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Barriers In Traditional Ashanti Religion To Membership In the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Andres University

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ABSTRACT

BARRIERS IN TRADITIONAL ASHANTI RELIGION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH: AN ANALYSIS AND SOME ANSWERS

by

Amofah-Anane Asamoah

Adviser: Russell Lynn Staples
Title: BARRIERS IN TRADITIONAL ASHANTI RELIGION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH: AN ANALYSIS AND SOME ANSWERS

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Problem

The persistence of traditional belief and practice among about 30 percent of Ashanti traditionalists presents a great challenge to the Ashanti SDA Church on how to engage the traditionalists' with the gospel. The darker side of the Ashanti world is characterized by fear and insecurity.

While Christianity presents an attractive doctrine of salvation in a transcendent sense, its emissaries have failed to provide satisfying ways of dealing with the forces of the spirit world. In
addition, the Ashanti institution of chieftaincy involves closely connected socio-political and religious rites. The chief is both the central officiant in rituals of tendence upon the ancestors and the mainstay of social order. Traditionalists fear that Christianity will displace traditional religious beliefs and thus undercut the force of social solidarity. These beliefs and practices pose significant barriers to the acceptance of the gospel and consequently impede a decision to join the SDA Church.

Method

Four of the religious beliefs and practices that are regarded as barriers to the acceptance of Christianity are analyzed using both anthropological and biblical perspectives.

The evangelistic approaches of Catholics, mainline churches, the SDA Church, and the spiritual churches in Ghana are discussed and analyzed to see how and to what extent they have been able to break down the barriers that impede the acceptance of Christianity. Finally, biblical and practical responses to some of the issues involved are presented.

Results

The study suggests that a major root of the problem is the Ashanti concept of God as being remote and
unapproachable and hence not available in times of crisis and insecurity.

An answer is found in the Christian concept of an immanent God and the mediatorial function of the incarnate Savior.

Conclusion

Ashanti SDA Christian workers should be equipped with an adequate understanding of traditional beliefs and practices to enable them to supply satisfying theological and practical answers to the barriers that impede acceptance of Christianity.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

BARRIERS IN TRADITIONAL ASHANTI RELIGION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH: AN ANALYSIS AND SOME ANSWERS

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Amofah-Anane Asamoah
June 1997
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA  Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CGC   Central Ghana Conference
GC    General Conference
NT    New Testament
OT    Old Testament
SDA   Seventh-day Adventist
VVC   Valley View College
WAUM  West Africa Union Mission
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In his comparative study of The Akan Religion and the Christian Faith, Sidney G. Williamson stated:

The people to whom Europe offered its faith were themselves possessed of religious practices and rites which came to bear a variety of descriptive names. The Ashanti people of Ghana undoubtedly fall under this

1The Akan people form the largest ethnic group in Ghana. They account for over 52% of the population. They occupy the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Western, Central, and the Eastern regions of present Ghana. They possess common sociocultural features and institutions among which are a matrilineal descent system, clanship, a common language with dialectal differences, traditional government and law systems, and common religious practices. They are predominantly farmers but some of them engage in fishing, weaving, pottery, carving, mining, and trading. Among the Akan groups are the Ashanti, Fante, Bono, Nzima, Ahanta, Dankyira, Wassa, Sahwi, Aowin, Akim, Akuapem, Kwahu, Akwamu, and Assen.


3Ashanti is one of the many tribes of the Akan people in Ghana. They inhabit the central part of the forest region of Ghana. They speak the Twi language and constitute about 4 million of the 17 million people in Ghana. For information about Ashantis see chapter 2. See also R. S. Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).
category of people. They possess a strong traditional religious heritage that has shaped their lives and thought patterns for many years. For one to think that traditional Ashanti religion is powerless and non-existent in this era of Christian influence is a misconception.

About 30 percent of the population in the Ashanti region adhere to traditional Ashanti religion. This segment of the population rejects Christianity. The force of traditional religion greatly influences their day-to-day life and, consequently, impedes their decisions to become Seventh-day Adventists.¹

Many Ashanti traditionalists are concerned about the immediate issues of everyday life. They are also searching for security in life. They need protection from fear of evil spirits, evil eye, disease, witchcraft, and infertility. They seek security in their marriages and jobs. Crises, such as those mentioned above, and beliefs in ancestors, lesser gods, magic, and charms, as well as traditions like chieftaincy, rituals, and rites of passage and other related issues occupy the attention of its members. These are the issues that adherents of low religions,² like Ashanti traditionalists, face in the SDA Church.

¹Hereafter SDA Church.

²For a discussion of high and low religions of the world, see Gailyn Van Rheenen, Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 51-65.
their day-to-day lives. Solutions are sought to deal with these issues from the traditional religious practitioners. M. J. Field mentions in Search for Security, her field study among rural Ghanaians, that "at the shrines it is possible to see people gone mad with fear and to see their sanity quickly restored by the removal of the fear."1

The Ashanti traditionalists search for a supernatural power that can counteract the fears and crises they face in life. One would have thought that the Ashanti SDA Church would emphasize prayer and fasting as a form of deliverance ministry2 in response to such pressing needs, in addition to its emphasis on a truth and an allegiance encounter.3 But dealing with issues


3Truth encounter is based on Scripture and it is intended to lead a person to the true God who is the object of allegiance. Allegiance encounter is also based on Scripture, and "it appeals for a relationship between humans and God based on commitment and faithfulness." See Charles H. Kraft, "Allegiance, Truth and Power Encounters in Christian Witness," TMs (photocopy), pp. 4-5, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA. See also, idem, "What Kind of Encounters Do We Need in Our Christian Witness?" Evangelical Missions Quarterly 27, no. 3 (1991): 258-65.
concerning the spirit world of the Ashanti traditionalists has not been the primary concern of the church. Rather, the immediate concern of the church has been to seek the salvation of the Ashanti traditionalists. There exists no evangelistic approach of the church that is geared purposely to engage the Ashanti way of thinking.¹ Instead, the church tends to give a one-sided answer, telling the Ashanti traditionalists to have faith in God and to look forward to the kingdom of God where there are no such problems. But the principalities and powers of the spirit world are real to the Ashantis. Therefore many Ashantis think that conversion to Christianity may result in a loss of the protection offered by traditional Ashanti religion.

After a century of Christian contact, some basic tenets of traditional beliefs and practices still remain alive and influential in the experience of many Ashanti traditionalists and pose barriers to conscientious membership in the SDA Church.

The focal points about which these barriers are clustered are listed below:

1. Belief in abosom (lesser gods)
2. Ancestor veneration
3. The use of asuman (charms, amulets,  

¹Interview by author, Emmanuel Osei, Berrien Springs, MI, April 19, 1996. Also Isaac B. Boateng, interview by author, Berrien Springs, MI, April 22, 1996.
talismans) for protection against evil spirits and misfortune

4. Aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance.

Despite the persistence of traditional beliefs and practices among Ashanti traditionalists, Christian missions have succeeded in evangelizing Ashanti people for over 100 years. During these years, the combined weight of Western civilization and Christianity has exerted a powerful influence on the Ashanti people. In fact, the foundation of the Ashanti culture has been shaken by the large number of Ashantis who have converted to Christianity. Today about 64 percent of the Ghanaian population call themselves Christians, 19.8 percent are nominal Christians, 44.3 percent are affiliated with a church, and 12 percent attend church regularly. Among Ashantis, about 60 percent are Christians.

Since its inception in the Ashanti region of Ghana in 1914, the SDA Church has had a stronghold among the Ashantis. In 1914 there were forty-five converts to the Adventist Church from among the Ashanti. By 1996,

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²This includes Roman Catholics, Protestants, and African Independent Christians.

out of a total SDA membership of 171,955 in Ghana, approximately 95,144 were from the Central Ghana Conference, of whom about 80 percent were Ashantis.¹ There is hardly a district in the Ashanti region where the SDA Church is not known. This growth has taken place in spite of the tensions between Christianity and traditional Ashanti religion.

The primal worldview that cements the previously mentioned barriers has been influenced on the surface by many years of Christian contact. However, in spite of long exposure to Christianity and Western civilization, the barriers still remain an integral part of the life and thought patterns of many Ashanti traditionalists. In addition, many Ashantis now pay more attention to their culture and traditional ways of life. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, there has been a positive affirmation of the value of traditional ways of life. Among both educated and uneducated Ashantis, there is a rejection of many of the customs and ways of the Europeans and a return to their own cultural roots.

The old Ashanti expression sankofa, which literally means "It is not a taboo to go back for what

¹The 1996 SDA Yearbook reports 95,144 members from the Central Ghana Conference, which is comprised of the Ashanti region and a few isolated lands of Eastern, Western, and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana. Out of this figure, more than two-thirds of the members are in the Ashanti region. See Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1996 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996), 54.
was left behind," is today given loud voice in Ghanaian society. Some of the elderly Ashantis are deeply concerned about the disappearance of traditional values from the consciousness of young people. These elders blame this problem on the process of acculturation.\(^1\)

Acculturation is viewed as a national concern. To arrest this problem, the Ministry of Education and Culture has introduced cultural studies into the curriculum of all junior secondary schools in Ghana.\(^2\)

In the wake of this cultural rejuvenation, the SDA Church faces the challenge of exploring new methods of evangelism that will engage the thought patterns of Ashanti traditionalists. Part of this project is an attempt to provide some biblical and practical responses to Ashanti traditionalists who struggle with the above issues.

**Justification of the Study**

The presence of Adventism in the Ashanti region of Ghana for over eighty years is an indication of the

\(^1\)&mdash;Acculturation is the process whereby a foreign culture profoundly influences a home culture. For example, European forms of government and politics, Christianity, and education have influenced the Ghanaian way of life. See Thierry G. Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots, Culture and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1990), 53.

church's determination to share the gospel with the Ashanti. However, since its beginning in Ashanti, the church has faced the problem of dealing with the cultural barriers that confront the convert. Many Ashanti traditionalists have become gospel-hardened and resist the Adventist message. In addition, many middle-class Ashantis show a renewed interest in their cultural heritage, which for some time seemed to have been abandoned because of the earlier impact of Christianity and Western civilization on Ashanti people.

Ashanti converts to the SDA Church during the past two decades have been largely from other Christian groups rather than from among traditionalists. And yet there is some ambivalence on the part of Ashanti traditionalists who reject Christianity in that they realize that their traditional religion does not provide all the answers to their problems. In their continuous search for security, some Ashantis attend SDA evangelistic meetings and enjoy the expositions of the doctrines presented from the Bible. However, when it comes to making a decision to become Christians and be baptized into membership, they find it difficult to leave their traditional religion.

There appear to be four main categories of Ashantis in regard to their response to Christianity. The first consists of those who accept Christianity and make a clean break with their traditional religion.
The second group is made up of those who join the church but bring elements of their traditional religion with them. A third group is composed of those who attend church on special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, baby dedication, and baptismal service, but do not join the church. The fourth category is Ashanti traditionalists who consciously reject Christianity. This is the target group as far as this work is concerned; however, the second and third categories of Ashantis would also benefit from solutions regarding these barriers discussed in this study.

Based on personal experience, it is my conviction that the SDA Church does not address those issues with which Ashanti traditionalists struggle. The evidence would suggest that the independent spiritual churches are able to meet the needs of the Ashantis by faith healing, demon exorcising, and an emotional type of worship. These are more in keeping with traditional ways than the form of Christianity practiced by the mission churches. These churches grow by leaps and bounds; this is an indication that Ashantis are receptive to Christianity when it is presented in a way that addresses their specific needs.

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1The activities and characteristics of the independent spiritual churches are treated in chapter 5 under the subtitle "Recent Religious Developments among the Ashanti."

On the positive side, the Ashanti people have a tradition that clearly exalts Saturday as the great day upon which to worship God. Adventists, therefore, have an opportunity to win Ashantis to the church by drawing attention to God through their culture.

Having set forth the premise that there is a persistence of traditional religion among about 30 percent of the Ashanti population, it is necessary to delve into the beliefs and practices of the Ashanti people to identify four areas that constitute major barriers to membership in the SDA Church. This attempt will help in an analysis of how the mission churches and the spiritual churches have been able to make breakthroughs, and where they have failed in breaking down the barriers that impede Ashanti traditionalists. The findings will lead to a development of some biblical and practical responses that will engage the thought patterns of Ashanti traditionalists who struggle in their decision to accept the gospel and enter into membership in the SDA Church.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide some biblical and practical responses to four elements of traditional Ashanti beliefs and practices that constitute significant barriers to the acceptance of Christianity. These are: (1) belief in abosom; (2) ancestor veneration;
(3) the use of *asuman* (charms) for protection against evil spirits and misfortune; and (4) aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance. Some other beliefs and their functions in Ashanti culture, such as the Supreme Being, the nature of man, sacrifices, sin, punishment, and the Ashanti worldview, are also discussed. It is anticipated that this study will lead to an elucidation of ways in which the gospel truly engages the Ashanti way of perceiving reality and thereby provide some biblical and practical responses to the barriers.

**Limitations**

Inasmuch as this study is focused upon barriers to the acceptance of the gospel experienced by Ashanti traditionalists, it is limited to Ashanti religion and culture and does not seek to include other peoples of Ghana.

This is done for the following reasons:

1. The focus of the study would be blurred by the inclusion of similar but different traditional religions.

2. The Ashanti region has the largest population among the ten regions in Ghana. In addition, the SDA Church has its largest membership in this area in Ghana.

3. The Ashanti people have some common socio-cultural features with other Akan people. The study should therefore be helpful in other regions in spite of its focus.
Methodology

This study is intended to unravel the salient elements of Ashanti culture and religion. This is approached from anthropological and theological perspectives. Anthropological insight is employed as the key to understanding the Ashanti worldview, which is indeed the focus of the study. Much of the literature written by anthropologists and sociologists about Ashanti culture and religion has been consulted for this research.

The theological approach has been developed with a biblically shaped worldview. While this is not insensitive to the Ashanti culture, it does subordinate the beliefs and practices of the Ashantis to the Scriptures. It seeks to achieve a balance whereby the gospel can come alive within the Ashanti culture. This approach is intended to engage the mind of the Ashanti to understand and accept Christianity as an option to traditional religion. My personal knowledge of traditional Ashanti religion and culture is drawn upon as well as the experiences of some Ashantis who accept Christianity as well as others who have rejected it.

The study is organized as follows. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the task of the project. A brief history of the Ashanti people, an overview of their worldview, and some of their beliefs and practices are described in chapter 2. Chapter 3 is a survey of
evangelism among the Ashanti people. The evangelistic approaches of the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Anglicans are discussed and analyzed.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of SDA evangelism in Ashanti, while chapter 5 addresses recent religious developments among the Ashanti. In chapter 6, four beliefs and practices of traditional Ashanti religion, which constitute major barriers to membership in the SDA church, are presented. Chapter 7 is an attempt to suggest some biblical and practical responses to the predicaments posed by these barriers. Chapter 8 is summary, recommendations, and conclusion.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as used in this study.

**Traditional Religion:** The indigenous religion of the Ashanti people. It consists of beliefs and practices that have influenced the life and thought patterns of the Ashantis for many years. Some of these beliefs relate to: the Supreme Being, ancestors, lesser gods, witchcraft, charms, magic, rites of passage, sacrifice, and festivals.

**Culture:** The way a group of people live. It covers a wide range of areas in people's lives and thought. It includes knowledge, beliefs, art, customs,
law, and other capabilities and behavior patterns acquired by members of a particular society.

**Worldview:** The way a group of people perceive, interpret, and relate to the universe. The worldview is at the heart of every culture.

**Ancestors:** Deceased family members, who are believed to exist in an incorporeal state in the underworld and exert profound influence upon living members of their clan. They are believed to live close to the Supreme Being and are considered to be part of the family lineage. They are highly respected and regarded as custodians of family laws, customs, and values.

**Chief:** A title used for the traditional ruler of a village or town. He must come from a particular clan or family line that is considered royalty. When a man is elected as a chief, he automatically becomes the religious head, judge, legislator, commander-in-chief, as well as the administrative head. He occupies the royal stool of the ancestors and acts as a representative for the ancestors and the tribe.

**Abosom:** A name given to the lesser gods who are considered to be the children of the Supreme Being. The word *abosom* literally means "the worship of stones or rocks." The spirits of the *abosom* may inhabit inanimate natural objects like stones, rocks, rivers, and lakes. The *abosom* are worshipped. Some of the roles they perform in society include: acting as intermediaries
between the Supreme Being and man; giving guidance in moral issues; and offering protection, healing, and security to their worshippers. Some of the abosom in Ashanti are Tano, Lake Bosomtwe, Tigare, and Gadawu.

**Asuman:** Various kinds of personal charms, such as beads, animal skins, bracelets, horse hairs, and strings used as protection against evil spirits and misfortune. It is believed that the power of asuman comes from plants or trees, fairies, witches, and forest monsters. They are sometimes worn around the neck, waist, wrist, ankles, or hung at the doorpost of the family house.

So far in chapter 1 I have presented an overview of the problem and justified this study. The statement of purpose, its limitations, and methodology have been presented. Several important terms have also been defined. Chapter 2 takes us deeper into some of the beliefs and practices of Ashanti traditional religion.
CHAPTER II

ASHANTI TRADITIONAL RELIGION: SOME BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Ashanti People

The Ashantis are believed to have come from Bono in the Brong-Ahafo region\(^1\) of Ghana. Some stories based on oral tradition suggest that all the Akans entered the forest area as a group from some part of the north.\(^2\) It is not known exactly when they entered the forest, but it is believed that they first lived at a place called Techiman in the Brong-Ahafo region.\(^3\) Later the Ashantis moved further south and occupied the land now known as Adansi.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Cultural Studies for Junior Secondary School Pupils, book 1, 12. The Brong-Ahafo region is one of the ten territorial administrative divisions in Ghana. It is bordered on the north by the northern region, on the south by the western and Ashanti regions, and on the east by the eastern and Volta regions. They speak the Bono language, which is similar to the Twi language.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.

At present the Ashantis inhabit the central portion of the southern half of Ghana, covering an area of about 9,417 square miles.¹ They account for about 4 million of the 16 million people in Ghana.² Due to their geographical location in the interior of Ghana, their culture has been less subject to alien influence than that of other Akans, such as the Fante, Nzima, and Ahanta, who live along the coastal area of Ghana.

