ATTITUDES AND POLICIES OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES
TO TRADITIONAL BIRTH, PUBERTY, MARRIAGE AND
FUNERAL RITES IN GHANA

by

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A thesis presented for the degree of Master of Theology
of the University of Edinburgh in the Faculty of Divinity
1970
Anyone who takes a cursory look at the history of the young Mission founded Churches in Africa, for the past century, will immediately realise that the responsibility of almost all the young Churches in Africa, and Ghana in particular, both for the spiritual care and the administration of the congregations, has fallen on the indigenous Church workers. Indeed they have increasingly carried out their work with astonishing success.

Many Mission Churches have achieved autonomy. The Basel Mission has become the Presbyterian Church of Ghana under its own Moderator. The Wesleyan Mission Society has become the Methodist Church of Ghana with its own Chairman. And the English Missionary Diocese has also become part of the new Province of West Africa under its own Archbishop. And though these independent Churches are administered by the African clergy from within and have since ceased to be dominated by the parent Churches yet throughout the years, the Churches' mode of expression and structures have remained Westernised and have been subject to little or no change.

One has to bear in mind that the era is passed when Missionary agents were wont to criticise adversely almost all the aspects of the traditional customs and practices. We are now witnessing an era of understanding and enlightenment. For, research studies in the political, social, legal and religious structures of many Ghanaian societies have been undertaken in the works of R.S.Rattray, N.Field, K.A.Busia and J.Banquah.

In the light of this new knowledge of traditional society, both foreign and indigenous Churchmen are not only questioning the Churches' attitudes and policies to traditional customs,
but are endeavouring to extract and more than that to incorporate all the good features of the traditional customs into the Churches for the Churches' enrichment both structurally and liturgically. There is a new quest to make the universal import of Christianity felt in all lands and places. It is the fervent desire of many Churchmen today that Christianity be introduced to all people in such a way that it will not appear antagonistic to but fulfil what is lacking in their cultural heritage.

The question is often raised as to the extent to which the spirit of the Christian message has penetrated into the home and community, especially in connection with those personal and social ceremonies. It is in the light of such questioning that a careful study of the Churches' attitudes and policies to these personal and social ceremonies have been found essential.

For the general knowledge of the Akan religion, customs, and institutions, I am indebted to the works of Rattray, Field, Busia and Danquah from which I have drawn my sources for the survey. Throughout this survey I have thought it necessary to illustrate, as far as I possibly can, with documentary evidence, the different positions taken by the Churches on particular issues. But where there was a concensus of opinion only one source has been quoted to avoid duplications.

Apart from my personal comments which are interspersed in the survey, it would be noticed that at the end of almost every main topic some questions and problems which either need solutions or further investigation have been raised. I have used the term Protestant in a general sense to refer to all the non-Roman Catholic Churches. But the two major Churches (i.e. the Presbyterians and the Methodists) received special attention. However,
references have been made to some Independent Churches in so far as they present a marked contrast in policy to the above mentioned Churches. I should also like to say that I am conscious of inadequacies and inconsistencies which have been left unexplained for many reasons, to which, I hope, the reader will bear with me.

I should like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. A.C. Ross, my Supervisor, for the invaluable assistance, guidance and encouragement I received from him. My thanks are due to Professor A.C. Cheyne, Head of Department of Ecclesiastical History who, inspite of his numerous commitments voluntarily read through the manuscript and made some suggestions.

I am also indebted to the Directors of the Basel Mission Home Board, Switzerland for the generous financial resources they offered me, without which I could not have undertaken this study.

S. Prempeh.
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CHAPTER ONE

A GENERAL SURVEY OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

ABOUT BIRTH, INITIATION, MARRIAGE AND DEATH

It will not be possible for the purpose of this survey to describe any more of the beliefs and customs of the people of Ghana than is required for our understanding of the general outlook of the average person. Much has already been written on the subject of Akan beliefs about birth, initiation, marriage and death; and to the exhaustive and far-reaching research material so far gathered in this field I do not pretend to be capable to add anything new. As a basis of our study throughout this survey on the beliefs and customs, particular attention will be paid to the Akan, the predominant ethnic group in Ghana who form about one-half of the entire population.

The supernatural world view of the Akan may be described as consisting of a hierarchy of spirits and spiritual forces. In relation to man, the nearest of the supernatural beings and forces are the so-called Mmoatia -- the little folk. Next to this comes the Asakanfo, the ancestors, or ghosts of the departed elders of the clan. Still higher in the hierarchy of supernatural beings are the Abosom, namely, the clan or tribal deities whose abode are mainly in natural phenomena such as rivers, stones, trees and mountains. Furthest removed from the human plane in a class quite apart, yet directly accessible to human invocation at any time,

is God the Supreme being.¹

Of importance to our subject and one directly related to the whole social life of the Akan is the place and influence of the ancestors, one of the objects of Akan's religious belief. Indispensable also for our understanding of the numerous ritual practices connected with different transitions in the life of any member of the family, is the widespread belief in ancestors and ancestral power.²

The Akan extended family system embraces those about to be born, the living and the dead who are awaiting rebirth into the land of the living. The ancestors are, in a sense, scarcely divided from the living by the narrow stream of death and, therefore, watch over everything that concerns the family, its health and prosperity, maintaining a lively interest in the day to day affairs of the members of the family. Daily or casual glimpses of their presence in dreams indicate their continued interest in the living members but should they appear angry or displeased, then action must be taken. Through rites and offerings performed and in the consultation of oracles, their wishes are discovered and the necessary measures are taken to satisfy their needs. As custodians of law and order, they punish offenders with sickness and misfortune.³

Pouring of libation also testifies to their presence and existence. Every lineage head (abusuapanin), the priest and custodian of the

¹. For the sake of clarity I have categorised the Akan supernatural beings as if they function in closely knit compartments. No such rigid divisions exist, for their functions overlap and cannot be fitted into any rigid pattern.

². R.S. Hattray, Ashanti, p.126.

ancestral stool, is vested with political and legal authority.  

The **Abusua** and **Ntoto**

Two distinct principles generally govern the Akan social order. The clan (**abusua**) and the spirit (**ntoro**). These two principles are united in every man. Every lineage group belongs to one of the many clans.

Clan is synonymous to blood (**mogya**). Traditionally a child is believed to be formed through a combined process of three major elements. During the act of coition the woman’s blood and the man’s ntoro-spirit meets and this leads to conception and eventually to the formation of an animate being. But at the point of birth, a child receives a third element, the soul (**kra**), a life force which proceeds direct from God and returns to Him after death.  

Characteristic of the clan system is exogamy. The exogamous rule requires that a man must not marry anyone of the same clan. A man of Asona clan, for instance, cannot marry a woman of the Asona clan but he can marry from the Agona or Aduana clans. Any union whether consciously or unconsciously contracted within the prohibited category must be annulled immediately after detection. Strict observance of the rule has helped to mark out lineage members into separate entities.

Matrilineal descent is another characteristic feature of the clan system. The existence of a clan and any possible hope

3. Ibid., p. 35.
4. Ibid., p. 35.
of survival depends largely on the female descendants who are the sole transmitters of the blood (abusua) and therefore, serve as the medium for the survival of the clan. Sociologically the system determines inheritance. ¹ Because people of the same clan cannot marry, it is logical that a husband cannot be a member of the wife's abusua. And since succession is matrilineal, i.e. traced through the woman, children of any union have no legal right to inherit the property of their father. In all communities, like the Akan, where descent is matrilineal, the property of a deceased person goes to the eldest brother or most generally to his nephews, the sons of the maternal sister, but of the same mother. Nevertheless self-acquired property may be left by will as a gift to the children. This system partly affords an explanation why some unfortunate wives and their children after their husband's death are deprived entirely of any share of their husband's property.

Mention has already been made that the ntoro, which may be defined or described as soul or spirit, is one of the elements possessed by every person. ² This power, transmitted through the father to the son, but lost in the daughter, determines a man's personality. Any peculiar features demonstrated by a child which bear some similarity to his father's attributes and idiosyncrasies, are taken as evidence that he possesses his father's ntoro.

The number of ntoro groupings are variously given. ³ Exogamy characterises both the ntoro and clan groupings and

¹. Ibid., pp. 39-44.
². Ibid., p. 36.
³. Busia gives seven ntoro divisions, Rattray gives nine and Danquah gives twelve.
basically prohibits marriages within certain categories.\textsuperscript{1} Obser-
ance of common taboos is another important feature of the ntoro
grouping.\textsuperscript{2} Special days are set aside for the ritual washing of
the ntoro thus to discover the ntoro of a man you ask what he washes.
Unfortunately because the ntoro is widely scattered and also lost
in the female, there are many people who do not know to which ntoro
they belong.\textsuperscript{3} Nevertheless the use of common surnames and common
forms of etiquette serve not only to link members of the same ntoro
together but also strengthens the bond between father and son.

Many of the clans claim to originate from animals and
many, therefore, bear animal names. Totem animals of the respect-
ive ntoro are treated with respect and reverence, they are never
killed or eaten except for ritual purposes. Full burial rites are
accorded any totem animal found dead in the forest.\textsuperscript{4} Every person
finds his place within this web of inter-relations where he inherits
his blood from the mother which gives him his status and membership
in the clan and the wider community. The spirit is received from
the father while the underlying part of him is received from God.

Our study of the clan system has revealed significantly that the
abusua determines inheritance and succession while ntoro prohibits
marriages within certain categories.

The exogamous division therefore makes it impossible for
a man to marry or to have any form of intimate concourse with mem-
bers of the same clan or ntoro. That the exogamous ruling was

\textsuperscript{1} R.S.Rattray, op.cit.,p.37.
\textsuperscript{2} Among the Bosommaru ntoro, the first to be bestowed on man,
for example, a python, a dog, and an ox are taboo.
\textsuperscript{4} R.S.Rattray, op.cit., pp.48-49.
carefully observed is evident from the number of prohibited categories which Rattray has outlined. The following are the main ones:

i. A man cannot marry his brother's daughters.

ii. His sister and her daughters.

iii. His daughter and her daughters.

iv. His mother and her sisters.

v. His father's sisters or father's brother's daughters.

vi. His grand-daughter (i.e. son's daughter)

vii. Or any one of the same abusua.¹

This list does not exhaust the wide range of prohibitions but of importance for our survey is the fact that all conjugal relations within this category, except cross cousin marriages, is incest and strictly forbidden. Besides, marriages of this kind is believed to imperil the soul not only of the offending spouses but also the soul of the clan. Further more it disrupts the family from within through sexual rivalry and jealousy and weakens the mutual bond of the tribe and its survival.

Cross cousin marriages, the only exception to this rule, is not only allowed but preferred. This wide-spread form of marriage with one's mother's brother's daughter or with one's father's sister's daughter² has two basic advantages. On one hand it preserves and strengthens the matrilineal family, and on the other hand, it ensures that a man's property eventually benefits his own children thereby reconciling the father's interest in his children with his obligations to his nephews. Cross cousin

¹ Ibid., p.37.
² R.S.Rattray, Religion and Art, pp.317-331.
marriages, rarely practised these days, was, in the past, a means whereby the small tribal or isolated individual groups consolidated themselves and survived by fighting for their existence.

Marriage Rites.

Having briefly outlined the basic principles governing the abusua and the ntoro grouping, the rights, obligations and restrictions they confer on individuals within the lineage, we will turn our attention to a study of marriage and its related customs. The Akan, not unlike any other ethnic group, regard marriage as a contract between two family units which the spouses between whom the union is proposed respectively represent. The ultimate concern of the two family units is to ensure that a permanent mutual bond is established by the marriage contracted.

Quite a variety of marriages exist within any tribe. Rattray outlines no less than six among the Ashantis, all of which, he maintains, are legally binding when contracted. Similar differences exist in the basic formalities surrounding each kind of marriage, the nature of which is often determined by the status of the person in the community. Marriages within the royal family differ in most cases from that of a commoner to that of a slave girl.

In contrast to an ordinary marriage there may be mentioned another form which lies between an engagement and marriage. Infant betrothal (asiwa) is a typical form of union in which a

1. Rattray mentions the following forms of marriages: Marriage of a free man with a free woman; Marriage of a free man with a slave; Marriage of a man with a woman who is a pawn; Marriage of a widow or widows (levirate); common law marriage. Female twins not related to a chief by blood become stool wives.
father may betroth his daughter to another man. This promise, in rare cases, is made before the child is born but the general practice is to make it promise while the girl is still a minor. Before a promised child reaches marriageable age, the man spends extravagantly on her in the hope that the girl will realise the generosity of the man and accept the offer to marry him. If the parents accept an aseda-money from the man, then he has the right to claim compensation from anyone detected of making advances to his child wife.

The right of the man to visit his young wife and possibly to employ her services where necessary does not in any way, it must be made clear, entitle him to sex rights until she reaches the age of puberty and the necessary rites performed to declare her as capable of marriage. Customary law strictly forbids marriage before puberty and that makes it doubtful whether this form of union can be appropriately described as marriage. Admittedly, the infant betrothal has never been attractive. More often than not, girls on reaching marriageable age had refused to marry the men concerned. The unfortunate thing is that since girls have the right to reject any proposal from a suitor, custom also allows that the parents of a girl who eventually repudiates a marriage arrangement should pay the value of the gifts they had received from the man towards the upkeep of their daughter.

Concerning an ordinary marriage, which we will describe in some detail, the following are the main features. Before a man of marriageable age decides to marry, he proceeds the actual

1. R.S. Rattray, op. cit., p.76.
2. Ibid., p.77.
contract with the choice of a girl, making sure, however, that he has observed the exogamy rule by making previous enquiries into the background of the girl. Having obtained the girl's consent to the marriage the parents are informed.

Traditionally, it is the duty of either the father or the maternal uncle or both to find a wife for their son or nephew respectively. At this stage the uncle accepts the responsibility of contracting the union on behalf of the man. The uncle will first entertain the parents of the girl with wine to introduce himself to them and especially to ask the hand of their daughter, if not already betrothed, for his nephew in marriage. With the acceptance of the Introduction fee, further discussions on the proposed marriage are arranged.

As a practical measure, calculated to ensure the success of the union, both families concerned enquire into the history of the spouses between whom the union is proposed. The object of the exercise is to ensure that upon moral, physical or mental grounds the union can or cannot be effected. Any obstacle, in the form of a quarrel between the two family units, however trivial it may appear, must be settled before further steps are taken. If, therefore, for any apparent reason the consent of the girl's parents is not obtained, further efforts to woo the girl is discouraged since any union contracted outside the family circles without the sanction and support of the family is abhorred by the community. People involved in such marriages often lost respect and had little or no say in the general affairs of the community. Rarely do suitors encounter difficulty in obtaining the consent of a girl's parents. In a majority of cases before the

2. R.S.Rattray, Religion and Art, p.77.
proposed marriage is put before them they are already aware of the intentions of the boy and girl. Therefore, parents who do not want a particular man in their family would immediately discourage any form of courting before it reaches the stage of marriage negotiations. When the consent is obtained the uncle sends in the Thanks-money, (tirinsa) which varies from 12/- to £2 8/-. 1 depending, however, on the status of the man. Part of the Thanks-money is distributed among representatives of both families present as well as to the witnesses to the union, drinks provided for the occasion are served and partaken by all present.

An Akan marriage ceremony is generally secular but magico-religious elements enter into it at the conclusion of the union. The usual practice is for the lineage head to pour libation and to invoke the ancestors to witness the conclusion of the union being established between the two families; and he solicits the ancestors for their blessing to ensure the success of the marriage, that it may be fruitful and remain a permanent bond between both families.

Gift exchange, a common feature throughout the ceremony, is not essential for the validation of the union and can be avoided when necessary. 2 The customary practice is for the bride to prepare quite a variety of dishes for the husband and his friends. The bridegroom in turn sends to his bride some customary presents. There are occasions when special items omitted in the presents may be demanded by the relatives of the girl.

A head-money (tiri-sika) returnable to the husband in

1. Ibid., p.81.
2. Basia, Rattray, Sarbah and Danquah, the authorities in this field of study, are unanimous in emphasising that payment of Thanks-money is enough to validate a marriage. cf. Danquah, Akan Laws and Customs, p.149. Rattray, Religion and Art, p.81.
case of divorce may be demanded by the girl's parents. A husband of whom the dowry is demanded has to pay the money before he may be allowed to take the girl away. But agreement could be arrived at in the case of those who are unable to make full payments so that they could pay by instalment. However, there are husbands from whom no dowry is demanded.

For quite a variety of reasons some parents demand a dowry or head-money which, it is sometimes alleged, deters some suitors from contracting their unions or delay it until they are capable of saving enough money for the dowry. The allegation that poor parents always demand exhorbitant dowries is not true. But the general tendency was for parents in debt or needing money for a project to take advantage of their daughter's marriage to obtain money for that end. Some, however, demand dowries to secure their daughters in a trade or buy them a farm. Yet there are others who demand dowries merely as a legal fee sanctioning the union or as a token of an honourable marriage or a guarantee of good behaviour. In none of these can the dowry be said to be a purchase of a woman which often implies an exchange of money for something of an equal value.

The interest and responsibility of each recipient of part of the dowry, whether a member of the family or not, is recognized. Everyone becomes concerned about the relationship introduced by the marriage contract. This partly accounts for what appears to some foreign observers as undue interference by the relatives in the

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1. Customary presents form a bridegroom to the bride includes:
   - a trunk box;
   - 5 changes of cloth;
   - 4 headkerchiefs;
   - 1 brass pan;
   - 1 native stool;
   - 1 large mirror;
   - powder;
   - pomade;
   - head oil.
domestic affairs of a couple. The object of the so-called interference, it must be noted, is not a desire to interfere but to help maintain the integrity and respect of a union the responsibility of which they had accepted by receiving part of the dowry.

Among the Akan, polygamy is allowed by law as a social institution. Any capable person can marry more than one but polygamy is an exception rather than the rule, for it is mainly enjoyed by the rich few. Many factors account for the practice and perpetuation of polygamy. Some people keep more wives for the domestic and agricultural labour they provide at certain periods of the year. Others keep more wives for the sake of prestige, since the number of wives and children one has often confers on him a degree of popularity which indirectly gives him a better say in the domestic affairs of the community. A wife's sterility or chronic disease which may render her incapable of child bearing may also stimulate polygamy. In a community where polygamy is practicable, a man may prefer to marry another wife rather than use his wife's physical disability to divorce her. Women with any physical impediments devote themselves wholly to domestic tasks. Another determinant of polygamy is the long period of lactation during which a woman is expected to stay away from her husband.

A husband wishing to marry a second woman seeks permission from the first wife and compensates her, but failure to do so cannot be accepted as genuine cause of divorce. The first wife who becomes the senior wife passes on some of her domestic duties to subsequent wives thereby being relieved of a lot of domestic burdens. Personal jealousies may occur, for instance, when a co-wife fails to get children of the same husband, but such instances are very rare. And whether women who are involved in
polygamous life are worse off or lose any dignity or not is not easy to discover.

Akan pattern of residence is patrilocal. A woman leaves her parents to stay with the husband in the same compound with the family of the man. Within this new environment, the husband acquires exclusive rights over the wife. He accepts the responsibility of a biological father over children the woman will bear. He is entitled to punish her for adultery and claim damages from the co-respondent.\(^1\) In case of divorce the man claims back the dowry.\(^2\) He employs the services of the wife and her children for both domestic and economic purposes, and the woman contributes to labour at certain periods of the year in the farm apart from attending to the domestic tasks. In a reciprocal manner, the husband maintains the wife and children and pays for the wife's debts and torts. However, it needs to be emphasised that, the rights of a man over his wife do not extend in the same degree to her personal property and most important, her children. Any property of the woman acquired before or during the marriage remains her own. Similarly, the off-spring of the union belong to the woman since they are of the woman's abusua.\(^3\)

Divorce, a formal dissolution of marriage in any community is a direct corollary of the practice of marriage. Customary law permits dissolution of marriage at the will of either party.\(^4\) But the law requires that divorce be granted only when a genuine

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1. R.S. Rattray, Religion and Art, p. 98.
2. Ibid. p. 98.
3. Supra, p. 4.
4. There appears to be divergent opinions here, for Sarbah maintains that among the Fanti only the husband can seek divorce.
cause has been shown. Causes of divorce are diverse and apply in different ways to either party. Among them Rattray outlines the following: a man may divorce on the grounds of: (i) barrenness (ii) adultery, (iii) habitual drunkenness, (iv) quarrelsomeness, (v) strained relations between husband and mother-in-law, (vi) practice of witchcraft. In addition to the list may be mentioned laziness, bad cooking and bad temper.

A woman may also seek divorce on the grounds of: (i) husband's impotence or her own sterility, (ii) infidelity, (iii) improper maintenance, (iv) assaulting her at a lonely place, (v) absence for a considerable number of years without making provision for her maintenance, (vi) practice of witchcraft.

One needs to know the African's natural desire for children in his marriage to appreciate the gravity of impotence or sterility as a common cause of divorce. If after a number of years of marriage a couple fail to demonstrate their fertility through childbirth, excessive pressure is put to bear upon the couple by relatives to annul the marriage. Some husbands resolve this problem by breaking ties with the family at the great cost of continuing to maintain his wife. In most cases, a more compromising attitude is adopted. The husband with the help of the first wife will marry a second wife with the hope of raising children for him rather than yield to a dissolution of the union.

In ordinary married life couples resolve their own differences. But should one of the parties be seriously offended, a divorce action may be pursued by the offended party. A court of elders of both families with some impartial witnesses meet to
settle the matter rather than allow the union to disintegrate. Although after examining the case a verdict is usually given and the offended party compensated, the ultimate concern of the court is not to find fault but to prevent divorce. All measures taken are therefore, aimed at ensuring that the life-long relationship, now impaired, is carefully mended. Quite often marriages without family backing are dissolved at the least provocation from either party since there are no means of solving problems which often threaten the stability of the unions.

A situation may, however, arise in which the circumstance surrounding the case is such that the only reasonable solution is to grant divorce. A court faced with a situation like that will assist the couple to dissolve the union. A man who divorces his wife claims the restoration of the dowry and until that is paid, the woman is recognised as his wife even though they may not be living as such. He is entitled to seduction fees if the woman marries. Divorced persons can remarry but a divorced woman cannot marry the accomplice. When the dowry is refunded, the man smears his shoulder blades with white clay provided by the woman to signify that the marriage has been nullified.

A divorced woman leaves her husband to stay with her abuaasa, but the children are left with the father. Only unweaned children may be left in the custody of the woman. If on the contrary, the man decides to leave all the children in the custody of the woman then he provides money for the upkeep of the children alone. It will therefore be appropriate that we go from here to

1. Ibid., p.101.
2. It was a common practice in the past for a husband to pronounce a curse on a woman never to have anything to do with any person suspected of seduction.
examine how a child is initiated into the family through the ritual act of naming.

Birth Rites.

Akan traditional belief about birth holds that a child is composed of three distinct elements. Blood (mo\-ga\-n) synonymous to clan (a\-b\-u\-sa\-n), spirit (n\-to\-r\-o) which determines a child's personality and a soul (k\-ra) the life force which he receives from God.\(^1\)

Through birth an opportunity is offered to an ancestor to reincarnate into the world of the living. The off-spring of a couple adds further recognition to their union. Therefore, incapacity to procreate which, in Akan expectation, must characterise any union, is bound to lead to disintegration of the marriage, for a union which fails to satisfy this fundamental prerequisite (i.e., offering an opportunity for an ancestor to reincarnate) is discouraged.\(^2\)

A pregnant woman must observe a variety of rites of a magico-religious character to ward off all evil influences to which she is susceptible. In addition to her own taboos, she observes before and after the birth of a child those taboos of the husband.\(^3\) All the customs have reference not only to its welfare but also that of the mother, to that of the community and the establishment of the child's relationship to the community.

A woman who has miscarriages or experiences difficulty during child birth is believed to be harbouring some ill-feeling

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2. Rattray, Law and Constitution, p.32.
3. Rattray, Religion and Art, p.52.
against the husband or has committed adultery which remains un-confessed. But infidelity of a man during his wife's pregnancy has no adverse effect on the man. Custom requires that a woman who experiences difficulty during child birth should confess her sins and ask for forgiveness since failure to confess may lead to death.

A whole household hails with joy the arrival of a child. Though a child is immediately given a God's name or a natal-name, yet it undergoes a week of critical watching to justify that it has come to stay permanently, for a newborn child is believed to be a ghost child who may be called back anytime. A child who died before the eighth day or before the naming ceremony, until recently, was buried in a midden heap and the mother was advised to desist from showing any signs of mourning the child. The belief was wide-spread that to mourn the child was to encourage the ghost mother to send it back to the same mother a second time.

The reception rites (ntetea) take place on or after the eighth day. On the appointed day, the mother adorns the child with precious beads and a member of the child's ntoro is called in to perform the rites. If a boy, for instance, the grandfather will receive the child on his knees, spit into its mouth, an act supposed to signify the reinforcement of the ntoro-spirit in the child, and invoke God and the ancestors by saying:

1. Among the common offences attributed to difficulty in childbirth are, infidelity - most especially adultery; a contemplation of divorce after birth; improper observance of the requisite taboos and the ntoro propitiatory rites.


3. Ibid., p. 61.
Father and God so-and-so, my grandchild so-and-so has be¬
gotten a child and has brought him to me, and I call him
after myself naming him so-and-so; grant that he grows
up and continues to meet me here, and let him give me
food.¹

By far the most important and widespread ceremony asso-
ociated with birth is the bestowal of a name upon a child which
initiates it into the family, for a person's name is regarded as
part, and in some respects, the most essential part of his being.
Many other rites of a varying importance and function tend to clus¬
ter around the naming ceremony.

Having concluded the ceremony, both the mother and the
child go out for the first time to receive official recognition and
be accepted into the community. Every child finds its proper place
in the community, no child is a stranger since it belongs to an
abusua. A child stays with and works for the father who has certain
obligations and rights with regard to the child.² As a child is
initiated into the family and the world of the living so also is
it initiated into the status of adulthood on reaching the years of
discretion.

Puberty Rites.

The Akan, unlike some of the tribal groups in Africa who
practise male initiation, have no initiation rites for adolescent
boys. But parents with the help of the other members of the family

¹. Ibid., p.64.
². R.S.Rattray, Law and Constitution, pp.11-12.
educate their boys in such a way as to display the characteristics of manhood. Boys are generally educated by a process of living. But certain amount of basic instructions are given in the arts and activities which essentially concern the male. This informal training may include proper observance of religious rites, customs and every day etiquette; sex matters, speech, social obligation and tribal lore. Respect for the elderly and the opposite sex as well as self control are emphasised. Parents also permit their children to acquire some arts like basket making, proper farming or the art of war through play and casual imitation of adult activity. The same can be said of the training of girls but there is more to it than that of the boys.

Common among all the tribes of Ghana is the observance of girl's puberty rites which occupy an important place in the community life of the Akan. A girl's puberty rites take place after she has experienced her first menstruation. The ceremony is arranged within the matrilineal extended family under the supervision of the old women.

When a girl first makes known of her physical condition to her mother, custom requires that the mother in turn informs the Queen mother, the nominal head of all the women in the community, and expresses desire to celebrate the event. She may, however, decide to perform the necessary religious rites connected with the event which involve no elaborate public display. But if an official celebration is intended, then she extends an invitation to all her friends and the women relatives within the community.

1. Ibid., p.14.
2. Ibid., p.16.
It is a taboo for a girl to be pregnant or marry before the puberty rites are performed, an act which brings disgrace to the whole family.\(^1\) It has, therefore, been found essential that before proceeding with the rite, the mother of the girl with the help of the Queen mother or her representative examine the girl to make sure that she is not pregnant.\(^2\) The pregnancy test has remained an essential sanction upon pre-marital chastity and a custom which possesses the character of an important ethical protection.

