

### **2.2.3 Social Structure and Political Organisation**

Because of the shrine at Antoakrom, people of different backgrounds came there for spiritual consultation. With time these people eventually moved their families there for settlement. The social orientation of the people is thus a mixed cultural type. This is because most of the people who came to the village, came with their own beliefs and practices.

According to Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Antoakrom has a multitiered segmentary structure consisting of matrilineal clans, major matrilineages, and minor lineage segments. The major clans number three in total. Their origins are attributed to mythical female ancestors, and no attempt is made to trace descent lines to the groups' founders. They assume little importance in the lives of their members, beyond creating a context for friendship among fellow clan members from distant localities. However, sexual relations or marriage between members of the same clan is prohibited and recognised as incestuous.

---

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace at Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace at Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

The clan system of the people of Antoakrom include; *Aduana*, *Dyoko*, *Asona Benkum* and *Asona Nifa*. The clan that can ascend the throne of the community (thus, the royal family) is the ‘Aduana’ clan.

Antoakrom stool is of a divisional status. A number of chiefs have ascended the throne since the community’s inception. The name of the first Chief was Nana Kwadwo Nnum and the present chief is in the person of Nana Okyere Darko Ampem III, who ascended the stool in 2014.

### **Entertainment**

It is said that “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and all play and no work makes a lazy boy”. After a hard day’s work, one needs to ease the stress by partaking in one or two entertainment activities. The people of Antoakrom have developed their own means of entertainment which include the following;

- *Dame* (Draft): This game is usually played by males. The Antoakrom community has not less than six (6) posts designed for “dame”. At every post there are not less than four (4) drafts. They play the “dame” in turn whenever they come together to play, and subsequently, the one who emerges as the overall champion is installed as “*Damehene*”, (the King of draft). At times the various “*Damehene*” of the various draft post come together in a contest and the winner becomes the “*Opeimu*” in the community. Notwithstanding its public nature, *dame* is also played as a form of entertainment in the homes.
- *Oware*: This is basically an indoor game which is played by both sexes, but usually among the females.

- Food joints and drinking spots: these are places where foods, *khebab*, and drinks are sold, with background music for the people to entertain themselves with the soothing background music, eat and drink to their satisfaction, make friends and meet lovers.<sup>29</sup>

## **Polygamy**

This marriage type is the state of marriage to many spouses. When a man is married to more than one wife at a time, the relationship is called Polygamy. There are several reasons why Antoakrom men marry more than one wife. The number of wives one can manage depends on one's social status. It is also a taboo for men to have sexual affairs with their wives during their menstruation period, and again the desire to be seen as an ancestor after death because of the numerous children and the need for more farm-hands all attribute to the spate of polygamous marriage in the community and its environs.<sup>30</sup>

### **2.2.4 Religious Life and Thought**

Every person adheres to one religion or the other. This is true of the people of Antoakrom. In terms of religious groupings, all the three (3) major religions are evident in the community. These include Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religions. There seems to be more than twenty (20) Christian denominations in Antoakrom, which these include the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecost, Ghana Baptist, Salvation Evangelistic Ministries, Assemblies of God, Apostles Continuation, Seventh Day Adventist, Historic Adventist and others.

Islam also has some influence in the community. There are two notable (2) sects of Islam which can be identified in the community, and these are the *Sunnis* (which has the greatest following) and the *Ahmadiyya*.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Hanson Boateng, the Leaders Meeting Secretary and Former Society Steward of the Methodist Church Antoakrom, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace at Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Malam Abudu, the Islamic Mosque, Antoakrom, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

## Major Shrines

The major religion of Antoakrom and its environs is traditional religion which is practised by the people being right from infancy. It is interwoven with the culture of the people, and affects their everyday life. As established in the beginning, the community bears its origin to the presence of a major shrine which attracted many people. There were many other shrines in the community but these are no more in existence. They include *Kune*, *Atia Mframa*, *Banie* and *Numafowaa*. *Numafowaa* was the greatest among the four and was also the royal shrine. The last priest or shrine attendant of the last shrine (Kune) died in 2014, and has rendered the shrine non-functional since. Therefore, Antoakrom has no major shrine till date.<sup>32</sup>

## Taboos

Every society, institution, association are governed by agreed rules and regulations, which can be safely termed as “dos and don’ts”. In some cases, the breach of any of these rules attracts individual punishments. Antoakrom like any other traditional society has taboos, norms, and codes of behaviour based on their beliefs. Since taboos are intertwined with beliefs, breaking any of them may have some societal consequence. The individual offender may bear the brunt of the consequences, but its lasting effect has a broader impact; the outbreak of an epidemic, loss of harvest, impotency, barrenness/infertility and bad death.

Some taboos which have serious consequences in Antoakrom are as follows;

- Having sexual intercourse in the bush or farm.
- No farming activity Thursdays ‘*Awukudae*’ and ‘*Akwasideae*’. During these days, no member of this community (whether native or stranger) is permitted to go to the farm land; for it is an abomination.
- Sacrilegious intermarriage (*mogyafra*).

---

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace at Antoakrom, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

- Rearing of goat is a taboo in the community. One can only bring it into the community and kill it the following day, and not to be kept for some days.
- Incest: having sexual relation with a mother, niece, daughter, sister, father's wife, and any other close relative.
- Some foods and food products are taboos in the community. It is forbidden to bring "abɛ mu" (palm fruit), 'gyentia' (firewood), and firewood bundled with palm branch into the community.

### **2.3 Brief History of the Methodist Church Ghana**

The Methodist Church Ghana is one of the largest and oldest Protestant denominations in Ghana. It traces its roots back to the landing of Rev. Joseph Dunwell on 1 January 1835 in Cape Coast, Ghana. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, another missionary, emerged as the father of Methodism in West Africa, taking the Christian message beyond Cape Coast to the Ashanti Kingdom, Nigeria, and other parts of the region.<sup>33</sup>

By 1854, the church was organized into circuits constituting a district with T.B. Freeman as chairman. Freeman was replaced in 1856 by William West. The district was divided and extended to include areas in the then Gold Coast and Nigeria by the SYNOD in 1878, a move confirmed at the British Conference. The districts were Gold Coast (Ghana) District, with T.R. Picot as chairman and Yoruba and Popo District, with John Milum as chairman. Methodist evangelization of northern Ghana began in 1910.