It is not known exactly when the Ashantis started building their empire. But it is certain that between 1630-1663, during the reign of an Ashanti king, Oti Akentin, they built a consolidated state and the Ashanti power was firmly established.³ However, the king who is said to have been the real founder of the Ashanti state is Osei Tutu, who reigned from 1697-1731. It is said that during his reign, the Golden Stool,⁴ which is the

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³It is not certain how many Ashanti kings reigned before Oti Akentin; however, tradition says that Twum Antwi was the first acknowledged king. He was followed by Kobina Amamfi, who reigned from 1600-1630. See Balmer, 34-44.
⁴The Golden Stool is said to have come from the sky through the powerful ritual of Okomfo Anokye, a friend of Osei Tutu. He is said to have been commissioned by Onyame, "God," to make the Ashanti a great and powerful nation. Anokye is said to have declared that the Golden Stool contained the "soul" of the Ashanti people. It is the physical symbol of Ashanti nationhood and power; if captured, the Ashanti kingdom would perish. See Edwin W. Smith, The Golden Stool
symbol of Ashanti power and unity, was given, and the Ashanti capital, Kumasi, was established.¹

The major occupation of the Ashantis is farming. Most of the country’s export crops, such as cocoa, coffee, and colanuts, and their own food supply are produced in this region. The Ashantis are also noted for their rich gold mining industry, both in the past and present.² Today a large number of the Ashanti population are in trading and civil services.

Ashantis have a well-developed social, political, and religious system that binds them together as a people. Every aspect of Ashanti culture is sacred to them. Religion and culture are inseparable. The birth of a child, the naming ceremony, death, a disease that strikes the community, abundant or no rainfall, a flood, a falling tree, or lightning that claims the life of a child or an adult are not taken for granted. They are interpreted as blessings or misfortunes due to obedience or disobedience to the Supreme Being, the gods, spirits,

¹See Balmer, 39-40.

²Gold mining is done in two important Ashanti towns, namely Obuase and Konongo. Up to this day Ashanti kings and queen mothers decorate themselves with ornaments of gold from the Ashanti area when they sit in state. It was possible that this rich gold industry in the past attracted European traders to the coast of present Ghana, who gave the country its first name, the Gold Coast. The present name, Ghana, was taken when the people of the land obtained political independence from British rule on March 6, 1957.
or ancestors. The Ashantis' interpretation of the universe is a major reason why some of their beliefs and practices pose barriers to membership in the SDA Church when the Christian faith confronts the Ashanti culture. This leads us to our next discussion about the characteristics of Ashanti traditional religion.

**Characteristics of Ashanti Traditional Religion**

Until Christianity came to the Ashanti, the inhabitants of that land were primarily adherents of traditional Ashanti religion. Though many Ashantis have now been converted to Christianity, some of these Christians are sometimes influenced by the powerful impact of their traditional religion and seek help from the traditional religious practitioners in time of crisis. It is therefore necessary that Christian missionaries to the Ashanti as well as pastors and leaders who are Ashantis become acquainted with the major characteristics of this religion in order to deal with the issues that arise out of this dual allegiance.¹

The major characteristics are discussed below.

1. Ashanti traditional religion is concerned with the immediate issues of everyday life. Crises such as disease, death, barrenness, drought, flood,

¹Dual allegiance in this context refers to a situation in which Christians share loyalty to Christianity as well as to their traditional religion in time of crisis.
witchcraft, and other related problems occupy the attention of its members. Solutions are sought to deal with these issues either from the fetish priest, medicine man, or diviner.

2. There are no written scriptures, creed, or fundamental beliefs. This is the reason for diverse rather than standardized beliefs.

3. The transmission of history, beliefs, and practices is done through oral tradition.

4. Life in traditional Ashanti society is relatively simple. However, the process of acculturation, due to colonization and Christianity, continues to influence the traditional way of life.

5. Ashanti traditional religion has elements of animism. However, not all the beliefs and practices can be described as animistic. For example, the belief in the Supreme Being as creator, Saturday as a day of worship of the Supreme Being, and the importance of moral values are not classified as animistic. On the other hand, the worship and sacredness attached to the river god, Tano,¹ and other natural deities and their shrines could be described as animistic.

6. Some Ashanti beliefs and practices are

grounded in myths.¹ They help to explain the nature of the Supreme Being, how the world was created, how God separated from man, the origin of death, the spirit world, and how patterns of behavior came to be established. For example, one Ashanti myth explains God's retreat into the heavens after a woman hit him with her pestle while pounding traditional food called fufu. This myth portrays how God was close to man at first but withdrew due to human disobedience.

7. All members of the Ashanti tribe are considered as members of this religion. It does not require a decision for an Ashanti person to be part of the traditional religion. One is born into it and grows with the beliefs and practices. When Christian teachings conflict with traditional beliefs and practices, Christian missionaries and Ashanti converts to Christianity face problems with the traditional chiefs.

The chiefs expect Ashantis to respect and obey the traditional laws and customs of the land, whereas missionaries and local converts to Christianity shift allegiance to God. K. A. Busia mentions that the

¹Myths are sacred narratives that convey certain fact or certain basic truths about man’s existence and experience with the universe. Myths throw more light on how things got to be the way they are. Van Rheenen categorizes six different types of myths: creation myths, national myths, deity myths, spirit myths, sickness myths, and cosmic myths. See Van Rheenen, 40. See also, Kwabena Amponsah, Topics on West African Traditional Religion, vol. 1 (Accra: Adwinsa Publications (Ghana), 1977), 16-17.
conflict between Christianity and the chiefs is real and has not been solved.¹

8. Ashanti traditional religion ishenotheism. The Supreme Being is regarded as the "element of ultimacy"² in worship. Apart from him, the lesser gods, called abosom,³ also receive reverence for their role as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and man.

9. Ashanti traditional religion emphasizes rituals as a means of communicating with the Supreme Being, with other divinities or lesser gods, and with the ancestors. Among Ashantis, the most common types of rituals are animal sacrifices, pouring of libation, and rites of passage. I witnessed a ceremony in which the chief of Agona-Ashanti poured libation to appease the Oyon River god to permit divers to search for the body of


²See Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 218-20. Tillich mentions that all religions possess an "element of ultimacy." In Ashanti traditional religion, the Supreme Being is the ultimate recipient of all worship. The problem here is centered around the fact that in the Ashanti world, the Supreme Being is transcendent and the lesser gods are close to man and are constantly involved in the day-to-day religious experience. Benjamin Ray mentions that "this contrast between the one universal god and the many local gods poses an important question about the unity and structure of African religions." See Benjamin C. Ray, African Religions: Symbols, Ritual, and Community (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 50.

³See definition of terms, pp. 14-15.
a school boy who had drowned in the river.

10. Ashanti traditional religion has no clearly defined eschatology. Unlike Christian eschatological thought regarding the second coming of Christ and paradise restored, the Ashanti view of "human existence does not project forward to a distant and transcendent future; it projects back upon itself to the present, in cyclical fashion to the all-important now."¹ The Ashantis believe in life after death, but this is understood as the continued involvement of the deceased in the life of the living.

11. It is not a missionary religion. Every Ashanti is supposed to know the beliefs and practices of the traditional religion, but the idea of proselytizing is not part of the religious tradition.

These characteristics lead us deeper into the Ashanti worldview.

**The Ashanti Worldview**

For the Christian church to communicate the good news of the Bible to Ashantis effectively, it is necessary to understand the Ashanti worldview. Understanding the worldview of a particular culture is the key for the outsider to make an impact and to influence the people in that culture for change. This is because from one generation to another, each member

¹Ray, 140-41.
"reared in a given culture is conditioned to interpret reality in terms of the conceptual system of that culture."¹ Without a clear focus on how a particular group of people in a culture perceive reality and interpret it, we will be only scratching the surface of the culture and neglecting the core where it itches.

The first thing one notices about Ashanti worldview is a religious ontology. Every aspect of the culture, from the individual to communal levels, including its social and political institutions, is bound up with religion. There is no dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural. In the Ashanti world, there is no compartmentalization of religion and the sciences. They are related. To Ashantis, Paul’s remark about "principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places" in Eph 6:12 is real.

Ashantis believe in a Supreme Being who is higher than the created order. He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. Ashantis refer to Him as Nyame or Onyame, meaning "the Shining One."² He is seen as


²Another name used for Onyame is Nyankopon or Onyankopon, which means "The only great one." For a discussion of the Ashanti root name for deity, see J. B. Danquah, The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), 30-57.
distant, merciful, and at the same time vengeful.

The spirit world is alive in the Ashanti worldview. Between the Supreme Being and man lie powers and principalities, good and bad, spirits, lesser gods, ancestors, and other forces of the cosmic and earthly realm.¹

The next aspect of the Ashanti worldview is the idea of corporate identity. The Ashanti always have the sense of belonging. Though they see themselves as individuals, they also sense their collective identity as members of society. In fact, an individualistic lifestyle is foreign to Ashantis. This idea of collective identity and a sense of belonging may be one of the reasons why Ashantis practice an extended family system.

Another aspect of the Ashanti worldview is that they have a regard for history. They believe that past events can have an influence over the future. To the Ashantis, the saying that "history repeats itself" is a reality. Therefore, any mistake that led to a misfortune in society should be guarded against and not repeated. It is therefore not surprising why most Ashanti parents conduct investigations into the family record of a would-be in-law.

One significant aspect of the Ashanti worldview

¹I further discuss the Supreme Being, ancestors, lesser gods, and witches under a section of this chapter on beliefs and practices.
is a belief in dreams. Dreams are considered to be ways in which spiritual powers communicate with individuals. Dreams can be from the Supreme Being or from ancestors or gods in the spirit world. Ashantis pay particular attention to the interpretation that their diviners give to dreams.

A dream in which a tree fell and almost crushed an Ashanti farmer to death will deter him from going to farm the next day until he has consulted a diviner to prevent a possible disaster from happening.

Again, when one has a dream and sees a bull running after him, the usual interpretation given is that a witch is seeking after the life of that person. An Ashanti traditionalist will seek help from a diviner to protect himself in such a situation.

In several instances, dreams have led to new religious movements in Ashanti, known popularly as the spiritual churches.\(^1\) Individual prophets claim to have had a dream in which God called them and gave them healing power to minister to the needs of sick people. For example, through a night vision Isaac Kwasi Prah left the Methodist church in Ghana and founded the Divine Healing and Miracle Church.\(^2\) In fact, Christian missionaries to Ashanti may identify with a fundamental

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\(^1\)See chapter 5 for a discussion about the spiritual churches.

\(^2\)Van Rheenen, 187-188.
belief if they frequently comment on the importance of dreams in the Bible.

The Ashanti worldview strongly endorses respect for elders. In Ashanti thought, the elders include the ancestors who are deceased but are considered living and continue to influence the affairs of the family. Respect for elders brings honor to one’s family, whereas disrespect for elders brings disgrace to the family. It is disrespectful for an Ashanti to call an elderly person by the first name. It is traditionally acceptable to use the appropriate titles such as opanin (elder), wofa (uncle), mesewaa (aunt), nana (grandfather or grandmother), before the first and last names. Any act of disrespect to an elder is likely to be met with stern questions such as, "Whose son or daughter are you?"

The tradition of showing respect for elders and authorities in traditional societies is the reason that when the opinion leader or elder is won to Christianity, he can, in turn, influence the community for Christ.

The Ashanti perception of the universe leads us to discuss further some of their beliefs and practices.

Some Beliefs and Practices

The Supreme Being

Ashantis have a firm belief in the Supreme Being. He is the creator of man and everything in the universe. He is also the overall ruler of the created order and has
power of life and death. He is called Nyame or Onyame.¹

Belief in the Supreme Being was part of the religious tradition of the Ashanti long before Christian missionaries set foot in Ghana. Atheistic philosophy is foreign to Ashantis. One of their proverbs affirms this statement. It says: "Obi nkvere abofra onyame" (No one teaches a child to know God). The idea is that God is everywhere, and He is revealed through His created works.

The name for God, Onyame, does not convey all the functions of God. Ashantis therefore use some appellations and attributes in everyday speech to express their belief in God, His uniqueness, character, and nature. I will mention a few of these.

Apart from His name, Onyame, God is also known as Oboade (the creator of all things), Totrobonsu (the maker and giver of rain), Twereduampon (the one on whom men lean and do not fall), Odomankoma (He who gives in abundance to all), Tetekwaforamoa (one who endures forever), and several others. Ashantis regard the Supreme Being as spiritual, invisible, and omnipresent. One often hears an Ashanti proverb, "Se wope asem aka akvere Nyame a na wo ka kvere mframa" (If you want to tell God, tell the wind). Also regarding His omnipresence, the usual expression in an Ashanti proverb

¹See Danquah, 40; also, Rattray, Ashanti, 139-144.
is "Se wo dwane Onyame a wohve na se" (It is impossible to hide oneself from God).

Ashantis also regard Onyame as a being too great to be approached lightly. He is one who cannot be bothered with the ordinary affairs of men. However, he has delegated authority to the abosom (lesser gods) and the ancestors who act as intermediaries between God and man. Though God is not approached directly, He is the ultimate recipient of all sacrifices offered to the lesser gods. E. A. Mettle-Nunoo points out clearly that Akans regard the lesser gods as a means to an end and not an end in themselves.¹ Perhaps the argument for the indirect approach to God is that, in Ashanti culture, the chief is not approached directly but through the linguist. It is this view about the Supreme Being that has brought about the belief in lesser gods as intermediaries in the Ashanti religious tradition.

The practice of worshiping Onyame through the Nyamedua (God’s tree)² was common among Ashantis.


²Though the Nyamedua is rarely seen on Ashanti compounds, it is the most ancient of all the rites of the traditional Ashanti way of worship of Onyame. It consisted of a four-forked receptacle at the top of the main stem. It sometimes branches into three. A basin or pot containing dudo, which is a mixture of water and herbs, is placed between the forks. This is used for curing diseases. A chain is run through the Nyamedua from the receptacle of the fork to the base in the ground, symbolizing a link between God and His children.
In Ashanti and other Akan areas in Ghana, the traditional day of worship of the Supreme Being is Saturday. Ashantis believe that Onyame Kwame (The God of Saturday) completed His work of creation on Saturday and appeared to men on that day to receive their worship. J. B. Danquah, who was one of the first Akan scholars to conduct research on Akan religion and ethics, wrote: "The Akan recognize that all men are issue of the first progenitor, the ultimate ancestor and creative Nana whose day is Saturday: Nana Nyankopon Kwame."

Every Ashanti male child born on Saturday is called Kwame, which is the day-name for God. Among

on earth. White clay and white linen are used to decorate the Nyamedua, symbolizing the holiness and righteousness of God. I also need to mention the Akrapresia (washing of souls) in connection with the Nyamedua rites. Every Ashanti chief within the week has three special baths dedicated to the washing of his own soul, usually the day he was born, for the soul of the stool he sits on, which occurs on the day-name of the stool, and lastly, the soul of Onyame Kwame on Saturday. An elder of a family also leads out in the "washing of souls" for the family. The actual worship takes place on Onyame Kwame day, Saturday. Every family offers gifts to Onyame Kwame, which include white yams, white eggs, plantain, white sheep, and white clay. On that day, the elder who leads out in the ceremony offers the gifts and prayers to God on behalf of the entire family. He sprinkles some of the dudo on the people, especially on the sick, and asks special healing mercies for them. It is believed that in many cases, the prayers are answered. For more information about the Nyamedua rite and worship of Onyame Kwame, see K. Owusu-Mensah, Onyamee Kwaame: The Akan God of Saturday (Accra: Advent Press, 1990); idem, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993); Rattray, Ashanti, 139-144; Danquah, 43-56. Also, interview by author, Opanin John Kwaning (age 75), Berrien Springs, MI, July 13, 1993.

'Danquah, xxix.'
Ashantis, Saturday is known as *meneneameneda* (written and pronounced in short as *memeneda*), meaning "I AM THAT I AM DAY." We recognize that when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He referred to His name as "I AM THAT I AM" (Exod 3:14). Ashantis know that the great "I AM" has a day of worship, which is Saturday. "I AM THAT I AM DAY," when translated into *Asante* or *Twi*¹ language, surprisingly means *Meneneameneda*. *Meneneameneda* in Ashanti tradition is referred to as *Dapaa* (a good day, a real or special day).

On this day every Ashanti family abstains from normal work, such as farming, going to the riverside to fetch water, and other duties. It is a special day dedicated to the worship of *Onyame Kwame*. However, with the coming of European missionaries to Ghana, traditional Saturday worship celebration dedicated to *Onyame Kwame* was supplanted by the European Sunday-worship tradition. The missionaries taught the people to worship God on Sunday instead of Saturday. In Ashanti, every male child born on Sunday is called *Kwasi*. With the introduction of Sunday as a new day of worship by the missionaries, the Ashantis and other Akan people began to call the White

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¹*Asante*, or *Twi*, is one of the dialects of the Akan language spoken by Ashantis. Probably, "Ashanti" is the European way of writing *Asante*. Although "Ashanti" is used in many books, in speaking and writing the native language, *Asante* is used or preferred.
missionaries the name **Kwasi Broni**, which literally means "Sunday white man."\(^1\)

K. Owusu-Mensah, an Ashanti historian, points out vividly:

But for the European missionaries who brought Christianity to Akanland, the Akan would never have known about "a Sunday God." The only thing they knew, and had lived with through the ages, was that God is called Onyamee Kwaame and that His day of worship is Saturday.\(^2\)

Despite the introduction of Christian Sunday worship and the gradual annihilation of traditional Ashanti Saturday worship in Ghana, an Ashanti does not need to go far to know that the true day of worship of **Onyamee Kwame** is Saturday.

The Nature of Man

The Ashantis believe that man is created of material and spiritual things. He is therefore a biological and spiritual being. He is made up of the following components: the **Okra** (a soul), **mogva** (blood), **sunsum** (spirit), and **honhom** (breath of life).

Among Ashantis, **Okra** is considered the most important part of man. One cannot exist without it. It is the spark of the Supreme Being in man. According to Gyekye, **Okra** constitutes the innermost self, the essence

\(^1\)This does not mean that the Ashanti consider all White males and females to have been born on Sunday.

\(^2\)Owusu-Mensah, **Onyamee Kwaame**, 52.
of the individual person and life. Since Okra is the
life in man, there is the usual expression among Ashantis
as okrateasefo (a living soul). Apparently this
religious thought is expressed in the Christian Bible.²
The withdrawal of the Okra (soul) from man means death.
When the Okra leaves the body, it goes back to the
Supreme Being who gave it.