Early in the morning of the day of celebration of the rite, the girl's mother pours libation and expresses thanks to God, Earth goddess, the ancestors and the mothers of the spirit world for her daughter's menstruation.\(^3\) At sun-rise the girl, richly adorned, is seated on a white stool in a public place attended by an old woman relative. In front and behind her are placed basins containing symbols of fertility. She remains seated all day while the invited girls and women relatives celebrate the event with drumming, singing, dancing and parading the main street from one end to another. Gifts of silk cloths, pomade, sweet perfume and precious beads are presented to her by friends.\(^4\)

Through dancing, singing and other gestures, they demonstrate to her some of the features of womanhood into which she is about to enter and congratulate her for her achievement. These

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1. In the olden days a girl found to be pregnant before the act could be performed was immediately expelled from the village and the accomplice severely punished. Expulsion was the worst form of punishment any family could inflict on a member since it was tantamount to being sold into slavery.


3. R.S.Hattray, op.cit.,p.70.

4. Ibid., p. 70.
ceremonies which involve a girl in sitting down a whole day, despite the strain in such an exercise, do not in fact place any emphasis on physical endurance or social isolation which are common features in the rites for male initiates elsewhere in Africa. On the contrary, ideas and symbolisms which demonstrate her womanhood and wifehood are emphasised. At sun-set she is thoroughly washed at the riverside to cleanse her of all stains which characterise that period.

The next stage is the feeding. The grandmother touches her mouth three times with a meal of mashed yam (or plantain) and eggs without the girl really eating it. After that she is given three boiled eggs, a piece of baked elephant ear and water. A quantity of mashed yam in a basin is placed before her and children gathered around are ordered to rush to scramble for bits and pieces while she tries to get hold of one of them. The belief is that if she gets hold of a girl her first born will be a girl, and vice versa.1

After six days of feasting and rejoicing, a public visitation crowns the ceremony. The girl, gorgeously dressed and attended by her mother and some of her friends, goes round the town returning thanks to all who either assisted in the celebration through personal participation or through the giving of gifts. This affords an occasion for conspicuous display of wealth. Every girl enjoys it out of the natural desire for public display of her beauty, her dress and her golden ornaments; and partly because of the gifts she receives from friends and kinsfolk. But far more important in the life of every girl is this ritual ceremony which

1. Ibid., 74.
introduces her into the status of adulthood and confers on her the rights and obligations of an active member of the community. Besides, being a potential wife and mother, she is now privileged to be a medium for the perpetuation of the clan.

With the completion of the final stage, the community accepts her as mature and virtually prepared for married life. She is from thence addressed as a woman (eno or maame) and by this public declaration of adulthood, she acquires the right to attract the attention of prospective suitors if not already betrothed.

Death and Funeral Rites.

Belief in the existence of the ancestors after death and the related belief in their ability to influence the lives and destinies of their living descendants is demonstrated by the meticulous care with which the dead are disposed of. Among the Akan, death is regarded as a mere transition from the world of the living to the world of the spirits, where life is more or less a replica of life on earth. The pious attitude of the Akan who never eats and drinks without first throwing a little bit on the ground is evidence of the nearer presence of the dead to the living. Similarly during the annual festivals when a chief on behalf of the people enters the stool room to offer food and drink to the ancestors add further support to this fact.

In the event of a member of a family falling seriously

1. Girls are immediately introduced to married life after the puberty rites have been performed.

sick at the point of death, a medicine man is called in to cure him. A diagnosis through divination is made to discover the cause, before the necessary medicinal remedies are applied.\(^1\) If a god or a supernatural agent has been offended, it is placated since without its pacification no medicinal application will prove efficacious. A patient who recovers undergoes a purificatory rite prescribed by the medicine-man. The common aim is to remove any kind of stain which might have been incurred through the violation of a sacred or sanctioned law.

That the Akan believe in natural death is undeniable. But nothing evokes more suspicion and questioning than the death of a young, strong and healthy person. Such a death demands immediate enquiry through the consultation of an oracle for supernatural explanation. Where the cause is not attributed to the wrath of a supernatural being, then foul play is suspected and further enquiries are made. By far the most usual cause assigned to death is witchcraft, and suspected members of the family are compelled to undergo the test of poison ordeal.\(^2\)

The form of any funerary rite whether simple or complex is determined, in most cases, by the birth and status of the deceased and the circumstances surrounding the death.\(^3\) Funeral rites of a king or people of the royal house differ considerably

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1. Ibid., p. 107.
2. Although the belief that witches can cause evil through supernatural means is widely held still there is the underlying fact of their helplessness and inability to effect harm on people outside their families. The proverb holds: 'however fierce a witch's mouth may be she eats on her own side of the stream but cannot cross the water'.
from that of an ordinary citizen or a slave. Accidental death (atofowuo) such as death through childbirth, sorcery, poisoning and drowning is regarded as bad death,¹ and the ritual surrounding bad death takes a different form. For instance, a man who commits suicide is immediately buried with few and meager subsequent rites. Measures are taken to drive away the lingering spirit of the suicide.

Since many factors determine the nature or form any funeral should take, it will not be possible for us to examine all the various forms. We will therefore, concentrate our attention on the most important features of the funeral rites of an ordinary individual. References will, however, be made to any peculiar feature in so far as it throws light on the essence of the intricate ritual acts.

Death in Akan society involves the whole community. Though only the elders of the nearer family meet to plan the details of the funeral yet all the members of the community, as a rule, are obliged to attend and in one way or another express their sympathy and concern about the loss. The ritual begins with mortuary and pre-burial mourning, in which members of the family, the widow, (if married) the children, friends, sympathisers and any association of which the deceased was a member all have special contributions to make.²

Messages announcing the death are sent to members of the lineage both far and near through firing of guns, beating of talking drums and through personal messengers. As the custom is, new arrivals show their presence by greeting the deceased and the

¹. Not all suicides are regarded as bad, or sinful. To take one's life in war by taking poison rather than fall a victim to the humiliation of the enemy is considered as honourable and recommended.

bereaved parents, but the universal custom of wailing begins only after the body has been laid in state and the chief has been officially informed. Occasionally men join in the wailing as a genuine expression of grief and affection for the deceased but the women generally combine the greeting with spontaneous outbursts of weeping and wailing. The sorrow expressed, the praises sung, the appeals made to him to return have all some effect on the deceased person who is believed to hover around in spirit to partake of the ceremony performed. Since the funeral celebration does not take place on the same day the wailing ends to be renewed afresh mostly by close relatives on the day of the funeral.

Meanwhile the body is washed and the hair and nail parings cut and preserved together with the toilet materials to be buried in the grave. He is decked in fine cloths, adorned with golden ornaments and laid in state. Arrangements are made for the purchase of a coffin and the digging of a grave. Greetings are exchanged between those who arrive and the bereaved family. The cause of the death may be briefly narrated by the lineage head and wine served to all present. The same routine is repeated with the arrival of any fresh group. For a period of

1. The Akan postulate the existence of three different spirits: i. Osamanpa—good spirit; (ii) Otofo—the spirit of one who died by an accident, and (iii) Osaman-twentwen— a lingering spirit who does not qualify to enter the spirit world and therefore hovers around and behind dwellings and causing mischief.

2. A dead person is believed to be a homeless spirit unless he is buried at home or his nail clippings and body hair are brought home and buried in a corner of the house with the toilet materials with which he was washed. cf.Hattray, op.cit., p.163.

3. The Akan recognizes the Earth (asase-Yaa) as one of the objects of religious worship for no one will dig a grave without first offering prayer and asking permission. A typical libation prayer before digging a grave runs as follows: Earth, whose day is Thursday, receive this wine and drink. It is your grandchild that has died. We have come to beg you for this spot so that we may dig a hole; Do not let any evil befall us. Let the relatives live long here where we are laying. Do not let another join her. vide K.A.Busia, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, Oxford, 1951. p.42.
three days or more until the body is disposed of, a non-compulsory fast is observed. Kola may be eaten and light soup taken, but as a rule, no food is cooked in the mourning house except food for the deceased. His favourite dish while living is prepared and placed before his bed and later taken to his grave, to signify the last meal which he partakes before his departure to the spirit world.¹

Wailing and lamentation continue until the time for burial is announced. After the corpse has been put into the coffin, relatives and friends as well as representatives of the different associations of which he was a member bring items of gifts with which they want the deceased to be buried.² If he had anything of which he had special fondness it is also brought beside the coffin. The lineage head will then address the deceased and all sorts of messages and special petitions are conveyed through him to the ancestors. The articles are then shown to the crowd, the names of the donors are publicly announced and a piece of every article is put into the coffin. A quantity of gold dust is added to the articles to cover his travelling expenses on his way to the spirit world.

The closing of the coffin is preceded by a ceremonial quarrelling among the youth as to who should carry the coffin to the cemetery. This partly accounts for the pandemonium often observed at pagan funerals, not to mention the effect of a quantity of alcoholic drinks in empty stomachs which influences adversely

2. Ibid., p.158.
the behaviour of the people.\textsuperscript{1} Sometimes free expression of oneself during such confused moments serve to minimise the emotional tension which results from the death of a beloved friend or relative.

Burial is the next major concern after the coffin has been closed. Carrying of the coffin in the main streets with the hope of discovering the one responsible for the death of a man when a foul deed is suspected,\textsuperscript{2} was a common feature in the whole funeral rites but it has been abolished by law.\textsuperscript{3} Another diminishing feature, in recent years, has been the ordeal in which the widow has to pass through as a pre-cautionary measure to ward off all evil influences of the dead man's spirit, and to break all possible connections with him.\textsuperscript{4}

It is often a moving spectacle expressive of genuine love when the coffin is carried to the cemetery followed by a long procession of mourners and sympathisers to bury the dead. Only relatives are allowed into the cemetery, all others wait at cross roads leading to the cemetery. The coffin is lowered into the grave and libation poured. Similar messages like those given before the coffin was closed are repeated and, before the grave is covered, the toilet materials are also thrown into the grave. Since a dead body is a taboo, all those who go to the cemetery have to undergo a simple form of purification before re-entering the house of mourning. Singing, weeping, drumming and dancing continue until dark when all the people disperse to their

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, p.151.
\textsuperscript{2} R.S.Rattray maintains that this curious custom is done to give Asase Yaa (Earth goddess) due notice and warning.
\textsuperscript{3} cf. Religion and Art, p.167.
\textsuperscript{4} Traditionally the widow rites include fasting, undoing of the hair, walking bare footed, wearing signs of mourning, and shaving of hair at some stage in the funeral. It may also include some attitudes acted in company with the mourners or alone.
respective destinations.

The funeral celebration takes place on the seventh day after the death. Early in the morning the relatives commence the day's activities with weeping while the necessary preparations are made for the funeral. Friends and relatives who, for reasons of distance or other commitments, could not be present for the main rites attend the day's celebration. In the afternoon representatives of the bereaved family are seated in the public while the participants come in to pay their homage by expressing their grief. Drinks are served to all and they in turn make donations of money and in kind to help reduce the funeral expenses. Weeping, singing, dancing and drumming go on throughout the day until sunset when the people disperse. Donations are received anytime after the conclusion of the funeral. In addition to what has been described subsequent celebrations in remembrance of the deceased may be performed on the fifteenth and the fortieth days, as well as on the anniversary of the death.¹

Soon after the funeral, the elders of the family return thanks to all the participants in and contributors to the funeral of their deceased relative. On the appointed day for an assessment of the cost of the funeral, the successor is also appointed. If a debt was incurred, the successor either accepted the responsibility of paying the whole debt or it was distributed among members of the family. This in a sense concludes the funeral ceremony and the family returns to normal life.

¹. R.S.Rattray, Religion and Art, p.166.
CHAPTER TWO
ATTITUDES TO BIRTH AND PUBERTY RITES

We have now described in some detail the Akan supernatural world-view, customs and the related institutions; we will turn our attention to an examination of the Protestant Churches' attitudes to these beliefs and customs. Particular attention will be given to the manner in which some of these customs were given expression in the Christian communities by the Christian Akans and how the Churches reacted to them. In this chapter, however, we will concentrate especially on infant baptism and the corollary sacrament of Confirmation.

We will begin with an examination of infant baptism in relation to birth rites. Parents in traditional society, we have already noted, are responsible for the welfare of their children; this parental concern is often demonstrated by the manner in which the naming and puberty or manhood ceremonies are performed for the children before they are even capable of deciding anything for themselves. Broadly speaking, the sacrament of infant baptism, one of the distinctive marks of the Protestant Churches, has, from an early period, retained the character of a ceremony of admission; and inspite of all theological protests, has reverted to one of its ethnic functions as a vehicle of naming. Many Christian parents have realised the worth of these two rites, namely, traditional out-dooring ceremony followed later in life by the puberty rites, and their close relation to the sacrament of baptism and ceremony of Confirmation. In the Christian communities, therefore, the common practice is for parents to perform all four rites for their children. Although
the traditional rites take a relatively simple form, they are purged of all irrelevancies and any acts which have fetish associations.

Reference has already been made to the fact that a child was more or less formally introduced into the community or kin by the act of naming. A child could not become a fully-fledged member of the community until it had passed through the naming ceremony, but it could be recognized as a part, however insignificant, of the family or clan immediately after birth. Although the given name may not necessarily be the one a child will bear throughout life the ceremony connected with the giving of a name forms the major part of all the ceremonies connected with birth. In a majority of cases the parents add or modify the given-name. For parents to have their children baptised without modifying or changing their names by giving them a Christian or Biblical name, is not uncommon.

Baptism, as practised by the Churches, may be described or defined as a sign and seal of ingrafting into Christ; of forgiveness of sins by His blood, and regeneration by His spirit; and of adoption and resurrection into everlasting life. If this explains, in a nutshell, the doctrine of Christian baptism, then the question which suggests itself is, what is the meaning and theological foundation of infant baptism as opposed to adult baptism? Space will not permit any elaborate discussion on the subject of the relevance or validity of infant baptism. Besides, I do not presume capable of embarking on a treatise of this nature.

1. Until recently the possession of an English name or particular Biblical name in addition to the ancestral name marked a person out as a baptised Christian.

2. I Cor. 12.12; I Cor. 6.11, and Rom. 6.3.
We will, therefore, concern ourselves with an examination of the attitude to infant baptism of the Protestant Churches.

It should, however, be made clear that within the Protestant faith there are different attitudes to the administration of baptism. Two minority groups, the Baptist Church, and the Church of the Lord (Aladura) I will refer to the latter Church again, hold that no one can and should be made a Christian without any conscious co-operation of his own will, and therefore reject infant baptism. About the latter's policy it is noted.

Children are not at all baptised in the Churches in the Organization, but they are presented and blessed in the Church in the manner prescribed in the rituals of the Organization. Children are deemed of riper years and able to answer for themselves when they have attained the age of 18....

With the exception of these two Churches, all the other Churches in Ghana accept infant baptism on the basis that though the infants do not understand the ceremony and cannot be held responsible in any way for what their parents do on their behalf, yet they are heirs of the covenant of grace and the promise is also to them. Therefore, in holy baptism God brings them into the family and household of faith, and makes them members of Christ and citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

We note in traditional society a baptismal practice of purifying and cleansing from evil which is analogous to the Christian practice of holy baptism. Through a series of magico-religious rites, the baptism of purification and cleansing, is

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believed to remove all stains and roots of moral evil and guilt. The purificatory washing, a significant and essentially symbolic act of sprinkling water on all participants to cleanse them of all sins of the past year, plays a large role during the Odwira of the Akan and the Homowo of the Ga.

Naturally when the Churches enjoined that people seeking admission into the fold should pass through the symbolic act of baptism, it was accepted without reservation, for the practice had no appearance of strangeness or novelty since similar rites were observed during the annual festivals. But these annual festivals were generally occasions of joy, pomp and ceremony and also for the renewal of vows. Participants therefore went back after the festival with an inward satisfaction that whatever they had requested would be duly granted. However the same feeling of joy and self expression did not characterise newly baptised converts. On the contrary, what appeared peculiar about baptismal candidates was that, as a Church leader observed:

> there was little expression of emotion of penitential struggle, of confession of sins, of religious awakening of overwhelming gladness of fervour.

His remark is interesting for two basic reasons. On one hand it shows that the peculiar puritanical attitude which so often characterised the way of life of some of the early missionaries was unknown to the Christian Akan. On the other hand, it reveals the inherent difference of the concept of sin in the Christian context and in

traditional thought. For the Akan sin was generally an offence against a neighbour or community or the dead ancestors. Sins committed were, therefore, dealt with by private arbitration so that there was little or no vertical reference (i.e. sin being an offence against God).

The assumption that some people sought for baptism as a result of false conceptions they had with regard to the nature of the Church cannot be ruled out. Some new converts for baptism are also known to have demonstrated a quiet reception of the Gospel which was not characterised by any classic signs of conversion experience. When superficially examined, one would be tempted to call in question the motives of people who sought for baptism. Nevertheless, many Church leaders had, in course of their ministry, come across people whose desire for baptism stemmed up from genuine convictions. For some 'baptism was a visible rite, an outward and visible sign.... a decisive break with the old world'.

1. The Akan postulate three kinds of offences: Sins or Tribal taboos (Oman Akyiwade) which consist of murder, suicide, certain sexual offences, assault, stealing and the invocation of a curse upon a chief, treason and cowardice displayed at war front. (2) Household cases (Efiesem) which, among others, are slander, abuse, theft, tale-bearing and cases over land and property. Though murder is viewed with particular abhorrence yet it is regarded more as a sin against the nation than a sin against God as the Christians would understand it.

2. Synod Minutes and Reports of the Presbyterian Church. 1937; "In a street preaching at a village between the hours of seven and eight in the evening, a minister reports, some messengers of 'Senya Bepo' disturbed the preacher, attacked and wounded a presbyter, and a Christian young man. This action encouraged the few members there to sing and pray till midnight at their place of worship. On the next day a fetish Priestess was converted to Christianity."

But this new allegiance could not be interpreted to mean a break with one's abusua for such a break implied cutting oneself off from the family which would never have occurred to an Akon as something possible for any rational person to do. The Churches did not realise in time that, as a missionary puts it, "the claims of kin could not be easily set aside however great the attractions of the new religion were" and has consequently led to more difficulties than they had actually anticipated.

In attempting to compile a synopsis of the policies of the individual Churches on baptism in general and infant baptism in particular, marked similarities in policy are noted although no signs of conscious co-ordination in policy can be detected. The Presbyterian Church enjoined:

Christian parents should dedicate their children to the Lord, presenting them within a month after birth, for baptism.  

As a rule the service was to form part of the main public worship but ministers could perform the rite anywhere when circumstances demanded it. The importance of the presence of the parents and the elders of the Church was, however, stressed.

Baptism shall take place during an ordinary service of public worship in accordance with the approved liturgy. The children being presented by parents in full communion or by sponsors of the parents' choice in full communion and in the presence of members of the session as witnesses.

1. Ibid., p.104.
3. Ibid., p.28.
Closely related in policy but different in details was the Methodist Church. She similarly insisted on the performance of the rite as part of the public worship, but unlike the Presbyterian Church, she did not recognize sponsors.

Due notice with regard to the baptism of an infant must be given to the minister. Both the parents are expected to be present except in special and exceptional cases when a full explanation shall be given to the minister. Ordinarily the sacrament should be administered during public worship. It should be noted that our Church does not recognize "sponsors", but that we regard the parents of a child as responsible for enabling the Church to carry out its contract, as contained in the statement, "We receive this child etc". ¹

The Church did not, therefore, accept any corporate responsibility for the upbringing of a child, a common practice in traditional society. The Anglican Church administered baptism to children through their parents but non-Christian parents could be represented by godparents who responded on behalf of the child.

In contrast to these policies may be mentioned the policies of some of the Independent Churches whose founders were previously members of the Mission founded Churches. The Church of the Twelve Apostles, who claim to subscribe to the same articles of faith as the Methodists, practice infant baptism.² The Musama Disco Christo Church — described by Baeta as 'ana-baptists', whose founder was expelled from the Methodist Church for his un-Methodist

². Baeta, op.cit.,p.15.
behaviour, also practises infant baptism. But unlike the others this Church differs in its baptismal policy by insisting that all those who join the Church, whether already baptised or not, should be rebaptised.

All the Churches both orthodox and sectarian have the same mode or form of administering baptism. The practice is one of symbolic cleansing and purifying by means of sprinkling water on the forehead of the child and followed by the pronunciation of the baptismal formular in the name of the Trinity.

With the growth and expansion of the Churches into the remote areas many difficulties were encountered. Of importance to our survey was the problem of administering baptism to heathens and their children, especially parents who demanded baptism for their children while they opted to stay away from the Church. Closely related to this was the problem of back-sliders and those who were labelled as children born out of wedlock.

By the beginning of this century the Mission Churches, being minority groups and desirous to fill their Churches with new converts, embarked on an extensive evangelization programme. Yet they aimed at maintaining a high quality of members and this consciously influenced the nature of their policies on baptism. Mass conversions into the Churches which were witnessed in the early life of the Churches were not always welcomed as genuine response to the Gospel and often occasioned great concern about the nature of the members being produced.

1. Ibid., p.50.

2. As an exception to the general rule, the A.M.E. Zion Church has adopted a policy which offers a large measure of flexibility. All three methods of baptism known to the Christian tradition i.e. sprinkling, pouring, immersion or dipping are employed as possible modes of administering the Sacrament. The candidate being free to choose what he prefers.
The relative difficulties of the admission of new converts through baptism into the Church confronted the local Churches and often made the application of a uniform policy hardly practicable. As the problems emerged Ministers pressed for some guiding principles whereby they could deal with their problems. The custom of the Presbyterian Church was to baptise non-Christian parents after a period of instruction and then admit them into the Church.

One who wishes admission into the congregation through baptism is expected to give up all heathenish and worldly ways of life.... Thorough teaching should be done before baptism in at least 40 lessons of instruction in the Christian faith.... After the session is convinced of the worthiness of the candidate as shown by his knowledge and his way of living, he is baptised by the Minister at a public service where he pledges himself to renounce the devil and give his life wholly to the service of God.1

Children could be baptised together with their parents but only at the expressed desire of either one or both of the parents.

When heathen parents are baptised their children under 12 years of age may be baptised at the same time if so desired by the father or mother.2

There were, however, instances where the baptism of children of which one of the parties was a pagan had been strongly disapproved. An Anglican Minister, in 1919, reports how he had to threaten a pagan father of a child before he allowed his child to be baptised.3 It is true to argue that a child belonged to the mother’s family

1. RTI, p.28.
2. Ibid., p.28.
and for that reason the consent of a mother to the baptism of her child should be adequate to lead to the performance of the sacrament. But the father also has some right in deciding what should be done to the child. This is based on the undisputed right as the one who names the child, and failure to take this fact seriously is a denial of his rights. It would appear, however, that Ministers supported the Christian partner and in a majority of cases succeeded with little resistance.

The Methodist Church went a little further in her suspicion of the convert's integrity by insisting on a period of probation even after baptism.

In the case of adult candidates for baptism a careful examination shall be conducted by the Minister who shall satisfy himself of the sincerity of their renunciation of idolatrous and superstitious practices, of the genuineness of their faith in Christ, and their knowledge of Christian truth and of their willingness to submit themselves to the discipline of the Church. Converts from heathenism shall be under instruction for a period of not less than fifteen months.¹

In spite of the elaborate programme for people seeking admission into the Church, there appeared to have been no clear cut policy on backsliders and non-Christian parents who wanted baptism for their children while they remained outside the Church. The Churches enjoined that parents should be present at the baptism of their children but this particular policy applied to parents in full communion. Since the Methodist Church did not recognize "sponsors", Ministers were left to decide each case on its own merits.

¹ Law and Discipline, p.18.
The vagueness of policy of the Churches on the baptism of children may best be illustrated by what was to be done to dying children of backsliders. No positive answer could be given by the Churches as to whether such a child could be baptised or not, instead Ministers were to decide in the light of the extent to which the parents fulfilled Church demands. The Presbyterian Church Synod of 1919 accepted the principle which demanded that:

the condition of their parents was to decide whether they should be baptised or not i.e. whether the parents after their exclusion kept close to the Church and paid their dues or not? In the absence of the parents the character of the relative or guardian was to decide, 1

For one to be classified as an excluded member of a Church presupposed that he was already out of the Church and could not, therefore, be expected to keep any appreciable contact with the daily activities of the Church. With regard to backsliders, it was improbable for anyone who kept close to the Church and paid his dues accordingly to be labelled as a backslider. Therefore, the criterion on which Ministers were to decide how the children of the so-called backsliders should be baptised was far from clear.

Ministers overburdened with the baptism of children of non-Christian parents, often had to deny the children this spiritual grace. For instance, a Minister reported to Synod in 1925 that some non-Christian parents who regarded baptism as a magical protection against evil spirits sought for it for their children and since the motives were detected to be false they were refused baptism. 2 Before this time another missionary had also reported

1. Synod Minutes and Reports, p. 1919.
2. Ibid., 1925.
on how some non-Christian people had been motivated to join the Church from the belief that the Christian villages were free of witches and witch power.¹

Deeply entrenched in the minds of some people was the notion that they were surrounded by a host of spiritual forces both good and evil. Witchcraft belief was widespread not only in the community but also in the Church. A Minister observes:

"the fear of witchcraft has not been eradicated from the minds of some of our members".² Church members were often accused of witchcraft. From another Minister we are told:

It is very sad to record that some of the female members of the T. congregation were charged with witchcraft, and while some stood firm to their faith, others shamefully swore heathen oaths to show their innocence.³

The erroneous association of old age with witchcraft and witch possession was reported to have led to similar witchcraft accusation among some old converts.

At some villages, old people who became Christians are branded by the heathen as witches and sorcerers, and are subjected to several indignities.⁴

Many were, therefore, compelled to "drink fetish" to prove their innocence but all such people did not escape the Churches' discipline. The general attitude of the Churches was a denial of witchcraft and witchpower. Any professed belief in witchcraft was

¹ For a detailed account of the traditional attitude of the Churches to Witchcraft, cf. Chapters 14, 18 and 19 of H.W.Debrunner, Witchcraft in Ghana, Accra, 1959.
² Synod Minutes and Reports, 1921.
³ Ibid., 1936.
⁴ Ibid., 1937.
regarded as superstition. Ironically, the Churches demonstrated a peculiarly paradoxical attitude,\textsuperscript{1} for members who were accused of possessing that power which did not exist were not defended but punished, either by suspension or exclusion. From a minister it is reported:

It is regrettable to record that during the year some Christians were charged with witchcraft and other heathenish practices which resulted in their suspension.\textsuperscript{2}

In order to avail themselves of such charges many had to "show their innocence by drinking fetish medicine"\textsuperscript{3} but there were helpless ones who "could not defend themselves but rather yielded to all that was said".\textsuperscript{4}

Denial of witch power was a potential set back to the Churches since it deprived them of the opportunity of preaching effectively on the essential message of Jesus' triumph over all evil forces to a people whose world outlook was dominated by these and other spiritual forces. Not only was the Churches attitude contrary to the New Testament teaching on evil spirits but Church members were thrown into confusion over the belief in witchcraft. For many people including some Church members, witchcraft was no "fantastic delusion"\textsuperscript{5} nor was it the result of disturbed minds.

\textsuperscript{1} The attitude of the Church authorities to these beliefs has largely driven these beliefs and peoples' attitudes to them to the background; so that there is reticence for Church members to discuss them overtly particularly with their Minister. But often an air of secrecy shrouds the performance of ritual practices by Church members to protect themselves against witch power. The result is very formalistic conformity to Christian doctrine but the underlying beliefs remain scarcely changed.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 1957.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 1955.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 1956.

\textsuperscript{5} M.J. Field, Search for Security, Faber, 1960, p. 41.
but for all intents and purposes witchcraft was something real and capable of effecting harm, hence the Churches' inability to eradicate from the minds of members witchcraft beliefs.