The church reached a state of self-support higher than that of any other District in West Africa. Culminating with the appointment of the Rev. Gaddiel Robert Acquah as the first African Chairman in 1948, the church was set on the path of self-governance, and in 1955,

---

<sup>33</sup>F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 28-72.

the British Conference directed the Missionary Committee to examine the request of the Methodist Missionary Society on the West African autonomy.<sup>34</sup>

The Ghana District had its own reservations and questioned the wisdom of establishing a conference for West Africa as a whole. Like Nigeria, there was no real enthusiasm on Ghana's part for it though no SYNOD explicitly rejected it. When Nigeria finally opted out of the proposed West Africa Conference for the church union in that country, which was never realized, the Ghana District revised her then current constitution to suit an autonomous District, and became the first autonomous Methodist Church in West Africa in 1961. In preparation for autonomous status, the Rev. Francis Chapman Ferguson Grant was elected chairman of the Ghana District Synod in 1960.<sup>35</sup>

After serving as a district in the British Methodist Conference, the Methodist Church Ghana attained full independence on 28 July 1961. It adopted an Episcopal structure at the Koforidua Conference in August 1999. Currently, the Methodist Church Ghana has 15 dioceses headed by bishops. Between 2003 and March 2008, 406 new congregations were started and ministry was initiated in Burkina Faso.

The current Presiding Bishop is the Most Reverend Professor Emmanuel Asante, the third presiding bishop and the tenth person to lead the Methodist Church Ghana. The administrative bishop is the Right Reverend Dr. Kweku Asamoah-Okyere, and the lay president is Mr. J. E. K. Pratt. Both clergy and laity were very instrumental in the process towards autonomy. Names like the Revs. G. Thackray Eddy, F.C.F. Grant, Charles Awotwe Pratt, T. W. Koomson and Messrs A. E. Chinebuah, S. H. Amissah and L. A. Creedy are worth mentioning in this respect. In an address at the opening conference, the Rev. F.C.F. Grant had indicated that the church did not lack human resource, saying:

---

<sup>34</sup>The Methodist Church Ghana (1835-2005): 170th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure, Accra, 2000.

<sup>35</sup>Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 12-18.

Our church has always been blessed with laymen and ministers of character and ability, dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ and loyal to His Church. As we welcome many delegates from all over Ghana who are members of this Foundation Conference, we rejoice that in our generation also the Church still has such men in its ranks.<sup>36</sup>

Names like the following stand out: Revs. Joseph de Graft Johnson, Joseph Wilson, F. E. Kwesi Ekuban, Charles Yamoah, J. Bart-Addison, Paul Adu, James Emmanuel Yarquah, S. B. Essumuah, K. A. Dickson, Joseph Yedu Bannerman, and the Rev. W. C. Cudjoe. Other outstanding laypersons were Paa Chinebuah, Dr. J. S. Annan, Crakye Denteh and Dr. Alex Quaison Sackey who ensured that the autonomy was consolidated. The Deed of Foundation was signed at the inauguration of the Conference on Friday evening, 28th July 1961. The British representatives and signatories on behalf of their Conference were The Rev. Maldwyn L. Edwards (President of the British Conference), Mrs. Marjorie Lonsdale (Vice President), Rev. R. Wilfred Pile (General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society), Rev. G. Thackray Eddy, Rev. T. Allan Beetham and Rev. J. Kingsley Sanders.<sup>37</sup>

#### **2.4 The History of the Methodist Church, Antoakrom Society**

The history of Methodism in Antoakrom cannot be traced to a precise date. However, according to Opanin James Asare, the Methodist Church have been brought into the community by four men. According to him, these men were already Methodists who used to attend church services at Nsiana, a nearby community (about four kilometres away). As aged as they were and with the stress involved in commuting to Nsiana for church activities, they decided to start a church in their own community, which they were able to do. These four (4) men who became the pioneers of the Methodist Church at Antoakrom are Kwaku Nobeng, Kwabena Antoa, Kwaku Oppong and Kwadwo Owusu. They were all natives of Antoakrom and none of them is presently alive. According to Opanin James Asare, the actual dating of the establishment of the church cannot be specified but was believed to be around the 1920s.

---

<sup>36</sup>Valedictory Service in Honor of Most Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah Booklet, 27 September 2009, Accra, Ghana.

<sup>37</sup>The Methodist Church Ghana (1835-2005): 170th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure. Accra, 2005.



According to the source, the church begun as a family fellowship which grew with the addition of more members.

The first leader of the church was Teacher Kofi Adu, a public servant who came into the community to teach the school pupils. Because this man could read and write, the founders handed the leadership mantle to him. The church used to meet for worship in a cocoa farm along the Nsiana road which is at the outskirts of the Antoakrom community. They later on moved into one of the school classrooms from where they moved finally into their own small thatched temple. It was about fifteen (15) years ago that the church was able to put up a standard chapel with blocks and that is where they worship now.<sup>38</sup>

Presently, there are two key leaders who are assisted by the heads of the various fellowship groups in the church. These leaders include Mr Harrison Asare (Caretaker) and Mr Samuel Owusu Bonsu (Steward). Current membership stands at about a hundred and twenty (120) adults with about seventy (70) regular members and thirty (30) Sunday School children. There are three (3) communities that serve the church which include Domi, Kwaakokrom, and Bensaso. Each of these communities with the exception of Domi which has about ten (10) members, has either one or two members. There are five (5) organisations (fellowships) in the church, and these include Women's Fellowship (MWF), Singing Band, Youth Fellowship (MYF), Girls Fellowship (MGF) and El-Shaddai Prayer Ministries (EPM).<sup>39</sup>

According to Hanson Boateng, an unfortunate situation occurred ten years ago which resulted in the a split in Church. A greater number of the members established another church at Manso-Akropong. The reasons for the schism were based on the fact that the current Society Steward, who was by then the Caretaker, was accused of committing adultery. The leadership of the church then decided to ex-communicate him. But he had support from his

---

<sup>38</sup>Interview with Opanin James Asare, Leaders' Meeting Member, the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with S. O. Bonsu, Society Steward of the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

family members, who were very influential in the church. These family members held the belief that the church emanated from within their family and they related to one of the founding members of the church, by name Opanin Kwadwo Owusu. This brought a disagreement between the two parties, hence, the separation. Among those who went away were the working class, non-indigenous and some natives.<sup>40</sup>

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter examined some background issues related to the study. It considered the background of Antoakrom with emphasis on its geographical location and economic profile, history and origin of the people, social structure and political organization as well as the religious life and thought. It also discussed the brief history of the Methodist Church Ghana as well as the history of the Methodist church at Antoakrom.

---

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Hanson Boateng, the Leaders Meeting Secretary and a Former Society Steward, the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AND THE METHODIST CHURCH AT ANTOAKROM**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed some background issues relating to the study. It considered the background of Antoakrom with emphasis on its geographical location and economic profile, history and origin of the people, social structure and political organisation and religious life and thought. It also addressed the history of the Methodist Church Ghana and the emergence of the Methodist Church at Antoakrom.

This chapter examines the issue of the traditional beliefs and practices and the Methodist Church at Antoakrom. Issues addressed here include the nature of the traditional beliefs and practices, the effects of traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom, the impact of the Christian message in Antoakrom Methodist.