Every Ashanti child born is given a kradin (soul
name), which is the day name given at birth. I was born
on Tuesday, and my kradin (soul name) is Kwabena. An
Ashanti girl born on Tuesday is called Abena as her
kradin. Apart from the kradin, Ashantis believe in
nkrabea (destiny). They believe that before the Okra
(soul) enters the individual, it bids farewell (kra) to
the Supreme Being, who is the giver. The Supreme Being
in turn gives nkra (a message) to the Okra (soul) to the
individual, and that will determine the life that person
will live on earth.³

The Okra (soul) then becomes the bearer of the
individual's destiny and serves as its guardian
protector.⁴ This belief among the Ashantis establishes

³Kwame Gyekye, An Essay on African Philosophical
Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1990), 85.

²See Gen 2:7.

³Gyekye, 104.

⁴Amponsah, 43.
the basis of their link between the soul and one's destiny. To the Ashanti, nothing happens to the individual that has not been determined by God. Their belief in fate is usually expressed in proverbs. The following are a few of them.

1. Obiara ne ne nkrabea (Each one of us has his own destiny).

2. Eve ne nkrabea (It is his destiny).

3. Onvame na ahvehve obi ara nkrabea (It is God who has determined each person's destiny).

4. Onvame nkum wo a oteasefo ye kwa (Unless God determines your death, a living person attempts in vain).

5. Onvame nkrabea nni nkwatibe (What God has destined cannot be evaded).

The Ashantis' belief in fate does not mean they do not believe in personal responsibility or that one cannot alter one's actions.¹ Each one is held responsible for his or her actions in life. This is where free will comes into the discussion. One Akan philosopher puts it vividly: "For the fact that every event is caused does not in the Akan system, eliminate or

¹Amponsah mentions that a person is capable of changing his actions by taking advice from the elders, who are familiar with the laws and customs of society. He also agrees that supernatural forces such as witches, sorcery, and even a powerful curse by someone can alter one's destiny. Likewise, a person's own hasty actions can mar his own good destiny. See Amponsah, 44.
subvert the role of the individual in human actions."

The *mogva* (blood) is a biological component that man inherits from his mother. The Ashantis practice a matrilineal system of descent. It is believed that the *mogva* from the mother determines a person's membership in a lineage, clan, and tribe, as well as his obligations as a citizen. The traditional Ashanti view is that it is the *mogva* inherited from the mother that maintains the physical continuity between one generation and another.

A person's *sunsum* is one of the components of man that is derived directly from the Supreme Being. It is [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

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1Gyekye, 121.


4Some Akan theologians, philosophers, and sociologists have different views about the *sunsum*. Some accept the view that *sunsum* is the same as *ntoro*, which is an inherited characteristic derived from the father, and therefore it is physical. Others consider *sunsum* as spiritual, which is derived from the Supreme Being. I do not discuss the various positions in this study. However, for the purpose of clarification in this study, I take the view that *sunsum* is spiritual, and it is derived from the Supreme Being. For further studies about the various positions, see K. A. Busia, "The Ashanti of the Gold Coast," in African Worlds, ed. Daryll Forde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 197; P. A. Twumasi, Medical Systems in Ghana (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), 22; Cultural Studies for Junior Secondary Schools, Pupils, book 2, 34; Gyekye, 91; also W. E. Abraham, The Mind of Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 60; Rattray, Ashanti, 45-76.
spiritual, and it determines a person's individuality. The prosperity or downfall of a person depends on his sunsum. Again, whether a person will be clever, stupid, hardworking, good, or bad will depend on his sunsum. Some writers see a connection between a person's sunsum and personality.¹ Some of the usual expressions used in this connection are ne sunsum ve duru (he has a strong spirit or personality)² and ne sunsum hve me so (his spirit or personality overshadows mine).³ Amponsah mentions that if a person has a strong sunsum, it is an antidote against witchcraft.⁴

Ashantis also believe that other natural objects such as trees, ropes, and plants contain sunsum. Sunsum therefore could not be physical but spiritual.

The honhom (breath of life) is spiritual and is given to man by God.⁵ In Ashanti thought, the honhom, together with the Okra (soul) enables a person to breathe.⁶ Thus, the physical body is without life until the honhom and the Okra are present. Gyekye explains

²Gyekye, 96.
³Ibid.
⁴Amponsah, 43.
⁵See Gen 2:7.
that it is the Okra that "causes" the breathing and yet the Okra and the honhom are not identical.\(^1\) A living person is called okrateasefo. When the honhom leaves the body, the person dies.

### Death and Ancestor Veneration

Among Ashantis there is a widespread belief that death does not terminate the existence of a human being. Rather it is a transition from this world to the spirit world called Asamando,\(^2\) in which the dead continue to live as ancestral spirits and maintain relationships with the living, bringing both benefits and misfortune.

The Ashantis' concept of death and ancestor veneration is grounded in the belief that the Okra (soul) is thought to continue to live because it was given to man by God, who is immortal. Again, Ashantis believe in the disembodied survival of the Okra\(^3\) (soul). When death occurs, the Okra, in their concept, does not perish with the body (honam), but rather continues to exist in the

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\(^1\)Gyekye, 88. He further explains that the honhom is the tangible manifestation or evidence of the presence of the Okra.

\(^2\)Asamando is considered to be the habitat of the spirits of the ancestors. The place where the dead are buried is called Asieve. Traditionally, there is the belief that the living are not supposed to frequent where the dead are buried. Many burial places are left unattended in order not to disturb the spirits of the dead.

\(^3\)For a full discussion of this concept, see Gyekye, 99–101.
spirit world. Death, therefore, is not perceived as a natural phenomenon by an Ashanti traditionalist. To him there is something within man that cannot die.¹

The concept that the soul continues to live is expressed not only in speech but also in Ashanti art. For example, the Ashanti adinkra² (cloth of mourning) bears the traditional design that is expressed in the Twi language as "Nvame bewu na mawu," meaning "as long as God is not dead, I shall not die."³

Despite belief in the continued existence of the dead, when death occurs it causes amazement in Ashanti communities. A cause must always be found. Certain deaths—for example, those caused by car accidents, snakebites, and lightning—are attributed to witchcraft,⁴ because in traditional Ashanti culture, one does not look for natural philosophy or scientific explanation for the causes of such deaths.⁵

Among Ashantis, the ancestors are venerated because of their ongoing role in society.

¹Danquah, 161. See also Gyekye, 100.

²Adinkra cloth is one of the traditional hand-woven cloths usually worn during funeral celebrations. The word possibly means "bidding farewell to each other."


⁴I discuss witchcraft in another section in this chapter.

What Staples has said about the southern Bantu in South Africa is true about the Ashantis in Ghana. He writes: "The southern Bantu live with their ancestors and a powerful sense of ancestral presence pervades almost every dimension of their lives."\(^1\) Every aspect of life in Ashanti from birth to death is inseparably bound up with the veneration of the ancestors. The living members of the society are therefore cautious about the way the ancestors are treated.

I will discuss briefly some of the ways in which the ancestors are venerated.

Ashantis believe that the dead demand a dwelling, and, as such, burial places are to be respected. One cannot frequent the cemeteries as is the practice in most Western societies.

It is also taboo to mention the name of the dead, since in the Ashanti world the invisible are just as real as the visible.

Again, it is the usual practice among Ashantis to offer food and drink to the dead on a shrine. Every pious traditional Ashanti, before drinking water or wine, will pour out a little from his cup onto the ground to invite the ancestors to partake with him. Similarly, one

will also throw bits of food to the ground before proceeding to eat.

Having established the Ashantis' belief that the dead continue to live and are venerated because of their ongoing role in society, I now discuss the rituals for the dead and the ancestral cult.

Rituals for the Dead

Ashantis pay particular attention to the rites of passage at death and the induction of the spirit of the deceased person to join the spirit of his ancestors. This is based on the belief that unless the proper rites are performed, the spirit of the deceased person will not be able to join the spirit of his or her ancestors. There is also the fear that the spirit of the deceased person will continue to haunt the family for their improper and insensitive attention to his burial and funeral rites. Therefore, as Nketia has mentioned, "the celebration of a funeral is regarded a duty and no pains are spared to make it a memorable event."1 Four elements of the rites of passage are discussed briefly.

Preparation of the Corpse

Among Ashantis, when a person dies, the body is ritually cleansed by washing it with hot water, sponge, soap, and lime. Relatives make sure the deceased's

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finger and toenails are trimmed. The hair is nicely cut to suit the appropriate style of the person’s age and gender. The body is dressed in rich Kente cloth with gold chain. The reason for keeping the body clean is to make sure that it is free from contamination and pollution when it is laid in state for public viewing. Also the deceased must be treated with dignity as he or she sets out on the journey to the realm of the ancestors.

Pre-burial Mourning

Mourning the dead is an important social event among the Ashantis. It is a period in which the deceased’s family and loved ones express their sense of loss as well as their bitterness and hate in the form of funeral dirges against death as an enemy to the human race. Nketia has described that “its demand is often not the solemnity of a quiet atmosphere.” It involves the wailing of human voices, singing of dirges, beating of drums as well as the firing of guns, especially if the deceased is from the royal family.

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1Ibid., 7.

2Kente cloth is a handwoven, expensive, traditional cotton cloth of such colors as red, yellow, green, blue, white, and black, depicting traditional meaning. It originated among the Akans.

3Nketia, 1.

4Ibid.
Mourning for the deceased takes place when the body has been prepared, laid in state, and the lineage head is ready for mourning. Relatives, friends, and other sympathizers come to mourn with the bereaved family and to pay their last respects to the deceased. On such occasions, cries of "aagvaee, enaee wodemegvaa hwan nie o?" (literally translated "father, mother, whom did you entrust to take care of me?") are heard from mourners.

Burial

The burial stage in Ashanti society marks the physical separation between the deceased and members of his or her household as well as the community. It is considered to be the most sorrowful stage in an Ashanti funeral celebration. At this stage relatives are careful in following the burial rituals so that the deceased will have a proper burial. The gravediggers pour libation to "Asaase Yaa" to ask for permission to dig a grave for burial. Only a few of the relatives of the deceased are allowed to be present as they put the body in a coffin. Relatives put additional clothes, money, gold rings, mat, comb, pomade, and sometimes the weapons and ornaments of the deceased in the coffin since it is believed the dead person will use them in the spirit world. Bishop Sarpong

1For a full discussion of the burial rites, see Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti, 159-63.

2"Asaase Yaa" is the god of earth known as mother earth.
mentions that Ghanaians have the belief that the world of the dead is fashioned on much the same pattern as this present world.¹

As the relatives of the deceased carry the coffin to the cemetery, the sounds of wailing and dirges from the mourners increase to indicate the intensity of their grief. On arrival at the gravesite Busia has observed that before the grave is filled in, a farewell address is given to the deceased by a member of his lineage:

You are leaving us today; we have fired guns; we have given you a sheep; we have performed your funeral. Do not let any of us fall ill. Let us get money to pay the expenses of your funeral. Let the women bear children. Life to all of us. Life to the chief.²

After the grave is filled in, the people return home and wash their hands and feet as well as the tools used at the gravesite.³ This ritual cleansing is prescribed to avoid contamination, since death "is regarded as a powerfully polluting agency."⁴

The Funeral Day

Among Ashantis, as in other parts of Ghana, the funeral day is a day set aside by the family to mourn and


³Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti, 163.

⁴Staples, 138.
remember the dead. It is also an important occasion in which the soul of the deceased sets out on its journey to the ancestral world after the funeral rites have been performed.\(^1\) Enough attention is given in the organization of the funeral so that all the demands in connection with the funeral are properly met.

Traditionally, it is required that very close relatives of the deceased go through a period of abuada, which literally means "fasting." They stay away from the main traditional food called fufu,\(^2\) and live on drinks, eggs, colanuts, porridge, soups, and very light food. The abuada (fasting) period goes on for at least eight days. They do this to show their grief for the loss of their loved one.

Funeral days are usually Mondays and Thursdays, but in recent years Saturday\(^3\) has become a popular day.

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\(^2\)Fufu is a traditional Ashanti food made from cassava and plantain, pounded into soft round balls and eaten with soup. If an Ashanti does not eat this food in a day in Ghana, it means he has fasted that particular day. In recent years the traditional practice of abuada (fasting) has been abused. Close relatives eat heavy food such as kenke, which is made from corn. They also eat rice, fish, and meat. The practice of eating kenke, fish, and meat was probably borrowed from the Fantes, who usually serve visitors to their funerals with those foods. However, as long as fufu is not eaten, the mourners still consider that they are fasting.

\(^3\)Ashantis believe Saturday is the day devoted exclusively to worship God, and nothing else should be done on that day. Owusu Mensah mentions that "Saturday funerals are a new introduction, originating in
for funerals, as it is on that day that workers are free to attend. The night before the funeral, there is wake-keeping, and the night is characterized by the singing of traditional songs, dancing, and firing of guns.

Close relatives of the deceased put on sackcloth, either black, red, or any dark brown cloth or adinkra cloth, and walk barefooted, indicating sorrow and mourning.

It is the tradition for the relatives of the deceased to take their seat at the funeral in order for friends and loved ones to shake their hands and express their condolences. Sympathizers give donations to help defray some of the costs incurred during the funeral celebration.

The bereaved family in turn serves the sympathizers with drinks. Among Ashantis, funerals are supposed to end with a sacrifice. Usually a sheep is killed, and libation is also offered to invite the ancestors to witness the induction of the deceased person as he or she joins the ancestors in the spirit world. The deceased spirit is invoked and is requested to drink

government workers first having half-Saturday off and now all Saturday off every week." See Owusu-Mensah, Onyamee Kwaame: The Akan God of Saturday, 51.


2All the sackcloth mentioned above symbolizes a period of mourning, not happiness.
and then join the ancestors in peace.

Among Ashantis, funeral celebration is a year-long activity. The deceased person is remembered on the eighth day, fifteenth day, the fortieth day known as adaduunan, the eightieth day known as adaduotwe, and finally the afehyiada, which is the first anniversary.¹ When all the funeral days are observed and the rituals involved have been performed, it is assumed that appropriate respect has been paid to the soul of the deceased person and the relatives can also live in peace and count on the blessings of another ancestor. However, not all the ancestors can be remembered in the future, especially if there are no living descendants who remember to continue the established medium of communication.

Ancestral Cult

The ancestral cult of the Ashantis is an organized system of religious rites that unites the lineages of the Ashanti society and strengthens the relationship that exists between the living and the dead. The activities of the cult are expressed through rituals of kinship and communal rituals.²

Rituals of kinship include those associated with the life cycle, such as the outdooring of new babies,

¹Rattray, Religion and Art in Ashanti, 166.

²I do not discuss all the rituals associated with each category. However, I do discuss the Adae festival, which is one of the communal rituals of the Ashantis.
initiation into adulthood, marriage, and death.

Communal rituals, on the other hand, are concerned with issues that affect the entire tribe, such as the annual festival celebration, installation of a chief, and cleansing of the entire community from a deadly disease. For the purpose of this study, I will discuss one of the communal rituals called Adae festival, which is celebrated by the entire Ashanti nation.

The Adae Festival

According to Rattray, the word Adae means a place of rest or lying down since no one is permitted to work or to farm on that day. It is a feast day that is dedicated to the propitiation, solicitation, invocation, and veneration of ancestral spirits. There are two Adae days, and they are held twenty-one days apart. The two ceremonies are known as kwasidae, or Adae kese, which occurs on a Sunday, and Wukudae or Kudapaakuo which occurs on a Wednesday. During the Adae, the chief and the elders enter the stool house known as nkonwafieso to perform the religious rites to the royal ancestors on

1See definition of Adae under subtitle, "The Adae Festival," on p. 47.
2Rattray, Ashanti, 92.
3Busia, The Position of the Chief, 27.
4Rattray, Ashanti, 92.
behalf of the Ashanti nation.¹

Rattray² and Amponsah³ have described in detail the rituals and activities involved in the Adae festival. I will therefore mention only the main features.

On the day before the Adae, every necessary preparation in connection with the festival is made. The stool house and all the stools are cleaned, and in the evening drums are beaten to remind all about the occasion.

On the Adae day, drums are again beaten to summon the people together. The main ritual takes place in the stool house. The keeper of the stool house, who is also the head stool carrier, opens the door to the stool house. Only the chief, linguist, stool carrier, and one or two of the elders are allowed to enter the stool house to perform the rite. Before they enter the house, the chief stool attendant pours water from a calabash at the entrance to the room to invite the spirits to come and wash their hands.⁴ As a sign of respect for the ancestors, the chief stands on his ahenema⁵ (native sandals); and with his shoulders bared, he offers drink,

¹Amponsah, 99.
²Rattray, Ashanti, 92-120.
⁴Ibid., 100.
⁵Ahenema is a native sandal. It literally means "sons and daughters of kings."
food, and meat on the stools of the ancestors. The chief reverently invokes the spirits of the ancestors in the appropriate manner, which Busia portrays vividly:

Today is Adae, come and receive this and eat; let this town prosper, let the bearers of children bear children; may all the people get riches; life to me; long life to the nation (oman).¹

It is the usual practice "to ring a bell to show that the spirits are eating or about to eat."²

After the rites in the stool house are completed, the next stage is a public celebration, which takes place in the public square in the town.³ The celebration begins with the beating of talking drums. Meanwhile, the chief, who went home after the ceremony at the stool house, gets dressed and adorns himself with gold rings, necklace, and bracelets. He wears these ornaments around his arms, ankles, and head. The chief enters the public square followed by two Kwadwumfo (minstrels), who recite "into the king’s ears the names and deeds of dead kings and queens as far back as their traditional history has any record."⁴ After the chief has taken his seat, all

¹Busia, The Position of the Chief, 28.
²Rattray, Ashanti, 97.
³The 1995 Adae Kese festival was celebrated together with the silver jubilee of the installation of the Asantehene, the "King of Ashanti" Otumfuor Opoku Ware II, at the sports stadium in Kumasi, the Ashanti capital. See, The Adae Kese Durbar (Kumasi: St. Cyprian’s Anglican Cathedral Press, 1995), 1-28.
⁴Rattray, Ashanti, 103.
the elders and members of each lineage pay their respect to him. The event concludes with dancing, drumming, singing, and a calling upon some of the elders and relatives who have taken their roles as ancestors in the land of the spirits. After this, the Queen Mother comes to greet the chief, indicating that it is now time for the chief to leave the gathering to go to his house. This allows the rest of the crowd to disperse to their various homes.