As an inevitable outcome of such confusion, members who were haunted by the fear of witch power had to seek refuge in the Christian community which, in their own erroneous estimation, was devoid of witch power. Those in the Christian communities similarly entertained belief in witch power but feared to make it known. A Minister succinctly observes about his congregation, "there is still much superstitious belief, although there is reluctance to acknowledge this to the Pastor".\textsuperscript{1} Outwardly members pretended they did not believe in witchcraft but some had to "resort under cover of darkness to Mohammedans and fetish priests, thus making conversion of the heathen more difficult."\textsuperscript{2}

Similar difficulties cropped up within the local Churches over the baptism of infants born out of wedlock. Illegitimate children in traditional society were accorded equal attention as legitimate children. They were no strangers for every child, whether it had a legal father or not, found its proper place in the wider family structure within which it was nurtured into adulthood. But this sort of training by a number of unqualified instructors in the family, however adequate, could not be accepted by the Churches. The welfare of every child, the Churches insisted, should be the sole responsibility of the parents. It was, therefore, difficult for fatherless children to be accepted through baptism into the Church unless the Minister received prior assurance of Christian upbringing for the children.

\textsuperscript{1} Synod Minutes and Reports, 1925.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 1955.
Before and after 1918, until the revision of her policy in 1929, the Presbyterian Church ruled that children born out of wedlock could not be baptised,

in cases where the parents are unable to take or keep the baptismal vows, or where grandparents or others who take the vows cannot also promise to keep the children entirely.¹

However, the revision of her policy saw a slight modification in policy when she maintained:

Illegitimate children may be baptised if presented by sponsors of the Protestant faith in full communion.²

We have already noted that in traditional society, the responsibility for the care of a child rested mainly on the parents, yet the elders of every family were obliged to help with the education and nurture of every child in the family. The informal training of children which included proper observance of religious rites, customs, and everyday etiquette as well as social obligation and tribal lore, among others, was the responsibility of all the members of the family. This framework within which children were trained by a host of experienced relatives afforded an ideal set-up in which the Presbyterian Church felt sponsors in full communion could be found capable of training the illegitimate children in the Christian way.

Neither in the rules of 1936 nor in the Supplementary rules of 1942 did the Methodist Church appear to have presented a clear cut policy on the problem. Instead, ministers were advised to use their discretion.

¹. Ibid., 1919.
². Ibid., p.28.
While discretion is allowed to our Ministers with regard to the baptism of children born out of wedlock, a Minister should refuse to baptise such children unless he is satisfied that the child will receive a Christian upbringing.  

What appeared as a difficult problem which confronted the Mission Churches, whose policies were profoundly influenced by the foreign Missionary agents of the period, was scarcely mentioned by the Independent Churches referred to above, for no radical distinction was made between legitimate and illegitimate children. The adoption of such a policy could have been contrary to their basic cause. For, one major reason for their secession and formation of their Churches was what they regarded as imposition of foreign ideas and practices by European Missionary agents on members of the Mission Churches.

Significant in the life of any child was the socio-religious act of naming through dedication of a child to the ancestors, for it admitted it into the privileges of the tribe or clan. In a unique sense, the Christian sacrament of baptism also identified a child with Christ Jesus and admitted it into a group which, in all respects, transcended all tribal bonds and kinship relations.

Granted that a baptised child stood in a better stead than his non-baptised counterpart, it would still be no exaggeration to argue that the uncompromising policy of the Churches to baptise only children who could be presented by their parents or sponsors in full communion has many latent set backs which has made it hardly practicable to be strictly pursued. Yet it remains essentially the only device with which the Churches have ensured that children who received baptism were properly cared for if the ultimate purpose of the rite was to be achieved. Nevertheless we cannot help

1. Law and Discipline, p.35.
but admit that the institution of sponsors has recently been a somewhat ineffective device to help such children.

No one would question the importance of administering baptism to children who could be trained and instructed in the Christian faith, nor the genuineness of the motives of many an elder who, for a considerable number of years, has been sponsoring children of non-Christian parents. But it is necessary that we take notice of some of the problems of the Churches which has made the fulfilment of the ideal training hardly practicable. One of the old but still a current problem is lack of ministers.

All the Protestant Churches have, in one period or another in their ministry, had to face the problem of recruiting Ministers to ensure an adequate pastoral care of the large numbers of people which the Churches had embraced. It will be appropriate for us to illustrate this problem by quoting some figures.

In 1919, the Presbyterian Church had 30,000 members with only 30 Ministers. In 1928, the Ministers had increased to 34 while the number of converts had risen to 51,000. In 1948, the Church had 72 Ministers who had to care for about 100,511 members. It should be evident without even going into further details to realise that the number of converts was far too large for the small number of Ministers to cope with adequately.

But this was not a problem peculiar to the Presbyterian Church, for all the Churches were affected by this problem of lack of Ministers. For instance, in 1952, the Methodist Church baptised 10,058 infants; the Presbyterian Church also baptised 21,047 people under sixteen years of age. 1 In the same year Church

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1. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1918-1952.
statistics revealed that the Anglican Church with 34,406 members had only 35 Ministers. The Methodists had a fantastic Christian community of 144,775 members but with only 55 Ministers. The Presbyterians with the largest number of Ministers had only 72 to care for over 100,000 members.

In view, therefore, of the large numbers of children baptised annually into the Church, it was natural that elders or sponsors who, from unquestionable motives, had guaranteed the upbringing of these children, in the course of time, might have ceased to perform that function except as a formality.

Related to this problem was the gradual breakdown of the coherent family structure. There was a time when the number of baptised children was small, so that however overburdened a minister was with the variety of his activities, he still could spare some time for the training of such children. But apart from the growth in numbers and lack of time which alone make it less practicable for a Minister to cope with the work of training by frequent visits, there is also the problem of the present urban way of life. Many members of a family who, until recently, lived in a closely knit community, are now scattered over wide areas. Consequently the godparents of children in such families are often hindered by time and distance to fulfil their role as co-educators of the children.

The old problem of baptising children of parents uncommitted to the Church remains up to the present time. None of the policies so far mentioned appear to offer any satisfactory solution to the problem. It is in the light of such difficulties that one would be inclined to sympathise with the Churches who do not

1. Ibid., p. 33.
practice infant baptism. They regard infant baptism as involving no element of commitment to the Lord and therefore devalue the essence of the sacrament.

Many pseudo-Christian or less Christian reasons are given by some parents for seeking baptism for their children. For some it is the fear that without baptism they might not have done everything necessary for their children. Others would like to conform to tradition or in some cases use baptism as a means of enjoying the privileges of the Church. Whether one or more of such reasons, among others, are given by some parents, the fact remains that the Churches will undoubtedly find it difficult to deny baptism to every child of God. Similarly they cannot adopt a rigid measure which will eventually make it hardly possible for parents to ask for baptism for their children. If such false motives are to be eradicated and the essence of infant baptism inculcated, then it can be achieved only through intensive teaching of the meaning of Christian baptism by the Churches.

The young baptised infants of today will be the Church of tomorrow and if the image of the future Church will conform to the present will depend on how best the younger generation are nurtured by the Churches of the Christian faith.

In spite of numerous set backs the Churches have proudly achieved some success in the baptism of adult converts as well as infants in large numbers so long as the Churches continue to make converts. For, by this method the Churches have opened their doors to infants who otherwise would have been denied this spiritual grace as long as they remained in the care of their non-Christian parents. The Churches partly believe that it is only

1. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1936.
through the act of baptism that the children could enjoy any spiritual benefits even before faith was made manifest in their lives. And though the Churches are continuously losing their young members yet they are able to maintain a nucleus of true and hopeful children who, on reaching the age of discretion, are confirmed into full membership of the Church. We will therefore take up our discussion from here and examine the Churches' attitude to puberty and manhood rites in relation to Confirmation.

Initiation Rites Versus Confirmation

The ritual connected with puberty and its importance in the life of any adolescent girl was described in an earlier chapter. In brief, we noted that the object of puberty rites was to introduce a girl into the status of adulthood and to confer on her the rights and obligations of an active member of the community. And, she, being a potential mother and wife, was accepted by the community as another medium for the perpetuation of the clan.

Traditionally, baptism was administered to converts before the introduction of confirmation, but theologians are divided on whether confirmation should be given the same sacramental value as baptism or whether it should be accepted as a subordinate rite to baptism.¹ However long the theological battle may go on, the fact still remains that all the Protestant Churches who retain infant baptism practice this initiatory rite of laying on of hands, supplementary to and complementing baptism.

In the early years of Protestant Churches in Ghana, confirmation was employed in combination with believers' baptism

thereby serving as a vehicle of admitting adult converts into the Church. Another method, to be discussed further in the following pages, applied mainly to already baptised children who had reached the age of discretion. The custom of the Churches was, and still is, to defer confirmation of a baptised child till it had reached the age of puberty. According to the Presbyterian Church, as a rule,

confirmation should not take place earlier than the age of 16.\(^1\)

Children, on reaching this age, underwent a series of instruction in the Christian faith and confirmed into the Church as full members.

This distinctively Protestant rite of Confirmation administered to baptised children on coming to the years of discretion was to 'the end that they may themselves with their own mouth and consent ratify and confirm' the promise made for them in their infant baptism. Confirmation was, therefore, in all respects, dependent on the previous confession. But confirmation could only be administered when the persons concerned had consciously expressed desire for it and had made an open confession of faith as a 'renewal of the baptismal vows and strengthening of the spiritual life.'\(^2\)

Practically, the preparation of candidates for confirmation was elaborate and most important. Instruction classes were organized during which lessons were given for several weeks. As an exception to the rule, non-baptised adult candidates for confirmation were given thorough instructions in the Christian faith and the rules of the Church and thereupon administered baptism and then accepted into the Church as full members. But confirmation

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1. Ibid., p.31.
2. Ibid., p.31.
was generally confined to youths who had been baptised in an earlier age. The Presbyterian Church required of candidates to undertake a course of instruction in the Christian faith in at least forty lessons but no specific length of time was set down. Those baptised in childhood must after receiving careful preparatory instruction make an open confession in Christ before they are allowed to come to the Table of the Lord. The Preparatory instruction should be thorough, given in at least 40 lessons, and the Session should pass on the fitness of the candidates before they are confirmed. ¹

The Methodist Church adopted a very rigid programme for the members, for candidates after baptism 'were subject to a further probationary period of nine months'. ² During this probationary period, candidates were instructed in 'Stories from the Gospel; The Apostles' Creed and Preparation for Holy Communion'. ³ Members who successfully went through the instructions in the Christian faith were admitted.

'On Trial' Members having passed a satisfactory examination in these subjects, shall be deemed fit to be received into Full Membership of our Church. These new members shall be received ...... at a Public Recognition Service by the Superintendent Minister or one of his colleagues. ⁴

Junior members i.e. young people who were baptised during infancy, did not have to go through such rigorous and long periods of instruction as prescribed for the adult converts seeking admission into the Church. Instead they attended regular courses of instruction in the Junior Society Class and afterwards examined in the same subjects as the adult converts before being admitted as

1. Ibid., p.31.
2. Law and Discipline, p.33.
3. Ibid., p.33.
4. Ibid., p.33.
full members.

It is required that Junior Members shall be examined in the above subjects before being received into full Membership at a Public Recognition Service. School children are not necessarily Junior Members and they must not be returned as such unless they have been baptised and meet in a Junior society class.¹

It is not always that candidates who received instruction at the end of their course proved to be knowledgeable in the fundamental principles of the faith, for a large proportion of the candidates were often illiterates and could not be made to learn the theological concepts easily, thus the need of the Churches to emphasise literacy as a prerequisite for admission into the Church. A Junior member, the Methodist Church maintained, could not qualify for full membership unless he satisfied these two conditions.

(a) He is able to read intelligently in the vernacular.
(b) He has been prepared for Holy Communion.²

Even those who had had some education and could therefore absorb a lot of what was taught did so without necessarily understanding the concepts they had learned. Williamson records how candidates for admission whom he examined could recite the Apostles' Creed, but when questions like 'Who was the Mother of Jesus?' or 'How did Jesus die?' were asked, he commonly received a 'blank uncomprehending stare followed by a reply, I do not know'.³

The Mission Churches took a wise step by depending on the children who came out of their schools to establish the nucleus of

1. Ibid., p.33.
2. Ibid., p.33.
3. Williamson, op.cit., p.36.
the local congregations in the villages. Children in the Mission schools received regular instruction in the Christian faith and, more often than not, were compelled to attend Sunday Services. This process of making converts was diligently pursued and initially proved quite successful. But in the course of time it failed to produce the same results for the evangelistic aim of the schools declined considerably while the purpose of education as a means of entering European way of life and money economy received greater emphasis. The problem of the Churches was that many of the confirmed youths on leaving school left the villages to the urban centres and in most cases lost touch with the Church in their new environment.

An interesting phenomenon observable among some of the educated Christian members in particular has been the tendency for parents to regard the Christian act of confirmation as a substitute for the traditional puberty rites for girls. Remarkable though the similarities between these two rites are yet it would be misleading to argue that the two must therefore be of equal importance and that one can be substituted for the other. Nketia draws attention to confirmation in its new guise when he writes:

There is no drumming and dancing but there is feasting and wearing of fine cloths; and many young people take a holiday for about a week in which they do nothing but go about in fine cloths. They receive presents and go about thanking members of the community as puberty girls would do.

After the conclusion of the traditional puberty rites a girl was

1. Reporting on his travels in 1932, Hartenstein remarked on the attitude of the people to education as "a means to wealth and advancement in the world of European activities".

accepted by the community as prepared for married life. Nketia observes an analogous attitude among the girl confirmants when he remarks.

Many of our young girls and their parents now think that Confirmation is the gate-way to marriage.¹

All these activities and attitudes, Nketia further argues, are essentially African. Evidence points to the fact that all the Churches are conscious of the new emphasis being given to the Christian rite and the probability of this leading to the distortion of the essence of the sacramental value of confirmation.² But Ministers have time and again acknowledged the difficulty of discouraging this practice, for confirmation, if anything, 'is to the African a kind of transition rite in which relations are interested'.³

However, some successful experiments in some parts of Africa are known to have been made. The old initiatory rites have been purged of its immoral elements. And the rites are conducted with 'as elaborate a ceremonial as belong to it of old'. These are then offered to all Christian catechumen as a substitute for the old traditional initiatory rites.⁴ But no similar conscious effort has been made by the Protestant Churches in Ghana. Williamson writing about the Churches in Ghana, alludes to the failure of

¹. Ibid., p.32.

². From another part of Africa we note such an opposition to the introduction of Puberty rites into the Church: "The introduction of puberty ceremonies into the Christian Church on the part of the missionary society, is a most regrettable step; it confuses the boundary line between Christianity and heathendom, it must lead to a perplexing of conscience and a weakening of the missionary force of Christianit in Africa. It is also a dangerous experiment. The mental atmosphere of the puberty ceremonies is directed towards awakening the sexual relation to belief in spirit", cf. International Review of Missions, Vol. XVI, 1927, p.591.

³. Nketia, op.cit.,p.32.

the Churches to take advantage of the good features of the traditional customs and incorporate them into the Christian Church.

The Church has failed to incorporate into its life valued Akan customs connected with rites de passage... The puberty rites for girls have received no recognition and many of the traditional rites for the dead are at least officially denied to Christians.¹

We are, however, presented with an opposite picture by another author who, commenting on the transition rites, remarks how the confirmation ceremonies have become grand occasions during which parents spend large sums of money on parties and clothing for their children.

He concludes with a general observation:

This is a single instance in which a pagan rite has been purified or christened.²

It is not clear whether, according to the author, this christening is the outcome of an attempt by a Church to extract the good features of the traditional practices and purify them for Christian use or it is the result of the work of individual Christian parents. What is taken for granted by the author as a purifying or christening of a pagan rite, presumably, is an unconscious innovation achieved by some individual Christian parents who, in the light of the pressure from society and their daughters in particular, are compelled to substitute confirmation for the puberty rites as a refined form of initiation which seemingly is very attractive for literate girls.

Thus the tendency for some Christian parents to introduce some of the rites peculiar to traditional puberty ceremonies into the Christian rite of confirmation.

¹. Williamson, op.cit., p.75.
². Ahiable, quote form Noel Smith, op.cit., p.57.
There is no doubt that throughout the years the Churches have maintained a consistent and uncompromising policy on all pagan customs and practices. For the Methodists admission of candidates into the Church had to be preceded by a 'renunciation of idolatrous and superstitious practices';¹ and for the Presbyterians admission was subject to the condition that the candidate would give up 'all heathenish and worldly ways of life, including heathen feasts, funerals and dances, face marks, wearing of amulets, superstitious practices, etc'.² The Churches have been engaged in an incessant warfare against the institution of chieftaincy, particularly its fetish associations and polygamy,³ traditional customs connected with birth, puberty and death, extravagant expenditure of money on Confirmation, Weddings and Funerals.

There are some Christian laymen who have shown a marked sympathy towards traditional customs and see a possible synthesis

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1. Law and Discipline, p.18.
2. RPFP, p.28.

The Presbyterian Church Synod of 1926, asserted that a Christian cannot accept an office in the Chief's Court for "Christians bearing insignia from chief's Courts are exposed to grave temptations. These insignia are connected with sacrificings, purifying with blood swearing, abstention, calling upon departed men; no true Christian can carry or perform matters connected with such insignia without hurting his Christian conscience. The Impossibility of pure native Chiefs becoming true Christians and remaining Chief is a sign that as long as stool worship and insignia worship is prevalent here, the Church must hesitate to make concessions". Busia also alludes to the tension between the Chiefs and the Christian Missions when he remarks: "Christianity came into immediate conflict with the Chiefs in Ashanti". A major cause of conflict was voiced out by a Governor in 1905 when he said, "What the Chiefs recent most was the marked tendency of Christian converts to alienate themselves from the communities to which they belong". Busia K.A.,The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, Oxford, 1951, p.133.
of these customs and Christian rites. But it would be far from right to argue, in the light of this, that such individual views are representative of the Churches' attitude to these traditional rites.

What becomes of the many young boys and girls who are annually accepted into the Churches should demand our attention here. No one description can fit the various demands of the individual Churches, yet however varied the respective Church requirements are, there is no doubt that a common motive underlies the demands of all the Churches that those of years of discretion should receive instruction about the Christian faith and life before being admitted as full members. The elaborate programme for instruction reflects the eagerness with which the Churches aim at preparing candidates adequately before confirmation. But my personal observation is that often times these lessons taught are very formal and insufficiently related to the everyday life of the Christian.

What was expected of candidates was the ability to memorise the contents of the Catechism and reproduce sections when asked regardless of whether the candidate really understood what the passage was meant to convey to him or not.

An inevitable consequence of this has been the creation of a situation which has, undoubtedly, occasioned great concern among all the Churches in recent years, namely, the tendency for young and newly confirmed communicants to lapse and eventually fall

away from the Church. The reasons for this state of affairs are varied; lack of depth in the instructions given, lack of follow up after confirmation, and in some cases family influence partly accounts for this dilemma, but there is more to it than lack of depth and care. The current easy mobility of the population and the resulting tremendous drain of the newly confirmed into the urban centres to take up jobs where they are no longer under the vigilant watch of the Minister or parents, is a strong factor to reckon with. The danger to young communicants in the cities is that there they have a number of associations which fulfil many of the social needs fulfilled by the Churches in the villages. All this, among other factors, have contributed to the present lapses and backslidings which characterise the contemporary Churches in Ghana.

Those who see the answer to the problem in a renewed effort to make the Church more attractive, and capable of enticing many of the youths back into it quite often fail to give much attention to the latent problems which emerge in an attempt to achieve this end. There is, on one hand, the danger of making the Church too attractive and to become nothing more than one of the social clubs the youths are used to visiting, thereby relegating the reason for the Churches' existence to a subordinate position. On the other hand, to advocate a reversion to the old traditional Christian way of life is to create a kind of ghetto which will also set the Church apart from the community which embraces the Christian members as well.

As a matter of expediency, Salems or Christian quarters were established in the early years of the Churches' evangelistic work to set apart form the community and from probable contamination the new converts from their pagan counterparts. But Salems cannot presently be an efficient means of maintaining the Christian identity
in the wider community. Besides, the old Christian communities have now been submerged into the wider whole as a result of the rapid growth of the towns. It has, therefore, become necessary that for any effective witness to the Gospel message to be actively pursued, it must begin from within the community itself.

So that as it may, it remains to be seen whether this conscious or unconscious attempt at christening the puberty rites, among others, which at the present has not received the sanction of the Churches, will eventually be accepted by them. The initiative has undeniably been taken by individual Christians and it is left with the Churches to either respond to the challenge and to support or discourage them. I cannot attempt any systematic treatment of the theological implications of any effort to synthesise traditional and Christian rites but I will concern myself to outline the views and attitudes expressed which might stimulate future discussion.
CHAPTER THREE
ATTITUDES AND POLICIES TO MARRIAGE RITES

At the beginning of the establishment of Colonial rule on the Gold Coast, and before any wide scale missionary work began, two forms of marriages were already in practice. On the one hand was the traditional customary marriage, and on the other hand was an alien but popular marriage, namely, Muslim marriage. But with the abolition of the slave trade, and the introduction of legitimate trade, relations with the coastal people and the European merchants in particular were firmly established. The expansion of trade and the gradual take over and administration of the Gold Coast by the British led to the introduction of a new form of marriage under the title "Ordinance Marriage of 1884". Generally speaking it was a replica of the English Marriage Law. This process coincided with the arrival, expansion and consolidation of the Christian Missions among the people. Out of the Christian Missions emerged yet another form of marriage -- Christian Marriage.

First, let us look at customary marriage. When a man of marriageable age expressed desire to marry, the commonly known customary rites were performed after he had chosen a bride. His father or uncle on his behalf contracted the marriage through series of consultations and exchanges of gifts. The main features of the rites have been described in another chapter. The essence of these rites was to establish a permanent bond between the two spouses as well as the kingroups which they respectively represented. A religious rite in the form of a libation prayer concluded this social ceremony. In pouring libation, the ancestors of both families

1 Supra, pp.7-16.
were invoked to witness the relationship which was being established between them and to bless the union with prosperity and fruitfulness. This, in a sense, concluded the ceremony and conferred on the couple the status of wife and husband. The union was then given public recognition by the members of the lineage and the community as a whole.

The second form of marriage practised before the arrival of the Christian Missions was Muslim marriage. The Muslim religion made an early start in West Africa. Before the 15th. century when European activities began on the coast until the 19th. century when their activities could be extended into the interior, the Muslims had already been there and had gained considerable influence on the tribal groups in the South and North of the Colony.

Muslim marriage had many features in common with the customary marriage. Bride wealth or head-money was paid by the bridegroom to the bride and without it no marriage could be given the sanction of the family nor recognized by the community. Customarily, a father wishing to honour his son married for him. In this form of marriage, greatly appreciated by the people, the father took the initiative, paid all the marriage expenses and before the man had even known the girl the bride was brought to him. This is believed to have been an aspect of the Islamic policy of assimilation. A policy which allowed local customs to be adopted and assimilated into the Islamic institution thereby making the religion flexible enough to embrace new ideas and practices and reject those which were inapplicable.

2. Ibid., p.165.
Apart from the similarities, there were also peculiar features which made it quite distinct from all other forms of marriage. The essence of Muslim marriage which involved no ritual blessing, unlike Christian marriage where God’s blessing was invoked upon the couple, or customary marriage in which the ancestral blessing was invoked through a libation prayer, was that it consisted mainly in the exchange of promises between the contracting parties. It was, however, sanctioned by the presence of two witnesses and the payment of the dowry (mahar or sadaq) to the bride. Mixed-marriages were strictly forbidden and the choice of a woman was restricted to coreligionists. The Quranic law forbade what was described as "marriage of a believer with an infidel".

More often than not, a father’s home was the venue for a wedding which was akin to Church weddings. The Qadi or Imam, the spiritual head of the Muslim community, who presided over the marriage, conducted the matrimonial rites in the presence of witnesses and other participants. An introductory service of a short prayer and a sermon preceded the performance of the main nuptial rites. The ceremony was then concluded with feasting and merry-making. Rarely adhered to these days is the custom of proving the virginity of the bride, an inseparable part of the ceremony which, in the course of the years, has lost its original importance.

1. Lammens, Islamic Beliefs and Institutions, Methuen, London, 1929, p.60.
2. vide Quranic Text: 60.10. Tringham, however argues that this Quranic law is broken for many Muslim men marry pagan women, 'the intention is that they should become Muslims'.
3. Lammens, op. cit., p.69.
The same ceremony was performed when the bridegroom married a second or third wife, for Muslim marriage, based on the Quranic doctrine on marriage, permitted a man to marry at most four women at a time. He could keep a number of concubines but these were not accorded any legal recognition yet the off-spring of such a relation was accepted as legitimate by the community.\(^1\)

There was a turning point in the history of Muslim marriage when in 1907 the "Muhammadan Marriage Ordinance" was promulgated by the Colonial Government.\(^2\) Among other things, it legalised Muslim marriage and raised it to the same level as Civil and Christian marriages which will also be examined in the following pages. Accordingly, any Muslim who married under the terms of the Ordinance was to register the marriage at an Office of a Registrar of Marriages.

The bridegroom, the bride's wali, two witnesses to the marriage and a Muhammadan priest licensed...shall soon as conveniently may be, and before the expiration of a week after the celebration of the marriage, attend at the office of the District Commissioner for the purpose of registering the same.\(^3\)

Inheritance and succession of a Muslim who died intestate, the Ordinance stipulated, was to be treated according to the Quranic law of succession.

On the death of a Muhammadan whose marriage has been duly registered under this Ordinance the succession to his or her property shall be regulated by Muhammadan law.\(^4\)

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1. Ibid., p. 164.  
3. Ibid., Cap. 75, sec. 6.  
4. Ibid., Cap. 75, sec. 10.
The Ordinance of 1907, therefore, made provision for Muslims who wanted to legalise their marriages to have them registered after the customary rites had been performed.

The third form of Marriage which came to be recognized by the people was the "Ordinance Marriage of 1884". Without having to go into details, mention will here be made of the main features of the Ordinance. According to the terms of the Ordinance, a minister of religion or a Registrar of marriages could not perform any marriage under the Ordinance which had "an impediment of kindred or affinity" or any proposed marriage of which one of the parties might have contracted a previous marriage by native law or custom. Moreover, unless the parties concerned could produce a genuine registrar's certificate, the marriage officer was to refuse to marry them, contravention of these rules nullified and made void any marriage contracted.

The most important feature of the Ordinance was its explicit insistence on monogamy as the only form of recognizable marriage. It disallowed anyone married under the terms of the Ordinance to marry again unless a legal divorce had been granted by a Civil court of law.

Any person who is married under this Ordinance, or whose marriage before the commencement of this Ordinance is declared by this Ordinance to be valid shall be incapable during the continuance of such a marriage of contracting a valid marriage under any

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1. Ibid., Cap. 71, of the 1920 Ordinance for Regulating the Law of Marriage.
2. Ibid., Cap. 71, sec. 13.
3. Ibid., Cap. 71, sec. 29 and 41.
Native law or custom, but save as aforesaid, nothing in this ordinance contained shall affect the validity of any marriage under or in accordance with any native law or custom or in any manner apply to marriages so contracted.  

Although the Ordinance could not be said to have been basically formulated to favour the Churches still because of its bias towards the Christian ideal of marriage, it had great attraction for and commendation from the Churches. The Ordinance provided the Churches with a weapon capable of achieving their ends. It was held by the Methodist Church Synod that,

the civil sanctions afforded by the Gold Coast Marriage Ordinance make this form of marriage eminently conducive to the attainment and maintenance of the Christian ideal.

Nevertheless for a variety of reasons, which will be discussed later, the Ordinance marriage, despite all the security it was supposed to offer those who contracted it, remained unattractive to the Church members.