#### **3.2 The Nature of the Traditional Beliefs and Practices**

##### **3.2.1 The Ancestral Cult**

Belief in the ancestors is the commonest feature of African traditional religion. Thus, ancestral veneration can be considered a central element of African religion.<sup>41</sup> Ancestors are the dead members of a community who were once human beings and who lived on earth, but have now joined the spirit world through the process of death. They are very much honoured and revered. The people of Antoakrom, like all other Akan, have a strong belief in the ancestors because they were once humans, and are in a position to know the human condition and needs very well and also in a position to solicit help and blessing from the Supreme

---

<sup>41</sup> S. A. Thorpe, *African Traditional religions: An Introduction* (Pretoria, 1991), 109.

Being. However, for the Akan, there is a strong link between the ancestors and their living descendants, a link which death does not break.

The permanent link between the ancestors and their living descendants is underscored by the same practices carried out by the people. These practices do not only define the people's belief in life after death, but also express their dependence on the ancestors for protection and sustenance.

### **Funeral and Burial Rites**

The Akan funeral rites present a vivid picture of their belief in ancestors. This is because they believe that death is a medium whereby people who lived responsible lives are ushered into the realm of the spirit. Thus, this belief becomes evident during the burial ceremonies whereby the family presents some items called *adesiedee* to the deceased. These include mat, pillow, bed sheet, bucket, matches, handkerchiefs, and so on. The Akan believe that life continues after deceased as logistics and therefore, these items are given to the death for the journey and the life in the spirit world. It is the customary among the Akan to observe the fortieth day of the dead as a day of mourning. This day is observed by the Akan whether or not the burial and the final funeral celebrations had been carried out. It is believed that the fortieth day is the day that the spirit of the deceased finally departs from the earth, into the spirit world.

### **Widowhood Rites**

Widowhood rites are customary rites that are carried out upon the death of a husband or a wife. It is held that when a partner dies the widow needs comfort, sympathy, love and company from kinsmen, hence, the rituals. The rituals performed for the widows are not to be seen by people who are not part of the rituals. Unfortunately, this is the time when kinsmen ably support the harassing of the widow. These rites are believed to make the widow free

from any visitation by the deceased. Thus, “Strict observance of the rites frees any one from anything”, so is the tradition.<sup>42</sup>

These rites begin immediately after the death of the partner until after one year. The widow is to wear solely black clothes throughout the period of the rite in conformity to the Akan custom. As soon as the husband dies, the living spouse is taken to a special place and shaved off her hair (the shaved hair is kept, to be used in a future rite). A black thread is used to run through a padlock and this is worn around the widow’s waist for the padlock to hang exactly at the private part. This is believed to ward off any sexual interference from the dead husband. During the burial rites when the deceased is lying in state, the widow is made to sit in front of the bed. She is not allowed to talk to anyone until it is time for the corpse to be put into the coffin. The widow is then allowed to deliver the parting message to the deceased partner.

When the burial procession begins it is often led by the widow, carrying an earthenware bowl (*apɔɔwewa*) with the sponge, soap and towel, which were used in bathing the corpse, including the shaved hair. She is closely followed by the coffin bearers. She is not expected to look back until she reaches an agreed point at the outskirts of the community, where she has to throw the “*apɔɔwewa*” down for it to break and return home without reaching the cemetery. The reason why she is not to look back is because it is believed that she can bring back home the tragedy she has thrown away. After the one year anniversary, the widow begins to wear white clothes. It is believed the white cloth indicates that she is now clean and new. Food is prepared for people to eat with her to indicate that she can now socialize with them. This marks the end of the widowhood rites. She then goes round the community to

---

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Alice Asante, Leaders’ Meeting Member, Methodist Church, Antokrom, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

greet the people. People give her gifts to welcome her back into the society. In the Pakyi traditional area, the widow can remarry after one year or at the end of the widowhood rites.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Abadinto* (Naming Rites)**

Giving names to children is considered an important traditional value. This is underscored by the fact that, names defines who a person is, and where he or she comes from. The Akan says “*Nyame mpe bɔne, nti na ɔmaa obia din*” meaning, because God hates sin, He gives names to people. In the Akan tradition, new born babies are kept indoors from the day of birth until the eighth day to determine if they will live or survive. This is so because it is believed that, some ancestors sometimes decide to come back to the physical world either to live again or to spend some few days and go back to the spiritual world. Another reason for keeping babies indoors for some time is that, new born babies are prone to evil spirits and therefore are being kept away from “evil eyes” to escape these attacks. Others also are of the view that it is a means to ascertain whether the new born child is strong enough to stay in its new environment. Some believe that babies face a lot of dangers just after birth so if they are able to withstand all these dangers, then they are given personal names. The Akan refer to the new born baby as *ɔhɔho* (visitor) and after the eight day, it is called “*abɔfra*” meaning it is created among the living.<sup>44</sup>

Rattray points out that when a child is born in this world, a ghost-mother mourns the loss of her child in the *asamando* (spirit world). During this period no one is very certain whether the infant is going to turn out a human child or prove, by dying before this eight day period has elapsed. Both mother and child remains indoors during these eight days and the mother is considered as unclean. From the above reasons, if there are convincing indications that the child would survive and is ready to be part of the living, preparation is made by family

---

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, A Native of Antoakrom, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, A Native of Antoakrom, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

members and neighbours towards its outdoorings and naming on the eighth day. The ceremony usually takes place at the family house or the home of the mother in the kitchen. The kitchen is chosen because it is believed that, that is the place where women belong.<sup>45</sup>

According to Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, the ceremony starts with the father or an elderly person bringing the baby to be named, outside three times. The baby is brought out three times because there is a saying that, “*כככ bosom animm prensa*” (the oracle is always consulted three times) and “*se wode biribi sibukya so a, nntunnwu*” (if you put something on tripod, it does not spill). The naming ceremony begins at dawn and ends before sunrise. The mother dresses in white to indicate victory through birth. Sacred beads are put on the child believed to drive away evil spirits, and it is dressed in white clothes to indicate victory. Again, clay marks are made on the child with a comb to make him or her look beautiful.<sup>46</sup>

Alice Asante sides with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey that, when all relatives and friends are gathered, an *kyeame* (a spokesman) is selected among the elderly from the child’s father’s family to officiate the occasion. The *kyeame* then announces the purpose of gathering to the family and well-wishers on such a day. Afterwards the child is brought out to “see the sun” by experiencing the physical environment for the first time. A prayer in the form of libation is then offered to invoke the spirits of *Onyankopɔn* (God), *Asaase Yaa* (Earth Mother/goddess) and all the ancestors of the family for their blessings and protection. The *kyeame* prays with a glass of alcohol in his hand.

Traditionally, it is the father who gives the personal name to his child. This is done in consultation with his *abusuapanin* (head of the family) because children are named by their fathers. The father is consulted by the *kyeame* for the occasion to present the real name of the child, which is then announced to the gathering. Before the rituals, the *kyeame* explains

---

<sup>45</sup>R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954),

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, A Native of Antoakrom, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

the meaning of the name, which of the family member both dead and alive that the child is being named after and the reasons why they are naming the child after such a person.