The Role of the Ancestors

The ancestors play important roles in Ashanti culture. They include the following:

1. They participate in the life of this world by sending help and protection or punishing with misfortune.

2. They act as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and man. That is why libation prayer¹ is offered to thank and affirm society's dependence on them.

3. They act as custodians of laws, customs, land, and morality in society. An Ashanti has the belief that the ancestors are watching him, and therefore he has to behave well in society in order to give a good account

¹Libation prayer is the means through which the living seek to communicate with the ancestors or objects of worship. In libation prayer the Supreme Being is also mentioned.
when he joins them one day in the spirit world.¹

4. They sometimes appear to relatives in dreams to give them information concerning personal belongings such as cloth or jewelry they need at Asamando which relatives forgot to bury with them.² They also tell them where family treasures such as gold are hidden.

5. They are consulted to sanction the legitimacy of the chief’s office because the stool on which the chief sits belongs to the royal ancestors.

I now discuss another important institution in connection with the living and the dead, namely, chieftaincy and the stool.

Chieftaincy and the Stool

The traditional office of the Chief and his role in the Ghanaian society form one of the major institutions that colonial rule and Christianity could not destroy. The National Constitution recognizes the

¹Until Christianity came to Ashanti and forgiveness of sins was preached by the missionaries, people were afraid to steal the produce from someone else’s farm. This is because, previously, the Ashanti believed that the ancestors were watching him and one day he would have to give an account of his behavior. Christian teaching emphasized a God in heaven who hates sin but loves sinners; God is in charge and not the ancestors. However, the belief still exists, and one is afraid of being cursed for stealing.

²Usually, it is expected that the next family member who dies is "sent" with those belongings during the burial to be given to him in the spirit world.
functions of the chiefs in the local, regional, and national levels.¹

Until Western democracy came to Ghana through colonial rule, the chiefs were rulers and leaders of the people, exercising and practicing grassroots democracy that involved all the people in their society. Today, article 272 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana recognizes the function of the National House of Chiefs to "advise any person or authority charged with any responsibility under this constitution or any other law for any matter relating to or affecting chieftaincy."² They are also recognized to study, interpret, and codify customary law as well as the evaluation of traditional customs.³

In Ashanti, the chief must come from a lineage or clan considered to be the royal family. The office of the Chief is based on a matrilineal descent system, since Ashantis trace descent through the mother.

The chief occupies a sacred position. From the day of his installation he is regarded as a sacred leader.⁴ Busia argues that the sacredness of the chief

²Ibid.
³Ibid.
as a person and the position he occupies are emphasized by taboos.¹ He writes:

He may not strike, or be struck by anyone, lest the ancestors bring misfortune upon the tribe. He may never walk bare-footed, lest when the sole of his foot touches the ground some misfortune befall the community. He should walk with care lest he stumble. If he does stumble, the expected calamity has to be averted with a sacrifice. His buttocks may not touch the ground: That again will bring misfortune.²

By virtue of this unique status, the chief then becomes the intermediary between his royal ancestors³ and the tribe. The chief must possess certain qualities. He should be mentally and physically sound, must command respect, have a good reputation, be well versed in traditional laws and customs of the land, and must be acceptable to a majority of the people. The stool the chief occupies belongs to his royal ancestors, for it was established by the first ancestor who founded the town or village. The stools are considered sacred because it is

¹Taboos are special rules that control the behavior of members in a traditional society such as that of the Ashantis. If a person breaks a taboo, it is said the person has offended the gods and ancestors. Some of the taboos in Ashanti are: a man is not supposed to run away from battle, it is a taboo to steal the property of a god or a shrine, to insult or slap a chief, to make a girl pregnant before her puberty rites, to commit suicide, to commit murder, to marry or have sex with close relations, to go to the farm or stream to fetch water on sacred days, and so on. In recent years, because of the influence of Christianity and Western acculturation, some of these taboos have been relaxed.

²Ibid., 26-27.

³The royal ancestors are former chiefs from the royal or ruling family who are deceased but are believed to continue their lives in the land of the departed.
believed they contain the spirits of the ancestors. This is why the actual celebration of festivals dedicated to the ancestors and the cult itself is centered around the blackened stool.¹ The stools of the deceased chiefs are kept at the stool house.

The well-being of the society depends on how the chief conducts himself by following in the footsteps of the ancestors and maintaining good relations with them. The chief, therefore, has important roles to play in society both for the living and the ancestors.

The Role of the Chief

The chief’s role in society includes religious, political, traditional, judicial, military, and economic responsibilities and functions.

Religiously, he functions as an intermediary between the living, the ancestors, the gods, and the Supreme Being. He performs the rites during festival and harvest celebrations as well as in times of major emergency or misfortune. He does these through the

¹Amponsah, 102. He also mentions that it is not everybody whose stools are blackened but heads of lineages, clans, chiefs, kings, and queen mothers. He also states that the stools are blackened in order to preserve their beauty, since sacrifices of blood, fat, and meat, which are offered on the stools, would stain them if left in their natural state. They are blackened, also, to arouse awe and reverence to the ancestors, and to remind the living of the death of the ancestors since black is a sign of mourning among Ashantis. See also Peter Sarpong, The Sacred Stools of the Akans (Accra-Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1971).
offering of sacrifices, pouring of libation, and prayers.

The chief is also the political leader of those within his territory. As a political head, the chief summons an assembly to discuss the welfare of the community and allows national government officials to discuss and explain government policies to the people.¹ In a similar vein, the chief represents the traditional council, and presents their grievances to the national government.² This function is very important in modern-day Ashanti, especially if the government tries to use executive powers to acquire stool-lands.

Traditionally, the chief is in charge of the territorial lands and laws that govern the society. He sees to it that the people obey the taboos and celebrate all the festivals. In addition to this, the chief organizes communal labor as a means of undertaking self-help projects such as schools, clinics, places of convenience, marketplaces, and other projects that are vital to society’s needs.

The chief is also a judge of the people he rules. He settles disputes between individuals, especially farm-land cases, marriage, and cases related to the stool. He administers justice by sometimes offering the appropriate punishment to the guilty party or allowing the guilty

¹Mettle-Nunoo, 131.

²Ibid.
party to pay compensation to the offended party.

The chief also performs military duties. He is the commander-in-chief of the army. He organizes the people and appoints heads over them and leads them to wars against their enemies.¹

As a chief he also performs economic functions. He finds ways to raise funds for the traditional council through taxes and royalties from mining companies and timber firms operating in his territory.² As long as the chief performs his functions according to the laws of the land, he gains the approval of the ancestors and the people. If the chief abuses his powers, he offends the ancestors, and that can sever his connection with them and consequently lead to his destoolment. I now proceed to discuss the lesser gods.

Abosom (The Lesser Gods)

Apart from the belief in the Supreme Being and the ancestors, Ashantis also believe in the existence of lesser gods known as abosom.³ The spirits of the abosom

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³In its singular form the word is rendered obosom. Abosom is the plural form. It literally means "the worship of stones or rocks." In the actual sense, it is not the stones or rocks that are worshipped but the spirits of the gods that inhabit these inanimate objects. Pobee mentions that the "etymological association of the god with a rock may be a hint at the security found in the gods, rock being a symbol of stability and strength." See John S. Pobee, Toward an African Theology (Nashville:
may inhabit stones, rocks, rivers, lakes, trees, mountains, ropes, and several other inanimate objects.

The abosom are regarded as Nyame mma (children of the Supreme Being). The designation of this name demonstrates the source of their power. The power of the abosom is described as beneficent and dangerous.\(^1\) The general belief of the Ashantis is that the Supreme Being is transcendent, too big and awesome to be approached lightly and bothered with the trivial affairs of everyday life. God has therefore delegated matters to the abosom to act as intermediaries between the creator and the creature.\(^2\) "They are immanent, not transcendent, and their relationship to man is fundamentally reciprocal."\(^3\) Sacrifices are offered, and libation is poured to the Supreme Being through the abosom.

Some of the abosom in Ashanti include the river Tano, Lake Bosomtwe, tigare, kune, and gadawu.

The abosom are worshiped; therefore they have

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Abingdon, 1979), 47. For a full account of the lesser gods, see Rattray, Ashanti, 144-202.

\(^1\)Pobee, 47.

\(^2\)The abosom and ancestors may have similar roles but there are differences. The ancestors are believed to be very close to the Supreme Being. You dare not treat them with contempt, whereas the abosom may be treated with contempt if they fail to do what is expected of them. The twin pillars of the spirit world in traditional Ashanti religion are the Supreme Being and the ancestors. Between them are the lesser gods.

\(^3\)Ray, 64.
priests and priestesses. The psychological trust in the healing from the *abosom* in Ashanti is powerful and influential. The idea behind this is that since the *abosom* are considered as authoritative figures, a prescription or pronouncement of healing coming from them is considered as real.

The Role of the *Abosom*

The *abosom* perform a number of roles, among which are the following: They act as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and man. They also act as guardians of morality in society. They therefore punish those who go against God's laws and reward those who are obedient to these laws.

The *abosom* are able to influence and manipulate natural objects for the good or ill of society. For example, the *Obosom Tano* is connected with the river *Tano* and is supposed to "ensure good navigation after receiving appropriate sacrifices."¹

In addition to the above roles, the *abosom*, through their priests and priestesses, are able to identify evil spirits that manifest themselves as witches to harm or interfere in the progress of their own kinsmen.

A discussion about *abosom* in Ashanti culture is incomplete without touching briefly on the *asuman*. This

¹Mettle-Nunoo, 64.
is what I turn to next in this section.

The Asuman

The belief in the power of *asuman*[^1] is widespread among Ashantis. These are amulets, talismans, and personal charms, usually in various forms such as beads, animal skins, bracelets, strings, and horsehairs, used as offensive and defensive weapons against evil spirits and misfortunes. It is believed the power or spirit in *asuman* comes from plants or trees, fairies, witches, and forest monsters.[^2]

Some *asuman* are small in size and can be carried by the owners where they go. They are sometimes worn around the neck, waist, wrist, ankles, or hung at the doorpost of the family house. The *asuman* are the source of immediate security for most Ashantis. According to Kwabena Amponsah, they are used primarily in magic, and the power of some is derived from the magical formulae that are used to make them.[^3] Unlike the *abosom*, the *asuman* do not have their own priests or priestesses.

Uses of Asuman

The use of *asuman* in modern Ashanti culture has increased. They are used by individuals in competitive

[^1]: See p. 15 for a definition of the term. The singular form is *suman*. *Asuman* is the plural form.


[^3]: Amponsah, 16.
sports and worn as protection from rival workers aspiring for position in administrative circles. Drivers hang them in their cars to protect them from accidents. They are worn by women as a strengthening force against interference in their marriages. Market women, storekeepers, and traders wear or hang them in their shops as a charming power to attract customers to buy their products. They are also worn by children to protect them from convulsion and other strange diseases. All these uses of asuman may be attributed to the fear and insecurity perpetuated in the Ashanti culture that a host of spirits, some evil and some good, surround the individual. This leads to the next discussion, which is about witchcraft in Ashanti culture.

Witchcraft

Witchcraft is a belief that a person may be possessed by some supernatural power that is used purposely for evil. Witchcraft may occasionally be used for good intentions, but it is usually for destructive purposes.

The words obavifo (a witch) and obavibonsam (a

1For a detailed discussion of witchcraft in Ghana, and particularly among the Ashantis, see the classic work of the Rev. Hans Debrunner, Witchcraft in Ghana (Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot, 1961).

2A witch," or obavifo among Ashantis, is the name for a female who practices witchcraft. The plural form is abavifo. Sometimes, the word abavifo is used loosely for both female and male persons who practice witchcraft.
wizard) frighten the superstitious Ashanti so much that they do not like to be pointed to or called by that name. A person practicing witchcraft feels uncomfortable when people talk about the evil practices of witches and wizards in his or her presence. Those who are expert in detecting witches say that if you blow dust at the foot of suspected witches, they immediately try to clean their eyes. This seems to confirm the traditional belief that witches walk in an upside-down position.

Among Ashantis, older women rather than men are generally considered to be witches. In recent years, the practice of witchcraft is also common among boys and girls. Most people believe that witches and wizards fly during the night, usually between midnight and one o'clock.

How Witchcraft Is Acquired

Witchcraft can be acquired in the following ways:

1. One can get witchcraft through inheritance. A relative who is a witch can pass it on to another family member in the form of a gift. The gift becomes the object that contains the witchcraft.

1"A wizard," known as obavibonsam among Ashantis, is a male person who practices witchcraft. Wizards are considered to be more evil in their practice and dangerous than witches. The name obavibonsam is traditionally associated with the devil. The plural form is abavibonsam.

2Debrunner, 2.

3Ibid., 52-60.
2. One can get witchcraft by eating certain kinds of food prepared with witchcraft substance in it.

3. Others get it by swallowing objects that contain witchcraft.

4. It also may be acquired if a person picks up an object such as an earring or necklace that contains witchcraft.

Before a witch leaves to engage in her night activities, it is said that she puts a piece of cloth or certain leaves on her husband and children, who may still be sleeping. In this case, they may continue to sleep, and none of them will notice her absence.

It is a person's sunsum (spirit) that leaves the body at night to engage in witchcraft activities. Witches are said to assume various characteristics and forms when they fly at night. The usual belief is that witches fly through the air emitting red light signals. Some witches are said to ride on animals like lions and antelopes or on the back of one of their relatives.

It is a common belief among Ashantis that a swollen foot or an open sore that does not respond to

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I use the term "witch" to denote the practice of witchcraft instead of using both witch and wizard at the same time, except as otherwise noted.

Debrunner mentions that the leaves are known in Twi as dudene, or twen, the "camwood tree." These leaves, he says, are also used for the covering of kenkey, a traditional food made from corn dough. See ibid., 9.
treatment is used as a chopping board by the witches. The meeting place of the witches is on top of a big tree such as the Onvina tree (the silk cotton tree), found usually at the outskirts of a town or village. Here the witches plan their activities and embark on their destructive acts.

Witches are blamed for every misdeed or misfortune that claims the lives or threatens the well-being of family members. The witches themselves admit that. They include the following:

1. Witches are blamed for the deaths of young persons in their prime, such as occur in motor accidents or snakebites.

2. Witches are blamed for causing barrenness and miscarriages in women as well as impotency in men.

3. Witches are accused of making the hands of people into a sieve so they cannot hold on to the wages and earnings obtained from their jobs.

4. Witches are noted for placing large, gallon-sized containers in the bellies of relatives who are drunkards.

5. Witches can make people blind.

6. Sometimes witches are accused of causing failure in final examinations and interviews and of hindering the progress of aspiring relatives.

7. Witches are also blamed for inflicting chronic diseases that do not respond easily to treatment.
Sometimes not even the traditional treatment of the medicine man, except the witch doctor, detects the witch, and she is forced to avert the evil she has inflicted on that particular person.

Despite the destructive activities of the witches, it is a common belief among Ashantis that some witches use their powers for good intentions. They protect their immediate relatives, especially their own children, from being harmed by other witches in the family. One usually hears the statement, *se meye bayifo a anka mede bebo mabusua hoban*, which literally means, "If I am a witch, I will use the powers to protect my family."

Witches in Ashanti are discovered by the *Bonsam komfo* (the witch doctor). When a witch is discovered by the witch doctor, the conclusive evidence that substantiates her status as such is the discovery of her *bavikukuo*, literally translated "witchcraft pot."2

For over 100 years of Christian influence

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1Ibid., 39. The word *okomfo*, when used without any further qualification, refers to a priest of one of the traditional gods. In recent years, the independent churches or spiritual churches have become very popular in Ashanti, due to the claim that the "prophets" of such churches are able to exorcise witchcraft and protect those who are haunted by witches. See Pobee, 48. For a detailed account of the rise of anti-witchcraft shrines in Ashanti and how they are used to catch witches, see Debrunner, 105-127.

2The witchcraft pot is usually hidden under a river or a big tree.
among Ashantis, the belief in witches still remains trapped in the thought patterns of Ashantis. This is the reason why the causes of certain diseases, deaths, accidents, barrenness, and other misfortunes are attributed to witchcraft.

I next focus on the concept and functions of sacrifice in Ashanti traditional religion.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice remains an important element of worship in traditional Ashanti religion. It is an act of slaughtering a victim or offering a gift to express gratitude to, or to appease, the Supreme Being, lesser gods, ancestors, and the spirit powers with the intention of winning favor, support, and protection from them. Usually a sheep, a fowl, food, and drink are used in offering a sacrifice. Traditionally, it is believed the animal should be without deformity in order for the sacrifice to be accepted.

Anybody can offer a sacrifice, but on special occasions such as festival days, worship, or social gatherings, the priest, chief, medicine man, diviner, or the head of a family leads out. Sacrifices can be offered at different places, but usually they are offered at the shrines, sacred groves, stool houses, river banks, outskirts of a town or village, and graveyards.¹

¹Mettle-Nunoo, 91.
Types of Sacrifices

Mettle-Nunoo lists about nine different types of sacrifices, but I will discuss six of them briefly.\(^1\) The type of sacrifice and what is chosen to be offered depends on the occasion. For example, in a typical *Adae* festival no other victim but a sheep may be offered to seek the good will of the ancestors.

Among Ashantis, daily sacrifice is a significant act whereby the worshippers express thankfulness towards their object of worship.\(^2\) It normally takes place at the family or community shrine. The food and drinks offered are the same as those eaten by the family.

There is also a gift or thanksgiving sacrifice. This is done to express gratitude to the deities for answering a request made to them on behalf of the individual, family, or community. Again, in appreciation of receiving an unexpected gift, as well as during a good harvest, a thanksgiving sacrifice is offered.

Another type of sacrifice practiced among Ashantis is the votive sacrifice. It is performed when an individual makes a vow to the deities or ancestors during a critical situation and promises to offer something when the wishes are supplied.\(^3\) It is common in

\(^1\) Ibid., 92.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.
Ashanti for a childless woman in need of a baby, as well as a young man seeking an adventure with the hope of making a living, to enter into a vow with the object of worship. The sacrifice that is to be offered depends on the vow made to the deity by the individual. If such a vow is not fulfilled, serious consequences such as death, loss of one's wealth, or sickness may happen to the individual.¹

Preventive sacrifice is also offered to drive away an impending disaster or suspected misfortune.² This type of sacrifice is performed at the entrance of the village or a family house and is believed to drive away all evil forces in connection with the disaster. It can be done communally or individually.