This leads us to the last form of marriage to which reference has already been made, i.e. Christian Marriage. The Churches honoured the social function of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, intended to be a life-long union and a permanent relation. The Methodist Church, in adhering to the content of the Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 about marriage, maintained that the significance of any union was the consent of the two parties:

The essence of a valid marriage consists in the consent before witnesses of two parties, who are competent to marry, to live permanently one with another as man and wife.

1. Ibid., Cap. 71, sec. 49.
3. Ibid., p. 58.
But the sanctity which should characterise any monogamous marriage, if the marriage was to receive Church sanction, all the Churches unanimously maintained, could only be fulfilled when it had received divine blessing in a Church. In view of this, therefore, the Presbyterian Church laid this down as their policy.

Marriage being state ordained and blessed by God and a symbol of the relation between Christ and His Church, it should not be contracted without careful thought and dependence upon the Lord for guidance. Members of the Church entering upon Christian marriage are urged to seek the blessing of God.¹

The Methodist Church, complying still with the Lambeth Conference Reports, insisted on the need of the marriage of members to be blessed in Church if it was to be recognized.

When the conditions precedent to a valid marriage as laid down by the ecclesiastical authority have been complied with, the Church solemnises the marriage with prayers and blessing. The absence of such religious sanction does not invalidate the marriage.²

Although the absence of the blessing, according to the Report, did not invalidate the marriage, still the Churches insisted on members having their marriages blessed if the marriages were to be recognized. However, despite the Churches' insistence on Church marriage the validity of customary marriage was never doubted.

The Synod recognized the validity of marriage according to Native customary Law as of Marriage according to the provision of the Gold Coast Marriage Ordinance but urges upon all our members the duty which rests upon them as Christians to observe the Christian rite


It was, however, obligatory for members wishing to contract any form of marriage to ensure that they had obtained all the necessary legal documents and particularly to have observed the degrees of consanguinity within which marriages were strictly prohibited not only by the Church but also the society. Betrothal of children and marriages within certain degrees of kindred and affinity were forbidden. Each Synod of the Methodist Church was permitted, in the light of the native customs of the particular district, to draw the degrees of kinship and affinity within which marriage was forbidden.

The overt expression of love and service by some of the early Missionaries through charity and the Gospel preaching of salvation to a people who were desirous of abundant life, attracted many to the Church, especially those married couples who had married according to the customary law. The Presbyterian Church accepted the validity of the marriages of such people but suggested that if they so desired they could receive Church blessing on their marriages.

A formal and legal marriage under native customary Law is recognized by the Church. If contracted before admission into the Church no further service of blessing is necessary, unless the parties concerned desire such blessing.

But illegal marriages or concubinage in any form was forbidden and unless the illegal relationship could be legalised

1. Ibid., p.59. —The recognition of customary marriage by the Churches as applied to the members was subject to certain basic conditions. The conditions stipulated by the Churches were, monogamy, life-long fidelity and Christian home life.

2. REP., p.32.

3. Law and Discipline, p.19.

4. REP., p.33.
either by customary law or Ordinance, such people were denied admission into the Church nor could they have their marriages blessed by the Church.\textsuperscript{1} Polygamous marriages which presented so much trouble to the Churches throughout the years will be examined separately. Of interest to note here was the fact that what the Churches often referred to as illegal marriage was basically polygamy. Initially the Churches could not be very strict with already married couples who entered the Church but it was not easy with polygamists.

With reference to marriages contracted by members of the Church a far more strict attitude was adopted. The Churches' demand was for members intending to marry to inform the Session or Leaders Meeting of their engagement and only when no valid objection against the marriage had been lodged could the banns be publicised.\textsuperscript{2} Publication of banns referred particularly to Ordinance and Christian Marriages which were performed by either a minister of a Church or a Registrar of marriages in a licensed building.

Members were at liberty to marry according to customary law, but it was enjoined that they should bless their customary marriages in the Church at a Public Marriage Blessing Service. Unlike the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church had a peculiar custom of insisting on the presence of either a minister or an elder as one of the witnesses to a customary marriage contracted by members.

The ceremony of Marriage according to Native Customary Law should be witnessed by a minister or Catechist, and at least one leader of the Church, and on the evidence of a valid marriage according to Native Customary Law

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p.33.
the Minister, being satisfied that the rules of our Church relative to Marriage have been observed, shall bless the marriage in the presence of the family or before the congregation.  

Church officers were treated by the Methodist Church differently. The Presbyterian Church, in principle, expected a high standard of marital relation from her Church leaders but she did not set down any specific rules on marriage for them. The Methodists made special demands on the different categories of her members, namely, Ordinary members, office bearers, and paid agents. There was no attempt to enforce Ordinance marriage on ordinary members, nevertheless, the condition of membership was "the Scriptural principle of monogamy and life-long fidelity" which all members were to obey.

Local preachers, Class leaders and Stewards, being office bearers of the Church, were expected to bless their marriages in Church either under the Marriage Ordinance or at a Marriage Blessing Service. Where circumstances did not permit the performance of the rite, the Office bearer concerned had to affirm his acceptance of the principles of Christian marriage before a Leaders meeting or the congregation. Failure to comply with this rule disqualified him from holding any office in the Church. Paid agents of the Church (i.e. Ministers, District and Circuit Agents including Catechists and Teachers) by compulsion, had to perform their

1. Law and Discipline, p.18.
2. Ibid., p.59.
3. Ibid., p.59.
4. Ibid., p.59.
marriages under the provision of the Marriage Ordinance. This in effect were the general rules which governed the marriages of members of the Protestant Churches. How members reacted to the rules of the Churches will be examined elsewhere and before touching on that we will examine briefly the attitude of the Churches to mixed-marriages.

The question of mixed-marriages between Christians and non-Christians was, as might be expected, one of the earliest practical problems of the Churches. As a means of maintaining the identity of the Christian Church, the Presbyterian Church in particular, established Salems or Christian communities and isolated her members from their families and the community as a whole. For a time, these Christian communities maintained an enviable reputation for the high standard of life (both morally and materially). To many people they appeared to be ideal earthly paradise; but it was not long before many problems emerged from these secluded enclaves of the Church. With the expansion of these Salems the Christian women greatly outnumbered the men. Naturally some of the women could not get husbands from the group. The only way out was for them to accept non-Christian husbands to the great displeasure of the Church. Nevertheless Christian women involved in mixed-marriages were encouraged to continue with the union so long as the unbelieving partner willingly and faithfully maintained the relationship of wife and husband. The same policy applied to

1. Ibid., p.59.
parties of which one was a convert while the other remained outside the Church.

When one of the heathen partners has become a Christian there should be no separation if the heathen partner desires to continue to live with the Christian. Should the heathen partner violate the marriage contract at a later date, the Christian partner would be justified in seeking divorce in accordance with customary law.¹

What constituted a justified cause of divorce was not easy to arrive at. Traditional marriage law did not recognize change of religion as a cause for divorce. Any woman who deserted her husband on such account could not be regarded as legally divorced. Besides, a husband who indulged in fetish or superstitious practices could only be admonished to stop but the Church could not encourage the woman to seek divorce. Hence the difficulty in getting such a union annulled unless the initiative was from the pagan husband. However, children of such a union were regarded as holy and rightful subjects for Christian baptism.

It can hardly be emphasised that mixed marriages were bedevilled with many difficulties especially with regard to the training and nurture of the children. Yet on the other hand, it had a relative value as a means of attracting the non-Christian partner into the Church through the exercise of the Christian ideals in the home by the Christian partner. The Anglican Church maintained a slightly different policy. She disapproved of the solemnization of marriages of non-Christians, but in regard to mixed marriages, the Bishop was to be consulted who, in the light of the case, would decide whether the marriage should be contracted or not.

¹ JFT., p.55.
The Methodist Church took a similar line as the Anglicans but disapproved of mixed marriages.

The marriage of a Christian with non-Christian is forbidden and cannot be celebrated in our Church.¹ Ministers, the Church urged, were not obliged to solemnize the marriage of non-Christians just because they produced a statutory certificate issued by a licensing officer.² But in the 1942 Supplementary rules, without changing the basic attitude to mixed marriages, she adopted a milder attitude. Impossibility of maintaining a policy of total rejection might have probably led to this mild attitude. For to recognize such a marriage the Christian partner had to pledge before the Leaders' meeting his or her acceptance of the Christian rule of married life. In the event of the other partner becoming a Christian both were enjoined to plight their troth.

In the case of marriages already contracted according to Native Customary Law where one only of the partners seeks membership into the Church, he or she shall be urged to express before the Leaders' Meeting personal acceptance of the Christian rule for his or her married life. Where one partner in marriage is already a Christian and a member of the Methodist Church, it is enjoined that on the reception of the other into membership both shall plight their troth according to the sanctions of Christian Wedlock in Church at a Marriage Blessing Service.³

In examining the attitude of the Churches to mixed marriages, therefore, two main trends are noted. The first is the

1. Law and Discipline, p.18.
2. Ibid., p.19.
3. Ibid., p.60.
policy of the Presbyterian Church which permitted the marriage of her members with non-Christians on condition that care will be taken and God's guidance will be sought for. Underlying this policy was their optimistic view that the non-Christian partner could be won for Christ. On the other hand was the Methodist and the Anglican stand point which was a partial rejection of mixed marriages of their members with unbelievers.

Apart from marriages between Christians and non-Christians, there was another type of mixed marriage, namely, marriages contracted between persons of differing confessions, especially between Protestants and Roman Catholics. It must be admitted that mixed marriages whether between Christians or non-Christians or whether between Protestants and Roman Catholics could possibly render impracticable that perfect harmony between a husband and a wife which underlies the concept of Christian marriage.

The Presbyterian Church took a more sympathetic attitude to mixed marriages with unbelievers but she was initially very unfavourable with any connection whatsoever between her members and Roman Catholics. In her inter-Church relation policy, she recognized the bond between all the evangelical Churches associated with the Christian Council and members thereof; and hoped that through the Gospel she could seek to foster community spirit, yet relations with the Roman Catholics was expressed in a categorically negative way.

We can have no communion with the Roman Catholic Church we see in the erroneous teaching and unevangelical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church a danger to souls.

1. Ibid., p.29.
2. Ibid., p.29.
It was, therefore, not surprising that in the 1953 revised policy the same negative attitude was adopted towards marriages between her members and the Roman Catholics.

Marriages with members of the Protestant Churches between whom and our Church close affinity exists is permissible; but marriages with Roman Catholics cannot be approved. Other mixed marriages should be approached with great care.¹

A pseudo-ecumenical attitude of this kind could not be maintained for long because when she revised her policy again in 1963, though the so-called erroneous teaching and the unevangelical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church had not been changed yet she omitted the clause which disapproved of marriages with members of the Roman Catholic faith.² Instead, she insisted on the importance of exercising great care in contracting mixed marriages by members.

The Methodist and the Anglican Churches appeared to have remained silent over the subject of mixed marriages of their members with members of the Roman Catholic Church. This silence may be partly due to their general dislike to mixed marriages which, presumably, applied to both non-Christians and Roman Catholics, we cannot be sure on this matter because of lack of evidence.

It must, however, be noted in passing that the Roman Catholic Church did not regard mixed marriages as illegal or as lacking sacramental character. Nevertheless she did not encourage her members to contract mixed marriages. She recognized mixed marriages on the grounds that two basic conditions would be fulfilled by the non-Catholic partner. First, that a Roman Catholic priest should perform the nuptial rites which presupposed implicitly

¹. Ibid., p.32.

that it could not be performed anywhere other than in a Catholic Church. The second condition was the right for the non-Catholic partner to permit the off-spring of the union to be baptised and nurtured in the Roman Catholic faith. Where the non-Catholic partner was adamant in his or her opposition to the Roman Catholic demands, it led to insuperable difficulties in the home and in the training of the children. It was, therefore, not unnatural if the Methodist and the Anglican Churches disapproved of mixed marriages.

Let us also examine a corollary feature of marriage, namely, divorce. Divorce, a formal dissolution of marriage, was one of the features of Christian marriage which, in the Churches' work, met with great resistance. The two recognizable forms of divorce were, namely, divorce on account of marriage impediment which in effect was an annulment than dissolution, and the dissolution of a legal marriage.

The first major difficulty the Churches had to reckon with was the considerable difference which existed between what customary law recognized as genuine cause of divorce on one hand, and what the Churches also accepted to be real causes of divorce on the other. In Akan society, as we noted elsewhere, customary law did not make divorce easy but relatively possible to be granted provided a genuine cause could be shown and adequately proved. Causes of divorce varied and applied in different ways to either of the parties. Among the numerous causes of divorce already outlined in another chapter were, adultery, barrenness or impotence, habitual drunkenness, strained relations between husband and mother-in-law and the practice of witchcraft. Assault, long desertion and improper maintenance could similarly give cause for a divorce action being taken.
In case of a divorce action being taken by the offended party, a court of elders of both families, whose responsibility it was to ensure the welfare of the union, met to arbitrate. Through persuasion the offended party was advised to consider possible reconciliation and where possible be compensated. But causes like adultery, barrenness and the practice of witchcraft, more often than not, led to divorce and within a matter of weeks the two were relieved of all obligations and could either marry or remain single.

The teaching of the Churches on the subject of divorce and remarriage was based on the New Testament words of Jesus. In Mark and Luke the prohibition of divorce and remarriage was absolute and unqualified; while in Matthew the qualification "except for unchastity" was supplemented. In the Epistles, Paul also appealed to Jesus' authority and repeated the general prohibition of divorce.

Marriage, according to the Churches, was intended to be a life-long union which must not be broken. Nevertheless it was clearly recognized that while, in principle, divorce was against the Christian ideal of marriage and should not be encouraged or granted easily, yet certain situations necessitated that concessions be granted and divorce be effected.

Christians who had contracted their marriages through native custom with or without Church blessing were all subject to the same principles governing divorce. Admittedly non-Church blessed marriages were very difficult to deal with since cases arising out of them were in most cases dealt with privately.

According to the Presbyterian Church:

divorce should not be taken lightly; but where it is

1. Mark 10. 2-12; Luke 16.8; Matthew 19. 9-12.
found to be unavoidable, the proper steps should be taken through the Session and the Presbyterial Committee for final decision of the Synod Committee.\(^1\)

This ruling, it must be noted, applied to marriages under native customs as well as to those which have received the Church's blessing which (with the exception of some difference in legal procedure) were legally binding as Ordinance marriage.

It would be, however, misleading to suppose that adultery was the only cause the Churches recognized. On the contrary, improper care, desertion for considerable number of years, or threat to the other's life could be accepted, after careful consideration, as cause of divorce by the Churches.

Marriages contracted under the Ordinance, irrespective of the individual Church policies on divorce, could only be dissolved by death.\(^2\) If for any apparent reason, divorce was sought for during the life time of both parties, by one of the parties, then dissolution could only be granted by a legal decision of a Supreme Court of Ghana; and none of the parties was permitted to marry until the Supreme Court had granted a divorce with a decree made absolute.

The trouble with some of the members was that they had contracted the marriage without first knowing the legal implications involved until they found themselves in a Court of Law; so that the difficulty of having a divorce case granted either by the Church or a Civil Court was time and again made one of the major reasons why members deliberately refused to contract Church marriages.

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1. Rif., p.33.

2. The difficulty of getting divorce under the Ordinance Marriage has led to intended couples wishing to contract that form of marriage to make sure of their fertility in advance hence pre-marital sex relations are common.
Reluctance to grant divorce was often demonstrated by the fact that even in a divorce case which, under certain conditions, could be legally permitted, the divorce was refused on the basis of the words of Jesus: "What God has joined together let no man put asunder". The Churches were also accused of emphasising the importance of reconciliation and not taking enough account of the strained relations or the love which essentially cemented the union. Inability to appreciate the real difficulties of members by insisting on the continuance of a union, intended to be life-long but the basis of which had been strained and was heading towards disintegration, was one of the common accusations levelled against the Churches.

The truth cannot be denied that there were instances where nothing could bridge a gap created between a couple, the cause of which was at times beyond their control. Such extreme cases, the Churches really admitted were beyond control and thus granted divorce. But the Churches could not condone the granting of divorce on every trivial account just because the offended party demanded divorce.

Closely related to the problem mentioned above was the difficulty of being granted permission to remarry. Remarriage, in actual fact, was granted by the Churches to members on two possible grounds. First, when divorce had been legally granted by the Church or a Civil Court with a decree made absolute. Second, when one's innocence with reference to the cause of a divorce had been established to be completely true.

Unless there was a formal legal and justifiable divorce, no one could marry and any departure from this was, according to the Presbyterian Church, a breach of law and was punishable by
suspension or exclusion. The Methodist Church maintained:

Permission for the innocent party to marry must be secured.....from the Chairman of the District through the Leaders' Meeting.

Members who dissolved their marriages with the expressed disapproval of the Church concerned were refused permission to remarry. The Commission's Report in 1948, in line with the general Church policy, stated:

Where a person is adjudged "guilty" it is difficult to see how such a one can be permitted to remarry. Even if there are signs of genuine repentance, it does not necessarily follow that the person should be allowed to remarry in Church or to have a second marriage contracted by law, blessed in Church.

Any guilty party who remarried according to custom was denied the privilege of having his marriage blessed by the Church.

No minister is permitted to solemnise the marriage of a divorced guilty party.

Having now outlined the Churches' policies and attitudes to marriage and divorce, we will turn our attention to an examination of how the Church members reacted to the policies of the Churches in general.

In the following pages we will try to uncover some of the reasons why Ordinance and Christian Marriages were unpopular with the people, why practices in the local congregations were often incompatible with the Churches' standard and why the teaching of the Churches on Christian marriage made very little impact so that the

1. RPP., p. 22.
2. Law and Discipline, p. 60.
3. I Will Build My Church, (the Report of the Commission appointed by the Methodist Church of the Gold Coast to consider the Life of the Church), Cape Coast, 1948, p. 80.
4. Law and Discipline, p. 18.
popular inclination, as the Church authorities were wont to admit, was towards customary marriage.

One apparent reason for this seemingly blatant disregard of Church marriage was alleged to be the high cost of contracting Church marriages. Related to this accusation was the view that the exhorbitant dowry demanded, even by Christian parents, often left prospective bridegrooms with no money to contract the expensive Christian marriage.

Before the beginning of this century there was a tendency among some Missionaries to underestimate the importance of the dowry and, therefore, aimed at the discontinuance of the payment of the dowry, but with little success. The custom, as they saw it, was purchase of a bride, an assumption which largely reflected nothing more than their ignorance of traditional customs. The ban on the payment of dowry could not be maintained for long because the dowry played an important part in the legitimization of a union and could not be abolished. The Commission's report of 1948 drew attention to the importance and relevance of the dowry in any marriage transaction.

We recognize the items forming the preliminary expenses, including Tair Naa, demanded by native custom, if only for the reason that without it no marriage would be considered as valid by Africans. They are as essential as the fee for the "Notice of Marriage".

If the Churches would not bless any marriage unless it had been properly and legally contracted in the customary way then it was pointless in aiming at the abolition of the payment of a dowry


2. I Will Build My Church, p. 76.
since without it no union could be consumated or given the family sanction. The practice was discouraged by the Churches by advising members to be reasonable in the amount of money they demanded of their daughters' prospective bridegrooms.

The rising cost of weddings was a common accusation against the Churches. It was observed that extravagant expenditure in marriage feasting and the bridal attire often hindered members from contracting Church marriage. In most cases the bridegroom incurred serious debts which eventually threatened the stability of the family. All the Churches were very sensitive to the accusation about extravagance as a hindrance and threat to Church marriage and were unanimous in expressing disapproval of the practice. The Methodist Church stated:

Extravagance during engagement or in the celebration of marriage, and especially the incurring of debt in such marriage is out of harmony with the Christian ideal and should be discouraged. Marriage in Church ought not to be a reason for higher marriage fees and expenditure, and it is the duty of all our members to avoid raising such a barrier against the general acceptance of the Christian standard.\(^1\)

The Commission which investigated the life and problems of the Methodist Church also reviewed the subject of extravagant expenditure at weddings which, members alleged, was a hindrance to Ordinance or Christian marriage. The Commission had to admit the allegation that "marriage in Church has come to involve unwarranted expenditure".\(^2\) A survey conducted in some Districts revealed that where the economic standards of the people was sound, in most cases,

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1. Law and Discipline, p. 60.
2. Ibid., p. 74.
expenditure in marriage feasting and bridal attire was quite high. In the marriage of an illiterate bride, it was reckoned that the average expenses on the marriage by customary law was £8 while the cost of a literate bride’s attire (outfit) alone was £53. 10.

Be that as it may, such extravagance was out of line with the Churches’ policy. The essence of marriage, the report stated, was not in the large sums of money spent at weddings.

It needs to be made abundantly clear that Christian marriage can involve, as such, little or no expenditure whatsoever, except in so far as the giving and receiving of a ring is regarded as essential. 2

Having admitted the justification in the accusation that Church weddings were costly, the Commission was compelled to make the following proposals which when followed, it was felt, could help reduce considerably wedding expenses.

In particular the Church fees demanded by the Minister, the Choir and Chapel-keeper should be discontinued. The reception following the wedding should normally be for the family and close friends of the bride and bridegroom and should be a simple nature. In addition to Tsir Naa (head-money) the total expenses connected with a wedding, whether by blessing in Church or by Ordinance ought not to exceed £25. 3

Reasonable though these proposals may sound, yet there is not the slightest indication that they were even accepted much more being put into practice. The Ministers, whose duty it was to help members reduce the cost of their weddings, could not give up charging fees for the nuptial rites they performed for any couple, and

1. Ibid., p. 75.
2. Ibid., p. 75.
3. Ibid., p. 76.
members also did not feel obliged to look to the Church for suggestions as to the form their wedding should take.

The problem with extravagance at weddings has been an age old one and attempts to discourage it have not achieved any marked success. The Churches, certainly, cannot be accused as having set this high cost of wedding ceremony for her members. Besides, members were aware that extravagance was irrelevant to the essence of Christian marriage. It would, however, be reasonable to argue that extravagance at weddings was the result of unnecessary imitation and often the result of a desire to excel in the conduct of one’s marriage ceremony. The bridegroom (at times under the pressure of the bride and her family) aimed at making the best of his wedding and consequently involved himself in unnecessary spending that he could not afford. So long as people do not realise the futility of blind imitation and continue to spend far beyond their means at weddings the problem cannot be resolved.

One other criticism levelled against Christian marriage, but particularly the Ordinance marriage was that it was an alien institution which the Churches were deliberately imposing on members. In 1939, a paper read by a Minister, in the International Conference at Madras, described Ordinance marriage as

a piece of colonial legislation which brings the contracting parties into relations with English laws of inheritance and succession and severs them from tribal law and custom. ¹

Being an English law, they argued, it was less applicable to their situation than African law and could hardly be attractive to African Christians. In the words of an indigenous lawyer and layman of the Church,

the attempt by the Christian Mission to force the English law of marriage on the native converts has had a disastrous effect on the morals of the people within the sphere of influence of the Christian missionary stations. Without knowing or studying the principles of the law of marriage as it obtains in the Akan and Fanti countries, the Christian pastors urged the Government to legislate; the result is the marriage Ordinance, which being unsatisfactory from many points of view has now become a veritable stumbling block in the Christianizing efforts of the several missionary agencies.¹

I would not dispute the possibility of missionary influence in the promulgation of the Ordinance Marriage of 1884 but as to whether missionary influence was the cause of the Ordinance remains to be proved. No attempt was made by the writer at an explanation of what he regarded as the disastrous effects or as unsatisfactory institution. Yet a step taken by the Presbyterian Church Synod in 1918 appeared to have lent support to the allegation that Ordinance marriage was unsatisfactory for the converts. In 1918, the Synod was compelled, for reasons not known, to appeal to the Government to simplify the divorce procedure as laid down by the Civil Courts.² It was indeed surprising why, at such an early age, the Church should demand a less difficult approach to the divorce procedure. Could this be taken as evidently justifying the view that this form of marriage was unsatisfactory? While this may not be by itself a compelling evidence to force us to such a conclusion, the fact remains that from a cursory survey of the situation, the Church had realised, not long after the acceptance of the Ordinance marriage, that the difficulty and expense of having

². Synod Minutes and Reports, of the Presbyterian Church, 1918, p.5.
a divorce granted in a Civil court could be an unpleasant undertaking.

In 1928, another layman, expressing his views on what had been generally attacked as undue emphasis placed on Ordinance marriage by the Churches, argued that such an attitude led to a great misunderstanding and mistrust of the true meaning and intention of Christianity as a religion for it was difficult to enforce monogamous life upon a people with whom polygamy had been a long established institution.¹

A little over stated though his remark was, yet it would hardly be an exaggeration to argue that the uncompromising insistence on monogamy placed more difficulties in the way to progress and greatly retarded growth. It was rather a barrier to many souls which could have been won for Christ. The argument that the Churches were after quality rather than quantity cannot be justified in view of the present state of some of the congregations.

Another common objection to Ordinance marriage was the privileges a woman enjoyed under the terms of the Ordinance.² It was often argued that it gave her greater social status; the right to inherit the husband's property after his death, a practice contrary to customary law of inheritance. It also gave her greater hold over the husband and could claim alimony if the husband married again. One would be inclined to suppose, in the light of such arguments, that the Akan marriage was far from the ideal. But to conclude that customary marriage was contracted with the intention of making slaves out of women would also be far from right.

¹. Danquah, op.cit., p. 95.
². An Educated woman married under the Ordinance assumes the title Mrs. Such women, according to Busia, expect a companionship and equality which the illiterate woman does not expect, and which society does not demand of a husband married under Native Law and custom. Busia K.A., Social Survey, Sekondi-Takoradi, Crown Agents, London. 1950, p. 43.
The question of inheritance could not be brushed aside as unimportant because it led to endless litigation in the Churches over the rightful claimants to the property of a man who died intestate. The Ordinance allowed the distribution of the property of a man who died intestate in the following manner.

Two-thirds in accordance with the provisions of the law of England relating to the distribution of the personal estates of intestates in force on the 19th November 1884, and Native law or custom to the contrary notwithstanding, and one-third in accordance with the provision of the native customary law which would have obtained if such a person had not been married.\(^1\)

This method of distribution of a dead man's property was quite alien to the people, because according to customary law of inheritance, a deceased person's property passed on to the matrilineal line, (but patrilineal inheritance was also practised by some Akan tribal groups) to the brother's or sister's children.\(^2\) Anyone who, during his life time, wanted to bequeath his self-acquired property to his children could do so in the presence of witnesses not necessarily members of the family; but in all situations the consent of the lineage head was necessary. When consent was refused the result was frequent litigation between the wife and her children on one hand and the family (i.e. brothers, sisters and their children) on the other.

It must be admitted that Akan law of inheritance, however consistent with their social set up, left much to be desired, for in a majority of cases the successor who should have cared for the

1. Gold Coast Laws, op. cit., Cap. 47.
2. Supra, p.4.
widow and her children left them badly off. \(^1\) The injustice often
done to some widows was abhorred by the Church as well as the com-
munity. \(^2\) Those who advocated the abolition of the custom were al-
ways the minority whose voice could not be heard. But a relatively
large number of people criticised the introduction of a new law of
inheritance which, as noted above, conflicted with traditional law.
The main criticism of the latter group was that the son inherited
the property of the father instead of the nephew. However, the
assertion that the new law had had disastrous consequence on the
social stability of the Akan peoples was an oversimplification of
the variegated factors, and the interplay of the many other foreign
ideas and values which had contributed to threaten the stability of
the Akan family structure.

Through the influence of the Basel Mission (later became
the Presbyterian Church of Ghana) her members as well as other Churches
accepted the rule whereby a man’s property, after his death, was dis-
tributed into three equal parts: One third for the children, an-
other third to the widow and the other third for the family of the man.