Ɔpanin Kwame Gyebi is of the view that, there are usually two cups which are ritually used during the naming ceremony. One cup contains *nsuo* (water) and the other alcohol. No ordinary water is used; rather they use *nyankonnsuo* (rain water). This water is collected whenever it rains and kept for such occasions. He added that, the rain water is considered pure and natural for the reason that God has already distilled it. For instance if the child is to be named *Ama Oforiwaa*, the elder who is performing the ritual dips his index finger into the water and alcohol at different times and places it in the mouth of the infant saying, “*Ama Oforiwaa nsuo nie, wohunu nsuo aka se nsuo nie. Ama Oforiwaa, nsa nie, wohunu nsa aka se nsa*”. This literally means that, Ama Oforiwaa, this is water, if you see water, say it is water. Ama Oforiwaa, this is alcohol, if you see alcohol, say it is alcohol.

This is repeated three times. It is believed that the practice is meant to instil within the infant, a consciousness of morality and the necessity of always living in harmony with the truth throughout its life. Whether the consequences of truthfulness leave a pleasant taste in your mouth representing water or a difficult taste in your mouth representing alcohol, truthfulness must be upheld all the time. Ɔpanin Kwame Gyebi said, further that the rest of the water and alcohol in the two cups is then mixed together and given to the parents to drink, signifying that the parents have participated in the ritual and are in unity with their child. Again, the parents are hereby confirming the importance of the moral lesson taught to the child and at the same time vowing to reinforce this lesson throughout the life of the child.<sup>47</sup>

In explaining the use of both water and alcohol, Obaapanin Diana Abbrey is of the view that, the taste of the water and alcohol depicts that the child is going to use his or her mouth to

---

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace, Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.



make someone sad or happy and also solve “soft” and “hard” issues with the same mouth. In other words, the mouth or tongue of the child outdoored is being consecrated to build up people only and not to destroy.

After the naming, libation is poured again to thank God the Supreme Being and the gods who gave a successful backing to the naming ceremony. Curses are also invoked on malevolent spirits to prevent them from bringing any bad omen against anyone who witnessed the occasion. As a sign of witnessing to the naming rite, everybody gathered is mandated to partake of the drink from the cup used in naming the child. The rest of the alcohol is kept for relatives who in one way or the other could not witness the occasion.

The next stage of the ceremony is *tanfiri* (special gifts given by the father to the mother and the child). The purpose of the *tan firi* is to bring the status of the mother back to normalcy. Traditionally, pregnant women are not supposed to put on new things in terms of clothing until she delivers and the child is named. The new born baby in its first week is also not supposed to wear anything new. For this reason, the child’s father must provide one of his old clothes to be torn into pieces for the child’s use as *nkomago* (tatter cloth or rag). Bringing both the mother and the new born baby back to their normal way of living requires that some special gifts that are presented to them first by the husband, followed by the person the child is named after and then the rest of the people gathered, who may also follow with relevant gifts.

In an interview with ɔbaahembaa Yaa Tabuaah, it came to light that, the first presentation of the *tanfiri* by the husband to his wife entails some pieces of cloth. Most of the time, the clothes are made up of black and white colour, signifying victory and any other thing that will make his wife look attractive in public. The child also receives its first presents as well. The second important gift from the husband is termed as *anoka* (mouth tasting). It is made

up of food items. He also gives *akokɔ bedee* (a hen) to be prepared immediately for the woman as a sign of saying “well done” for the pains she went through until delivery. It is believed that as the woman eats the ovary, oviducts and the follicles of the hen alone, she can give birth to more children, and also as the man eats the waist part he can perform well as a man. The child is made to taste some of the soup signifying its acceptance to be with the living. The belief is that when the child tastes the soup, it indicates he or she has come to stay because ghosts do not like pepper and onion so if he or she did not come to stay it will die.<sup>48</sup>

### **3.2.2 Abisa (Divination)**

It is not possible to explain African traditional religion without considering divination. Divination is an important practice in African traditional religion. It punctuates the entire life of the African, and it is a means by which the African communes with the spirit world. This is as a result of the fact that for the African there is a close link between the mundane world and the spirit world and the medium of communication between the two worlds is through divination. At various intervals, the elder in the family would go to the diviner to consult the ancestors and the other divinities to find out the state of the family and if there are certain things to be done. The Akan never carry out major undertakings such as building a house, travelling far away or marrying, without consulting the ancestors through divination. The ancestors are the guardians and custodians of the living and their permission and blessing must be sought before any undertaking. If the ancestors are against any intended journey or undertaking, that would have to be abandoned.<sup>49</sup>

Besides these situations, that compel the Akan to visit the diviner, there are other circumstances that would often call for divination. These include death, sickness, epidemics and some other disasters in the community. During these moments, the Akan consults the

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Obaahemmaa Yaa Tabuaah, Queen Mother, Antoakrom, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace, Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

oracle to find out the cause of this unfortunate incidence so that they can remedy the situation through sacrifices and offerings to the ancestors and divinities as the case may be.<sup>50</sup>

Diviners are usually men and women who are possessed by one or the other good spirits and are qualified for the job through experience. They are believed to be fathers of secrets, in that they reveal hidden circumstances, and also are able to predict future occurrences. It is this extraordinary power possessed by these divines that put them above all ordinary persons. They are highly revered because of their spiritual power. The choice to be a diviner is believed to be in the powers of the ancestors.

### **3.2.3 Polygamy**

Like all the Akan, the culture of Antoakrom does not forbid a man to marry more than one wife (polygamy) but rather forbids a woman from marrying more than one husband (polyandry). Thus, men have the freedom to marry as many women they would like in so far as they can take care of them or not. In an interview with some men at Antoakrom seems to indicate that. There are some reasons why they marry more than one wife. The number of wives one can manage depends on one's social status. Some men believe that if they go in for many wives, it indicates that they are responsible in the society. Again, since it is a taboo for men to have sexual affairs with their wives during their menstrual period. Again, many men will go in for more wives to satisfy their sexual pressure. The desire to be considered as an ancestor after death because of the numerous children one can have is also a motivating factor for polygamous marriages among the men of Antoakrom. Other men were also of the view that they have many wives because they needed them to help in their farming operations especially in the cocoa plantations.

---

<sup>50</sup> Cf. S. A. Thorpe, *op. cit*, 116.