Again, substitutionary sacrifice is one in which the victim is offered in place of the individual who would have otherwise suffered death, disaster, or a terrible disease. A sheep is preferred in most cases for the exchange of the soul of the individual. There is also the belief and practice of transference in this type of sacrifice. The sheep is rubbed against the body of the offerer. It is then killed and buried. When this is done, it is believed the offerer has transferred his misfortune to the sheep.

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 93.
A propitiatory sacrifice is performed by Ashantis with the intention of restoring a relationship between man and the gods when the relationship is broken by a mistake or negligence on the part of man. Natural disasters such as drought, rainstorm, famine, and others are in most cases linked to the sins of the people. To avert such disasters, propitiatory sacrifice is offered.

The concept of sacrifice is rooted in traditional Ashanti religion, and to eliminate it from their belief system will create a gap and consequently destroy the relationship of the Ashantis with the spirit world. This discussion of sacrifice leads us to consider sin in the context of traditional Ashanti religion.

Sin

A knowledge of sin is not a new idea in Ashanti society. A careful study of the Ashanti view of sin reveals that sin is an act against the individual or society, against the ancestors and God, and against the spirit world.¹

Gaba’s definition of sin in African traditional religion clearly demonstrates a similar view of the Ashantis. He writes:

In traditional African thought, sin may be described as the breach of prohibitions imposed on many by his object of worship or the doing of anything that is displeasing to spirit powers with the result that the displeased spirit powers manifest themselves

¹Pobee, 111.
adversely in human affairs.¹

In Ashanti thought, whether sin is committed against an individual or society, God or ancestors, it is a breach eventually against the ultimate reality,² hence the usual sayings, Onvame mpe bone (God hates evil or sin) and Onvame betua woka (God will punish you for your wicked deed). This is an indication that God is concerned with sin and evil in society.

The social or horizontal dimension is where the Ashanti first and foremost experiences sin. The horizontal dimension is defined in terms of Ashanti theory of existence based on corporate family relationship. Pobee explains more positively, I exist because I belong to a family.³ The idea of family in the Ashanti worldview includes the living, the dead, and the yet-to-be-born.⁴

Among Ashantis laws, taboos, and social prohibitions serve as moral codes and ethics to govern conduct in society. Bishop Sarpong lists some of the actions that are ethically good and ethically evil that are of significance here. Those considered to be ethically good are:

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²Ibid., 30.

³Pobee, 49.

⁴Ibid.
Be faithful to your husband, treat your neighbour's children well, pay back your borrowed money, respect the aged, keep what you have promised under oath, respect the earth by not spilling human blood on it.¹

The ethically evil are:

do not have sexual intercourse with a woman impregnated by another man, or with your mother, sister, niece or with the chief's wife, do not steal from the temple of a god, do not tell lies, do not despise or laugh at a deformed person, do not sell ancestral land, do not lay violent hands on the chief, do not ignore giving due veneration to the ancestors, do not fish in the sea during forbidden times.²

The above lists of dos and don'ts are not just societal codes; there is an ethico-religious principle underlying this categorization. Citizens who disobey the laws are punished, whereas loyal citizens are rewarded.

It is the issue of punishment that I now focus on in the next discussion.

Punishment

In traditional Ashanti thought, punishment is said to be the consequence of misdeeds committed against God,³ the ancestors, the gods, the spirit powers, individuals, and society. It may come in the form of death, illness, miscarriage, barrenness, impotency, or any kind of misfortune. Some of the sins that are


²Ibid.

³God and the Supreme Being are used to mean the same deity.
punished by the ancestors are killing another human being, stealing from someone else's farm or property, having sexual intercourse with another person's wife or close relative, disregarding the obligations toward the ancestors and the gods, showing disrespect to the chief and elders, breaking the taboos of society such as those associated with eating, visiting the stream or hunting on sacred days, and many others. The belief is that such offenders bring disgrace to themselves and their families. Also, because of the extended family system and concept of corporate solidarity among Ashantis, it is not always the individual who is punished for wrongdoing but sometimes the entire community.

In the Ashanti view, when punishment comes, it is given in the present life. It may take a long time for the offender to receive the punishment, but it will surely come. For there is no clearly defined eschatology as in the Christian faith in which there will be a final judgment and annihilation of the wicked.

In chapter 2 I have given the background of the Ashanti people and pointed out the basic characteristics of the Ashanti religion. The Ashanti worldview, religious beliefs, and practices have also been presented.

In chapter 3 I discuss evangelism among the Ashanti people.
CHAPTER III

EVANGELISM AMONG THE ASHANTI PEOPLE

Evangelism: A Definition

Many pastors, evangelists, missionaries, laymen, teachers, and scholars have attempted to define evangelism. James I. Packer defines evangelism simply as "preaching the gospel, the evangel."¹ Douglas Webster has the same thought but states it this way: It "is the proclamation of the gospel."² Abraham J. Jules says, "Evangelism is the act of leading those who do not believe to repentance and to acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord."³ G. Michael Cocoris gives a broader perspective of evangelism. He writes:

Evangelism is communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ with the immediate intent of converting the hearer to faith in Christ, and with the ultimate intent of instructing the convert in the word of God so that he can become a mature believer.⁴

Evangelism is about the good news of Jesus Christ. It is a message of hope to sinners and "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16).

Evangelism is also about the love of God, which He has demonstrated to humanity through Jesus (John 3:16). This is the gospel God wants the world to hear.

In order to get involved in evangelism and proclaim the message effectively, we need to know what the evangelistic task is.

The Evangelistic Task

The evangelistic task is based on God's intention to save the world through His Son Jesus Christ. It is about preaching to the world the message of salvation through Jesus Christ that has been entrusted to us by God (Matt 24:14; 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). In Matt 28:19-20, the command for the evangelistic task is given by Jesus, "Go ye." This implies that every follower of Christ is to engage in the task of soul-winning. Ellen G. White, sharing the same burden for soul-winning, wrote:

If the followers of Christ were awake to duty, there would be thousands where there is one today proclaiming the gospel in heathen lands. And all who could not personally engage in the work would yet sustain it with their means, their sympathy, and their prayers. And there would be far more earnest labor for souls in Christian countries.  

Apart from this command, the geographical

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boundary for the evangelistic task is clear, that is, "all nations" (vs. 19). Bruce L. Bauer comments on Jesus' statement in Matt 28:19 as follows: "The Greek word used for nations above is *ta ethne*. . . . Jesus was saying that we need to make disciples of all ethnic groups."

From this statement we can conclude that faithfulness to the evangelistic task is not measured in terms of how many countries have a Christian presence, but in terms of how many ethnic groups or people groups within a particular country have heard the gospel. The gospel must reach all people. This includes the Ashanti people.

The evangelistic task also emphasizes teaching new believers, the gospel of Jesus, and baptism (vss. 19-20). The duration for the evangelistic task is given as "until the end of the age" (vs. 20). This implies that, as long as Jesus has not come, this mission will never end.

Those who are engaged in the evangelistic task are assured that Jesus will always be with them, to the very end of the age (vs. 20). The evangelistic task demands a lot of sacrifice. It involves leaving the joy and comfort of one's home environment to face different

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environments and cultural shock of other places. It removes one's pride and encourages respect for other people's cultures. It involves an incarnational approach, a process whereby one could settle within a given culture and become like one of the people without compromising one's faith. This is done with the sole purpose of making an impact on the people with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. It demands a person's talents, possessions, and time. Considering the demands, it is necessary to have an organized body to fulfill this task.

God's Agent for Mission

The work of evangelism is a missionary enterprise carried on by people who consider themselves followers of Jesus. They have been called by God and entrusted with the message of salvation to humanity. The first evangelism was done by God when He announced the good news about the promised Messiah to Adam and Eve after their disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). Since then, patriarchs, prophets, and priests in the Old Testament (OT) and Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament (NT) have engaged in the evangelistic task of reaching people with the good news of salvation. After the apostles, many faithful Christians have preached the gospel.

Today the church is God's agent, responsible for
the message of salvation to all people. E. G. White’s classic definition of the church emphasizes its mission in the following words:

The church of Christ is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. And the obligation rests upon all Christians.1

Also, the NT makes it clear that "by reconciling us to Himself through Christ, God has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:19-20).

During the past decade, the primary concern of Protestant missions and many Catholic missionary agencies has been to evangelize the unentered areas and unreached people groups of the world by the year AD 2000. For example, the International Journal of Frontier Missions reports that their task is "a church for every people by the year 2000."2 The Global Mission Department of the General Conference3 of SDA was created in 1990 at the GC session in Indianapolis to coordinate the church’s mission emphasis in the fulfillment of this task. It states: "The goal was set to have one Adventist in every

1White, Steps to Christ, 55.


3Hereafter GC.
Having defined evangelism and the task involved, as well as the church as God’s agent for mission, I now proceed to discuss the biblical approach to evangelism.

Biblical Approach to Evangelism

The Bible itself, according to John Stott, “does not just contain the gospel; it is the gospel.” It contains a message from God to sinners. At the same time, it tells us how to deliver the message. Without proper delivery, sinners may not feel the impact of the gospel. If this happens, the message will not be able to accomplish its purpose. It is therefore necessary that missionaries who are engaged in soul-winning become acquainted with the biblical approaches to evangelism. I discuss briefly four approaches from the Bible that are clear indications of God’s purpose for saving sinners. These approaches can be applied to evangelize the Ashanti people.

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Meeting People Where They Are

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, God demonstrated His love for them by taking the initiative to reach them where they were. This is an indication of God's love for lost humanity and His willingness to reconcile us to Himself. Those who are engaged in evangelism could follow Jesus' example in meeting people where they are.

Meeting people where they are shows how much we care and how we identify with people's feelings. It also gives people a sense of belonging and may be a catalyst for transformation. This approach to evangelism has both vertical and horizontal dimensions: "Vertically it reconciles humanity to God; horizontally it reconciles humanity to one another."¹

Evangelism that is undertaken without taking into account the situation and circumstances of the target group is bound to fail, because it fails to reach people where they are. In meeting people where they are, we must, however, be cautious not to compromise our Christian principles. In her book, Out of the Salt Shaker, Rebecca M. Pippert states that "we too must live with the tension of being called to identify with others

without being identical to them."¹ God met Abraham in
his idolatrous background and brought him out to be a
blessing to all humanity (Gen 12:1-3). In the same way,
Christian pastors and evangelists who are Ashantis should
adopt this approach and meet the Ashantis on their own
level with a message of hope.

**God's Universal Purpose**

The Bible presents a universal approach to
evangelism. It is God who initiates this approach. He
does it through His own son Jesus Christ and Israel as a
nation. The call of Abraham in Gen 12 was to have a uni-
versal purpose. Through him the whole world was to be
blessed. Consequently, Israel’s election was to fulfill
the universal task. Johannes Blauw stated, "The election
of Israel is a matter of divine initiative which has as
its goal the recognition of God by all nations over the
whole world."² The messianic concept presented in the
Psalms also has a universal application. For example, Ps
22:27, 28, 31 declares, "All the ends of the earth will
remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of
the nations will bow down before him, for dominion
belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations." Vs.

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¹Rebecca M. Pippert, *Out of the Salt Shaker* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 120.

31 also declares, "They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn for he has done it." Also, the servant of the Lord in Isa 42:6-7 makes a striking statement about God’s intent to save all who are locked out of the commonwealth of Israel in darkness. He declares:

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand . . . to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open the eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Similarly, the NT church was founded with a universal purpose in mind. Commenting upon Christ’s mission in relation to the beginning of the church, Hans K. LaRondelle states:

Christ proclaimed that His mission to suffer death under God’s judgment was intended to benefit all peoples: "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). The evangelist John explains that Jesus died "not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one." (John 11:52)

The message of Acts 1:8 is that evangelism is to begin at the home base and then spread to the entire globe. The Three Angels’ Messages of Rev 14:6-12 are universal in scope. We need to have a universal purpose in mind in order to evangelize "every nation and kindred and tongue and people" (Rev 14:6). God’s universal plan for the nations includes the salvation of the Ashantis of Ghana.

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The Incarnation

One of the most effective approaches to evangelism presented in the Bible is the incarnational approach, which became a reality in the person of Jesus, who became man and lived among humanity. As Brian Hebblethwaite states, "The central belief of Christians that God himself, without ceasing to be God, has come amongst us, not just in but as a particular man, at a particular time and place."¹ The incarnation of Jesus brought light to a world plagued for centuries by sin without Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles were living in darkness, "in the land of the shadow of death." Ellen G. White described the hopeless condition of humanity before the incarnation as follows:

The deception of sin had reached its height. All the agencies for depraving the souls of men had been put in operation. The Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. With pity He saw how men had become victims of Satanic cruelty. . . . Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin--to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning.²

Such was the desperate condition of the world that made the incarnation of Jesus a reality. Jesus came at the right time. The apostle Paul wrote, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman,


born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal 4:4-5).

Through the incarnation, Jesus brought hope and meaning to human existence. He came to set us free from sin and Satan's control. The incarnation of Jesus reconciled humanity to God (2 Cor 5:18). In reconciling us to Himself through Christ, God has committed to humanity the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19).

The incarnational understanding of mission follows Jesus' example; it knows no barriers. It also cuts across geographical boundaries and makes its home within all cultures, even the Ashanti culture. This approach is indispensable to evangelism.

God and Culture

The God-and-culture approach to evangelism is based on the concept that although God is above culture, He uses people within a culture to fulfill His purpose.¹ This is because "culture is the milieu in which all encounters with or between human beings take place and in terms of which all human understanding and growth occur."²

¹This position has been fully developed by Charles H. Kraft. In part 3 of his book he discusses different models of "God's attitude towards culture." See Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 113.

²Ibid.
Hebrews He employed Hebrew linguistic and cultural terms in spite of their limitations. Furthermore, when God chose to reveal Himself to humanity through Jesus' incarnation, Christ chose to live within the context of human culture. He was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and died a Jew.

Again, Israel's religious and nationalistic exclusivism was a barrier to the heathen nations. Likewise, the cultural barrier in the NT church was a handicap to cross-cultural evangelism. Gentiles were excluded from the temple services and alienated from the Kingdom of God unless they accepted and followed Jewish traditions. The visions given to Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 indicate God's abhorrence of human barriers between cultures and consequently His purpose of breaking down those barriers in order to fulfill His universal purpose of salvation.

Every group of individuals is totally immersed in a particular culture. It is therefore difficult to bypass culture when doing evangelism. However, not every practice in all cultures is approved by God. In the OT, for example, the practice of the other nations who worshipped other gods was against God's law (Exod 20:3-6). Similarly, the practice of worshipping lesser gods in addition to the Supreme Being by Ashantis is against

1Ibid.
God's law. The Bible is a sure guide for all who desire to know how God expects all people from all cultures to worship Him. In the next section I briefly discuss the history of the Catholic and the mainline churches in Ashanti and analyze their approaches to evangelism among the Ashanti people.

**How the Mission Churches Came to Ashanti**

Unlike the coastal Akan areas in Ghana, Christianity came to Ashanti late. Three reasons can be given for this delay:

The Ashantis were proud of their own culture and traditional religion.¹ According to Pobee, Christianity was regarded as a positive evil by the Ashanti chiefs.² They considered it to be the religion of the White man and were convinced it would destabilize the Ashanti kingdom, just as it had done to the Fantes along the coast.³

Also, Ashantis were loyal to their kings and chiefs, and they did not want to consider themselves subjects of any other authority. They, therefore,

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¹Lystad, 26-30.

²Pobee, 63.

³Ibid., 62-63. This is about the remarks made by the grandnephew of Kwaku Duah I, King of Ashanti, to a Methodist missionary called Picot who arrived in Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, in 1876. See also Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Pub. House, 1967), 180.
resisted any form of European rule in the early stages of colonial and Christian expansion into their territory.

Finally, several wars were fought between the Ashantis and the British, and that created a barrier to missionary expansion to Ashanti and the northern parts of Ghana. What heightened the tension and almost destroyed early missionary activities in Ashanti was the capture and banishment of the Asantehene (the King of Ashanti), Nana Agyeman Prempeh I, and some of his people to the Seychelles in 1896 by the British.¹ King Agyeman Prempeh I, however, returned to Kumasi in 1924 as a baptized member of the Anglican Church.² From that time on, there was a strong movement towards Christianity in Ashanti.³

There is also evidence that before the first two Methodist missionaries, namely Freeman and Riis, visited Kumasi in 1839, the Ashantis had already had some contact with Christianity.⁴ Debrunner mentions that when T. E. Bowdich in 1817 led the English diplomatic mission to Ashanti in response to the Ashantis' threat to the coastal people, he saw in Ashanti a Dutch Bible

¹Debrunner, A History of Christianity in Ghana, 312.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 101.
and a Dutch "refutation of popery." \(^1\)

Today about 60 percent of the Ashanti population are Christians. There is a Christian presence in every district in Ashanti. The establishment of Christianity in the midst of a traditional, religious-conscious society such as that of the Ashanti may be attributed to a number of approaches employed by the Christian missions in Ashanti. But before I discuss the approaches, I briefly present the history of the Catholic and the mainline churches in Ashanti.

The Roman Catholic Church

Preliminary attempts toward the establishment of the Catholic Church in Ashanti began in 1875. \(^2\) According to Debrunner, an Ashanti named James Cobbina, who had been baptized at Cape Coast, began the work in Kumasi in 1902. \(^3\) Information based on oral tradition suggests that in 1904, one Mr. Arthur, probably a Fante, was the first and only Catholic in Kumasi. \(^4\) Still another source suggests that the Catholic Church in Kumasi owes its establishment to James Anquanda, a jailer from Winneba, who was baptized in

\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Debrunner, A History of Christianity in Ghana, 223.

\(^4\)Ibid., 4.
1905 and later was transferred to Kumasi.\textsuperscript{1} Whatever the precise date for the beginning of the Catholic Church in Ashanti, it is certain that by 1905 the Roman Catholics had started their mission work in Ashanti. In 1933 the biggest Catholic church in Ashanti, St. Peter's Cathedral, was built on the Roman Hill\textsuperscript{2} in Kumasi. In 1992 St. Peter's Church had a membership of 19,059, of whom about 2,738 were children.\textsuperscript{3} Presently, the Catholic Church has spread to many villages and towns in Ashanti, including Offinso, Jamasi, Mampong, and Nsuta.