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1. N.A. Ollennu, *The Law of Testate and Intestate Succession in Ghana*,
Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1966, pp. 211–235. The duties and
responsibilities of a successor are with respect to creditors of
the deceased, his children and wife, members of the immediate and
wider family of the deceased. Rights to recover debts due to the
deceased and if he cares to live with the widow as his wife. Right
to service from the children and to receive on behalf of the family
a share of the marriage fees paid to the paternal family for the
marriage of any of the daughters of the deceased.

2. The Ashantihene was said to have reopened the subject of inheri-
tance at the 1941 Session of the Confederacy Council with this
appeal: "I brought up this question at our last Session but we
did not come to a definite decision about it. One fact with us
Ashantis is that we appear to be too conservative. We always
like to stick to custom even though it may have outlived its day....
I want you to understand that our children are blood of our blood
and bone of our bone from whom we are accountable to God for
bringing them into this world....
It is only your children who care for you. Is it not fair then
that we should make provision for them and their mothers who look
after our interest and welfare, so that they may not become use-
less and wretched after our death?"
But in a predominantly pagan family the law could not be applied without strong opposition from the family which eventually involved the Church in litigation over the property of a deceased member who died intestate.

The Ashanti Confederacy Council was known to have ruled that one-third of the property of a man who died intestate should be given to the wife and the children. And before the law could be given Government sanction some Native Courts had enforced it without much resistance although it deprived the non-Christian claimant of the property which was his due by customary law of inheritance.

Divorce, not unlike some of the aspects of marriage discussed above, presented similar problems to the Churches. Regardless of Church sanctions, divorce policies were flouted, and members effected divorce at will. A cursory look at some of the remarks from annual reports will unveil the seriousness of the problem of divorce. In 1926, a minister observed:

There is very little difference between the Christian and heathen marriages and therefore dissolution of marriages is regarded as a slight thing among them.

Another minister in 1933 remarked:

Unhappy married life and divorces are also a hindrance to the work.

1. Ollennu, op. cit., pp. 144-145. Attempts by some Traditional Councils to make it possible for children to have a share in their father's property. - The Resolution of the Akim Abnakwa State Council of March 28, 1941 proposed that one-third of a man's estate should descend to his children in equal parts.

The decision or resolution of the Ashanti Confederacy Council made in February 21, 1946 proposed that one-third of a man's estate should descend to his children, one-third to his wife, and one-third to his family.

2. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1936.

3. Ibid., 1933.
Two years later a minister expressed concern about "the frequent dissolution of marriages" and further added a comment on the relative ease with which members "disregarded the Christian matrimonial law of permanence and dissolved their marriage". "Wives, said another, deserted their husbands at every trivial dispute". Such were some of the remarks which abounded in the annual reports about member's behaviour with reference to divorce. This feeling of total disregard of the Churches' divorce policy which one gets on reading such isolated but genuine remarks might not have been as serious as the reports suggest. But they were characteristic of the general negative attitude of Church members which was noticeable throughout the years in both urban and rural congregations.

Reference has already been made to the fact that there was great difficulty in obtaining divorce either in a Civil or Church Court. And apart from the problem of going through an expensive legal proceedings, there was also an underlying problem of the vast difference between causes of divorce in traditional society and what the Civil and Church Courts also regarded as genuine cause of divorce.

Natural desire for children was a major motive for marriage. Therefore, incapacity through barrenness or impotence to fulfil a marriage by producing children was always deemed as an impediment which in a majority of cases led to annulment of the union. But the Churches would not accept a child-less marriage as a cause of divorce. Adultery, singled out by the Churches as a cause of divorce, was only one of the many causes. A man who dreamt of having had intercourse with another man's wife (if it

1. Ibid., 1935.
got to the hearing of the husband) could similarly lead to divorce. The so-called seducer was fined as if he had been caught in the act. This latter example among others like strained relations of a husband with the mother-in-law, and practice of witchcraft could hardly be tolerated as evidence in a Civil or Church Court. Thus there was the problem of reconciling traditional causes of divorce with those of Church which were continuously in conflict.

It was not always that every divorce action was granted. We have already noted the reluctance with which the Churches granted divorce. The same could be said of marriages contracted in the customary way, for divorce was, in all situations, a last resort. Where divorce action was not taken, customary damages for seduction was quite often claimed. The seduction fee depended on the standing of the offended party in the community and could be very high in the case of people of the royal house. The Churches also set down seduction fees for the members, individual Churches had different seduction fees since no uniform pattern could be acceptable to all the Churches. The figures available to us which is reproduced here applied to the Presbyterian Church members alone.

Seduction of a man's wife £5; seduction of a virgin £2.
Seduction of a girl who has once fallen or delivered £8.
Seduction of a fallen girl not yet admitted to Church Membership £5. Seduction of a virgin by a married man £12.
If the seducer of a girl agrees to marry her, and can marry her, he must pay £4 to the parents. If the parents refuse to give consent £6.

1. Before the Native Authority Ordinance of November 1942 was promulgated, which fixed adultery fees at £25, or imprisonment not exceeding three months, a seducer of a king's wife was put to death by a ritual killing of lynching (atapere). A seducer of the wife of a holder of a hereditary office paid a sum between £24–30. Commoners had their bride price refunded and also claimed compensation from the accomplice.

2. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1918.
Cases between members of the Church and members of other Churches or between members of the Church and non-Christians or strangers who were not subject to the discipline of the Court of the Church had to be settled according to the respective Church or customary laws. This fee applied to all forms of marriages provide the offences were dealt with by the Church Court. But the seduction fees proved to be unacceptable to some members, for it was not long before the whole system was attacked. The Church was accused of condoning the evil of adultery by permitting the general payment of a sum of money not usually exceeding £5 to the offended husband. The husband thus lost his right to a divorce under the Ordinance by receiving a money payment for an offence in a form not prescribed under the Ordinance. For others, it was felt, the method of charging fees of a seducer would lead to moral failure in Akan social life.¹

Space will not permit us to elaborate any further on the reactions of the Church members to the Churches' policies on marriage and divorce as here described. We will therefore, cut short our discussion and in the following chapter examine the problem of polygamy. What the Churches' policies and attitudes were and how the Church members reacted to them.

¹. Danquah, op. cit., p. 94.
CHAPTER FOUR
ATTITUDES AND POLICIES TO MARRIAGE RITES
CHRISTIAN MONOGAMY VERSUS POLYGAMY

No traditional institution has presented so many difficulties to the Protestant Churches in Ghana, and still remains such a stumbling block to the spread of Christianity among the people, than polygamy. The universality of the custom and its tremendous attraction for some Church members have always hindered efforts to abolish it or legislate against its practice by the Churches. It has, therefore, been frequently discussed in Missionary Conferences and reference will here be made to a few of them and the various attitudes taken to the subject by the Mission Churches.

The Conference of Missionaries of various denominations meeting in Calcutta in 1834, unanimously agreed that a polygamist convert should be allowed to retain his wives after baptism, but that such a person should not be eligible to any office in the Church. The opposers argued that it was a threat to the Church standards, for a relaxation of a divinely ordained law of monogamy could lead to chaos in the Church.

In the London Centenary Conference of 1888, a long debate ensued over the question of the admission of polygamists after missionaries from Africa, India and China had expressed views on the nature of the problem. But no concrete or uniform policy acceptable to the delegates was formulated. In the same year, the Lambeth Synod of Anglican Bishops, which met in London, was unanimous in resolving that baptism could not be administered to

a polygamous husband. However, it was generally agreed that, in some situations, the baptism of the wives of a polygamist could be allowed. The Report stated:

That the wives of polygamists may, in the opinion of this Conference, be admitted in some cases to baptism. But that it must be left to the local authorities of the Church to decide under what circumstances they may be baptised.¹

In the case of the wives of polygamists, therefore, polygamy constituted no necessary bar to being baptised or admitted to full communion of the Church.

In 1894, the issue was raised again during the Missionary Conference of members of the Anglican communion, in London.² No resolution was passed but from a study of the papers read and the views expressed during the subsequent discussions, it became apparent that divergent opinions still existed among missionaries of the Anglican Church.

The 1900 Ecumenical Conference of Missionaries, which met in New York, also discussed the problem of the admission of polygamists into the Church.³ While divergent opinions were expressed as in previous Conferences on the subject, the general tendency was one of opposition to the practice of polygamy. In a concluding remark from one of the Missionaries who delivered papers on the subject, he stated as follows:

Better a thousand times the unbroken regions of darkness than such baptised heathenism as this. Better long years of fruitless labour than such sadly unchristian results. ...It is easier to keep out than to put out, and when it comes to admitting members into the Church,

a missionary cannot afford to present other than an uncompromising front to the various forms of evil that show themselves, no matter how firmly rooted, in a heathen community.¹

Undoubtedly, many of the missionaries who were confronted with the realities of the situation prevailing in the localities took a more sympathetic view towards any discussion on the admission of polygamists. But remarks, couched in strong terms such as the one noted above, which characterised the way in which some of the missionaries opposed polygamy, could not have helped to resolve the problem. Having criticised the custom in the Missionary Conferences, the delegates went back to their respective stations only to be confronted with the same problem, the complexity of which grew steadily with the expansion of the Church into the remote areas.

Subsequent Missionary Conferences, whether held in Africa or elsewhere in another part of the world, followed the same pattern. Without compromising, they firmly upheld and reaffirmed the principle of monogamy, but left questions of detail to individual missionaries to deal with in the light of local conditions. This resulted in confusion in some Mission fields and so the question of polygamy was yet again placed on the agenda of subsequent Conferences.

In examining the problem of polygamy in Ghana and the attitude of the Protestant Churches, it became apparent that there had been no change in policy. These Missionary leaders who attended the annual Missionary Conferences, being profoundly influenced by the decisions and policies taken, applied the same policies on polygamy in the local congregations but with little success.

Polygamy, practised in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa,

¹ Ibid., p. 269.
is an age old institution. Unlike concubinage, abhorred by Akan society, polygamy could legally be sanctioned. The practice of polygamy in Ghana, unlike some of the predominantly Muslim countries, was an exception rather than the rule, but it was greatly indulged in by Chiefs and rich farmers. However, it was not uncommon, for quite a variety of reasons, for some ordinary men to live polygamous lives.

Taking more wives, for some, provided extra domestic and agricultural labour while others took more wives for the sake of prestige. The general tendency in traditional society was for people with more wives and children to be highly esteemed. Such people automatically assumed a better social status and importance. Surplus of women during the period of tribal warfare was a contributory factor to the practice of polygamy. Since Akan society had no place for an unmarried woman, many of the surplus women preferred to be married to already married men rather than bear public ridicule. But the period of tribal warfare is past and there is also a fair balance between men and women of marriageable age, so this no longer holds as a ground of argument for polygamy. A wife's barrenness or chronic disease also stimulated polygamy. But the major contributory factor to the practice of polygamy was the African's desire for children and a large family which, apart from the better social status it gave him, also served as a means of perpetuating the ancestral family. On the other hand, high rate of infant mortality in some cases have made the formation of a large family impossible. Besides, children are presently economically unproductive as they used to be in the past. Scientific medicine has also helped to reduce infant mortality hence the

1. Supra, p.12.
gradual decline of the custom of polygamy.

With the growth of the Churches the seriousness of the problem in relation to the admission of new converts of polygamous backgrounds become evident. During the first World War, one Prophet Harris, and educated Liberian and later a catechist of the American Episcopal Church, claiming to have received divine command to preach and baptise, came to Ghana on an evangelistic tour. Success crowned his campaign and he was believed to have baptised no less than 100,000 people. His abrupt departure left the new converts as sheep without a shepherd. Many of the Mission Churches, therefore, stepped in to gather the converts into their Churches.

The Methodist, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventists and later the Anglican Church (through the activities of one Swatson, a disciple of Harris who later became a member of the Anglican Church) took advantage of it. But the Basel Mission would not because she was sceptical of the calibre of converts Harris' campaign had produced. Those who refused to be absorbed into the existing Churches formed themselves into small local Churches with faith-healing as their main emphasis.

3. Ibid., p. 270. — Under the Leadership of one Sampson Oppon, a Government report issued in 1922 revealed a mass movement towards Christianity in Ashanti in which some 15,000 people were baptised. Cf. International Review of Missions, Jan. 1923, p. 51.
5. Among the smaller Independent Churches which emerged from Harris' campaign were: Grace Tanne's Faith Healing Church; John Nackabah's Twelve Apostles Church; West African Water Healing Society and Wonder Worker, as well as the Divine Healing Society. For a detailed description of some of the activities of these faith healing Churches confer C.G. Baeta, Propheticism in Ghana, SCM, 1962.
There was a tremendous rise in the number of converts in the Churches but the marriage question proved a vexation. Harris had not insisted on monogamy; local tradition speaks of two wives who accompanied the Prophet.¹

A fair number of people baptised by Harris and later absorbed into the Churches had contracted polygamous marriages so that with the admission of such large numbers of converts into the Church the question of polygamy immediately came to the forefront. The Presbyterian Church whose policies were codified in 1918, a few years after Harris' campaign had come to an abrupt end, took a firm stand against polygamy.

a. Plurality of marriage is not approved.
b. Polygamists enrolling themselves as candidates for baptism can only be given the usual preparatory instruction but can be baptised only when they have managed to adjust their marriage problem.
c. Only one wife of a polygamist can be received into the Church.²

Before the Methodist Church codified her policies in 1936, she had adopted a similar policy on this subject.

While a polygamist may be a member of such a Catechumen Class or of a Bible Class, he is disqualified from baptism and for membership.³

With regard to the wives of the polygamist husband, the Methodist Church stated her position in the 1942 Supplementary rules as follows.

It shall be left to the Superintendent Minister to decide whether one who is already the second wife or subsequent wife of a polygamist may be admitted into

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membership. No female member becoming the wife of a polygamist may remain in membership.¹

In many of the Missionary Conferences mentioned above, one could observe a general tendency towards a plea for the baptism of the wives of a polygamist but not the husband. But the Churches in Ghana were stricter for, apart from one wife, preferably the first of the polygamous husband, none of the parties involved was baptised.

All the Protestant Churches opposed polygamy but attitudes differed from one Church to the other. The Presbyterian Church appeared to have been very strict for in 1920, she ruled that all polygamists residing on Mission lands were to be reported to the Church authorities so that legal action could be taken to expel them.² Such attempts at protecting converts from being influenced by their pagan counterparts was too severe, and it is doubtful if the ruling was ever put into effect.

What the Churches demanded of polygamous husbands was to put away all their wives except one, preferably the first one, since she was the senior wife and had better claim on the husband than the others. Any polygamous husband who could resolve his marriage was accepted and those who could not remained as adherents or members in the Catechumen class. We have no means of assessing the number of husbands who divorced all their wives except one and joined the Church, but those who did it would have been very small in number for it was common in the early years of the Churches to see adherents far outnumbering the full members.³ The interesting fact is that many of these polygamous families kept close to the Church.

¹ Ibid., p. 60.
² Synod Minutes and Reports of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, 1920.
and participated in the worship and daily activities of the congregation except that they could not join the others at the Lord's Table.

The question whether a polygamous husband should be accepted into the Church exercised the minds of many people. If the polygamous husband was required to put away all his extra wives, the question was asked, what would happen to those he repudiates? Was such a demand not a barrier to and a deprivation of a lawful wife? What was the moral justification for the Church to ask people to divorce their wives without any reasonable cause why the marriage should be annulled? Many kept on asking these and similar questions. Attempt to keep these people out was explained as an action intended to prevent the creation of anomalous conditions in the Church of Christ by accepting those who in reality could not be placed on the same footing as full members.

Since there was no means of resolving this problem, the prevailing local conditions were quite often different from that laid down in law. It came to the notice of the Presbyterian Church in 1919 that despite her clear cut policy on polygamy, some ministers had accepted polygamous husbands into the Church. The Synod of 1919, therefore, ruled:

Christians accepted already under contrary conditions were to be retained, but in future any minister who went against this rule would be dealt with as having gone against the Church rule.\(^1\)

An excluded member, it was affirmed, who could choose out of the wives the one he liked could then be baptised, otherwise the only

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1. *Synod Minutes and Reports, 1919.*
alternative for such people was to remain as adherents\(^1\) (a term which the Methodist Church later decided against applying to such people) so long as they remain polygamous.

The fate of wives other than the first one was similar to their husbands'. The Churches allowed one the privilege of becoming a full member. The problem with the extra wives was that some of them had ignorantly contracted polygamous marriages and could, therefore, not be said to be parties to their husbands' action. Those who fell into such situations always pressed the Churches for baptism. A minister, in 1923, reported:

Many wives of polygamists are pressing hard for admission into the Church membership; their arguments are plausible that they have no personal freedom to contract or dissolve a matrimonial alliance.\(^2\)

The real difficulty of some ministers was not the acceptance of such women into the Church but the problem of keeping a husband from Church membership because of the number of wives he had but at the same time grant the wives the privilege of Church membership of which they had deprived their husband by living with him.

However, there were instances where the Churches could be very explicit in their ruling. Where a woman, having joined the Church as a spinster, was married or allowed herself to be married by a man who already had a wife could not be entertained; the woman and the married man were immediately excluded from Church membership.

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1. Hitherto the word "Adherent" referred to members who for reasons in their married life were unable or were not prepared to accept full obligation of monogamy. But after the Commission's Report the word was given a different interpretation. It was used for a member of another Church who, while retaining membership of his Church, through residence away from the place where his own Church was, attended the Services or joined the fellowship of the Methodist Church.

2. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1923.
People questioned the authority of the Church which justified her to insist on polygamous husbands casting off all their wives except one. The dangers which attended such a policy, it was argued, was not given equal attention by the Churches. Akan law did not recognize annulment or dissolution of marriages on what appeared to be but invalid reasons. The moral and ethical problem of casting off a number of wives with their children lawfully born yet without any hope of regular subsidy to maintain them was also raised. Such women, it was supposed, could easily be driven into prostitution or cohabit with other men in a quasi-marriage which was similarly injurious. Chiefs who, by virtue of their status, had to maintain all the women in the harem were often tempted to marry more than one. So that apart from their office as religious heads which involved fetish associations, polygamy was a great hindrance to many who wanted to join the Church. For a minister, the major hindrance of the Chiefs was "not real fetishism but polygamy". 1

The attitude of members to the Churches' policy on polygamy was plainly to disregard it. Local ministers had to acknowledge the difficulty of controlling polygamy. Insistence on Church policy, it was observed, was causing pain and creating dissension in the Churches. Local ministers reported that the rules could not be enforced unless the Churches were prepared to lose very many members. 2 The general tendency was for members to lose very many members. 2 The general tendency was for members to

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1. The Ashanti Confederacy Council in 1946, was said to have resolved that "a chief should not be obliged to marry more wives than he wants on account of the expenses of maintaining large households and of giving many children modern education. Natson, quoted from Busia K. A., The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, Oxford, 1951, p.15.

stay out of the Churches' fellowship since they had no intention of resolving their marriages in the way demanded. The Catechumen or members on trial increased out of all proportions and they preferred to remain perpetually in the Churches' role-book as adherents and live polygamous married lives.

Minister after minister reported of the relative ease with which members of their congregation indulged in polygamy and how it was hindering the work. In 1921 a minister reported:

Polygamy still proves a great hindrance to many from joining the fellowship of the Church, and many clamour for a lose marriage connection which they miscall "polygamy".¹

From other districts we are told: "Love of polygamy is very strong here"; "The behaviour of some of the excluded Christians and polygamists staying amongst us gives us much anxiety"; "The heathen in this town are too fond of polygamy and the pursuit of money to care at all for their salvation".² Such were some of the concerns expressed about the persistence of polygamy.

The problem of polygamy was complicated with the emergence of the Separatist or Independent Churches in Ghana.³ Almost all these Churches tolerated polygamy hence the difficulty of maintaining a consistent policy on the subject. In 1924 a minister remarked to the Presbyterian Synod:

Wives of polygamists in town are continuously approaching us for re-admission. Can anything be done for them as in other Churches?⁴

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1. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1921.
2. Ibid., 1921.
3. In 1929, a Presbyterian Minister reported to Synod- 'Our work is becoming the more difficult by the establishment of two societies in our midst and near us. One of them receives polygamists, and the other speaks against the Church dues and other givings'.
4. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1924.
Some African historians in recent years have over-emphasized the conflict on polygamy in relation to Church admission as the main reason for the formation of many Separatist or Independent African Churches. But while admitting this as a contributory factor in some situations, with reference to the formation of Independent Churches in Ghana it did not apply. On the contrary, the secession and formation of African Churches in Nigeria clearly contrasted with the situation in Ghana.¹

Webster provides us with an account of the attitudes and policies towards polygamy of the Yoruba African Churches in Nigeria. According to Webster, polygamy played a major role in the formation of these Churches.² Whether by coincidence or accident Webster observed that the pronouncement of the 1888 Lambeth Conference on polygamy witnessed the emergence of the African Churches. By 1920 they had developed into five major denominations. These African Churches unlike their African counterparts in Ghana, aimed at projecting their cultural image by "accepting polygamists into the Churches through baptism". A measure which, in the words of Webster, "was a significant and vital step towards indigenization".³

Webster observed that two main trends of thought was noticeable among these African Churches.⁴ On one hand were those who advocated "a gradual return to mission standards", and on the

² Ibid., p. 227.
³ Ibid., p. 227.
⁴ Ibid., p. 237.
other were those who suggested polygamy be introduced into the Christian Churches. It was evident from Webster's account that the United Native Africa, one of the African Churches, had gone to the extent of permitting polygamy for both clergy and laity.¹ According to that Church, polygamy could not be proved a sin from the Bible and neither polygamy nor monogamy were essential to salvation. Even advocates of a gradual return to monogamy, while not accepting a polygamous ministry, tolerated polygamy for the "weaker brethren".²

The Mission Churches in Ghana did not experience the problem of secession as a result of their policy on polygamy. According to Baeta, the ulterior motives behind secession in Ghana were in most cases different from other prophetic movements elsewhere in Africa. Political motivation had not played any significant factor. No evidence of anti-European or anti-Western feelings which played a role in some parts of Africa was noticeable. And where the Churches had reverted to the practice of traditional customs, it was apparent that they derived their authority from the Old Testament and not because they were African customs.³ Nevertheless the assumption that monogamy was based on European usage and custom was strongly held by members of these Churches. Besides, they attributed hypocrisy demonstrated by some members of the Mission Churches in their married life, prostitution, as well as the general breakdown of social morality to the Churches teaching on monogamy.⁴

1. Ibid., p. 232.  
2. Ibid., p. 234.  
4. Ibid., p. 133.
This gives us a clear indication that polygamy was, in all these Churches, tolerated. Baeta's research into the activities of these Independent Churches revealed that not a single one spoke against polygamy. The Church of the Twelve Apostles, Baeta tells us, did not impose any restrictions on the number of wives members could have provided that the wives were properly maintained.\(^1\) The Musama Disco Christo Church, the largest Independent Church, practised what he described as "controlled polygamy". Everybody could marry according to God's will, for as an African Church they believed "polygamy is not a moral sin".\(^2\) Marriage contracted had to be recognized by the Spiritual head and when there was any impediment to the marriage his permission was refused. Spiritual guidance could be sought for previous to contracting a marriage to ensure the viability of the union. Akin to the Mission Churches was their attitude to divorce. "No divorce, according to the Church, was allowed for any cause whatsoever".\(^3\) Anyone who disregarded the Church law was immediately excluded from Church membership.

But the Church of the Lord (Aladura), a purely indigenous Church, took a slightly different line. According to this Church, it shall recognize marriage contracted according to the custom of the country, but it shall accept and inculcate upon its members to contract the Christian Marriage.\(^4\) Whether this particular Church permitted polygamy or insisted on Christian monogamy is far from clear. But if the latter assumption is right then it is the only Independent Church known to

\(^1\) On the activities of the Independent Churches in Ghana, I am indebted to Dr Baeta's work from which the following materials have been extracted.

\(^2\) Baeta, op. cit., p. 58.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 59.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 125.
to have insisted on monogamy. In the light of Baeta's account on the attitudes of these Independent Churches to polygamy, we notice similar divergence in emphasis as compared with Webster's account with the Yoruba African Churches. The different emphasis, in the words of Baeta, varied from one of frank, unqualified and enthusiastic approval to only cautious, almost apologetic acceptance, and an uneasy reticence on the whole matter.¹

The only interesting feature about the different attitudes of the Mission Churches as compared with the Independent Churches on polygamy was the choice it afforded new converts. Many polygamous converts in the Mission Churches who had been refused the privilege of full membership were admitted into the Independent Churches, but not all those who could not be granted admission into the Mission Churches found their way into the Independent Churches. However, their toleration of polygamy, as Baeta observed, clearly played an important role. Instances are known where Church workers who had been dismissed from the service of the Protestant Churches, for being guilty of polygamy, had taken up work with the Independent Churches.

During the 1938 International Missionary Conference in Madras, Tambaram, the practice of Christian monogamy in a polygamous society was presented by the African delegates as the greatest social problem affecting the welfare of the people.² Given the option to decide on what was the most important problem of each delegate, there was no doubt that some African delegates might not have chosen polygamy as the greatest problem of the country or

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1. Ibid., p. 133.
Church each represented. But there was a unanimous agreement among delegates on the question of polygamy.

The Rev. B.W. Thompson of the Gold Coast Methodist Church, one of the African delegates, presented a paper in which he briefly outlined the history, growth and achievements of the Church. In conclusion, he drew attention to the fact that the ethics of the Christian Church was "the part of Christianity which the Christian African found hardest". The institution of marriage and home, he maintained, was the greatest moral problem of the West African Church. He proudly emphasised that Ordinance marriage had been enforced on the members but it was also a conventionally accepted practice by the anglicised or literate members of the community. He, however, remarked with regret that among those who disregard the Church law could be found many wealthy Christians with wide commercial and political influence. These men had developed a preference for what he described as "the license and laxity of the non-Christian civilization of the West rather than that pattern which Christ sets for the society which is the Church". And although the Church had always reckoned with the perplexing problem of the admission of the polygamous converts, still the fact that there were Christians who deliberately chose polygamy or lapsed into it was far more distressing.

In the light of this problem, as Thompson endeavoured to outline, the African delegates presented their case as follows:

In most parts of Africa polygamy has been the custom and insistence on monogamy is one of the great bars preventing the entrance of men into the Christian

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1. Ibid., p.10.
2. Ibid., p.13.
3. Ibid., p.15.
Church. Even within the Church there is a grave danger of serious hypocrisy in that men professedly monogamist are secretly carrying on illicit connections. In some areas men brought up in Christian atmosphere are reverting to polygamy and other social customs, and declare that these bring to them no sense of guilt, and pricking of conscience.  

In view of the difficult situation confronting them, in regard to the admission of converts, the delgates asked the question as to whether monogamy is essential to Christianity or is merely a factor in European civilization that can be eliminated from the ethical code of the new Churches? Again whether in the practice of polygamy there is something radically incompatible with a vital faith in Christ and living of a true life in fellowship with Him.

The dilemma of the African Churches, undoubtedly, was fully appreciated by the Madras Conference. Nevertheless, to grant them special concession, as their question implied, would have meant a deliberate betrayal of the long-cherished ideal and universal practice of Christian monogamy. This heritage, the Assembly felt, must be jealously guarded. The Assembly, therefore, expressed its view in a positive way which left the African delegates with no alternative than a return to monogamy.

This is not a matter to be settled by the individual conscience -- the criterion is the will of God for the people whom He has redeemed and purified in Christ. Monogamy is not a mere factor of civilization; it is the vital life of the Church in its own experience; it was taught by the Lord Himself and has Scriptural Authority behind it....It is impossible to conceive of the full development of the personality of the woman

2. Ibid., p. 157.
3. 
under the conditions which obtain in polygamous life, nor indeed that of the man.\(^1\)

If the African delegation indeed anticipated to receive a favourable solution to their problem then their hopes were completely shattered.