### **3.2.4 Bayie (Witchcraft)**

Belief in the existence of other spirits besides the ancestors and divinities is an integral part of African traditional religion. There is, however, a difference between these spirits and the spirits of ancestors and divinities. Ancestors are the spirits of people who once lived on earth and have now died and joined the spirit world. The divinities are also spirits that are connected in one way or the other with the family, clan or village community. On the other hand, the spirits being discussed here are of a different kind. They are considered as free roving spirits that are all over and not confined to any particular place. These spirits are generally feared as they are believed to be malicious and can manifest themselves in various forms and cause havoc to the human society. *Abayifo* (witches) are believed to possess some of these evil spirits that make them kill and eat human beings through a spiritual manipulation. It is believed that some of these spirits have the ability to enter the womb of a woman during the normal intercourse with her husband and be born into the world. Generally, babies with abnormal features are suspected to be this kind of children. These roving spirits are never anybody's friends and very often people do not even talk about them.

Though generally the Akan consider these spirits as malicious and wicked spiritual beings, they also believe that there are good spirits among them. These good spirits can possess an individual in the community and reveal some secrets to him or her for the good of the community. This secret could be the power to heal various kinds of diseases and ailments, prevention of *bayie* (witchcraft) activities, ability to divine and see the future, prevention of epidemics-drought and so on. These are considered good spirits that use their powers for the benefit of the community.

### **3.2.5 Sickness and Healing**

Traditional African medicine is a holistic discipline involving indigenous herbalism and African spirituality, typically involving diviners, midwives, and herbalists. Practitioners of

traditional African medicine claim to be able to cure various and diverse conditions such as cancers, psychiatric disorders, high blood pressure, cholera, most venereal diseases, epilepsy, asthma, eczema, fever, anxiety, depression, benign prostatic hyperplasia, urinary tract infections, gout, and healing of wounds and burns.

Diagnosis is reached through spiritual means and a treatment is prescribed, usually consisting of an herbal remedy that is considered to have not only healing abilities but also symbolic and spiritual significance. Traditional African medicine, with its belief that illness is not derived from chance occurrences, but through spiritual or social imbalance, differs greatly from Western medicine, which is technically and analytically based.

Herbal practioners, because of their long period of practice have some form of experience in diagnosing sickness and prescribing remedies. In the Antoakrom community, sickness is considered as a deviation from the wishes of the deities which need to be rectified. Healing is thus considered as a means of bringing about spiritual harmony. Physically the sick person may be asked to make some sacrifices or go through some form of purification rites. Others can be offered some herbal concoctions to either drink or apply on their bodies. People with fractures usually consult bone setters, who apply some creams, or powders on the affected parts to effect healing. Usually diseases such as epilepsy, madness, stroke and others are believed to have spiritual causes, and healing for such requires that some spiritual directions and medications are adhered to.

### **3.2.6 *Duabɔ* (Curses)**

*Duabɔ* is a common practice among the people of Antoakrom. To curse is to call upon divine or supernatural power to send injury upon someone. The intent of cursing is to invoke harm on another through the use of certain words or phrases. These words are imbued with power

granted to them mainly through religious or social demarcation.<sup>51</sup> Simply put a curse visits misfortune on the one denounced and normally occurs in a situation where there is a grievance between a speaker and his addressee or the victim. It could be said that when an evil act is done by an unknown person for instance, a curse might force the return of stolen property, or disarm suspected sorcery and turn it back on the perpetrator. Ritual secrets are also protected by a conditional curse against anyone who reveals them. Curses therefore wish an array of misfortunes on their victims - sickness and death, suffering from diseases and barrenness, crop failure, defeat and disgrace, lack of peace and harmony at home.<sup>52</sup>

Among the Akan the etymology of the word curse *duabɔ* seems to come from two words: a noun ‘*dua*’ stick or club and a verb ‘*ɔ*’ to hit. *Duabɔ* is therefore a verbal noun from the verb phrase ‘*ɔdua*’ hit with a stick or a club. According to Agyekum<sup>53</sup> the act of *duabɔ* literally involves an attempt to use a stick to hit somebody with the intention of killing him or her, hence, the phrase “*medebɛgye wo*”. In the real sense of the act, it is rather the use of words which are believed by the Akan to have some inherent power to kill people. This is done by handing the person over to some spirits and some supernatural powers.

Among the people of Antoakrom, the pronouncement of curses against culprits in a criminal act ranging from stealing to murder is very rampant. In the view of Kwame Gyebi,<sup>54</sup> a curse may have two intentions, first is petitioning the Supreme Being, the *abosom*, (lesser gods) or the *nananom* (ancestors) against a culprit to force his spirit to move him or her to confess. Confession exposes him or her family to public odium which may be enough punishment. If he confesses and shows remorse, he or she is forgiven after being told what compensatory or restitution action he has to carry out. This is based on the fact that the justice system that

---

<sup>51</sup> S. J. Tambiah, “The Magical Power of Words” In *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3: 1968, 175-208.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Alice Asante, Leaders’ Meeting Member, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2015

<sup>53</sup> K. Agyekum, *Akan Verbal Taboos: In the Context of the Ethnography of Communication*. Working Papers in Linguistics, M.phil Thesis (NTNU Norway, 1996),

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace, Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

prevails at Antoakrom is not based on punitive intents but in finding out the offender, getting him or her to compensate the victim and restoring social harmony.

The second intention is for the deities and the ancestors to punish the culprit maximally if he or she stubbornly refuses to confess. The punishment may be madness or slow and painful death through a mysterious ailment.

### **3.2.7 (Aforebɔ) Sacrifices**

Africans offer sacrifices as a means of restoring harmony with deities or as a form of thanksgiving. For the Akan there are two ways of offering sacrifices. These are either blood sacrifice or drink sacrifice. The blood sacrifice involves the immolation of the victim, either an animal or a chicken and the blood offered on the shrine of the particular divinity. Generally, participants of the sacrifice consume the meat of the victim. The Akan believe that blood signifies life so by offering the blood of the victim on the shrine, the particular divinity takes the life of the victim, which is signified in the blood. Besides this bloody sacrifice, there is also bloodless sacrifice with drink. For this kind of sacrifice, the Akan pours the drink on the shrine of the divinity as libation to invoke the divinity to accept the prayer that is being offered.

Broadly speaking, the Akan have three forms of sacrifice namely, thanksgiving, pacification and supplication. The sacrifice of thanksgiving is usually done after childbearing, marriage, a successful expedition and so on. This sacrifice is offered to thank the ancestors for the blessings they have received during the year. A sacrifice of this kind is naturally one of a joyful celebration. The sacrifice of pacification is usually carried out as a result of a wrong done by an individual or a group of people in the village or in the family. Examples of crimes that calls for the sacrifice of pacification are cutting branches in the shrines dedicated to a particular divinity, having sex in the bush or sleeping with somebody's wife and a host of others. These crimes are believed to anger the divinities and the ancestors and thus call for

some sacrifices to pacify them or else some misfortune may befall the individual or even the community. The sacrifice of supplication can be done at any time, but generally they are done before the individual or community undertakes a major event such as the beginning of the farming season, before harvesting, before embarking on a long journey and so on. This sacrifice constitutes a request for success and blessing from the ancestors.