**The Methodist Church**

The Methodist Church first reached Ashanti through the efforts of some Fante Methodist Christian traders between 1835 and 1838.\textsuperscript{4} There was no active participation of trained ministers until the Reverend Mr. Thomas B. Freeman arrived in Kumasi with Mr. Andreas Riis in 1839.\textsuperscript{5} They held their first service in the presence


\textsuperscript{2}Roman Hill is the name given to the site where the Catholic Diocese of Kumasi is built.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{5}The City of Kumasi Handbook, 56; Debrunner, A History of Christianity in Ghana, 100.
of the Ashanti King, Kwaku Dua.\textsuperscript{1} The early efforts failed until Freeman’s second visit to Ashanti with the Reverend Robert Brooking in 1842.\textsuperscript{2} The first church was built in 1904. The Wesley Church in Kumasi now has 2,645 members, of whom 650 are considered as junior members.\textsuperscript{3} Today the Methodist Church has spread to other parts of Ashanti, including Bekwai, Juaben, Obuasi, and Fomena.

The Presbyterian Church

The beginning of the Presbyterian Church among the Ashanti is credited to the Reverend F. Andrews Ramseyer. A Basel missionary, Ramseyer was taken prisoner and brought to Kumasi when the Ashantis captured Anum and Ho in 1869.\textsuperscript{4} Ramseyer found favor with the then king of Ashanti, Kofi Karikari, who allowed him to preach the Gospel and establish a school. He was released in 1874.\textsuperscript{5} After that, several efforts to reinforce the work Ramseyer had started in Ashanti failed. In 1901 he was accompanied to Kumasi by I. Bellon and two African ministers, Reverends Nathaniel Asare and Samuel Kwafo.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{1}The City of Kumasi Handbook, 56.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid, 55.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
\end{quote}
They built a mission station and a chapel and then began to spread the gospel to other villages and towns in Ashanti. The Ramseyer Church in Adum, Kumasi, has a membership of 2,870; of these 1,100 are communicants, and 950 are children.\(^1\)

The Anglican Church

As compared to the other mainline churches, the Anglican Church was late in coming to Ashanti. It was first known as the Church of England Mission. A group of men and women from the coast was transferred to Kumasi and started the Anglican Church there.\(^2\) It was firmly established under the venerable G. W. Morrison in 1913.\(^3\)

In its early stages, the membership was mostly European merchants, army officers, and a few prominent Africans.\(^4\) The Ashanti king, Nana Agyemang Prempeh, was baptized into this church, and since then all his successors have been members of the Anglican Church.\(^5\) It is more of an aristocratic church, and has not expanded into the rural areas of Ashanti.

\(^1\)The City of Kumasi Handbook, 56.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid., 57.
\(^5\)Ibid.
Evangelistic Approaches of the Mission Churches

The mission churches working in Ashanti have employed similar evangelistic approaches. Two of these approaches stand out clearly. They are the proclamation approach and the Christian service approach. These are discussed below.

The Proclamation Approach

When the mission churches came to Ashanti, they announced the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with the immediate intention of making converts and organizing them into a church. Spreading the story of salvation was a priority in the mission churches because their new mission field was considered as non-Christian. To the missionaries, it was an opportunity to introduce Christianity to the Ashantis.

Street Preaching

Under the proclamation approach, street preaching became an effective method of soul-winning. For example, the Roman Catholic school boys used to ring bells through

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1The SDA church is part of the broader classification of the mission church in Ghana, but it is not considered as part of the classification in this chapter. I discuss the SDA approach to evangelism in chapter 4.

2Debrunner, A History of Christianity in Ghana, 101, 141.

3Ibid., 214.
the streets of Kumasi to call the faithful to worship."¹

The method employed earlier in street preaching was confrontational. The missionaries wanted the gospel to have a stronger effect on the minds and consciousness of the Ashantis to induce change in every aspect of their lives.² Through street preaching, the missionaries taught the Ashantis the biblical message of the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ, and a wholehearted allegiance to God, judgment, eschatology, and a hope in a future resurrection. The results were quite significant. Undoubtedly, the truth about salvation in Jesus alone and the coming judgment, accompanied by hellfire to destroy all who have pledged allegiance to other gods, convinced many Ashanti traditionalists to "run from the wrath of God," to join the Christian churches. There are genuine Ashanti Christians who have abandoned their traditional religion and have pledged wholehearted allegiance to Christ. They show a great deal of religious vitality, which is an evidence of the hope found in Christ.

There were other significant breakthroughs by the mission churches in their street-preaching method. The church confronted certain practices and in some cases condemned some aspects of Ashanti culture that were

¹Baffour Addoh, 5.

considered a hindrance to Christianity. This is affirmed by Williamson as follows:

The primary task of the missionary among the Akan was, as he saw it, the destruction of traditional superstition and the implantation of the Christian faith.¹

These include drumming, dancing, and the traditional Ashanti Saturday worship of Onyame Kwame (the God of Saturday). Ashanti converts to Christianity were taught by the mission churches² to accept Sunday as the day of worship in place of Saturday, which the Ashants have known since antiquity.³ This is one of the major religious aspects in Ashanti culture that has been destabilized by the inroads of Christianity upon the Ashanti culture. This achievement is a major breakthrough by the mission churches. While Sunday worship has become popular among many Ashanti Christians today, it is also generally known among the Akan-speaking groups in Ghana that the European Catholics from Portugal in the fifteenth century introduced Sunday worship into Ghana.⁴ Based on personal observation, it is my  

¹Williamson, 54.

²With the exception of the SDA Church, which taught the Ashanti to worship on Saturday, the other mission churches taught and worshipped on Sundays.


⁴Owusu-Mensah, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 43.
conviction that if the missionaries had studied the Ashanti religion and had presented the biblical Sabbath, which is Saturday, many Ashanti traditionalists could identify with the Christian religion.

The mission churches also condemned the worship of the abosom, the practice of polygamy, the eight-day ceremony of infants, as well as outdoing, and initiation rites. While the missionaries condemned these practices, they did introduce Christian ritual practices such as confirmation, mass, and prayers to saints, which serve a similar purpose with ancestral practices. However, the Ashanti convert found out that the saints and the Virgin Mary he prayed to were "much removed from his daily wants and anxieties." Similarly, Ashanti converts to Christianity were discouraged from participating in festivals such as the Adae, in which the ancestors are venerated. Converts were also taught to trust in God and to disbelieve in the existence of their fears, evil spirits, ghosts, witches, and other related problems. This

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1See Gen 2:1-2; Exod 20:8-11; Matt 4:16.
2Williamson, 75.
4Appiah-Kubi, Man Cures, God Heals, 87.
was one of the failures on the part of the missionaries. By neglecting the spirit world of the Ashantis, the missionaries tended to belittle or regard as nonexistent "the powers and spirits that were considered to occupy the primal world." Staples summarizes the missionary oversight as follows:

Missionaries also tended to forget that Christianity has had a long history of dealing with a world "peopled" by evil forces and dark powers. They presented Christianity in terms of a world-view which did not fit the thinking of people in a primal age.

As a result of this neglect on the part of the missionaries, there appears to have taken place a bifurcation in the religious lives of many of the converts. Some of these converts to Christianity practice dual allegiance instead of a wholehearted allegiance to Christ. In time of crisis these converts seek help from the traditional religious practitioners for answers to their problems. Busia's description of the Ashantis is worth quoting and touches on significant points related to the above.

For the conversion of the Christian faith to be more than superficial, the Christian Church must come to grips with traditional beliefs and practices and with the world view that beliefs and practices imply. It would be unreal not to recognize the fact that many church members are influenced by traditional beliefs and practices. The new convert is poised between two worlds: the old traditions and customs of

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1Staples, 212.
2Ibid., 213.
3Ibid.
his culture which he is striving to leave behind, and the new beliefs and practices to which he is still a stranger. The Church would help him better, if she understood the former, while she spoke with authority about the latter.1

Based on Busia’s findings, it is clear that what the Ashanti traditionalists need is a conviction that upon conversion to Christianity, the old ways, fears, and insecurities in life will no longer have control over them.2

Today, the mission churches have shifted their proclamation approach from being confrontational to accommodative. The outdooring of infants, drumming, dancing, and other traditional practices are no longer condemned.3 Williamson states that many missionaries as well as Akan Christians see no valid reason why the outdooring custom should remain divorced from the church life; indeed, most Christian Akans have always outdoored their infants.4

The Christian Service Approach

The Christian service approach is the means through which the mission churches recognize their responsibilities as God’s agents to labor not only to


3Williamson, 154-155.

4Ibid.
save the souls of their converts but also to minister to the needs of the whole person. Early mission experience along the coast of Ghana showed the success of combining education and medical work with the proclamation of the gospel. Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Anglicans each began their separate but similar evangelistic work in Ashanti by joining schools and clinics in a hand-in-hand combination of education and health care.

**Education**

Initially, the mission schools made slow progress in Ashanti. The chiefs and their people resisted education. They thought mission schools would make their people proud and turn their children into Christians and consequently lead to the "repudiation of the chiefs' authority and their obligation to the tribal stools." It was not until the government established non-denominational schools in Ashanti that education was embraced by the chiefs and the people. Busia reports that in 1905 the Presbyterians had ten schools in Ashanti with a total of 207 pupils, and the Methodists had seven schools with 219 pupils. By 1914, the Presbyterians had

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23 schools with 724 pupils. In the same year the Methodists had 13 schools with 617 pupils, while the Roman Catholic mission had four schools and 340 pupils. In addition to these mission schools, the government in 1909 established a boys' school in Kumasi, and in 1914 a girls' school and a boys' school in Kumasi and Sunyani, respectively.

The idea to "use the schools to build up the church" had positive results. This was a major breakthrough in evangelism that resulted in the conversion of many Ashanti traditionalists into the mission churches. The mission schools became a means to an end. What street preaching could not do, the mission schools were able to achieve, for the school pupils were also church members during the Sunday services. Apart from the classroom syllabi, the emphasis placed on the Bible and Christian values contributed to preparing the school pupils to accept Christianity.

In fact, it would be unfair on the part of Ashantis if they failed to appreciate the immense contribution made by the mission churches to education. Education brought Ashantis more in contact with the outside world. Education paved the way for good jobs,

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1Ibid.

2Williamson, 41.

3Colonial Reports, quoted in Busia, The Position of the Chief, 131.
higher income, and a raise in the standard of living of the Ashantis. Before education was introduced to Ashanti, a large number of the people depended on a subsistence economy for their livelihood. Today, many of the educated Ashantis are employed in civil work.

The beginning of education in Ashanti also reinforced the translation and publication of literature needed in the classrooms and the churches. The Basel Mission published several books in the vernacular, including school readers, catechisms, Bible stories, and various tracts, which were useful in spreading the gospel in Ashanti. After the complete Twi Bible became available in 1871, many Ashanti school children and church members were taught to read and understand it in their own language. This was a major breakthrough in the missionary approach to evangelize the Ashantis.

Another important achievement of the mission churches was the training of future leaders for the church and civil work. Freeman College and Wesley College were built in Kumasi by the Methodists to train teachers for the schools and clergy for the churches.

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1 The Synod of the Basel Mission and the Scottish Mission Church met in 1926 at Abetifi in the eastern region of present-day Ghana and adopted the new name "Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast," now known as the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. See Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 294.

2 Ibid., 143, also, Williamson, 70.

3 Ibid.
Trinity College in Accra provides training for clergy of various denominations. The Catholics also have St. Hubert's Seminary at Santaase in Kumasi. The Presbyterians and Anglicans, in addition to the churches mentioned above, each have several primary and middle schools as well as junior and senior secondary schools in Ashanti.

Although education provided manpower for the church and civil work in terms of local leaders, it also led the Ashantis to reject certain aspects of their culture to embrace Western forms. A case in point is the missionary dress. Pobee mentions that a Methodist minister in Ghana now feels uneasy wearing a native cloth to an annual Methodist conference session because he is expected to wear a lounge suit.¹

Again, education has opened the way for Ashanti Christians to challenge the mission churches on some cultural practices that are rejected by the church. In a way, Bishop Sarpong reflects the tenor of educated Ashanti Christians who defend their cultural heritage. He writes:

Unfortunately, Christianity has in fact imported Switzerland, Britain, and Italy into Ghana. Practices that have absolutely nothing to do with the Christian message of faith in God and love for God and neighbor have been made integral if not essential parts of Christian membership and worship. Traditional institutions have been arbitrarily proscribed with disastrous consequences. . . .

¹Pobee, 56.
Christians are left in a cultural vacuum. I appeal to all Christian leaders to desist from obstinately concerning themselves in cultural dances. . . . The Old Testament records show how David ecstatically danced before the Ark of the Covenant. When his wife jeered at him God punished her with barrenness. I refuse to believe that God is going to send me to hell because I have danced "Adowa" or "Adenkum" or "abadza." He would not be the kind and just God of the Christian religion.

He concludes by saying,

Wasn't I born into a culture which had these as its means for recreation? Wasn't it God who placed me in this culture? How can He punish me for using what He has put at my disposal?¹

Today, the greater percentage of the educational work in Ghana is still in the hands of the mission churches. The government provides funding, but allows the schools to have church names and to provide most of their own staff to teach in their schools. I now discuss the medical work of the mission churches in Ashanti.

Medical Work

Initially, medical work by the mission churches in Ghana in general was slow. However, between 1918 and 1931, the churches carried on their medical work through the giving of instructions on hygiene in the schools.²

The first Protestant mission hospital in Ashanti was


established by the Presbyterians in 1931 at Agogo.\(^1\) In 1953, the Methodists established a hospital in Wenchi in the north of Ashanti.\(^2\) The Anglican Church in that same year made final plans to run a government-assisted maternity hospital at Mampong-Ashanti.\(^3\) The Catholic Church also built a hospital at Offinso-Ashanti. The doctors and nurses of the mission churches could be described as medical evangelists. They saw their work as a response not only to the physical needs of the people and relief of suffering, but also to their spiritual needs as well. They combined their efforts with the hospital evangelists in telling people who came for treatment everyday, especially the outpatients, about the good news of salvation.\(^4\) By combining evangelism and medical care the mission churches accomplished the following three main objectives:\(^5\) (1) meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the individual; (2) following the example of Christ; (3) creating awareness of natural causes of illness.

\(^1\)Ibid., 144.
\(^2\)Ibid., 147.
\(^3\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)J. Herbert Kane, *Life and Work on the Mission Field* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966), 285-87. Kane mentions several objectives of medical missionary work; the three objectives mentioned above have relevance to the Ashanti situation.
In addition to the above achievements, there was a significant breakthrough made by the mission hospitals in the area concerning the causes and explanation of illness. When the missionaries came to Ashanti, scientific medicine was unknown. Disease was attributed to misfortunes brought by the gods and the ancestors. The life of the Ashanti depended upon the mercy of the medicine man or traditional healer. The introduction of the White man's medicine for treatment of diseases was a challenge to the traditional healer. However, some Ashantis still go to the traditional healer for treatment, especially when a disease does not respond to physical treatment at the hospital.

Despite the achievements of the mission hospitals in Ashanti, there were setbacks in their work. First, there were shortages of medical personnel. Even today the few personnel available in the hospitals and clinics are not able to attend to all the needs of the patients, and if they could, they would have to work long hours.¹

Also, there were inadequate funds to run the hospitals. The mission hospitals operated on a limited budget. In most cases, there was little or no subsidy from the government. They also tried to charge lower fees, and in several instances no fees, in order to compete with the well-established government hospitals and clinics.

¹Ibid., 288.
Today, there are several mission hospitals and clinics in Ashanti, but the earlier emphasis placed on soul-winning is lacking. Most of these hospitals do not have chaplains, and their fees are as high as that of the government hospitals. However, the mission hospitals are a blessing to Ashantis, because in villages, towns, and places where there are no government health posts, the mission hospitals and clinics offer a good substitute.

**Summary**

In chapter 3, I have attempted to explain what evangelism is about, the task involved, and how the church is presented in the Bible as God's agent for mission. The biblical approach to evangelism has been discussed as the model to guide the mission churches in their evangelism among the Ashanti traditionalists.

Although Christianity came to Ashanti late as compared to the coastal areas in Ghana, and also Ashantis were initially resistant to Christianity, the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Anglicans have been successful in winning many Ashanti traditionalists into Christianity. Their success may be attributed to two major but similar approaches, namely, the proclamation approach and the Christian service approach. Under these approaches, methods like street preaching, education, and medical work were used to achieve significant breakthroughs in the conversion of
many Ashanti traditionalists into Christianity. However, these approaches and methods of the Catholic and the mainline churches are not without limitations. For example, the missionaries rejected the worldview of the Ashanti traditionalists as a prerequisite to evangelize the Ashantis. The SDA Church will benefit from the areas where these churches have been successful in making many Ashanti traditionalists Christians, by improving on these approaches, as well as avoiding the mistakes of these churches. In chapter 4, I discuss SDA evangelism among the Ashanti people.
CHAPTER IV

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EVANGELISM AMONG
THE ASHANTI PEOPLE

Background of SDA Work in Ashanti

Preliminary SDA work began in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1888, but active work started in 1894. Initially, the SDA work in Ghana was confined to the coastal areas, particularly the Apam-Kekam area in the western region.

The work in the interior among Ashantis began in 1914. Before Adventism reached the shores of the then Gold Coast, other Christian missions mentioned earlier in chapter 3 had already begun active work among the coastal inhabitants.


2In 1892 the GC officially sponsored Elder Lawrence C. Chadwick, a member of the Foreign Mission Board of the GC, on a fact-finding mission to Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone following an awareness of the GC that a handful of SDA believers existed in this part of the world. It was after his welcome report at the 1893 GC session that the GC officially agreed to send resident missionaries to the three countries. On February 22, 1894, two Americans, Karl G. Rudolph and Edward Leroy Sanford, arrived at Apam in Ghana as the first resident missionaries. See Owusu-Mensa, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 60-62.

3Ibid., 513.
and Ashanti peoples and had succeeded in teaching the Ashantis Sunday observance.