In sympathy with the problem, and in order that the African Churches could be helped resolve this seemingly insuperable problem, it was suggested that the International Missionary Council should undertake a research into the subject and the related customs of the African peoples. And in the light of their findings prepare some literature for the guidance of the African Churches.\(^2\)

The shattering pronouncement of the Madras Conference of 1938 did not bring to an abrupt end the debate on the admission of polygamists. About ten years after, the Commission which was appointed by the Methodist Church Synod in 1944 to "investigate all aspects and problems of our Church life and to make recommendations accordingly"\(^3\) also devoted a considerable time to the study of Marriage and Home life. The Commission reviewed all forms of marriages in Ghana, namely, Marriage by Native Custom, Marriage by Native Custom and blessed in Church with the pledge of life-long fidelity; Marriage under the Ordinance of 1884; and Marriage under the Ordinance and in Church (both forms could be combined and performed by a Minister in a Church).\(^4\)

Concerning polygamy, the Commission contended that the Churches' emphasis should be on Christian monogamy and not monogamy for it was evident that

\(^1\) The Life of the Church, Tambaram Series, Vol. IV, 1939, p. 405.
\(^3\) I Will Build My Church, Cape Coast, 1948.
\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 72-73.
whatever factors such as economic conditions or 'civilized' practice may lead to monogamy, they will not lead to stability in marriage, and for that essential union which is the root as well as the flower of the Christian marriage.¹

Delying on the 1931 and 1948 census figures, the Commission tried unconvincingly to establish the fact that the figures for men and women of marriageable age were even and therefore could not justify the assertion that polygamy was practised because women far outnumbered the men.² Granted that the figures were about the same on the national level, the figures in the Churches were quite different. The general noticeable trend among all the Protestant Churches was for the men to outnumber the women at the early stages of the Churches' ministry; but with the growth of the Churches, there was a reversed pattern and the women outnumbered the men. The explanation often offered for this interesting change is that women are more conservative while the men easily lapse by resorting to polygamous practices.

What then was to be the Churches' attitude with regard to a polygamist seeking membership? Through investigations conducted by the Commission it became evident that concessions which had been made in certain cases for the wives of polygamists had been far from helping to establish the expected standard of Christian home life. It therefore recommended that

no woman being the wife of a polygamist shall be admitted to membership by baptism.³

If the Christian monogamous marriage was to be the fundamental

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1. Ibid., p. 76.
2. Ibid., p. 72.
3. Ibid., p. 72.
basis of Christian life, then it was recommended that

those members who enter on marriage shall have their
marriage blessed in Church, if not we cannot regard
them as members of our Church.1

Past experience had shown that attempts to enforce the ruling of
the Church through force had proved destructive, nevertheless the
Commission felt compelled to reaffirm the old policy in strong
terms; for the rules, it was observed, had proved valueless
because

they are inherently false to the true purpose of God
for man and woman.2

The Commission was also confronted with some peculiar
problems on which no conclusions could be drawn. It was very un-
certain as to whether marriage by native custom could be regarded
as adequate for Christians.3 For example, if a man married by
customary law and had his marriage blessed in Church, he could div-
orce his wife in accordance with customary law, yet unless the
Church also recognized the cause of the divorce as genuine, she
did not accept the divorce as granted. If on the other hand the
same man married another woman, the Church could grant the first
wife divorce but customary law did not recognize divorce on the
grounds that a husband had married a second wife. Hence the con-
fusion over what authority should be accepted — the Church or
traditional customary law.

After the Commission had presented its report to Synod
in 1948, it was suggested that a Study Group Retreat should be
organized, as a follow up on the Report, the following year. The

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1. Ibid., p. 72.
2. Ibid., p. 73.
3. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
purpose was to give members the opportunity to study the recommendations and air their views. In April 1949, the Study Group met in Winneba. Among the subjects covered by the Retreat was the conflicting views on marriage and its related problem of polygamy and Church admission.

Members who met to discuss these recommendations expressed divergent views on the admission of polygamists. Some were very uncompromising and disapproved of the admission of polygamists through baptism. But they also disapproved of any attempt to drive them out of the Church. They had to be maintained as adherents so that through the teaching and activities of the Church they would in the course of time realise the full significance of their situation.

With regard to the wives, some felt that since quite often women involved in polygamous marriages were incapable of effecting changes in their marriages, if they pressed for baptism they must be baptised. But a majority of the people did not favour this sympathetic view for, apart from the first wife, extending the same privileges to the others could lead to disension in the Church. The latter group offered the following reasons.

i. That such recognition by the Church of the first wife weakens the strength of the second and third marriages.

ii. That if the Church puts all wives into the same category, a woman may have no 'conscience' on the matter of becoming a second wife.

iii. That if such a ruling affects subsequent wives, they will feel that they are held responsible for any subsequent disharmony in the home.

iv. That if the first wife, desiring to become a Member divorses her husband she makes it possible for the

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usurper to become the lawful wife.

v. Adherents know that in the event of a move on their part to attain Full Membership, it is the first wife that stands the chance of becoming the recognized wife.¹

The uniqueness of the Study group was its indigenous Church member participation, which was a great opportunity for the Church members to discuss their own problems and express their views. In the light of the views expressed it was clear that only a few would have liked the adoption of a milder policy on the subject under review. A majority of the members, however much they appreciated the difficulties of some fellow members, still lent support to the Church rules. A really good sign which marked a step towards a better understanding of the nature of Christian marriage.

The Commission's recommendation that the question of marriage and divorce should be a subject of discussion in the next Inter-District Conference was taken up. Therefore, in the Inter-District Conference of the Methodist Church in West Africa in 1949 at Accra, the question of Christian marriage was put on the agenda.² A paper read by Rev. T.A. Beetham analysed the basic issues thereby providing an atmosphere for constructive discussions. Delegates did not return with concrete answers to their problems but at least a new enlightenment dawned upon them so that they had a better understanding of the problems and how they were to go about them.

One interesting feature of this Conference was its general agreement that there was a tendency among Church members towards a "preference for Native Customary Law",³ but it was not

¹ Ibid., p. 102. (RSF, op. cit., p. 16)
³ Ibid., p. 286.
possible for the Conference to accept customary law as the legal basis of Christian marriage. Bartels, in his view felt to do that would have meant making use of a civil and legal contract which did not enforce monogamy, and which would lead to tension in the minds of Christians who, in time of crisis, might find themselves spiritually bound by the Church to monogamy but legally free to enter into further marriage contracts. 1

The Christian Council statement, in 1950, on the problem of marriage and polygamy which had all these years been discussed on local, national and inter-national levels, appeared to have summed up the discussion. The Council first drew attention to some anomalies which still prevailed in some congregations and then resolved to reaffirm the Churches' position.

We desire to emphasise in the present stage of the life of the Christian Churches in the Gold Coast the essential importance of Christian marriage. We note a tendency, which we deplore, still further to relax "concession" which have been officially recognized in an attempt to meet the opinions of our people on the difficulties involved in a country with a polygamous tradition. We press rather upon the Churches the need for reviewing their present attitude and, by their rules, practices, and sanctions, bringing out more clearly the true nature of Christian marriage. To this end we urge, the Churches in particular, to refuse full membership to "Christian" or heathen polygamists or polygamist's wives. 2

How far the Churches have succeeded in effecting changes in this field will be a topic of another chapter. Suffice to say now that the long and protracted battle on polygamy goes on.

1. Ibid., p. 287.
2. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1950.
The policies and attitudes of the Churches are still maintained inspite of some occasional disregard of Church ruling by some Ministers. And although polygamy is on the gradual decline still it has not favoured the Christian marriage. This should be enough to prepare us towards a study of the contemporary Church in Ghana in the light of the problems here discussed.
CHAPTER FIVE
ATTITUDE TO DEATH AND FUNERAL RITES

Death is an event commonly associated with beliefs and observances of very great emotional significance in both simple and advanced societies. Particularly, it is the climax of the successive stages of a man's life which ushers him into the world of the spirits. Through the medium of death, therefore, an individual enters a new mode of relationship with others and relinquishes his role on earth.

The beliefs and practices surrounding death serve two purposes.

Firstly, they assuage its frightening aspect by fitting it into a coherent system of values, usually, linked with the concept of life after death. Secondly, they rally the support of the extended family and support those who have been bereaved.¹

These two aspects, apparently, play important roles in the event of a death in any Akan family. The funeral rites of the Akan have been described in another chapter and need not be described in any detail here.² But it would be important to note that the Christian Akan preoccupation with the dead and the elaborate funeral rites cannot be appreciated unless the motives are examined within the context of their traditional beliefs about death, the spirit world and life after death.

Death occurs, it is believed, when the spirit leaves the body for good. Whether the cause of the death is attributed to natural events or attributed to the machination of envious relatives, death in any case, is regarded as a transition which introduces a man into the world of the spirits. Despite the emotions of fear, sorrow, anger and despair which are naturally aroused as a basic

² Supra, pp.22-28.
reaction to the death of a loved one, the Akan hardly regard death as an end in itself. By the way and manner they react to death in and through the rites, they demonstrate the belief that death is not the end of man, and that it does not sever the connections with the kin group. Though, as an inevitable natural separation, it may evoke in the bereaved family a general sense of loneliness, yet the bonds continue.

This wide spread belief in life after death greatly influences Akan funeral rites. Through dreams and the pouring of libation, the existence of the ancestral spirits are recognized. Attitude to dreams and their interpretation offer a classic example of how the Akan come to realise the presence of the ancestors. As do many of the tribal groups in Africa, the Akan believe that during sleep the soul wanders about leaving the body under the protection of the spirit. The ancestral spirits, through the medium of dreams, manifest themselves like shadowy flimsy substance, visible and audible but without physical form, to their living relatives.\(^1\) Hence death, which scarcely divides the present life from the next, hardly hinders the ancestors from communicating with their living relatives. By this non-physical contact, therefore, their belief in the existence of the ancestors are reaffirmed and strengthened.

Similarly, pouring of libation, at least in Akan thought, presupposes the existence of the ancestors. In pouring libation the dead who depend on the living for sustenance are given drink to quench their thirst. Not only are they given food and drink periodically by the lineage heads but in the annual festivals, in which all the members of the community are obliged to participate,

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the ancestors are given food and drink and their aid solicited to

gain health, strength and prosperity.¹

Closely related to this way of thought is the Akan belief

in reincarnation. According to their notion of reincarnation,

the soul of a person exists before his birth and may be

the soul of a spirit of a relation or other person already
dead. In life the soul is considered partly as the soul

or spirit of a person partly as a separate being, dis-

tinct from the person who protects him, gives him good or

bad advice, causes his undertakings to prosper or slights

or neglects him.²

Underlying the whole concept of reincarnation is the belief that

the soul is reborn into the clan which it belonged in a previous

existence; a corollary belief to this is that the ancestral spirit,

which a child inherits before it is born into the world of the liv-
ing, determines its talents and temperament while the destiny of

a child is determined by God.³

One other aspect of traditional life which throws further

light on the Christian Akan concern with the dead is the fear of

ancestral spirits. The Akan attitude to the ancestors may be de-
scribed by the psychological term 'ambivalence' a combination of both

fear and affection, attraction and repulsion. There is no doubt

that many Christian Akan have found it difficult to acknowledge

overtly this fact but their attitude to life and death leaves little

room for doubt that fear of the ancestors have a profound hold on

them. The ability of the ancestors to inflict harm or to punish

those whose behaviour does not conform to the tribal mores has a

firm hold on the minds of most people.⁴

¹ R.S. Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti, Oxford, 1927, p.120.
² J.G. Christaller, Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Languages,
⁴ Supra
The widow who feels really vulnerable to her husband's spirit during the funeral is often compelled to undergo certain rites to ward off these influences to which she is susceptible. In the same way the nearer relatives of a deceased person, conscious of the possibility of incurring his displeasure if they fail to satisfy him, are prone to spend large sums of money on the funeral with the aim of disposing of the body in a manner befitting his dignity.

In most cases, the ceremonies are aimed not only at showing respect for the dead but also to facilitate the spirit's journey from here to its proper resting place, and assure the departing soul of the goodwill of the living members so that it would not bring mischief upon them. Beliefs such as these have greatly determined even the Christian Akan attitude to the dead and they are expressed largely through the funeral rites.

It is, therefore, natural that with the advent and growth of the Mission Churches, such beliefs, as briefly described above, found their way into the Churches, for the new converts did not only live in and with this world outlook but also participated in both the pagan funerals of their non-Christian relatives and the funeral ceremonies of the Christian community. And since these beliefs, bound up with their world outlook, could not be easily suppressed, they found expression in the way they performed their Christian funerals.

In examining the policies of the Churches, we note that they took a clear stand on funerals. By the end of the second decade of this century, the Presbyterian Church had already codified a clear cut policy on the attitude her members should adopt with regard to the dead, the disposal of the body and subsequent
funeral rites which in traditional life, we noted, was protracted and quite often consumed a great deal of time and money.

The death of a relative, no doubt, was an occasion which demanded the attention and sympathy of the entire community. The Church, not unlike the general community in this respect, also regarded the death of a member or a neighbour as an event which must evoke sympathy and help from the congregation.¹

But unlike the pagans, whose reaction to death and attitude displayed during the funeral rites was characterised by wailing, lamentation, drunkenness and exhorbitant spending, the Church ruled that:

Christians must not grieve after the manner of those who have no hope.²

Christians conduct at funerals was to be exemplary and to serve as a standard to be followed by the non-Christians. To that effect, therefore, the Church maintained that members at funerals should be sober, refraining from taking or offering alcoholic or intoxicating drink on such occasions and observe simplicity in their expenses on the coffin.³

The Methodist Church showed a marked sympathy in her policy towards Native customs. Thus in her policy on Christian behaviour she maintained that it was impossible to lay down particular rules for the guidance of her members. Many of the traditional customs, she had to admit

are woven into the fabric of the life of the people, and in some cases they may have value in the building

2. Ibid., p. 32.
3. Ibid., p. 32.
up of an African expression of Christian thought and practice.\(^1\)

And where particular customs, which appeared to be repugnant to Christian conscience, were being practised by members it should be possible for the leaders to aim to oppose more by argument and persuasion than by open hostility.\(^2\)

She also emphasised the need of leaders to turn members from darkness into light. But such guidance should be gradual for any method which aimed at helping through the use of force was disapproved. It was therefore added that members should not be severe with people beyond their light and must often be content to lead them, step by step, until they see more clearly.\(^3\)

The extent to which the African clergy influenced the Church's policy on the native customs, unlike the Presbyterian Church policy which was relatively strict, cannot be easily assessed. It would be misleading to think of this liberal policy as conforming to rather than transforming the native customs. Perhaps, it was an attempt to Christianise the traditional culture rather than Africanise Christianity; for it marked a step towards a better understanding of traditional customs, and aimed at employing the good features of Akan customs for the enrichment of the Christian Church.

This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that the Church allowed herself to be impregnated by pagan practices, because all the Churches were uncompromising in their policies.

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1. Methodist Law and Discipline (With Supplementary Rules approved by the Synod of the Methodist Church of the Gold Coast in 1942) Cape Coast, 1942, p.57.
2. Ibid., p.57.
3. Ibid., p.57.
towards funeral rites and customs. All the traditional modes of announcing the death of a neighbour through the firing of guns, and through talking drums as well as through personal messengers were abolished except the latter. They were substituted by the tolling of the Church bells which instantly brought many Christians to the house of mourning to express their sympathy and share in the grief with the bereaved family.

Wailing, drumming and dancing among other features which so often characterised pagan funerals were forbidden.

Superstitious customs...wearing apparel, and jewelry long periods of mourning including confinement and hardship imposed on widows should be avoided.

The Presbyterian Church early in 1919 took a firm stand against dancing whether it was connected with traditional drumming of the local band or a western form of dancing. She was convinced that dancing in any form "led to immorality and looseness" but recommended that those found guilty of dancing should be treated by the process of admonition, then suspension from the Lord's Supper and finally exclusion.

Drumming, dancing and serving alcoholic drinks were strictly forbidden by the Methodist Church authorities. Even though it was admitted that dancing played an important role in the life of the people yet they ordered members not to take part in dancing or witness indecent fetish drumming and dancing. Moreover, "the practice of drumming at wakes, being conducive to intemperance", was also not permitted. This ruling applied to "Ball-room dancing" which had no fetish associations; it was discouraged and not permitted

1. RPP., op. cit., p.32.
2. Synod Minutes and Reports of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, Accra, 1919.
3. Law and Discipline, op. cit., p.58.
to be held either on Church grounds or elsewhere in aid of Church funds. Concerning ball-room dancing the Church noted as follows:

Whilst no one shall be excluded from the Membership of the Church merely for ball-room dancing, we believe that it lends itself to practices which are detrimental to moral and spiritual welfare and is therefore strongly disapproved. Members by their presence subject themselves to strong temptation which may lead to disciplinary action by the Church and they are urged for their own welfare and as an example to others not to attend.¹

It must, however, be emphasised that the prohibition on drumming and dancing, and drinking of liquors at funerals by the Church, granted that it helped to maintain the Christian identity in a predominantly pagan community, was completely alien to African way of life and expression; the insistence on the law made hypocrites of some of the members of the Church. Contributing to a Conference on "Christianity and African Culture" organised by the Christian Council, in 1955, Nketia, a lecturer in music and drama, expressed his views in this manner:

It is the African way to celebrate funerals in the context of much singing, drumming and dancing.²

He further argued that dancing, which the Church had associated with immorality, could not be confined to any one particular kind of situation, for according to Nketia,

It is merely a form of expression and may be usefully employed in rejoicing, in mourning, in worship.³

Reviewing the policy of the Methodist Church on drumming and dancing in the past, Bartels concluded that the problem of the Church was

1. Ibid., p.58.
3. Ibid., p.36.
not

the possibility of employing African drumming, dancing and music with their captivating harmony and rhythm, for the enrichment of the Church's worship but the difficulty of dissociating from the body of customs which had permitted human sacrifices and other heathen practices.¹

The impression one gets from this remark of Bartels is that there was an underlying fear of being accused by the pagan community of committing the same mistake; for even at a time when all forms of dancing and drumming could easily be divested of all heathen associations, the Churches were still very reluctant of making any changes in policy.

Christians who were denied the privilege of expressing themselves through participation in drumming and dancing at funerals, compensated for this deprivation by augmenting the place of singing. Singing of Christian hymns and mourning songs, accompanied at times by musical instruments, played an important role in Christian funerals. Naturally, not all could control their innate and irresistible tendency to express themselves through drumming and dancing for cases are known of complete disregard of the Church policy.

Not long after the Presbyterian Church had codified her laws, and before the Methodist Church could re-enforce her policy on dancing in the 1942 Supplementary rules, a local minister reported of the ease with which the youth in his congregation participated in the local band.

The so-called native band "Abaha" is ruining many of our young men and girls. The band is not played in the day time only, but at night without light. Even the heathen

speak ill of it...Owing to this many of our young men and girls are neither Christians nor heathens.¹

The very nature of the Church policy was a deterrent to the ministers and elders who were desirous to visit the places of dancing to see what really took place and, where possible, discourage Church members from participation. Fear of being accused by the pagan community as being interested in the dances loomed large in the minds of the leaders, hence the reluctance to go anywhere near these dancing places. Without fear of detection interested members of the Church joined in with the pagan dancers.

In 1936, the Presbyterian Church formulated a uniform policy on funeral rites for her Twi and Ga members of the Church but, in actual effect, it applied to all members alike. After years of controversy over the differences which existed between the two tribal groups on their funeral ceremonies the following basis was accepted:

1. No drinkables—(this referred to alcoholic drinks)
2. No cloth of the deceased torn up.
3. Nothing to be buried with the corpse.
4. Opposed mixing with heathen customs.
5. Bed of the deceased removed after the burial.
6. No parading of thanks of sympathizers. Make announcement in the Chapel or in press.
7. No prayer before wailing.²

The congregations, in principle, accepted these rules as governing every Christian funeral ceremony. But the prevailing practices in the local congregations did not conform to the Church's policy as some of the aspects of the rites about to be discussed in the

¹ Synod Minutes and Reports, 1927.
following pages will seek to demonstrate.

Far more positive was the Churches' disapproval of large expenditure of money at funerals. The desire of a bereaved family to make a grand occasion of the funeral from motives other than satisfying the dead, often led to financial burdens being placed upon the family. In most cases money had to be borrowed and after the funeral the cost of the funeral was borne by all the members of the family.

As the amount of money spent on Christian funerals rose with the years, the Churches had to take a stand on spending at funerals. In 1926, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church expressed concern about

the deplorable fact that expenses at funerals were too heavy and unbecoming in Christians, especially in connection with drink.¹

It was, therefore, agreed that a general limitation of funeral expenses, especially on drinks should be imposed. However, neither before nor after the Synod had expressed concern about funeral expenses was anything laid down to guide members in their spending. It was left with families concerned to be discrete and exercise great moderation in their spending.

The Methodist Church, known for her peculiar attitude to drink, was rather more positive on her policy on extravagance in general and drinking at funerals in particular.

Extravagant expenditure of money on Baptism, Weddings and Funerals and especially expenditure of money on alcohol on these occasions is entirely contrary to the Mind of Christ. Our people should be exhorted strongly to oppose the customs which demand these excesses and

¹ Synod Minutes and Reports, 1926.
Ministers are advised to refuse to attend weddings where alcohol is provided for the guests.¹

It's quite probable that the above rule had little or no effect on members for soon after this the Church noted with concern the general deterioration of her members which was the result of the constant dangers to the moral, social and religious life of the Gold Coast caused by the use of intoxicating liquors.²

In an attempt to remedy the situation, the Church ruled that in the light of this danger and

because of the intemperate and wasteful indulgence at weddings and funerals the use of intoxicating liquors by our members on such occasions is forbidden.³

Unlike the Presbyterian Church, strong sanctions were taken against members found guilty of drunkenness or engaged in the liquor trade.

When a member is found guilty of drunkenness he shall be suspended for at least three months.

Any member engaged in the sale of intoxicating liquor shall be expelled from membership.

Any office bearer so disciplined, shall not on reinstatement be allowed at once to resume office of the Church.⁴

1. Law and Discipline, op. cit., p.10.
2. Ibid., p.58. ——"It is plain that the continued use of alcoholic drinks, whether prepared in this country or imported from abroad, causes heavy losses to the community. These are shown 'in deterioration of character, impairment of health and efficiency, discord in domestic life, public disorder, the creation and intensification of poverty, economic loss and the neglect and suffering of children. The spiritual quality of human life is adversely affected by drinking habits and the evidence that the drink evil militates most potentially against the Kingdom of God is manifold'." cf, I Will Build My Church, p.118.
3. Law and Discipline, p.58.
4. Ibid., p.58.
A cursory look at the Liquor Traffic and the adverse influence it had on the people of the Gold Coast and her neighbouring countries would partly explain why the Church had to adopt such a rigid policy. Statistics collected in 1918 showed that while there was a remarkable fall in the importation of liquor to some of the West African countries, that of the Gold Coast was in the increase. In 1902, a member of the West African section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, reviewing the whole liquor traffic, noted the following two handicaps which had made the abolition of the trade hardly possible:

The Mohamadan preacher does not leave a stone unturned to combat drunkenness in any form, and to a large extent he succeeds. The European missionary also denounces drunkenness. But he is terribly handicapped (1) by the European trader, about one-fifth of whose total trade consists in the importation of freshly distilled liquor, (2) by the European Government who, tacitly encourage a traffic without which their whole administrative machinery would become temporarily paralysed, seeing that from 45 per cent to 75 per cent of the revenue of their Colonies derived from this trade.

We have no means of checking the genuineness of these figures; but even when they are taken at the face value there is no doubt that the trade had proved profitable to both the white merchants and the Colonial administrators hence their reluctance to legalise against liquor importation although the demoralising effect of the liquor on the peoples was widely known.

1. Spirits imported to the Gold Coast from the United Kingdom, increased from 80,707 imperial gallons in 1915 to 106,527 gallons in 1916; and from the United States they increased from 874,735 gallons in 1915 to 1,123,637 gallons in 1916. Figures from the Annual Report of the United Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1918.
In a letter from a chief, Sir Ofori Atta, a member of the Provincial Council, in 1929, to the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, attention was drawn to the serious state of affairs occasioned by the liquor traffic. He stressed the need of helping to suppress an evil which was undermining the moral, and spiritual welfare of the people with whom the Committee was concerned.

In the same year, the Provincial Council (of the Eastern Province) expressed its condemnation of the liquor trade in a resolution in which it deplored "the importation and sale of European alcoholic drinks as one of the ills introduced among Africans". The Council further pledged itself to bring about a "gradual discontinuation or stoppage of the traffic", and also appealed to members of the Council to endeavour to "make the terms of the resolution known to the members of his state, and to see that the same is respected by them". The Council further recommended the distribution of copies of the resolution to the British Government and to the British and local newspapers.

Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Missionary Churches, in 1929, held a Conference in London during which the whole issue of the liquor trade was thoroughly reviewed. It was decided that a deputation represented by all the Missionary societies should be sent to the Colonial Office. About the same time the newly formed Christian Council of the Gold Coast, consisting of all the major Protestant Churches, presented a similar Memorandum to His Excellency the Governor who later set up a Commission of Inquiry.

1. A letter from Sir Nana Ofori Atta, dated 7th January, 1929, forwarded through the Scottish Mission in the Gold Coast to the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland.

2. Church of Scotland Annual Reports on Foreign Missions, Edinburgh, 1929.
into the liquor trade.¹

The result of these consultations was the promulgation of an Ordinance which took effect from 1931. The terms of the Ordinance demanded that there should be a 10 per cent reduction in liquor importation to the Gold Coast for a ten year period.² It was, therefore, hoped that by 1939, there would be a total abolition of the trade. But things did not happen according to the expectation of the Churches and other sympathisers in Britain; for in 1939 a new law was passed which permitted the importation of 150,000 imperial gallons of gin in 1940 to the Gold Coast, this was believed to be three times as much as the actual import in 1939.³ This shattered any hope of total abolition of the liquor trade for which it had been earnestly hoped. The Government's argument was that total abolition would encourage illicit distillation of the liquor which, undeniably, had been in process long before the decision was taken.

Space would not permit us to go into further details about the history of the liquor trade and the extent of its demoralising effect on the people of the Gold Coast and her neighbours. But it would be appropriate to state that the liquor trade and drinking at funerals which the Churches attacked with all seriousness was only one aspect of the entire problem.

Despite all the efforts to abolish the trade, it was rather surprising to note that, little seemed to have been said by the Presbyterian Church in her policy on liquor. The policy on drinking formulated during the war was never revised. The only probable explanation was that there was no compelling need to impose any

¹. Ibid., 1929.
². Ibid., 1940.
³. Ibid., 1941.
severe policy on drinking on her members since the instability in trade and the general insecurity of the war period might have affected the trade.

But the Methodist Church, whose membership was mainly scattered on and near the coast,\(^1\) may have been severely affected by the liquor trade. It would be necessary to note that the coastal peoples had a monopoly of the trade as the middlemen between the white merchants and the people of the interior. And the stable conditions after the war offered an opportunity for the resumption of the liquor trade. Apart from the general attitude of the Methodists to liquor, there was little wonder that the Methodist Church, whose members might have been over indulgent in the profitable trade, while some others had probably fallen victim to the influence of liquor, was compelled to tighten her policy on drinking and the sale of liquor.