Besides offering sacrifices, the Akan also make other offerings that may not strictly be considered as sacrifices but are nonetheless important in their relationship with the spirit world. These offerings are usually in the form of food offering mostly to the dead including the ancestors. This usually happens when somebody dies and the post-burial celebration is not yet performed. In that interim period, between burial and post-burial celebration, the family of the deceased may prepare food and leave it uncovered in the kitchen so that the deceased who has not yet been brought into the ancestral home through a funeral celebration may come in and eat. Besides, during the funeral celebration, there are moments that food is prepared and kept for the ancestors to come and eat.

### **3.3 The effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom**

#### **3.3.1 Cultural Conflicts**

It has been observed that the people of Antoakrom are an indigenous people who have lived with their traditional religion long since before the advent of Christianity has. For the fear of being punished by the ancestors, a three (3) day fasting and prayer meeting of the Methodist Church at Antoakrom had to be rescheduled for poor attendance. Thus, only a few people turned-up. A critical look into the situation brought to light that the death of the chief priest influenced the poor attendance of the fasting and prayer meeting. How come Christianity is



being influenced by funeral rituals of the community?<sup>55</sup> The reason is that those people, even though are Methodists, are still glued to their traditional religious ties. In another sense they also fear of being victimised by their families and friends.

Again, most Christian women undergo widowhood rituals, especially when the dead husband is not a Christian. The custom of the community demands that the bereaved woman is taken through the widowhood rituals but as a Christian, it poses conflict on the fellow as to whether to accept or reject the custom.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned, is the issue of chieftaincy. If the chief is a member of the church, he is at the same time to offer sacrifices to his ancestors. Even the *abusuapanin* of the royal palace is a member of the Methodist Church. But the case is, upon the knowledge of *nsaguo* (libation) and ancestral veneration as against Christianity and by virtue of his position, he finds it difficult to combine the two positions.<sup>57</sup>

Among the Akan, people usually retaliate or revenge the evil planned against them when they feel they are wrongfully treated. The common way of revenging the situation to indicate one's innocence is to invoke curses for the ancestors and the spirits to judge and punish the offender. So, when a Christian is mistreated he or she is tempted to clarify him or herself by invoking curses. But should he or she do so? In the view of Samuel Bonsu, there have been several cases involving church members who have been called to the royal palace because of curses and which has brought a bad image on the church.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Alice Asante, Leaders' Meeting Member, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, A Native of Antoakrom Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace, Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Samuel O. Bonsu, the Society Steward of Antoakrom Methodist Church, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

### 3.3.2 Syncretism

On the issue of the ancestral cult and funeral rites, the interviews revealed that most of the Christians do not see anything wrong with *nsaguo* (pouring libation), *adesiedeε*, *kunayɔ* (widowhood rite). Only a few of the members believe that certain rituals must be changed and done in the Christian way. Two years ago, the church tried to teach its members to observe the one week rites of their deceased relatives at home, without mounting canopies outside like the normal final funeral rites. The move nearly brought confusion into the church. The performance of the funeral rites including *adesiedie*, to them, is what their tradition demands and must be duly performed. After these traditional rites are carried out, the Church can then proceed with its burial service. In their view, we must “give what belongs to Caesar to Caesar and what belongs to God, to God.”

In addition, though *duabɔ* is considered among contemporary Akan society as an evil practice, most people of the Methodist church at Antoakrom still invoke curses on others. There are several cases in the church where some members are summoned by *Nananom* to offer sacrifices (*twaodwan*) to pacify the gods and ancestors of the land because of *duabɔ*. These people do not see anything wrong with avenging oneself when he or she is innocent. They usually say *wotena hɔ a yede wo sekan bedwa nanka* meaning if you sit down unconcerned your knife may be used to cut the meat of a python.

Further, most members of the church sneak their way to go for *abisa* (divination) from fetish priests and malams, both far and near. In their view, they need to fortify themselves, against evil, for in this world, one cannot live by oneself. They often say, “*ewiase ha yenfa yen ani kan ntena se. Ewɔse wofa baabi.*”

Lastly, there are still as many couples in the church who are living together without going through any marriage rite. From the interviews conducted it came to light that some even

think *ƙƙƙƙ* knocking rites alone constitutes marriage and is accepted by the Bible. There are also others, who are married but still go in for plural wives or concubines. In the view of Samuel Bonsu, his family accepted customary drinks when his daughter was being married. His Abusuapanin, who is a Methodist said the drinks do not “spoil the marriage.”<sup>59</sup>

There are some other people in the church, who do not see anything evil in protecting one's child with some traditional concoctions. To them, protection from evil forces does not make one evil. In their view ... one has to perform the *abamoo* rites on his or her twin children in order to protect them and also to “remove” evil from them.

### **3.3.3 The Sense of Christian Identity**

As noted earlier, the church is made up of true believers in Christ. Thus, by belonging to Christ they are expected to live Christ-like lives. It is on record that the early believers were called Christians because they manifested the life of Christ. (Acts 11:26). The Bible gives several indications about the character of the lives of those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit. One of the primary evidences is a life of boldness and power in witnessing to the gospel of Christ. Jesus said,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Because of the life, actions and words of some members of the Methodist church, evangelism, both the open air and personal, have yielded little impact on the church's membership. Some people, especially Methodists who come to stay in the community, can join the church today and leave the next day to the neighbouring sister church at Akropong. This has made some people tag the church as ‘*family church*’.

---

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Samuel O. Bonsu, the Society Steward of Antoakrom Methodist Church, 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Some other people who are courageous enough would often say, after a successful evangelistic activity, that because of this or that person in the church, I will not be part of it. This seems to indicate that the sense of Christian identity and commitment is lost in some people, and this tends to give a bad image to the church. The question is, what may have accounted for this? Maybe, the lifestyle of some of the church members which can be described as “double standard” may be a contributing factor.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter examined the issue of the traditional beliefs and practices and the Methodist Church at Antoakrom. Issues addressed here included the nature of the traditional beliefs and practices, and their effects on the Methodist Church.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter covered the traditional beliefs and practices at Antoakrom and how they are influencing the Methodist Church in the area. Among the issues examined are the nature of the traditional beliefs and practices, and their impact on the Methodists.

This chapter is an evaluation and analysis and entails a theological reflection on the Christian faith and traditional religion. Issues considered here include the Bible and traditional beliefs and practices, the church and cultural issues, as well as traditional culture as *preparatio evangelica*.

#### 4.2 The Bible and Traditional Beliefs and Practices

God's dealing with humans is the primary theme of the Bible. Thus, the Bible presents us with how God chose to reveal Himself to human beings and what He wanted them to do. It was all about relationship, but how humans were to develop a relationship with God in the sense of their ideological beliefs depended to a large extent, on how they encountered the divine. The Old Testament is an account of the encounter between a personal God, referred to as Yahweh, and humans. God demanded that humans respond personally as individuals and collectively as a community. The aim of this encounter was to bring about a transformation in the lives of humans.