William H. Lewis pioneered the SDA work in Ashanti in 1914 at Agona, a town thirty-four kilometers northeast of Kumasi.¹ It is said that when Lewis called on the chief of Agona, Nana Boakye, to ask for permission to build a mission station, the chief was fascinated to learn that for the first time a White missionary worshipped on Saturday, the day of Onyame Kwame (the God of Saturday), whose day the people of Ashanti and other Akan-speaking groups also worshipped.² He was delighted to give Lewis a large plot of land, where the missionaries built a house and a school. This facilitated the SDA work at Agona, which embraced nearby towns like Asaamang, Ntonso, Bipoa, Wiamoase, and Kofiase. The report in 1914 showed that forty-five adherents were won, to form the nucleus of the SDA church in Ashanti.³

The SDA Church has a stronghold among the Ashantis. In addition to the present membership of

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¹It is said that before Lewis and his team reached Agona, they stopped at Ntonso about 22 kilometers from Kumasi and called on the then chief Nana Kofi Dei, with a proposal to begin SDA work there. But the chief earlier had promised a welcome for another Christian mission in Kumasi, so Lewis and his team left for Agona. See Owusu-Mensah, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 75-76.

²Ibid., 77.

³Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, s.v. "Ghana, Development of SDA Work."
95,144 out of 171,955 Adventists in Ghana,¹ the SDA Church has established hospitals and clinics, and run government-assisted schools.² This growth has occurred in spite of the barriers traditional Ashanti religion poses to Christianity. We turn next to the evangelistic approaches employed by the Adventist missionaries to Ashanti.

Evangelistic Approaches of the SDA Church

The church employed two main approaches to evangelism in Ashanti, namely, the proclamation approach and the Christian service approach.³

The Proclamation Approach

Under this approach, the SDA Church saw itself as a movement called by God and entrusted with a message to preach the truth about Christ and His soon-coming kingdom to all people, societies, and religions, and to entreat

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¹SDA Yearbook 1996, 54.
²With the exception of the SDA-Church-owned-and-funded schools, such as the Techiman Girls Vocational Institute, Amakom Preparatory School, and a few others, all the schools in Ashanti bearing the Adventist name are government-funded.
³These two approaches are the same approaches used by the mission churches which have been described in chapter 5, but the focus and methods differ slightly in the Adventist approach.
them to surrender in obedience to God and His law, including the keeping of the Sabbath, which is the fourth commandment. The SDA Church, from its very beginning in Ashanti, did not compromise its fundamental beliefs. It did not use any form of accommodation but preached a "thus-said-the-Lord" message. The nature of the proclamation approach was confrontational. The experience and self-understanding of the Adventist church in North America clarifies why Adventists did not compromise its approach to the Ashantis. The movement passed through the bitter disappointment of 1844. It identified itself with an end-time message that was also backed by the voice and counsel of a prophet. The methods used in the proclamation approach included public evangelism, the use of lay people in evangelism and literature evangelism.


3Ibid.


5Literature evangelism is a broader term used to define a branch of the SDA ministry devoted to the publishing of Christian literature and educational and health materials, as well as selling those materials with the intention of winning souls into the church.
These methods are discussed below.

Public Evangelism

Early Adventist missionaries to the Ashanti used public evangelism as an avenue of preaching the gospel to Ashanti traditionalists with the aim of winning them into the church. It is still an avenue of soul-winning and the planting of new churches within the Central Ghana Conference. The missionaries preached the biblical message of wholehearted commitment to God. They condemned the worship of idols and taught the audience to accept and keep all the Ten Commandments in the Bible. Emphasis was placed on the first and second commandments that forbid the worship of idols (Exod 20:3-6) and the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8) that talks about the Sabbath. In addition, the missionaries preached the message about the soon coming of Jesus, judgment, the state of the dead, and a hope in the future resurrection.

The major breakthrough by the SDA Church into the heart of the Ashanti culture is that, in contrast to the Catholics and mainline churches, who first brought Sunday worship to the Ashantis, the SDA Church taught Saturday as a day of worship. Since traditionally Ashantis worship Onyame Kwame (the God of Saturday) on Saturday, this no doubt initially attracted many Ashantis to accept the Adventist message. However, what the Adventist

1Hereafter CGC.
evangelists failed to do was to present the Sabbath alongside the Ashanti Saturday worship tradition.¹ Instead, they condemned the worship as pagan and demanded that Ashanti converts should observe the biblical Sabbath as taught by the SDA Church. Adventist missionaries therefore missed a wonderful opportunity to draw attention to God.

Again, the Adventist message about death and a future resurrection interested the Ashanti traditionalists. Death in the Adventist teaching was the biblical explanation of sleep. On the other hand, Ashantis believe that the dead continue to live as part of the family members. Since the Ashanti worldview lacked a clearly defined eschatology, they could not reconcile their understanding of the continuing existence of the dead to the Adventist interpretation of death as sleep (John 11:11).

Furthermore, the SDA Church, as did the other mission churches in Ashanti, rejected all forms of cultural means of indigenous expression, such as drumming, dancing, the eight-day ceremony of the child, outdooring, and other initiation rites. They taught the audience not to eat unclean meats,² and to abstain from

¹See pp. 29-32 for information about this tradition.

²It has become an axiom among SDAs in Ashanti that in the early years of Adventism, church pastors and elders used to visit church members unannounced with
the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other narcotics. The missionaries also spoke against polygamy, ancestor veneration, and some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance, such as the pouring of libation. This approach was an unpopular appeal to the Ashantis, particularly as they considered Christianity the White man’s religion. The SDA Church in Ashanti gives some answers and explanations to what they affirm and teach among Ashantis.

On the issue of drums, the SDA Church’s position in Ghana has been that Ashantis use drums to invoke the spirits, gods, and ancestors, and that if they allow its use in the church, members will be possessed by evil spirits. The same explanation is given about dancing. On the outdooring ceremony of the child, the church has successfully replaced its practice with the baby dedication ceremony. Regarding polygamy, the SDA Church requires that a polygamist divorce his additional wives before he can be accepted into fellowship through baptism. It is noteworthy that at all Adventist public evangelistic series in Ashanti, the attendance is encouraging, but when the appeal is made for a decision to join the church through baptism, the beliefs and practices mentioned above pose barriers to

ladles hiding in their clothes to be used to stir the soup on the fire being prepared by members with the intention of identifying any unclean meat in the soup so that such members could be disciplined.
conscientious membership in the SDA Church.

In spite of these tensions between traditional Ashanti religion and Christianity, many Ashanti traditionalists have made a clean break from their religion to join the SDA Church. Since 1980, Adventist evangelism among Ashantis has taken a slightly new approach, even though the proof-text method of the early missionaries is still used. I will discuss briefly this new approach. First, the evangelists use filmstrips, videos, and slides obtained from North America to illustrate their presentations about the second coming of Jesus, the destruction of the wicked by hellfire, the state of the dead, and the resurrection. This is usually advertised. This method seems to be attractive and appealing to Ashantis, since they attend the meetings in large numbers. My own experience with a team using a movie and slides in evangelistic presentations at Abrakaso, Boanim, and Kumasi-Ashanti produced good results. However, the use of foreign pictures fails to relate to the cultural situation of the Ashanti people.

Again, in the presentation of the Sabbath, instead of condemning the traditional Ashanti Saturday

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1 The 1980s was a period of "explosive growth" of the SDA Church in Ashanti. The pastors and church members were caught up with a spirit of evangelism. This led to a number of revivals, weeks of prayer, youth camps, and public evangelistic meetings. See statistics from the Central Ghana Conference in the SDA Yearbook, 1980-1989.
worship, as is usually the case, some evangelists such as John Kwaning\(^1\) and James Adu, and some pastors such as I. B. Boateng\(^2\) and A. A. Boateng in the CGC present the biblical Sabbath alongside the traditional Ashanti Saturday worship. What is appealing to Ashantis about this method is that the evangelists and pastors emphasize that the Akan peoples of Ghana are the custodians of a day of worship (Saturday) that the Bible also affirms. Some members from among Ashanti traditionalists and other Christian churches join the SDA Church as a result of this approach.\(^3\)

**Use of Laypeople\(^4\) in Evangelism**

The gap created by a shortage of trained pastors and evangelists in the past and present SDA work in Ashanti is filled by dedicated laypeople. Lewis started

\(^1\)John Kwaning, interview by author, Chicago, IL, November 8, 1996. While conducting a three-week evangelistic meeting at the Chicago Ghanaian SDA Church, where I serve as a pastor, John Kwaning presented the biblical Sabbath alongside the traditional Ashanti Saturday worship. Many of the audience at the close of the meeting were convinced that Saturday is the Sabbath.


\(^3\)Unfortunately, detailed statistics of this type of conversion are not kept by the CGC.

\(^4\)The term "laypeople" in this context is used broadly, as in Adventist circles in Ghana, to include evangelists and denominational workers in both local and conference levels who have not obtained any ministerial training. Usually, they gain evangelistic training through the outreach programs of the local church.
with James J. Dauphin from Sierra Leone and Kofi Christian from Ghana. But the missionary, Jesse Clifford, is credited for recruiting laypeople in Ashanti as evangelists. His laypeople had only primary school education with no ministerial training. They became known in the Twi language as Asofokwaa, which literally means "small or minor pastors." They were given a stipend that Clifford called "holy money." The laypeople were stationed to plant new churches in their territories. They were to preach the message about the imminent return of Jesus, and prepare "saints" for that event. This was done through public evangelism as well as door-to-door evangelism. The evangelists visited the people in their homes, conducted Bible studies, and

1Owusu Mensah, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 75. Lewis and his team were to be joined later by J. A. Davis of Sierra Leone, and S. B. Essien and J. K. Garbrah from Ghana. Ibid., 71, 75.

2Ibid., 85.

3Ibid. Of all the missionaries to Ashanti, Jesse Clifford is the most mentioned, even among the young generation who heard his name through oral tradition from the elderly church members. In matters concerning SDA history in Ashanti or church business and planning one usually hears the statement, "This was done at the time of Clifford" or "This is as old as the Clifford era" (1931-1948).

4Ibid. Clifford explained to his workers that "the holiness of the money made it sufficient wage." Some of these laypersons recruited include J. K. Amoah, C. B. Mensah, and I. K. Ansong. My father, D. K. Asamoah, used to tell me about the history and work of the "minor pastors."

5Ibid., 86.
prayed for them. The message of the soon coming of Jesus had significant effect among Ashanti traditionalists, and several of them were won into the SDA Church. During that same period the SDA work in Ashanti expanded to other parts of the country, including "Takyman, Atebubu-Kwame Danso area, Osiem-Koforidua area, Accra area, and the Buem-Krakye area."  

Undoubtedly, the laypeople carried on their mission to the best of their ability, especially as they did not have higher training. However, the lack of training also contributed to their inability to deal with issues and problems about the spirit world of the Ashanti traditionalists. In addition, the laypeople were so much preoccupied with the message of the soon coming of Jesus that they became less sensitive to the problems of the Ashanti traditionalists.  

In recent years, the way in which laypeople are involved in evangelism in the CGC needs to be explained. Evangelism is now done by the combined efforts of trained

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1See Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions (Tacoma Park, Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1931-1948); also, Owusu-Mensah, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 87-88.

2Owusu-Mensa, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 87.

3During the Clifford era (1931-1948), the laypeople who were employed as evangelists were men. Today, both men and women in the churches are involved in evangelism.
pastors and laypeople in the church.\(^1\) Whereas in the Clifford era (1931-1948) laypeople were recruited and given a stipend to do the work of an evangelist, now a large number of laypeople in the church are involved in evangelism without receiving any stipend from the local church or CGC. Again, the laypeople are preaching the same message about the soon coming of Jesus that was preached during the Clifford era. However, they emphasize more the end-time issues in the book of Revelation concerning the three angels' messages and the mark of the beast.\(^2\) The interpretation given by Adventists to these end-time issues\(^3\) interests both Ashanti traditionalists and those from the other Christian churches.\(^4\) Recent economic problems in Ghana have also contributed to make the Adventist end-time message appealing. Converts are mostly from the other Christian churches rather than from among Ashanti traditionalists. The reason is that the laypeople are

\(^1\)The desire to commit laypeople into ministry in recent years was spearheaded by M. A. Bediako. See Kofi Owusu-Mensah, Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History. TMs (photocopy), pp. 514-15, Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.


still not equipped with answers to deal with the cultural barriers\(^1\) that confront the Ashanti traditionalist, especially when the latter comes face-to-face with Christianity.

**Literature Evangelism\(^2\)**

This branch of the Adventist ministry is devoted to the establishment of publishing houses\(^3\) for the publication and marketing of Christian, educational, and health books with the intention of winning souls into the church. It also encourages local writings. This work is done by literature evangelists in the church. A. Cook, a British literature evangelist, in 1933 revived the literature work in Ashanti.\(^4\) However, L. Davidson from Jamaica is credited with laying the foundation of literature evangelism in Ashanti in the 1950s.\(^5\) He recruited about twenty-five prospective literature evangelists from the local SDA churches and trained them

\(^1\)Answers to the cultural barriers such as abosom, asuman, ancestor veneration, and some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance are discussed in chapter 7.

\(^2\)See p. 6, n. 1 above.

\(^3\)The Advent Press was established in 1937 in Accra, Ghana, to publish books for literature evangelism in West Africa.

\(^4\)Owusu-Mensah, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, 399-400.

\(^5\)Ibid., 400-403.
for the work. They were to spread the message of salvation in Jesus through the sale of the books, do follow-up visitation, look for avenues to offer Bible studies to prospective buyers, and also keep records of the people they visited. Some of the books they sold included Messages to Young People, *The Desire of Ages, Steps to Christ, Temperance*, and *Counsels on Diet and Foods.* The messages in the books appealed to the educated Ashantis. The health books, for example, addressed the health needs of the people on the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, as well as stressing the importance of clean air, pure water, and good nutrition. About fifty converts, mostly educated Ashantis, joined the church.

Since 1980 new books have been published and introduced to the Ashantis by the literature evangelists. They include *The Bible Story, God's Answers, Secret Keys, Looking Unto Jesus, Your Health in Your Hands, A Guide to Family Health*, and *Jesus--Friend of Children.* These

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1Ibid., 401.

2These books were written by Ellen G. White. See p. 107, n. 1, about the author.


4These books are published by the Advent Press in Accra, Ghana. One of the books, *Looking Unto Jesus*, is written by a retired Ashanti SDA pastor called C. B. Mensah.
books seem to appeal to Ashanti traditionalists, particularly the youth, and those from other Christian churches by providing some answers to their health, spiritual, and emotional needs. The following is a reply from the CGC publishing director concerning the appeal literature evangelism has on Ashantis.

The Ashantis always give the literature evangelists a hearty welcome. They have been helped immensely in terms of decent and healthful living. The good news has transformed the lives of many—more especially the youth.¹

Since 1980, about 1,750 converts from among the Ashanti traditionalists and those from other Christian churches have joined the SDA Church as a result of literature evangelism.² Despite this growth, the literature evangelism program is seen more as a means of employment by some church members rather than evangelism. Because of this, there is no consistent follow-up in order to get feedback from Ashanti traditionalists who buy the books. This is not to deny the genuine efforts of dedicated men and women who carry on the task of soul-winning through literature evangelism.

Again, most of the books are written by foreigners, and they do not reflect the cultural background of their readers. There is still much to do in this area in order to encourage local people to write

²Ibid.
Christian literature, for publication to enhance literature evangelism among Ashanti traditionalists.

The Christian Service Approach

Under this approach, the SDA Church in Ashanti effectively carried out a holistic ministry as a witnessing body called by God to deal with every aspect of the gospel through preaching, the teaching of the good news of salvation, and responding to human needs. The methods include education, medical work, and community services.

Education

Initially Adventist education in Ashanti was church-funded until in the 1950s, when the church embraced the Ghana government grant-aided system, which was the most common missionary instrumentality of the time. Since then a number of primary and middle schools, in addition to the Bekwai SDA Secondary School (established in 1948), Asokore SDA Training College (1962), and Agona SDA Secondary School (1972), have all enjoyed government grants. The only church-funded schools in Ashanti are Amakom and Tafo SDA preparatory schools.


2See Owusu-Mensah, Ghana Seventh-day Adventism, 433-34.

3Ibid.
Early Adventist missionaries to the Ashanti established schools with a fourfold purpose in mind. The first purpose is to teach the truth. As Stephen Neill said, "The only reason for being a Christian is the overpowering conviction that the Christian faith is true." The students were taught the truth about religion, history, and the sciences. The next purpose is to propagate the faith. In fact, Adventist missionaries thought of the schools as avenues of entrance and preparing a people, especially the students and the teachers, for the kingdom of God. The Bible was a required textbook. Weeks of prayer, singing periods, morning and Saturday worships were

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1Lewis started the first two Adventist schools in Ghana at Agona and Asaamang with an enrollment of 55 boys and 35 boys respectively. Later on, Adventist educational establishments expanded to towns such as Ntonso, Kofiase, Mampong, and Bekwai. In its early beginnings in Ashanti, schools were not for girls. Later, two girls were admitted to the Agona and the Asaamang schools. See Japheth Agboka, "The Beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana (Gold Coast): A Continuation, 1905-1917," TMs (photocopy), p. 53, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1975.

2See Kane, Life and Work on the Mission Field, 261-69. Kane mentions a fourfold purpose that led the missionaries to establish schools in the mission fields. His fourfold purpose is similar to that of the Adventist missionaries to the Ashanti.


4Ibid.
compulsory in the schools. The students were trained in soul-winning, often rising at 4:00 in the morning to conduct evangelistic campaigns in nearby villages. The teachers were trained to be evangelists in the districts where the schools were located. The school building was the church, and the students and teachers were church members. Max Warren aptly describes the beginning of SDA schools and church systems in Ghana. He writes,

In Africa, perhaps more than anywhere else, education as a specific instrument of evangelism and also as a widely-recognized form of social service formed the spearhead of missionary policy. The "bush" school which was throughout Africa the main agency of primary education was also throughout Africa the main agency of evangelism. The teacher was also the evangelist. The school was also the church.