Statistical evidence, as far as I know, is lacking for a realistic assessment of the extent to which Christians were involved in the excesses on drinks during funerals. In 1950, two funeral expenses recorded by Busia in a social survey were £85,14,10 and £87,12, respectively.\(^2\) According to his analysis of the items bought for the funeral, about £22 in the first funeral, and £30 in the second were spent on drinks which showed a large percentage. A second record of funeral expenses collected by Noel Smith, in 1968, was the result of seventy funerals he observed.\(^3\)

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Out of the sixty-six who responded to his questionnaire, the cost of four was more than £1000 each while another twenty-three were noted to have cost less than £50 each. But like Busia no indication was specifically given as to which of the people were Christian. Thus in both examples no clue is offered us with regard to Christian funeral expenses particularly on drinks. The vast difference in the amount of money spent in the four funerals as compared with the other twenty-three presents a very remarkable contrast but no reasons are given for the excessively high cost of the four funerals. The status of the four people remain unknown to us but that they were important personalities in the community is a probability which can hardly be ruled out. It is generally true that in traditional society the status of a person often determined the nature of the funeral. No family, however extravagant, would have bothered to conduct the funeral befitting the dignity of a king for a deceased relative whose status was nothing more than a commoner. In the same way, it would be unheard of for even a Christian Chief to be treated after his death as a commoner. Hence the difficulty of determining the extent to which Christians could have been involved in the excesses.

One other problem of the Churches was the difficulty of divesting the funeral rites of members of all un-Christian influences so that the funeral could be labelled as genuinely Christian. The extent to which they could dictate was very limited for their duty, in most cases, was to assist the extended family whose duty it was to bury their dead.

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Desire to show off or to excel in the performance of the funeral celebration might have probably contributed to the extravagant spending at funerals. But motives such as these were always subordinate to the basic desire of relatives to bury their dead in a manner befitting his dignity. The main factor to be reckoned with here was the underlying fear that improper care and burial could lead to incurring the displeasure of the departing spirit. Hence the readiness with which relatives either borrowed or gave out money for the sake of providing a proper funeral.

In order to check extravagance, the Churches accepted the responsibility of helping with the funerals of their members; and by this personal participation, they could ensure that expenditure was controlled and moderation on amount of money spent on drinks and other items was observed.

Particularly vexing to the Churches was the practice of throwing articles into the coffin for burial, a custom referred to in our survey on traditional funeral ceremony.¹ It was a common practice for friends and relatives to offer special gifts for the burial of the dead. This custom, as it seemed superstitious, was disapproved of by the Churches and members were discouraged from practising it.

Superstitious customs, wearing apparel and jewelry or church membership cards deposited into the coffin and killing of sheep connected thereto is forbidden.²

In spite of the Churches' incessant admonition on members to refrain from indulging in superstitious or heathen practices, the custom of depositing articles in a coffin remained a common practice.

¹ Supra, p.26.
² RPF., op. cit., p.32.
Many Christian families disregarded the policy of the Churches and continued to put into the coffin of the dead articles among which may be mentioned,

a piece of cloth or money and often the Bible, Hymn Book, Baptismal or Confirmation card of the deceased.¹

Noel Smith produced the following list, after his survey on seventy funerals, which were given to him as reasons for the practice of depositing articles in the coffin of the deceased:

(1) The deceased needs money and clothing on the journey to the ancestors.
(2) To prevent the deceased from haunting the living.
(3) To please the ancestors.
(4) To assuage the anger of the deceased if intimate personal possessions were to come into the hands of others.²

There is only a remote possibility for the abolition of this practice. Two reasons may here be adduced. First, the inability of members to understand the incompatibility of the practice on one hand and the Christian faith on the other, for the reasons recorded by Noel Smith have a profound hold on them and cannot be easily eradicated from their minds. Secondly, the closure of a coffin has always been an indisputable right of the nearer relatives of a deceased person and no African minister, however ignorant of traditional customs, will ever intrude upon the rights of the bereaved family. Thus the very nature of the custom and the related rules have, to a large extent, deterred the Churches from having any success in the abolition of this aspect of the funeral rites.

If the practice of depositing articles in a coffin occasioned much concern for the Churches, with regard to Funeral

². Ibid., p.295.
and Burial Services they succeeded in determining how the services must be conducted. Christian burial has had a positive attraction for the non-Christian members of the community. The general practice was for the Minister to perform the rites with a full service conducted according to the burial liturgy of the Church.¹ When the service was held in a Church the building was, on many occasions, packed to capacity and where the building could accommodate the entire lot of people, all those who had to stay out including the non-Christians were all encouraged to participate in the service. If for hygienic reasons the coffin could not be taken to the Church then the service was held in the mourning house in a similar way. In all situations, however, the ministers were offered the opportunity of exhorting the crowd by appealing to their conscience through the word of God.

But not all the members enjoyed the privilege of being taken to the Church or having the funeral service conducted for them. Christians who committed suicide, unless the action was the result of a deranged mind, were refused full burial rites and buried as excluded members.² Similarly dying children of parents guilty of backsliding with the exception of those who kept close to the Church and paid their pledge accordingly, were refused the burial service.³ Lapsed members, members under suspension and those who failed to pay their pledge or at the time of death were in arrears, were also refused the funeral service as a deterrent to others.

It was later detected that some local ministers often disregarded the policy of the Churches by charging fees in the case of lapsed members, and demanded the payment of any sum of money due

¹. RPP., p.32.
². Ibid., p.32.
³. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1919.
by the bereaved family if the deceased had any arrears. On payment of the money the minister conducted the funeral service. It became an acceptable practice for both the Christians and the non-Christians who, on behalf of their deceased relative, took advantage of the practice to ensure that the deceased person was treated as one in full communion.

What led to the introduction of this practice is one of speculation and conjecture. Opportunity for financial gain cannot be ruled out. Sympathy for the bereaved family could also be a contributory factor. With regard to the bereaved family, there was a tendency to regard the refusal of the Church to bury the deceased relative as a humiliation for the entire family. It was, therefore, natural that many of the bereaved families readily paid any amount due as arrears on behalf of their deceased relatives or anything the minister charged before conducting the service so that what would appear in the eyes of the public a disgrace to the family, could be avoided.

It took a long time before this anomalous practice came under heavy attack for it was only in 1950 that the Christian Council of the Gold Coast resolved to discourage

the practice of charging fees on behalf of the deceased member who in his life time did not maintain his connection with the Church.¹

Any such persons, it recommended, should be refused a Christian funeral service. Surprising however, no mention appeared to have been made in annual Church reports concerning the practice. The ministers who should have raised the matter were themselves guilty of condoning rather than insisting uncompromisingly on the stipulated

¹. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1950.
policy of the Church. Therefore, while the policy was that members whose behaviour did not conform to the Churches' standard of conduct should be refused Christian burial service, local practices were in most cases different. It was, therefore, essential that an independent body like the Christian Council should criticise the practice and also endeavour to discourage it. Like the problem with the Swearing of oath, in 1912, and the observance of Thursday as a sacred day in Ashanti, in 1935,¹ which demanded the concerted effort of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches in conjunction with the then Governor of the Colony to remedy the situation, the practice under review had also assumed a national dimension which made it very difficult to combat it from within the local congregation, hence the need for an external force.

The burial, which usually followed immediately after the funeral service in the Church or at home, was another moving spectacle. Customarily, a long procession led by the minister and the choir and followed by a large proportion of the people who had attended the funeral service made their way to the cemetery where the body was buried. Occasionally other extra rites, motivated by beliefs about the dead spirits, were performed on the night after the burial. Busia describes one of such rites as follows:

at the dead of night, another procession expressing very different beliefs, may follow the widower who carries a live-coal to the sea shore for the ceremonial bath to chase away evil spirits. The widow who may be literate or illiterate, goes through a series of other rites and taboos to avert misfortune. The sacrifice of a sheep to the dead may be followed by a 'wake-keeping'

when mourners sit up all night singing Christian hymns; but next morning, libations are poured to the dead.¹

The sympathy evoked on such occasions was nothing particularly new to the non-Christians since they also felt obliged to express their sympathy at the death of a neighbour. But the procession, the singing of mourning songs, the peace and solemnity which characterised the burial of a Christian was among the features which, in most cases, inspired many non-Christians to seek admission into the Church so that they could be honoured with the same or similar burial rites. Ministers were, therefore, not surprised that annual reports abounded with remarks about the desire to be buried by the Church as one of the reasons why people sought for baptism or admission into the Church.²

It was not always that extra funeral rites were performed in secrecy at the dead of the night, for those who, during their life time, were members of an association or a Fraternity (like Oddfellows Lodge), had extra burial rites performed for them after the minister had concluded the burial service. The same could be said of Christians of the Royal House who, by virtue of their status in the community, could not be buried in a public cemetery. But ceremonies connected with the latter group has not received marked approval from the Churches since quite often the privilege was abused. As an exception to the latter on the privileges granted to people of the Royal House, a Methodist minister, in 1939, reported to Synod an incident unprecedented in the entire history of the Church. It was the burial of a Paramount chief, Nana Kwabena Fori, unaccompanied, however, by the congregation or choir. His

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account was as follows:

At three o'clock in the afternoon the entire Church and congregation and the Chiefs with their retinues moved in a solemn procession from the house of mourning, with dignified order and quietness to the Church, the choirs of F. and G. and the catechists and minister marching before a great concourse of people in the Church. After the close the crowd moved out of the Church, leaving the royal coffin guarded by armed carriers in the dimly lighted Church...Three of our leaders and the minister got out from bed at dead of night and joined the guard and special royal officers. There was not a soul in the streets; but we avoided all the frequented ways on our way to the vault. It was simple service of prayer and commital and the grand historic man was laid to rest. Nana Kwabena Fori was a great father of his people and neither friends nor opponents can ever forget his noble accomplishment for his people.¹

With the exception of this particular example in point, the general practice was for the minister to conduct both the funeral and burial services in the Church and then leave the body with the members of the Royal House for burial. It thus offered them the opportunity for the practice of all the forbidden customs, thereby undermining the importance of the Christian rites which preceded the traditional rites. Where it was found impossible for the Church to control matters, it was suggested that ministers refuse to conduct the service.²

The extent to which ministers co-operated in maintaining the policy of the Churches is far from clear. And its quite probable that the personal emotional involvement in the funeral by some ministers and partly because of the status of the deceased in the community often influenced them to relax in the policy.

1. Annual Report of the Methodist Church, 1939, quote from Parsons, op. cit., p.82.
2. RPP., p.32.
The Commission appointed by the Methodist Church to investigate all aspects and problems of the Church life, claimed to have come across incidents which revealed that some of the ministers had been very lax in the implementation of the policy of the Church. It, therefore, recommended the reaffirmation of the old policy on funerals when it suggested that:

Only Full Members should have a full Christian Burial, that is a service at the Church and at the grave side, and a Thanksgiving service later.¹

For the baptised adherents and those in trial who did not attend instruction classes, it recommended that a service at the graveside should be conducted and the bereaved family consoled afterwards but it disallowed Thanksgiving service for such people.

Another aspect of the funeral rites which presented so many problems for the Churches was the Memorial or Thanksgiving Service. Memorial service, a subsequent funeral rite performed in remembrance of the dead and in grateful thanks to God, was a common feature in the Christian community. The non-Christian community observed the 15th and 40th days after the funeral as well as the anniversary of the death as memorial days.²

What the Churches objected to was not the fact that Christians remembered with thankfulness the departure of a member to his eternal rest, for all the Churches had Remembrance Sundays on which prayers were offered to God for the host of the faithful and triumphant saints which God had called to Himself. Instead the objection was to what a minister described as the old custom of celebrating the funeral of a "man who died 6-10 years ago".³

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¹. I Will Build My Church, Cape Coast, 1948.
². Supra, p.28.
³. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1918.
Speaking particularly about the attitude of the women to such funeral celebrations, he remarked on their complete involvement in the celebrations without any sense of guilt.

The custom of the Church was to set aside a special Sunday (often the last Sunday of the month) on which the members of the deceased family and friends, clad in mourning clothes, came to worship with the congregation and to express their thanks to God and the congregation for the part they played during the funeral ceremony. This was often followed by a period of mourning in the house during which drinks were served and donations received from friends and sympathisers who, for reasons of distance or other commitments, could not participate in the funeral ceremony.

According to the Presbyterian Church the Memorial Service was to conclude the funeral rites:

Taking part in heathen customs, like the renewal of the customs of mourning after one week or three weeks, and the killing of sheep connected therewith was forbidden.¹ The bereaved family, it was suggested, "could sit down after three days to regulate matters".² Breach of this rule was punishable by suspension from the Lord's supper for three consecutive occasions.

That there were some members who could not dispense with their heritage for the sake of Church rules was echoed by a minister who, in 1922, reported to Synod the attitude portrayed by his members to funeral rites:

Many of the young men of this congregation do not entirely abstain from heathen customs such as funeral

1. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1918.
2. Synod Minutes and Reports, 1922.
rites...and other country festivals. They do not consider it to be any bad act, but simply call it "amanne" (custom).¹

For some members the place of custom was foremost in their priorities and they saw to it that their customary duties were performed regardless of Church policy. In 1939, for instance, the Queen Mother of Ashanti decided to perform a royal funeral in remembrance of the departed members of the Royal House. The Church leaders were surprised to realise that nearly all the Christian women were willing to forgo the Churches' policy to participate in the funeral celebration. For before the Church leaders could approach the Queen Mother to grant permission for the Christian women to be exempted from the rites, (which she readily granted) many of the women had already cut their hair in preparation for the funeral.²

Fear of being suspended from taking the Lord's Supper might have, undoubtedly, deterred some of the women from expressing publicly their desire to participate in the celebrations; and granted that the Queen Mother had refused to exempt the Christian women no one could rule out the possibility that many of the women might have participated in the funeral celebrations. The only alternative left with the Churches was to suspend all the women who participated in the funeral, a measure which the Churches would have found inadvisable to take.

Inability of the Churches to control these subsequent funeral rites became obvious when, in 1950, a long Memorandum

¹ Synod Minutes and Reports, 1931.
² Synod Minutes and Reports, 1931.
issued by the Christian Council on Memorial Service resolved;

(1) The giving of donation by friends to members of the bereaved families should take place on a day other than Sunday. This practice already obtains in some part of the country and can be widely recommended. It would relieve the obligation of paying their turn of donations on that Sunday and would consequently remove the compelling urge to see the relatives seen already.

(2) The conduct of service should not interfere with the body of the worship. The names may be mentioned during the prayers and a relevant prayer incorporated accordingly. If a word is necessary it would come before the announcement, and finish with a verse of a hymn. We think the present practice by which the service takes place after the Sermon distracts the value and purpose of the worship, and worshippers leave with a sense of a social performance rather than of a dedication of life to God.

(3) Pastors should explain to their congregation the Christian motives behind Thanksgiving with a view to eradicating superstitious beliefs.

(4) We would discourage the practice of charging fees on behalf of a deceased member who in his life time did not maintain his connection with the Church. Any such person is not entitled to a Christian Burial Service.

(5) We unanimously disrecommend the wearing of special uniforms by the deceased relatives.¹

Before the local congregations could study the resolution and to air their views, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church adopted the resolution. This action led to great disquiet in the Church; and the Ga congregations, in particular, resisted any efforts to implement the recommendations of the Council for they felt that the

¹ Synod Minutes and Reports, 1950.
Resolution had not only been couched in strong terms but it was also not appropriate to the local situation. A missionary leader viewing the whole matter with great concern regarded it as "another danger which the Church must combat vigorously for the Funeral in its modern form of Memorial Service was a source of temptation for many Christians".¹

This matter was raised again in the 1953 Synod of the Presbyterian Church, but the leaders stood firm and made the final ruling on the Memorial Service. It was agreed that the funeral service conducted in the Chapel and at the graveside on occasions of death and burial were enough. The Synod, therefore, resolved:

The Memorial Service in the Presbyterian Church be abolished forthwith.

That the present decision closes further discussions of the subject at future Synods.

The excepting National Memorial Services the Presbyterian Church shall not participate in Memorial Services conducted by other Churches.

That a copy of the Resolution should go to the Christian Council.²

Along with the Resolution the Church condemned the special uniform worn by the members of the bereaved family. A menace which, it was urged, all the Churches must rally to remove from the Church life. The Church, therefore, succeeded in putting a stop to the long controversy on Memorial Services but the practice continued in a slightly different form in the local congregations and continues today.

What we have so far done is to outline the Churches' policy

¹. Report of the Ewe Presbyterian Church, 1941-1949.
². Synod Minutes and Reports, 1953.
and attitude to the standard of conduct at funerals, lodging of articles in the coffin, funeral and burial services as well as the subsequent Memorial and Thanksgiving Services. It became clear that although the Churches maintained a strict policy and did not compromise, still the prevailing local practices were indicative of the extent to which Church rules were disregarded. The matter became the more difficult when ministers appeared to have taken sides on some issues with the congregation.

The question which suggests itself now is—to what extent has the Churches succeeded in effecting changes in the funeral rites of members who are profoundly influenced by their traditional beliefs and practices? The Churches can certainly claim that the increasing concern expressed about the way members mourned or pre-occupied themselves with the dead, in the past, has diminished. Protracted formalities are rarely resorted to and wearing of special mourning cloths have lost much significance. Cost of funeral, which came under heavy attack from the Churches, is now under control.

Many people are very optimistic that with the growth of the Churches and with the continued nurture of the members, coupled with the rapid infiltration of western values and attitudes, things would take a better turn. But in spite of the impact of scientific and technological developments and its associated rapid social changes, the Akan world outlook has not been profoundly changed. Hence the funeral practices continue with the exception of a few outward transformations.

The Churches' teaching on death and after life has made very little appreciable effect on the members. For one thing, the Christian doctrine on death and after death remains a matter of faith and generally speaking, incapable of scientific demonstration.
Jesus proclaims that there is life after death, and on many occasions promises everlasting life to those who believe in Him. The Bible abounds with references to the plain fact that it is only through belief in what Jesus has done for mankind that believers have the blessed hope of life after death. Further more the Christian claims to believe the truth of Jesus' words in the fact of His being raised from the dead.

St. Paul compares the resurrection bodies of believers to the full grain of wheat; and the earthly bodies to the seed from which the full wheat germinates. The husk is sloughed off but a believer's inner life is formative of his life after death. According to Paul, therefore, if Christians are Christ's they shall undergo an instantaneous change whereby they shall pass, without dying, to the same incorruptible state as those of the dead who are raised to life everlasting.

The Christian Creed also holds that believers shall be the same yet not quite the same. The Creed bids Christians to believe in the "resurrection of the body and the life everlasting". The promise of the resurrection of the body is, therefore, one of the mysterious and the most important of all the Christian promises. Christian beliefs are, therefore, based on the Bible, and the words of Jesus and the testimonies of the followers are abiding witness to the truth of life after death for all believers of Jesus.

What then happens to the believer at death? The general belief is that the earthly body of his quickened spirit is dissolved and his spirit returns to God who gave it. It is this belief which enables a Christian to echo the cry "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord," since for him, death, in what

1. Apostle's Creed.
2. Psalm 118, 17.
ever form it may come, is only a transition from one life to another and from one calling to a higher.

Christians can at best visualize it now only through a glass darkly: but they look with confidence to the life to which the servants of God on this earth were destined and designed from the beginning.

Now I know in part; but then shall I know even so also I am known....they shall serve Him and they shall see His face.¹

This belief, and the very limited nature of the knowledge it provides, leaves many questions unanswered for many Christians particularly the Christian Akan. Questions about the resurrection of the body, the present state of the dead and all that is involved in the interim period until the day of judgment.

At this point of our discussion the Akan philosopher parts company with the Christian faith and belief about life after death. The Akan notion of life after death, unlike that of the Christian, holds that the dead remain no less active in their new environment than the living. They participate in the day to day activities of the living relatives. Moreover, it is firmly hoped that the departed ancestors would eventually return through rebirth into the family to which they belonged in a previous life hence the unsystematic notion of reincarnation.

The Christian doctrine leaves a vacuum partially explained, (between after death until the final judgment), about the activities of the dead. But the Akan doctrine, however unorthodox it may appear to the Christian Churches, provides a crude answer for the interim period as part of the life cycle of—birth, puberty, death and rebirth. This notion of a cyclic process of man has infiltrated

¹. 1 Cor. 13, 12 and Rev. 22, 5-4.
into the Christian Churches and is so embedded in the minds of some of the members that they influence, if not determine, the way and manner their funeral rites are performed.

I would not like to give the impression that I know the solution to the problem. But there is every reason to believe that the achievements of the Churches so far has been the ability to compel members, through sanctions, to accept a set pattern of conduct which should govern funerals. The core of the problem, as I see it, lies not in outward formalities but deep down in their philosophy of life. The Christian Akan is now faced with a dual set of values. Either he rejects his own and accepts the Christian values or aims at syncretizing both values and emerge with a new form altogether. Such a synthesis, if it can be practicably achieved, I am afraid, would be as injurious to the Church as complete rejection of her new values. The whole Akan world outlook needs drastic orientation but if any worthwhile changes are anticipated there would also be a necessity to reinterpret Church dogma in terms of Akan world outlook instead of its present traditional Greek formulations.
CHAPTER SIX

THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

We began our survey by describing, in some detail, the Akan traditional world-view, institutions and customs. Some of the Protestant Churches' attitudes to these beliefs and practices were also examined. Concerning the former we saw that the Akan supernatural world-view consisted of a hierarchy of spirits and spiritual forces. First, in relation to man were the little folk, the next level of the hierarchy of spiritual forces were the ancestors who were followed by the Abosom; furthest removed from the human plane yet directly accessible to human invocation was God, the Supreme Being.

The clan and the spirit (ntoro) were noted as the two basic principles which governed the Akan social order. The clan conferred on a child his status in society while the spirit determined his personality. Marriage was described as a contract between two kin groups. Through the union a firm and permanent mutual bond was established between the two families which also offered the couple some sort of security within the wider community. Significant in the life of a child was the birth rites or outdoor ceremony for it initiated him into the privileges of the tribe or clan. Similarly, the related puberty rites initiated a girl into the status of adulthood and conferred on her the rights and obligations of an active member of the community, above all these puberty rites gave her recognition by the community as a medium for the perpetuation of the clan.

With regard to funeral rites, it became apparent that belief in the ancestral spirits and their profound influences on the living members, to a large extent, determined the nature of
a funeral ceremony. All the complex ritual activities were to the end that the deceased person would be contented in his new state. The same motive underlay subsequent funeral rites for the deceased. Since this concluding chapter is intended to examine the Church today, it would be appropriate that before we sum up the Churches' policies and attitudes to these customs and beliefs, a cursory look be taken at the factors which have contributed to effect changes throughout the social set-up of the Akan and the extent to which the current social changes have either helped or undermined the efforts of the Churches to maintain the ideal Christian life and witness among the Akan.

Quite a variety of factors have contributed to the present rapid social changes in Africa. But of special interest to our survey are the factors contributing to changes in West Africa as outlined by Dr Little. He put forward the following: Cash economy, education which improves the social standing of a person, the attraction of the towns as centres of civilization, an escape from local taxes and court fees, unhappy home life and migration to the towns as a result of hunger. It would not be possible to examine all these factors in detail, we will therefore examine some of them and see in what capacity they have contributed to changes in the society.

The ideal basis of the Akan society, it will be recollected, is the Abusua system, the religious, political and economic unit which is loyally guarded by laws and customs. In this system, members enjoyed some security and a feeling of belonging to a group. So that the economic and social obligations of kinship such as those

connected with funerals, marriages and divorce as well as political allegiance kept alive peoples loyalty and attachment to their closely knit communities.

This ideal set-up, unfortunately, could not be maintained for long for with the advent of Western ideas and values, and the introduction of money economy, among other things, the traditional structure began to disintegrate.

The advent of the cocoa industry, at the close of the last century, was a significant phenomenon in the life of the nation, because it offered far reaching opportunities for economic development and aroused a new enthusiasm in many prospective farmers to expand their cocoa plantations. The cocoa industry accounts for the introduction of a number of features which were alien to the life and soul of the family. To note but a few, tribal ownership of land was broken when cocoa growing became a monopoly of independent farmers who no longer depended on tribal security based on mutual obligation and kinship solidarity. A latent outcome of the new feature was frequent litigations over property and cocoa wealth. Busia is said to have been succinctly told by a farmer who had realised the grave situation created by the cocoa industry: "Cocoa see abugua, paepae megva mm." —(Cocoa destroys kinship, and divides blood relations.)

Closely related to the above problem was the introduction of money economy and the subsequent formation and rapid growth of urban centres, characterised by a heterogeneous and cosmopolitan outlook. These urban centres had great attraction for many people.


from within and without the country, partly in search of work
which the towns appeared to provide and partly for the advantages
which town life offered as compared with the unsophisticated con-
ditions in the villages. Consequently problems like stealing,
prostitution, child delinquency, destitution and marital infidelity
became common. A less apparent and insufficiently appreciated
problem was the tremendous spread of venereal diseases which, ac-
cording to Dr Field, in most cases, was responsible for the increase
in impotency, sterility, still births and some neurotic ailments. The
interesting fact is that the victims of this disease found scape
goats in so-called envious relatives who were believed to be be-
witching them, hence the widespread witchcraft accusations, and
the consequent upsurge of many new shrines which claimed were capable
not only to protect victims of witchcraft but also to exterminate
witches.

Another important factor worth considering is modern educa-
tion. Education offered opportunities of earning a good income
and it also improved a person's social standing. Those aware of
the premium people put on education would undoubtedly appreciate
the efforts of many a parent to forgo every luxury for the sake
of providing their children with good education. Education
came to be seen by the people as a means to wealth and advancement
into the world of European activities. It would, therefore, not
appear surprising that a privileged youth chosen among many to be
educated "became the object of jealousy and spite" as Field observed

among the people of Akim Kotoku.

Admittedly, the widespread social changes through the introduction of money economy, cocoa industry and the subsequent urbanization offered direct opportunity for employment and development of capital resources. Possibilities were open to prospective individuals to provide their own needs without reliance upon the traditional assistance of the family. But it has also given cause to individualism, an alien feature in traditional society. Besides, since many kinship groups (under the present changing conditions) are no longer economically self-sufficient, kinship solidarity is being threatened. Yet a new phenomenon has emerged to replace the old, however imperfect, for the occupational and other associations which cut across tribal and kinship lines have taken over the activities previously performed by the extended family, the lineage and similar traditional organizations. The larger groupings such as the clan and the lineage which had economic and political functions are disintegrating if not losing significance entirely.

In spite of the general breakdown of society and what appears as a threat to the traditional family set-up, Little has demonstrated how voluntary organizations have played a major role as integrative forces. These voluntary associations include

1. Individualism was no peculiar consequence of the cocoa industry but a general phenomenon of social change. E.W. Smith, (in The Golden Stool, London, 1927, p. 214) vividly describes the situation in the following words. "The invasion of Africa by Europeans means the inoculation of the African with the germs of our individualism... We are administering them with a hose pipe whose stream carries everything before it with a rush. Taxes are levied upon and paid by individuals. Wages are paid to individuals. When crime is committed it is the single person and not the clan that expiates it. The Missionary seeks the conversion of individuals and teaches that every man and woman is personally responsible to God."

tribal unions and syncretist cults, groups concerned with mutual benefits and with recreation, and associations based upon the common interest of their members. Little outlines how these voluntary associations have substituted for the social and religious functions of the extended family system.

With regard to the latter, which will concern our attention here, Busia maintains the view that the Orthodox Churches in Ghana have become important social agents for the various Church Associations...attract many members and bring together people of different tribes who share the same faith; in this way they act as social agencies acquainting members of the community with each other.¹

Concerning victims of the present disintegrating family structure the Church Associations are performing a major function in the sense that they offer some sort of security from the hardships and isolations of town life to those who seek it....²

Baeta, speaking in the same vein, has this to say of the Spiritual or Independent Churches in Ghana:

At a time when the traditional bond of family and kinship ties are rapidly disintegrating, and the mutual obligations previously recognized by blood relations are being repudiated, with the result that...some Africans are finding themselves without dependable 'family', the significance of this opportunity of accession to a new group capable of replacing the old cannot be exaggerated.³

Little confirms this view when he adds that not only are

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¹ Busia, op. cit., pp.78.
² Ibid., p.79.
the Christian Churches 'an additional media through which voluntary
associations assist in integration',¹ but he considers the inte-
grative effect of these Christian Associations to be greater than
that of clan or tribal associations. First these Associations
in the Orthodox Churches are interdenominational and above all
open their doors to members of other denominations. Perhaps more
significant is the fact that the syncretist cults make no distinction
whatsoever and embrace recruits from all sorts of life.