In the Genesis account, we are told of how God called Abraham out of the traditional background of Mesopotamia. God's plan was to bring about a new people and a nation out of Abraham, who will be uniquely related to Him. Later God entered into a covenant with the

people, which symbolized their uniqueness and their relationship with God. Throughout the Old Testament, we are told that God desired from His people full allegiance and commitment which was to be the condition of His continuous relationship with them.

God continuously reminded Ancient Israel of their uniqueness, and demanded that they desist from idolatrous practices as was the order of the day in the lands that they resided. As Ancient Israel maintained a unique commitment to Yahweh, it ensured their safety, prosperity and peace.

This idea of separation and commitment to God the Creator, is re-echoed in the New Testament. We are told in the Gospels, of how Jesus taught his followers to separate themselves from idolatrous practices. In Matthew 5:13-15 we are told of how Jesus taught his disciples to be light and salt in the world. Thus, they were to be totally different in their altitude and behaviour and portray a responsible character wherever they found themselves.

Again, the Apostle Paul, in his epistles to the churches, taught Christian believers to separate themselves from all idolatrous practices. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Titus 2:12)

In the Book of Acts chapter 15, we are told that the early apostles needed to make a clear rule on the issue of Christianity and indigenous culture. The ruling was that Gentiles converts to Christianity were not to be made Jewish before they could be accepted as Christians.

### **4.3 The Church and Cultural Issues**

The church of Jesus Christ does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in an environment inhabited by humans. These humans have distinct ideas about the world in which they live. From these ideas come the various cultural distinctives that human tend to have throughout the world.

It is significant to note that God revealed Himself to humans in the light of culture. Human relationship with God is defined by the way they encounter God, and this is what shapes their understanding and worldviews.

It has been noted that, though Jesus, manifested himself in the human world through his incarnation in order to identify with humans and also to save them. Though he came with a heavenly message and mission, he employed the indigenous cultural categories of the Palestine world in which he was born. It has also been found out that the early church spread throughout the then world, because of the local Roman and Greek cultures.

In today's world, the church seems to be battling with its relationship with culture. It has been noted that polygamy continues to be a major problem in rural environments such as Antoakrom. What should the church do with its polygamous members who come along with their plural wives? Again, the issue of divorce is also a major problem for the church. How should the issue of divorce be handled in a church situation?

In the area of chieftaincy, how can the church handle its members who happen to be royals and are candidates for vacant stools? Can chiefs and queen-mothers maintain their royal status in society and still be regarded as full members of the church? What is the Christian status of the Association of Christian Chiefs and Queen mothers?

Again, in respect of funeral rites, what should be done for church members who die? Should the church present burial items otherwise referred to by the Akan as *adesiedie*? Has the church gotten any alternative to those funeral or burial rites for its members? How should the church handle its members who engage in such traditional rites?

It is significant to note that, in some situations, some Christians are "pushed to the wall" regarding their Christian commitment and their traditional, or family ties. When that happens, these Christians are put in a limbo, not knowing what to do. For instance, in some traditional environments, it is customary to perform some rites on twin babies. The question then is, should a Christian mother who happens to give birth to twins be made to go through these rites? Can Christian families allow their twin babies to undergo the twin rites, often referred to as *abamoo* by the Akan?

In some other situations, it is always difficult for some people to forgive those who offend them in one way or the other. Some will resort to the use of cursing as a means of revenge. In some other cases, the Christian may be cursed for an offence and may be asked to undergo some rites of purification to mitigate the effect of the curse. The question is, what should be done by Christians in such situations? What can the church do to help its members who are going through these problems? These cultural issues and many others, continue to shape the discourse on the church and cultural issues. Even though the church has a unique identity as the Body of Christ, there is the need for church leaders to teach their members and bring them to the point of understanding of the church's role in the world and strive to maintain their true Christian identity. A new understanding of cultural issues and their impact on Christianity will help make the church relevant in today's world, especially in the rural environment.

#### **4.4 Traditional Culture as *Preparatio Evangelica***

The struggle between the Christian faith and traditional beliefs and practices seems to be an unending one. However, it is possible for these traditional beliefs and practices to be made relevant in Christian missions. Thus, it is possible to have a dialogue between Christianity and traditional culture, including its beliefs and practices, which can be catalyst for Christian evangelization among indigenous people.

In this sense, points of contact can be developed with traditional cultural categories as tools for evangelisation. In this way, traditional beliefs and practices will cease to be invaluable elements, but rather vital tools for the propagation of the Christian message. Thus, a distinction could be made between those elements which are compatible with Christianity and those which are not.

From Acts 17, lessons can be learnt from Paul's encounter with the Athenians. Much as these Athenians were serving many gods, the Apostle Paul did not condemn them. Rather he



commended their religiosity, and used this religiosity of the Athenians to proclaim the “Unknown God” to them. As indicated earlier, our understanding of the cultural reality or situation of a particular context will help shape the message we are to proclaim. The crucial question is that, are we to “throw away the baby with the bathing water?” Can every aspect of traditional culture be considered as nonsense and of no use? If people engaged in idolatrous practices are condemned, then what will be the use of our proclamation? What then will be the target of our message?

It can be noted that, Jesus made use of available cultural categories in his unfolding of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. His use of parables was very much clear to his followers, who were from the Palestinian environment. However, in some situations, Jesus had to break some form of protocol regarding the existing culture. For instance, it was a cultural norm not to associate with women, who were considered as social outcasts by the then society. But it is clear from the gospel accounts how Jesus engaged women who supported him in most parts of his ministry. In John 4, we read of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. Again, in Luke 8:1-2 we are told that Jesus was accompanied by some women in his mission. In this wise, how can the cultural norms of our contemporary society be utilised in evangelisation?

There are some vital traditional categories which seem to be compatible with the Christian faith. These can be employed in the propagation of the Christian faith without losing its essential message. These may include the use of proverbs, stories, traditional music and dance, sayings, and others which tend to carry important messages. In the propagation of the Christian gospel, effort should be made to put the message in the context of the audience to aid their understanding and acceptance. Thus, moving the people from what they already know, to the new situation is very much significant in Christian evangelization. The doctrine of inculturation is very much imperative in contemporary Christian missions and should be pursued with all urgency.

For instance, issues such as sacrifice, mediation, forgiveness, confession, substitution, purification and others are not new to people from traditional backgrounds. These can be employed in the explanation of the mission and work of Jesus Christ, to aid the understanding of indigenous people and ensure their acceptance of the Christian message as their own.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter entailed an evaluation and analysis of the relationship between the Christian faith and traditional beliefs and practices from a theological perspective. It examined issues such as the Bible and traditional beliefs and practices, the church and cultural issues, as well as traditional culture as *preparatio evangelica*.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

This research work examined the influence of traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom in the Amansie West district of the Ashanti region. It began with a general overview and continued to examine some background issues in Antoakrom and the Methodist Church. It considered the background of Antoakrom with emphasis on its geographical location and economic profile, history and origin of the people, social structure and political organization, religious life and thought. It also addressed the history of the Methodist Church Ghana and the emergence of the Methodist church at Antoakrom. The study further examined the nature of the traditional beliefs and practices and their effects on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom. Moreover, the study, considered a theological reflection of the issue of Christianity and traditional beliefs and practices. It examined the biblical position on traditional culture, the church's relationship with cultural issues as well as traditional culture as preparation for evangelisation. The study concludes with a summary, conclusion and some recommendations.

#### **5.2 General Conclusion**

The study set out to examine the influence of traditional beliefs and practices on the Methodist Church at Antoakrom. It has been noted that traditional beliefs and practices are a part of the people of Antoakrom and have shaped their lives overtime. These traditional beliefs and practice are regarded by the indigenous people as the wishes of their forebears and thus constitute the pillars of their society.

However, with the advent of Christianity, there seem to be some form of a re-arrangement in the identity and allegiance of the people. Those who become Christians, and for that matter

Methodists, and are deeply committed to their new-found faith tend to regard the traditional beliefs and practices as demonic. There are also some who do see otherwise. On the part of these, traditional beliefs and practices have been part of their lives from infancy and for that matter there is no need to divorce them from Christianity. Thus, in their view, both can exist side by side.

It can be concluded therefore that, people do not need to stop being members of their traditional backgrounds in order to become Christians. Rather, they can appropriate the riches of their traditional culture in a relevant worship of God. Thus, Christianity and traditional culture should not be regarded as enemies but rather as bedfellows. This is so, because traditional cultural forms can be vital instruments in Christian evangelisation. However, are should be taken to different between the traditional elements which are compatible with the Christian faith and those which are not, so as to maintain an authentic Christian life.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

In the light of the findings so far made in this study. The researcher recommends that;

- The learned people of Antokrom must work towards a comprehensive written history, and documented beliefs and practices of the community. And that the traditional authority work in close collaboration with the church and Non-Governmental Organizations like the World Vision International to bring positive impact on the culture of the people.
- The local council of churches must come together and work out a common document to guide their members on how to relate with traditional culture in their areas of operation since each denomination seems to tow different lines in their reactions to culture, which sometimes seems confusing to many people.
- The Methodist Church at Antokrom must make all efforts to write the history of the church and research into the activities of the people who planted Methodism in

Antoakrom. This is necessary in order to give the members the opportunity to know where they are coming from and the foundation upon which their faith is built.

- The evangelists of the Methodist Church who undertake church planting should not leave the work in the hands of ordinary church members. The evangelists must also make time to study the beliefs and practices of the people of the rural communities and devise better strategies for communicating the Gospel to the indigenous people.
- Finally, organisations interested in the maintenance of the relationship between Christianity and traditional culture, should work diligently towards improving the dialogue between the two religions.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BOOKS

Agyekum, K. *Akan Verbal Taboos: In the Context of the Ethnography of Communication*.

Working Papers in Linguistics, M.Phil Thesis. NTNU Norway, 1996.

Asante Emmanuel, *Culture, Religion and Development*. Kumasi: Wilas Press, 2007.

Bartels, F. L. *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

Bediako Kwame, *Christianity in Africa: A Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995.

Bediako Kwame, *Theology and Identity*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992.

Bosch David, *Witness to the World*. London: Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1980.

Durkheim, E. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915.

Grudem Wayne, *Systematic Theology*. Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press, 1994.

Kant Immanuel, *Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Larbi Kingsley Emmanuel, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. Accra: CPCS, 2001.

Luzbetak L. J., *The Church and Cultures. New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Orbis, Maryknoll 1988.

Omenyo Cephas, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*. Uitgeverij Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer, 2001.

Rattray, R. S. *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Stott John, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. London: Falcon, 1975.

Thorpe, S. A. *African Traditional religions: An Introduction*. Pretoria, 1991.

Walls Andrew, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*. Mary Knoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996.

## **JOURNAL**

“Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism” (PDF). WIN-Gallup International. 27 July 2012.  
Retrieved 24 August 2012.

*New poll reveals how churchgoers mix eastern new age beliefs* retrieved 26 July 2013.

Phan, P. C. Spiritual Direction in a Multicultural Church. Helping Others Encounter God in Their Own Culture, *New Theology Review*, XIII, No.1 2000.

Tambiah, S. J. “The Magical Power of Words” In Man: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3: 1968.

*The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*. Revised Edition.  
Accra: Wesley Printing Press, 2000.

The Methodist Church Ghana (1835-2005): 170th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure, Accra, 2000.

Valedictory Service in Honor of Most Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah Booklet, 27 September 2009, Accra, Ghana.

Williams, L. Michael, *Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church. Bible Doctrines: An introductory study of the doctrines of the Bible* (2014), Chapters 12 & 13.

*Women More Religious Than Men* retrieved 14 July 2013.

## **PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED**

Alice Asante, Leaders' Meeting Member, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Hanson Boateng, the Leaders Meeting Secretary and a Former Society Steward, the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Malam Abudu, the Islamic Mosque, Antoakrom, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Obaahemmaa Yaa Tabuaah, Queen Mother, Antoakrom, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, A Native of Antoakrom, Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Opanin James Asare, Leaders' Meeting Member, the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Opanin Kwame Gyebi, Abusuapanin of the Royal Palace, Antoakrom, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

S. O. Bonsu, Society Steward of the Methodist Church, Antoakrom, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.



## **APPENDICE I**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. For how long have you been residing in the community?
2. What is the history and origin of the people of Antoakrom?
3. What can you say about:
  - (a) The family / clan system?
  - (b) The political system?
4. What are some of the major economic activities in the community?
5. What is the nature of the traditional beliefs and practices?
6. Mention and explain the festivals and feasts celebrated in the community.
7. What is the history of the Methodist church at Antoakrom?
8. What is the current situation of the Church?
9. What is the Church's view on traditional beliefs and practices?
10. What impact has traditional beliefs and practices made on the Methodist Church?

**MAP OF AMANSIE-WEST DISTRICT OF ASHANTI REGION WITH  
ANTOAKROM CLEARLY MARKED**



### **APPENDIX III**

#### **RELEVANT PICTURES**



**Royal Palace Antoakrom**



**Methodist Church, Antoakrom**



**Sunni Mosque, Antoakrom**



**Researcher with Abusuapanin Kwame Gyebi, Royal Palace, Antoakrom**



**Researcher with Obaapanin Diana Abbrey, Elderly Member of the Methodist Church, Antoakrom**





**Opanin James Asare, Elderly Member of the Methodist Church, Ant oakrom**



**Researcher with Samuel Owusu Bonsu, Society Steward, Methodist Church, Ant oakrom**