Much though we do appreciate the role of the Churches as
'agents of cultural and social influence'² yet there is no doubt
that the Churches themselves are, in some sense, victims of the
rapid social changes. We will therefore examine, in the light
of the present changing conditions, the extent to which the con-
temporary Churches have been affected both positively and negatively
and, how they have managed to face up to the challenges and oppor-
tunities offered to them.

In dealing with baptism and confirmation, we noted the policy
of the Churches as being similar. Accordingly children were bap-
tised only when they were either presented by their own parents
or godparents or sponsors. Children born out of wedlock were
baptised by some Churches on the condition that they would be given
Christian upbringing. The problem, we noted, was that the present
urban way of life made it hardly possible for baptised children
to be given the necessary Christian upbringing. Lack of time,
scarcity of ministers and distance were adduced as the major hin-
drances. But these problems have not been resolved. More serious

¹ Little, op. cit., p.145.
² Busia, op. cit., p.77.
is the rise in the rate of illegitimacy in recent years. Widespread is the belief that the breakdown of the old tribal sanctions is responsible for pre-marital unchastity and the resultant unwanted pregnancies. The problem is complicated by the fact that some of the men involved in such unions are either reluctant or financially incapable of marrying the girls concerned or ready to accept parental responsibility.

Pre-marital relations, though abhorred by the community and the Church, are yet accepted as an inevitable outcome of the present trend of things. Thus the baptism of children born out of wedlock which, in the past, was an exception has become a common practice, for the Churches' sanctions are incapable of preventing illegitimacy.

The question which needs to be answered is, how best can the Churches ensure that such children are given the necessary Christian upbringing which the Churches have insisted upon as a pre-requisite for the baptism of children born out of wedlock?

We are not in any better position when we examine the case of the adolescents. The puberty rites are generally losing the underlying importance as a means of educating girls. The separation from their parents to work in far off places and, the growing economic independence of the youths are undermining parental control. The pattern of late marriage of young men and women today does not imply absolute chastity until marriage, on the contrary pre-marital intercourse is common which partly contributes to illegitimacy especially in the urban centres.

The Methodist Commission which investigated the problems of Church life came out with these criticisms which were levelled against Church members.
(i) Even educated Christian men and women have been known to consult fetish priests and invoke the protection of cults, with the result that homes have been broken up by disclosures of alleged offences and faults.

(ii) The danger of extravagance in dress and getting into debt is a menace ruining the home life.

(iii) Many school boys and girls encouraged by their teachers or their mothers openly lead lives inconsistent with Christian principles.

(iv) The old sanctions are weakening and Christianity has not been taught or the Christian life lived for new sanctions to take their place in the habits and thoughts of the people.*

The first criticism reflects attempts, however misguided, by some victims of social change, in the Church, to find some sort of security in the newly founded shrines which promised them the security they needed. The second and third criticisms are tied up together. Educated girls in urban centres, desirous of providing themselves with all what was needed to keep abreast with the standard of urban life, had indulged in loose unions, sometimes with married men. These unions offer a channel through which they can amass sufficient money for the new kind of life they wish to lead. The last criticism is very significant in that it points to the fact that the Church is generally regarded as the only institution now capable of providing sanctions to replace the old tribal sanctions, but the Church seems to have failed to meet the demand.

The initiatory rites connected with puberty afforded an opportunity for moral and social teaching, but as the Commission observed, 'little remains of such customs', and granted that they

1. I Will Build My Church, (Report of the Commission Appointed by the Methodist Church), Cape Coast, 1948, pp.83-84.
existed as previously, 'the Church has no chance of using them'.

Puberty rites are now performed in few cases in rural areas. Educated girls would not yield to these rites because they regard them as out-moded. The Methodist Commission felt, in the nature of the situation, it was essential that a substitute-rite was provided for the girls. For example it suggested

opportunity should be taken when a girl reaches puberty for the Minister or Leader to visit the home and pray with the family. It is then that the sanctity of marriage, the dignity of womanhood, the grave need for chastity may and should be effectively stressed. 2

It was remarked earlier that confirmation is presently regarded by the girls and their parents alike as a 'gate way to marriage'. We also drew attention to the fact that the nature of instructions given to candidates for confirmation were very formal, and in most cases, scarcely related to everyday life of the youth. The latter fact was substantiated by the findings of the Commission which stated:

Christian teaching has too often been either traditional theology divorced from modern living or an emphasis on ethics without the necessary power and purpose. 3

The extent to which the spirit of Christian message has penetrated into the home and the community was suggested by the Commission as one of the fields which presently needs serious investigation.

It would be recollected that, in the second chapter, we discussed at some length the two main trends of though concerning rites de passage. 4. On one hand were those who felt the Churches

1. Ibid., p.84.
2. Ibid., p.84.
3. Ibid., p.84.
4. Supra, pp.52-54.
had failed to incorporate into her life some of the valued Akan customs which could be employed, with certain safeguards, to enrich and enliven the Services and rites of the Church. On the other hand were those who appeared to defend the view that the customary practices have already found their way into the Churches and, therefore, advocated a positive synthesis of Christian and traditional rites where possible. Our discussion will be taken up from here.

The feeling among some Church leaders and laymen as well as some white Missionary agents that there are many good features in traditional society which can be incorporated into the Church without necessarily distorting the essence of the Christian rites has long been voiced. Edwin Smith, one of the authorities on the African Church, as early as 1927, argued that African customs should not be suppressed but sublimated.\(^1\) By that he meant making use of customs which had grown out of some felt need by extracting the good features from the bad and making them serve a higher moral and spiritual life. He strongly advocated the view that 'all that is best in the Africa's past experience should be enlisted into the service of Christ and His Church'.\(^2\) To illustrate his point he referred to a possible transmutation in Christian baptism the religious ceremony of name-giving.

Another layman and local preacher of the Presbyterian Church, in 1940, posed a question "whether infant baptism could not find a place in the ceremony of naming", a custom which still exists in most parts of Africa, or "whether confirmation could not find a place in the initiation ceremonies for boys and girls".\(^3\)

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2. Ibid., p. 273.
The basis of his argument was that since these rites are practically observed in all parts of Africa its incorporation into these Christian rites would mean more than they mean now.

In 1948, the Methodist Commission also argued that what Africanizing Christianity means is to examine African beliefs and customs in the light of Christ's life and teaching, to discover what remains true and to use them as a starting point from which to appeal to African people and to lead them to Christ. Reference was made to the naming and puberty ceremonies by posing the question:

Can there not be some way of bringing Christian influence to bear to that critical period in a boy's or girl's life which is marked by a new surge of life in the early days of adolescence?.

Similarly delegates of the Conference on 'Christianity and African Culture', in 1955, drew attention to the possibility of Christening customs connected with birth, puberty, marriage and death. Nketia, one of the delegates, as we noted elsewhere, revealed how confirmation has taken a new turn analogous to traditional puberty rites for girls. In the same Conference Baeta also expressed the view that,

given the will and only a little imagination, it should be quite easy to combine 'out-dooring' with christening.

Such a process of christening, Baeta asserts, has one advantage in that,

in performing a Christian ceremony the people concerned would be in an atmosphere that was distinctively African.

1. I Will Build My Church, p.16.
2. Ibid., p.32.
4. Ibid., p.58.
and entirely familiar.¹

Various views have been expressed from all parts of the country by both indigenous and white Churchmen but underlying all the variety of views is the idea that customary rites have a contribution to make towards the enrichment of the Churches' life. Yet, as we noted earlier, the initiative has already been taken but the Churches have failed to respond.

This apparent apathy and indifference to the efforts being made by some individual Church men, partly springs from the fact that the Churches have all these years adopted a negative attitude to many of the customs of the tribal peoples, a heritage which they have unconsciously received from the early Missionary agents. The indifference also springs from the fact that the Churches are not ready for such a simple but delicate synthesis of Christian and traditional rites which, it is believed, when approached with care, would help maintain all the essentials of the Christian faith and at the same time make the Christian Church attractive to the people.

There is also an underlying fear in the Churches that they would fail to achieve the desired ends by incorporating traditional rites into the Church rites. Any efforts to achieve this end has been either disapproved of or indirectly thwarted. All the same there is evidence which points to the fact that, sooner or later Christianity can and will be practised by Africans in their own mode and thought forms and expression without at the same devaluing and inherent nature and meaning of the Christian message.

We have had occasion to examine the main aspects of the four types of marriages in practice in Ghana. Concerning Christian

¹. Ibid., p.58.
marriage which we examined in some detail, we realised the extent
to which the problem of polygamy, a corollary institution, has greatly
been disputed within the Church. The Churches enjoined that new
converts should bless their marriages. Married members whose
marriages were contracted in the customary way were similarly
enjoined to bless their marriages. Divorce, as it should have
been clear, was granted in case of adultery but divorce guilty
parties with some exceptions, were refused permission to remarry.
Apart from the Presbyterian Church which allowed mixed marriages,
all the other Churches discouraged mixed marriages.

What stood out very clearly in our discussion on marriage
was the fact that Ordinance and Christian marriages were less
attractive to Church members for the reasons that they were alien
institutions, that they were costly to contract and finally such
unions were hardly possible to dissolve. Hence the tendency for
even Church members to go in for customary marriage regardless
of Church sanctions.

Although many critical and thought provoking questions have
been raised concerning the Churches' policies on polygamy yet Church
policy remains unchanged. An uncompromising disapproval of the
practice is maintained; and those members involved in the practice
have no alternative but to stay away from the Church until they
are able to resolve the problems within their marriages. That
polygamy has created much trouble in the African Churches may be
deduced from the number of Conferences which have discussed the
problem and the nature of the petitions which African delegates
to some of these Conferences presented.

It would be appropriate at this stage of our discussion
to examine the present state of Christian monogamy and polygamy
in the light of the social changes. The increasing mobility of people from the villages to the urban centres and the economic self-sufficiency of many women as well as the impact of literacy through modern education of which we have had occasion to consider, have greatly affected the present attitude of the people to marriage.

Many young men these days depend on their own resources with little or no family assistance to pay their marriage fees, as a result of which many of them delay their marriages until they are financially capable of marrying. Marriage is therefore passing through a period of transition in which stress is placed on marriage as a union between two people rather than the traditional view which sees marriage as a contract between two kingroups. The age of marriage is steadily rising. For while in some years past girls immediately married after the puberty rites had been performed, these days, because of the long period spent at school, the average age of girls is 20 years and that of boys is about 30 years.¹

A gradual transition from polygamy to monogamy is noticeable among people in the urban centres, but with the transition has emerged a common practice of concubinage and marital infidelity. The impact of this new trend towards extra marital relations is greatly felt by educated women involved in Ordinance marriage.² For the educated women who have imbibed the western ideas of chastity in a society where polygamy is legally sanctioned, and a man is therefore at liberty to marry more than one, is indeed a potential source of conflict between the couple. Many of such

unions quickly end in divorce.

The Post Enumeration Survey Sample (1960) revealed that 86 per cent of all marriages contracted were monogamous. Yet out of this number, marriages contracted under the Ordinance accounted for only 2.3 per cent of the total. It was found that Ordinance marriage was closely associated with people of a high socio-economic standing. In regions predominantly Presbyterian it was recorded that about 9 per cent of the members had contracted customary marriage followed by a Church blessing. However, there has been a tendency among those who contract the Christian marriage or the Ordinance to emphasise the social aspect of the ceremony without at the same time giving equal consideration to the inherent importance attached to the nuptial rites. Thus large sums of money are spent on feasting and display which consequently involve some bridegrooms in fantastic debts.

Hastings' analysis of the forms of unions in one African Church is representative of the situation in the Churches in Ghana today. First, there are those couples living together who have not really been married according to the native custom. Second, couples married according to native custom or civil law but while there is no impediment to their marriage have still refused to receive Church blessing on their marriages (this forms the major group in all the Churches today). And finally Church members married to people of different denominations.

With reference to mixed marriages, there is no doubt that the present increasing mobility of people from the countryside

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2. Sample Survey.
into the towns and from one region to another has complicated the problem. And although the Churches may still differ in their doctrine on baptism and the way they would like their children to be nurtured in the Christian faith, still their policies on mixed marriages cannot effectively stand the test of the present trend of things. Mixed marriages are on the increase in all the Churches. The Churches' policy on mixed marriages was formulated at a period when the crucial problem was the Christian upbringing of baptised children in the predominantly pagan community. But the old rule can hardly be applied today since the underlying problem for which the policy was formulated has resolved itself in the course of the years. The present problem is not basically the Christian nurture of children of mixed marriages but with the baptism of such children. That is, which one of the couple has the right to decide in which Denomination the child is to be baptised. Is he to follow the Church of the father or mother? There are now many avenues through which men can choose their future partners. If love is to be accepted as the basis of any union then it would appear rather difficult to understand why people's choices should be strictly conditioned by Church rules which restrict the scope from which members could choose. It would seem reasonable to have a policy which affords members the right to decide not only their future partners but also whichever Church they would eventually join should their marriage be mixed.

The fate of polygamy is far from determined but many factors are putting pressure on polygamous families. Scientific farming is making children in polygamous households a liability rather than great economic asset as it was in the past. Many people are incapable of maintaining one wife adequately much more taking
another wife. For the educated young man, polygamy as such is not attractive, for it 'does not harmonise with his mode of life to have several wives in his house', thus the gradual decline of polygamous families is noticeable in all parts of the country.

Three main approaches to a solution of the problem of polygamy may be here examined. First, there are those who try to justify polygamy solely on the absence of any reference to polygamy in the New Testament as a sin or a prohibited practice. There are those who find a solution to the problem in education of women which, it is believed, will open their eyes to the realities of the situation and grow to dislike it. Others see a solution to the problem in economic pressure on polygamous husbands which will naturally discourage the practice.

Let us examine the first approach. The question whether in the practice of polygamy there was something radically incompatible with a vital faith in Christ and in the living of a true Christian life was raised by the African delegates at the Madras Conference, in 1938. The answer from the Conference, it will be recollected, explicitly advocated a return to monogamy as a solution to the problem. As they saw it, the decision was not a matter of 'individual conscience'. It was argued that 'the criterion is the will of God for the people whom he has redeemed in Christ'. But no sooner had the debate on the problem died down than it was again raised by one E.A. Asamo, an indigenous Christian layman of the Presbyterian Church. His view is that 'it is controversial question whether the New Testament has anything to say against polygamy as such, even by implication'.

2. The World Mission of the Church, pp. 157-158.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
to Asamoa, the spirit of Christianity 'is life and not form'. And if this basic assertion is true then 'mere form whether monogamy or polygamy can live for the form need not change in order to live.' ¹

Undoubtedly there is scarcely any direct evidence against polygamy in the New Testament, but lack of evidence does not disprove of the basic fact that the whole spirit of Scripture points to monogamy. The marriage of the first couple was monogamous and it is to this end that Jesus appealed.

Rev. G. Farrinder, an authority on African Church groups, though very sympathetic in attitude towards polygamy yet he vehemently challenges the assertion that the New Testament does not prohibit polygamy. He argues:

any suggestion of polygamy would have been impossible for the New Testament Christians because monogamy was the age long tradition of the Greeks and the Romans to whom the epistles were written.²

Any argument from silence is regarded as weak, for the fact that we have no direct evidence of Councils in the early Church which opposed polygamy cannot necessarily imply that 'polygamy was common and the Church dared not speak against it'.³ Although there are many Churchmen of different race and tongue who are not in sympathy with the Churches' policies on polygamy still will not go to the extent of supporting this argument which apparently is not only far fetched but has failed to evoke any attention or support except from these polygamist husbands — mainly the victims of Church regulations.

Mention should be made here, of some Churches elsewhere

¹. Ibid., p.298.
³. Ibid., pp.57-58.
in Africa which have adopted a policy calculated to promote better understanding of the problem of polygamy and help alleviate the difficulties with membership of polygamous families into the Church. While they exclude all members who lapse into polygamy it has been made possible for a polygamous family about which Church members could testify as maintaining commendable marital relations to be baptised provided they desire baptism. Members of such a polygamous family after baptism attained the status of full members and enjoyed all the privileges of the Church. However, a Bishop of Lagos in the 1920s shows how this practice of making concessions, mentioned above, created confusion which threatened the stability of some of the Diocese in Nigeria, rather than remedy the vexed problem of polygamy. He is, therefore, against any solution which aims at making concessions. It would, however, not be appropriate to compare the situation referred to by the Bishop with situations where in recent years the experiment is being tried. For the period before and after 1920 was one in which the main topic of serious discussion in the Church was polygamy in relation to Church admission. Lack of understanding of the problem, reluctance of the Church leaders to explore all possible avenues towards a solution of the problem and, the disillusionment of some Church members about the motives of some Missionary agents were enough to spark off new trouble if any attempted innovation was not handled with great care and tact.

Education is the next major solution to the problem. Education, some would suggest, is the answer to the problem. The practice of polygamy, it is believed, has been the result of the lowering status of women. This is often substantiated by the

1. The Moravian Synod of Tanzania of the Dutch Roman Catholic Church.
fact that the present educated women would not tolerate a polygamous household and, as a result of which, they are in continuous conflict with their husbands to demand their rights. This is not to say that there are women who 'do not feel that they lose any dignity by living in polygamy'.

A Bishop of Lagos, referred to above, sees the education of women as the answer to the problem of polygamy rather than the traditional method of victimization of the husbands, to that effect he argues.

Girls' schools, women's classes and guilds and every method to get the female portion of the community to understand the Christian law of marriage and to insist on its being followed are in a large measure the key to the overcoming of this difficult problem.

The trend of argument of advocates of this view is that until the women themselves show repugnance to the practice and are bold to reject offers from polygamous husbands, no rules and regulations, decrees or resolutions would effectively penetrate into the core of the problem. In this connection, the Rev. E.W. Thompson argued that the rules of the Churches were 'intended to meet a passing phase of civilization'. For he was convinced that the answer to polygamy did not lie in rules and resolutions but in the education of women until they were dissatisfied with the practice.

The institution of polygamy will never be abolished until women are thoroughly discontented with it and their sense and refinement revolts against it. If for this reason a great extension of work by women among women and girls of Africa is required.

1. Westermann, op. cit., p.139.
3. I Will Build My Church, p.72.
4. Ibid., p.72.
Westermann takes a slightly different view for he restricts the answer to the power of Christianity. His view is that it would be misleading to suppose Colonial legislation concerning customs would achieve any considerable success. In his opinion, the solution to the problem 'can only come from within', and must in all likelihood 'proceed from the power of Christianity'. But one wonders whether Church rules and regulations have made any appreciable success in this field of study. If the answer, as Westermann sees it, lies in the power of Christianity, then it is an assertion which can hardly be questioned. But whether the Church has so far demonstrated that power which is capable of achieving more than we can imagine is open to question.

The other approach to the solution of the problem of polygamy, it is hoped, will come about as a result of economic pressure on polygamous families. This argument appears, for some reasons, to gather much more popular support than the first two. It is seen from two basic angles. On one hand women who previously were involved in polygamous marriages for the sake of ensuring their security are now economically self dependent. Unmarried women presently do not enter into marriage for economic reasons. Few women, therefore, will be attracted to polygamous marriages for economic gain. On the other hand because of the sophisticated and high standard of living in the urban centres coupled with low wages, many men cannot afford to maintain more than one wife.

Besides, traditional regard for a polygamous husband is steadily declining for the number of wives and children a man has, in recent years, is not a major factor in accessing the greatness of a man.

In the light of such changes exponents of this economic theory would suggest,

we may wait until, for economic reasons, people cannot afford to have more than one wife. Then there will not be any virtue in it.\(^1\)

There is no doubt that economic pressure on both polygamous families and on young men in their struggle to maintain themselves out of their meagre resources have achieved so much in making the practice no longer attractive to many people. But it would be difficult to uphold the view that the solution to the problem must be left to economic pressure backed by time. For there are many causes of polygamy other than the great economic asset which polygamous families appeared to offer.

I would, therefore, agree with the view of E. Smith who sees the solution not in one or the other factors but all combined. That is, one complementing or supplementing the other. He comments:

Let us go on inculcating the Christian view of the relation of the sexes, let us insist upon monogamist marriages for the young converts, and in good time the African's conscience aided by the pressure of economic laws, will wipe away polygamy with other evil things.\(^2\)

Belief in ancestral power and their ability to influence the destinies of the living greatly determine the nature of any funeral rites. The time, expense and all the complex ritual practices are to the end that the deceased member of the family will depart to the spirit world contented. Like any other customs of the Akan, the attitude to death and its associated rites is undergoing changes. The position of the Chief, the representative and intermediary between the ancestors and the living, is now under

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pressure from the changes in society. The present modern political system of government has relegated the Chief's authority to a subordinate position. While sacrifices and libation still remain the functions of a Chief, Church members no longer regard pouring libation and offering sacrifices to the ancestors as adequate means of ensuring health and good harvest. More than that his religious function is being challenged by the Christian Church. Yet changes in funeral rites, among other customs affected by the rapid social changes, have been strongly resisted for 'they are bound up with people's view of life and the universe'. As such the funeral rites can be cited as one of the aspects of Akan culture that has changed little.

One of the fields of constant conflict between the Church members and the Authorities has been the Memorial Service which forms an integral part of any funeral rite. The Memorial Service held after the death of a member is regarded as a channel through which true Christian faith can be given expression. Instead of the Churches suppressing the Memorial Service, it was suggested that since 'All Saints day is an occasion when the Church remembers the departed brethren and also since in the Easter Week we think of the triumph of the Lord Jesus, an appropriate Memorial Service could be held during one of these festive occasions for all the deceased members of the Church within the past six months of the year.

Ministers and members, the Methodist Commission suggested,

1. Busia, Position of the Chief, Chapter VI passim.
2. Ibid., p.137.
3. Ibid., p.198.
5. I Will Build My Church, pp.32-33.
should seek in their faith and practice to relate the natural events of our human life to the influence of Christian thought and purpose.\footnote{Ibid., p.34.}

Presently one sees a marked danger with regard to the policy of the Churches calculated to supress, as far as they possibly can, all features of the funeral rites which are regarded as superstitious or as having fetish associations. For it is possible that, after a hard struggle, the Churches will eventually effect changes in all the externals of the ritual practices while, in actual fact, the underlying basic beliefs remain unchanged. The case is well put in the words of J.V. Taylor:

When people do not develop step by step from their point of departure by a series of choices but jump over into an apparently Christian new pattern without growth by decision then, sooner or later, old pagan patterns reassert themselves.\footnote{J.V. Taylor, Christians of the Copperbelt, SCM, London, 1961, p.303.}

Taylor's remark reflects adequately the contemporary situation of the Churches in Ghana. For in spite of Church sanctions the custom of throwing special articles into the coffin is still practised in another form by members. Many Church members see no incompatibility to the Christian faith in depositing in a deceased person's coffin his Membership card, a Hymn Book or an article for which, while living, he had special fondness. Libation is poured in some Christian funerals although it may not occupy any significant part in the entire ceremony as such. Similarly subsequent funeral rites are performed particularly by members of the bereaved family, and Christian members of the family feel obliged to attend though Church rule forbids it.

In the light of this it would appear to suggest itself
that if any meaningful changes can be effected in respect of the beliefs about the dead and the ancestors as well as rituals connected with these beliefs, then the answer cannot be found in rules and regulations. It will no doubt demand long periods of growth in the Christian faith from within the Church. Changes in attitudes to the dead and funeral rites would mean drastic changes in the entire world outlook of the people. This, I strongly believe, lies beyond the domain of what laws can accomplish.

Rev. H. Sawyerr, an African theologian of our age, poses many searching questions which, it is hoped, will open the way for further discussion on the problem of the dead and after death. Sawyerr's position is that before the Church can convince the African converts of the final resurrection of the dead she must define the significance of death and the role of the dead after physical existence. Many questions, for the Christian Akan, not unlike any of his counterpart in Africa, remain unanswered. Few of the questions will be outlined to illustrate the nature of the questions which the Christian Akan has not as yet had adequate answers.

(1) What is the meaning of death?

(2) What is eternal life, can its reality be experienced here and now or is it something of the past to which we look forward?

(3) What, if any, is the relation between the concept of immortality and the concept of ancestral mediation with regard to the welfare of the living members?

(4) Has the dead ancestors any place in the concept of the Church expectant and the Church triumphant?

(5) How should resurrection be interpreted to a people who hold, however imperfect, an indisputable doctrine of reincarnation?

These are some of the critical and unanswered questions which Sawyerr has rightly posed. If the Church is able to answer these questions in a way which will be meaningful to the Christian Akan then there is every reason to believe that their belief in ancestors and their pre-occupation with the dead would have been given a natural death blow.

In conclusion I would like to remark that a realistic appraisal of the Christian Mission work in Ghana will unveil the tremendous service rendered to the entire population in the field of education, health service, in the abolition of some inhuman practices, and significantly in bringing to the people a universal religion capable of satisfying their aspirations. All this was achieved through great sacrifices to which the people no doubt in diverse ways have expressed their appreciation.

Yet inspite of all this, the Missionaries are accused as being partly responsible for the destruction of many aspects of the African culture. Time and again people, from within and outside the Church, have accused the Church as being responsible for denominationalism, individualism, breakdown of sexual morality and marital infidelity (a result of the breakdown of the old tribal sanctions). The unfortunate accident of the advent of Christianity coinciding with Colonial administration, granting that the Missionaries did not employ the services of the Colonial agents as tools for the perpetuation of their own ends, have led to the accusation that the Christian Church is an agent of imperialism. 1

1. "Christianity is preached in Africa but not practised in Africa". "Christianity as it is practised in Africa, is purely a Westernised Christianity and looks awkward in an African society". "I often wonder why Americans are so enthusiastic about sending Christian missionaries to Africa, while in America our cousins— I mean the Black Americans of African descent—are segregated and subject to all forms of endless humiliation". cf Ram Desai, Christianity in Africa As Seen by Africans, ed., Denver, 1962.
It is beyond the scope or the demands of this survey to discuss the validity or falsity of these accusations. Though we may have to admit with all modesty that many mistakes were committed particularly due to ignorance of tribal customs and partly due to the undue fanaticism of some of the Missionaries to uphold, what they believed, was the cause of Christ, among other reasons. Yet many of these accusations are oversimplifications of the many factors which have contributed to the present wind of social changes blowing across Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The significant fact which underlies all these violent accusations is the conviction that the answer to the present dilemma is to be found in Christianity. This gives the Church something to be proud of. But the question which needs to be answered is, to what extent is the Church ready to face up to the realities of the situation and accept the challenge? As the Missionary age now draws to a gradual end, and even now responsibility in the Mission founded Churches are devolving on indigenous Christian laymen, one needs to ask whether Christianity can be presented in a more meaningful way to the Akan or it will still appear to be antagonistic to the Akan? It is my hope that Smith’s searching question——Can the African become a Christian and remain an African?——will be a reality as the Churches daily grow to a realization of their true purpose in the midst of the people they serve.

I do not assert any claim to originality in this survey nor do I pretend to be complacent in having presented an exhaustive picture of the subject. All what I have tried to do is to outline the basic attitudes and policies of some of the Protestant Churches

1. E. Smith, op. cit., p. 250.
in Ghana and the reaction of the members and people outside the Churches to these Church policies. This has been done by coalescing isolated remarks, comments and questions which have been expressed or raised by Church men and ordinary citizens who, in their various capacities, have shown some concern about the subject under discussion. In outlining the debate on the place of traditional customs in the Church, attention has also been drawn to some of the underlying problems and questions which remain to be answered or which would demand further investigation. This discussion has been pursued in the hope that, sooner or later, African theologians will seriously examine these problems with a view to contributing to a better understanding of the message of Christianity among the people and to the growth and edification of the young African Churches.
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