Early Adventist schools were an effective avenue of mass conversions and baptisms. The school pupils who joined the church were the children of Ashanti traditionalists. Some of the parents did not want their children to join the church, but the parents had no choice as long as they wanted education for their children, and the church school was the only school in the town or

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1When I was growing up at Agona in the 1960s, I noticed that teachers used a register to conduct roll-calls on Saturday mornings in church. This practice did not last long.


district.¹ However, some of the students left the church after they finished school, but the majority of them also remained as Adventists.²

Another important purpose of Adventist education in Ashanti is to develop the character of the students. Discipline and good morals are taught in the schools and they are a major influential factor in the conversion of the students. Many parents from other Christian churches as well as Ashanti traditionalists send their children to Adventist schools because of the reputation Adventist schools have earned among Ashantis in areas of discipline and good morals. A large number of the non-Adventist students who complete their studies end up becoming Adventists.³

Finally, Adventist education is intended to train leaders and workers for the church. The missionaries were of the opinion that for the church to become a truly indigenous church in the future, it needed trained local leaders. As Herbert Kane wrote, "No church will last

¹In the early years of Adventist education in Ashanti, there were few church schools serving large districts. My father used to travel seventeen miles from Kofiasse to Agona school until he finally moved to Agona.


³During the period 1980-1984, when I was a teacher at Agona SDA Secondary School, there were several baptisms which took place from among the non-Adventist students.
long without well educated, spiritual dynamic leaders.\textsuperscript{1} Almost all the workers in the CGC have received educational training from church schools in various disciplines. These leaders are the ones who are teachers in the schools, pastors and evangelists in the churches, chaplains in the schools and the hospitals, as well as administrators in the CGC. Others seek employment in government sectors. Again, it is these workers who win souls into the church. The schools then have proved to be an invaluable asset to the church and Ashanti society rather than a liability.

However, the church is day by day confronted with an acute shortage of trained leaders because there is no degree-awarding institution run by the CGC. The only junior college operated by the West African Union Mission,\textsuperscript{2} Valley View College\textsuperscript{3} in Accra, offers certificates in theology and business. Students who finish are required to continue their studies in an Adventist college or university abroad for their degrees. The problem of finance, coupled with the recent economic situation in Ghana, makes it difficult for some of these students to continue their studies. In addition, there is also a brain drain on the part of the very few trained leaders.

\textsuperscript{1}Kane, 263.
\textsuperscript{2}Hereafter WAUM.
\textsuperscript{3}Hereafter VVC.
workers who happen to continue their studies abroad. These prospective workers are lost to the foreign fields because they do not return to work in their home field.

One cannot deny the positive assessment of Adventist schools as an instrumentality of mission considering the immense contribution Adventist education continues to offer among Ashantis. The assessment is based on short- and long-term results. The short-term results are determined by the large number of students who join the church while they obtain Adventist education. On the other hand, there are those students who do not join the church, but who after they leave the schools claim affiliation to the Adventist church and eventually get baptized into the church. These constitute the long-term results.

Despite the success and achievement of Adventist education among Ashantis, some setbacks have hindered its mission and purpose. The schools in Ashanti presently lack Adventist teachers and administrative personnel. Government-aided grants to the schools mean the infiltration of non-Adventist teachers into the schools, and the lack of full control in decisions that affect the schools and the name of the church. What I experienced as a teacher at Agona SDA Secondary School is worth mentioning here. Out of about thirty teachers in the school, approximately eleven were Adventists, and nineteen were non-Adventists. In matters that required a
vote, for example, on whether to use the school bus on Saturday to attend the funeral of a relative of a non-Adventist teacher, always the non-Adventist teachers won the vote. There is also lack of cooperation among Adventist and non-Adventist teachers when it comes to enforcing church standards on the students. The church has to devise some means whereby it can attract more Adventist teachers into its schools in order to maintain the good name of Adventist education in Ghana.

Medical Work

The relationship of the medical work to the proclamation of the gospel in early Adventist mission was encouraged by the writings and counsels of E. G. White. She wrote:

Medical missionary work is in no case to be divorced from the gospel ministry. The Lord has specified that the two shall be as closely connected as the arm is with the body. Without this union neither part of the work is complete. The medical missionary work is the gospel in illustration.1

Mrs. W. H. Lewis pioneered the medical work at Agona with a clinic. Her husband later wrote about her:

As soon as Mrs. Lewis arrived, even while living in the chief's rest home, she began treating and caring for the sick and suffering. She was doctor, nurse, the whole works. The Lord wonderfully blessed her efforts, healing them and endearing the mission work in the hearts of all. This work she continued after we were in our new home and during our stay in Agona. She laboured thus, in this work, day after day without any wage or remuneration other than the

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grateful thanks of the suffering natives. They came from miles around for treatment. Many spoke of her as the "Angel of Agona."¹

The assessment of the medical work as an instrumentality of mission among Ashantis is demonstrated in the ongoing results of the following threefold purpose: (1) responding to human suffering, (2) creating awareness of the natural causes of illness, (3) pointing the patient to Christ.² I discuss these objectives briefly.

Responding to human suffering. In the early days of Adventist work in Ashanti, many of the people did not have access to clinics and hospitals. The sick were at the mercy and treatment of the traditional healers. Despite at times the successful treatment of the traditional healers, people suffered many physical ailments, such as open sores, toothache, blindness, leprosy, skin diseases, and so on. The medical missionaries tried to meet such human needs by applying the technical and scientific knowledge of Western medicine. One cannot doubt the positive results of the role the SDA Church plays in the use of modern drugs, vaccines, and other


²What Herbert Kane has discussed in his book is true of the missionary aspect in Ashanti. He discusses six points, but four of them are relevant to the Ashanti situation. See Kane, 285-87.
preventive medicine in the health of the Ashantis. This has reduced the mortality rate of many Ashantis who suffered such infectious diseases as cholera, malaria, measles, and tuberculosis in the first half of their lives.\(^1\) By doing this, the medical work became an entering wedge to open doors for the proclamation of the gospel in Ashanti. Many Ashanti traditionalists who came for treatment also responded to the call to join the church.

Creating awareness of the natural causes of illness. The Ashanti world is characterized by superstitious beliefs. Causes of diseases are attributed to demons, witches, and punishment from ancestors and the gods. Medical evangelists counteracted these beliefs by introducing scientific medicine with its emphasis on cleanliness.\(^2\) This has been an important breakthrough "both in preventive healthcare and in ministering to the sick."\(^3\) And yet there is still some ambivalence on the part of some Ashanti traditionalists and Ashanti Christians in that, in their perspective, medical technology does not seem to explain all the causes of illness. Some Ashanti Christians therefore seek help from the traditional healers for a solution to illnesses

\(^1\)Appiah-Kubi, 76-77.

\(^2\)See Kane, 285.

\(^3\)Appiah-Kubi, 77.
that do not respond to scientific treatment.

To point the patient to Christ. The SDA medical work in Ashanti is aimed at taking care of the physical pain of the sufferer as well as meeting his or her spiritual needs. The chaplains visit the sick, pray for them, and point them to Christ as the greatest physician. Today, there are two hospitals at Asaamang and Dominase, and two clinics at Onwin and Kokoma. The number of Ashantis who now join the church through the medical work is not as high as it first was in 1914. There were few hospitals and clinics at that time, as compared to several hospitals and clinics run by the government and other Christian churches today. The competition is great in terms of service and medical fees offered to the patient. The SDA Church in Ashanti needs to subsidize heavily the hospital fees and improve its services to attract many Ashantis in order to fulfill its intended purpose of meeting the physical and spiritual needs of Ashantis.

Community Service

The SDA Church in Ashanti carries out its community services through the "Dorcas Society" (now, Welfare Society) and the Adventist Development and Relief

\[1\]See also, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, Annual Statistical Reports (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 36.
Agency.¹ The purpose is to respond to the physical needs of the people as the church continues to proclaim the gospel to them. The Dorcas Society in the local churches distributes clothes, food, firewood, and, at times, money to expectant and new mothers as well as the needy. The members also visit the hospitals, clinics, and the children’s home with gifts and pray for the people. Presently, most of the church community service is done by ADRA.² It includes supplementary food rations, "Food for work program,"³ and assisting in rural community development by providing health-care programs such as improved sanitation and prevention of diarrhea. The work of the Dorcas Society and ADRA as an instrumentality of mission in Ashanti is seen as an entering wedge for the proclamation of the gospel. Many people and villages have been helped, but the results in terms of people who join the church have not been spectacular. This may be because funds given to ADRA by donor countries and

¹Hereafter ADRA. The funds for ADRA are mostly from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). ADRA operates in more than 100 countries with a worldwide budget of over $100 million. Ken Flemer, Hagerstown, MD, to Amofah Asamoah, April 4, 1995, fax.

²During 1981-1983, when bush fires destroyed food crops, farmlands, and cocoa, which is the backbone of Ghana’s economy, and there was no rainfall for several months, ADRA played a leading role in providing supplementary food rations to the people.

³This program is intended to benefit those who embark on community self-help programs for their people.
agencies are not meant for church evangelism. Also, ADRA and the Dorcas Society do not work closely enough with the conference and the local churches on evangelistic plans to win people into the church. In spite of this failure, ADRA and the Dorcas Society are still in a better position to draw many Ashantis to God by devising a workable evangelistic strategy to accompany their service to the Ashanti people.

**Summary**

Although the SDA Church came to Ashanti late as compared to the other Christian churches, it has been able to convert some from among the Ashanti traditionalists.

Through public and literature evangelism, as well as the combined efforts of laypeople and pastors, the message about the Sabbath, salvation in Jesus, the second coming, the state of the dead, and judgment have been taught to the Ashantis. The adoption of a new strategy in presenting the Sabbath message alongside the traditional Ashanti Sabbath by some recent evangelists such as John Kwaning and I. B. Boateng seems to attract Ashanti traditionalists and those from other Christian churches to join the church.

It was also discovered that education continues to play a major role in preparing the children of Ashanti traditionalists to accept Christianity. The medical work
and community services have also transformed the lives of many in terms of health care and other assisting programs. While the above methods by the SDA Church interest the Ashanti traditionalists, the church has not been able to break down the barriers that impede a decision to accept Christianity. Chapter 5 reveals where the spiritual churches have succeeded in attracting many Ashanti traditionalists by breaking down some of the barriers and reveals those areas where they have failed.
CHAPTER V

RECENT RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN ASHANTI
THE INDEPENDENT AFRICAN
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

The independent African Christian churches, popularly known as the spiritual churches\(^1\) in Ghana, are indigenous Christian churches that have been founded by Ghanaians to meet the needs of their own people. During the last five decades, several spiritual churches have sprung up and spread in the Ashanti region, where Christian missions for over a hundred years have succeeded in establishing churches. In 1979, Turner estimated that about 500 different bodies of spiritual churches existed in Ghana.\(^2\) The Ashanti region alone may claim more than a hundred, considering the rate at which new churches of this kind are being founded. Characteristically, such churches claim to have been founded by God, who called their first prophet in a dream.

\(^1\)Spiritual churches in this context are groups that engage in various activities which they claim invoke the Holy Spirit to descend upon the worshippers. See C. G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some 'Spiritual' Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 1.

or a vision. Usually the prophet claims to have obtained healing from a chronic disease or terminal illness and empowerment from God to establish a new church.¹ As such, these prophets are regarded as spiritually equipped by the Holy Spirit to identify and offer some solutions to the day-to-day problems of their members.

Some of the founders of the spiritual churches have had affiliation with the Christian faith of the mission churches.² Examples of spiritual churches in Ashanti include The Church of God, The Apostolic Church, The Church of Pentecost, Calvary Charismatic Church, The Church of the Twelve Apostles, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, The Divine Healing Church, The Church of Christ, Musama Disco Christo Church, and The Church of Canaan.

Possible Factors for the Emergence of the Spiritual Churches

Several factors may have contributed to the emergence of the spiritual churches. These include spiritual hunger, different worldviews, and the need for contextualization. These are examined below.

¹Ibid., 192.

²One of them is Prophet Samuel Brako who, as a result of a misunderstanding between himself and a Seventh-day Adventist missionary named Clifford, broke away from the SDA Church to establish his own church, popularly known by such names as Saviour Church (Memeneda Gvidifo or Saturday believers) or Memeneda Kokoo (Saturday worshippers who wear red robes). See Owusu-Mensah, Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana, 87.
Spiritual Hunger

The daily life of Ashantis are centered around religious activities such as festivals, rituals, and ceremonies, in which individuals have the chance to participate in the celebration experience of these activities. Yet, there seems to be an emptiness in the soul of the Ashanti people that needs to be filled. The spiritual churches seem to be problem-solving, practical, and dynamic, and as such they serve as an attraction to many Ashantis. They seem to meet the needs of the people regarding healing from diseases, demon possession, witchcraft, marital problems, employment, success in business, and other related problems, which are not given much attention in the mission churches. In fact, petition for healing, protection, and prosperity are the most common subjects of prayer in the spiritual churches. It is noteworthy that young men and women flock to these churches for special prayers to enable them to get visas to go abroad to seek a fortune. However, there is the danger that in these churches, members are tempted to put their trust in a spiritual leader rather than in God. It is good and acceptable for

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1This has been fully defended by Appiah-Kubi. See Appiah-Kubi, Man Cures, God Heals, 86; Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., African Theology en Route (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 117-18.

a spiritual leader to pray for church members, but members should also be taught to take their own problems to the Lord in prayer, since we all have access to the throne of Grace (Heb 4:14-16; 7:25). In addition, there is also the danger of focusing on the immediate physical needs of members and neglecting spiritual needs. This may lead to a shift in eschatology. The kingdom becomes present in the form of healing and casting out demons, while the glorious expectation and final consummation of Jesus' kingdom disappears from view.

Also, the spiritual churches are meeting the spiritual hunger of the Ashantis through their own culture. Ashantis are by nature warm, expressive, and spontaneous in their worship. This unique characteristic prevails in the spiritual churches. Through the use of drums and hymns composed to local tunes, as well as dancing, clapping of hands, individual testimony services, and prayer requests, the members enjoy collective and full participation in worship as in their religious tradition. These are characteristics that tend to attract Ashanti traditionalists rather than the formal and structured type of worship in the mission churches. The SDA Church can improve its worship to attract Ashanti traditionalists by learning from some of the experiences of the spiritual churches. Apart from the use of drums and dancing, which the Ashanti SDA Church does not intend to accommodate, the other forms of worship mentioned
above can be applied into the Adventist worship in Ashanti.

Inasmuch as the spiritual churches incorporate Christian elements into their worship and claim to be Christian churches, they easily attract members from the mission churches. The members see nothing wrong in identifying with these churches since they are taught that their God is the God of the mission churches whom they worship.

Here again, there is the danger that members may not be fully grounded in the faith. People flock to these churches because they need solutions to their immediate concerns. When they do not find immediate solutions to their problems in one church, they go to another spiritual church. Eventually they keep on changing churches without affiliation to a specific church.

Different Worldviews

Inasmuch as differences exist in the way Africans and Europeans perceive, interpret, and relate to the universe, there are bound to be differences in beliefs and practices. As noted in chapter 2 the Ashantis believe in the spirit world. This contributes to a cultural milieu in which there is a fear of evil spirits, poisoning, witchcraft, and other spirit-induced problems. The Ashanti desire to have these problems solved.
Because of differences in worldviews, the mission churches have not grasped the real issues Ashanti traditionalists face. The spiritual churches, which share the same worldview, are able to respond to the needs of the Ashanti traditionalists by demon exorcising, prayer, faith healing, and an emotional type of worship. The prophets confront the traditional Ashanti worldview not with skepticism or a denial of its existence, but with claims of supernatural power to deal with the fears and problems of its members.\(^1\) The Christian message of the mission churches points to the future kingdom. To the Ashanti traditionalist, salvation is conceived of in the here and now. It means deliverance from chronic diseases, impotency, barrenness, and misfortune. The Christian church could have offered protection through prayer and fasting. Instead, they belittled or dismissed out of hand the problems that preoccupied the Ashanti mind. In contrast, the spiritual churches tend to engage the Ashanti mind and embrace the Ashanti "worldview which they also find reflected in the Bible."\(^2\) What the Bible says about the principalities and powers is considered a reality. Deliverance ministry is practiced alongside a truth and allegiance encounter.\(^3\) This may be a major

\(^{1}\)Staples, 307.

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)See p. 3 above.
reason why Ashanti traditionalists are more easily attracted to the spiritual churches than to the mission churches. It may also be a major reason why some members of the mission churches are enticed into the spiritual churches.

Furthermore, in the spiritual churches there is much emphasis on collective instead of individual conversion. The total life of Ashantis, both social and religious, is communal. The extended family system and corporate identity in the Ashanti worldview is different from the individualistic and compartmentalized family structure of the missionary background.

Again, in some of the spiritual churches belief in ancestors is not discouraged. Appiah-Kubi mentions that ancestor veneration serves as an important attraction of the spiritual churches. He argues that the mission churches overlooked the Akan ancestors but urged "their members to venerate St. George of England, St. Andrew of Scotland, or St. Christopher of the Vatican, who are very much removed from the converts' daily wants and anxieties." The genealogy given in Gen 10:1-32 and Matt 1:1-17, as well as the book of remembrance mentioned in Mal 3:16, brings into memory the


2Ibid.
ancestors who are still considered to be part of the family in Ashanti culture. However, prayers offered to seek the good will of the ancestors are discouraged in most of the spiritual churches. In fact, the hope in the resurrection of Jesus for all who die in Christ is the message to the members during funeral celebration.

Another area that needs mentioning is the doctrine and theology of the spiritual churches. In fact, the spiritual churches believe in God as the creator and sustainer of the universe. They use the Bible of the mission churches. However, in some of these churches such as the Twelve Apostles Church, the Bible is not read but placed upon the leaders' table. It is only "taken to be held over the head of a candidate at baptism and of each patient preparatory to the healing exercises, sometimes again when the exercises are in progress."¹

The Twelve Apostles Church claims to follow the same articles of faith as that of the Methodist Church.² In some of these churches polygamy is not a moral sin. Mememeda Gyidifo (Saviour Church) regard it as normal "and there is no restriction on the number of wives a man may marry."³ The same is true of the Musama Disco

¹Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 15.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
Christo Church (MDCC).\(^1\) The practice of polygamy attracts a number of Ashanti traditionalists to join these churches. The SDA Church and the mission churches, on the other hand, stress monogamy using biblical passages such as Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 7; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:5-6.\(^2\)

Regarding the role of women in the church, most of the spiritual churches encourage their women to participate in the ministry of the church. This is not surprising in a matrilineal society such as that of the Ashanti. In some areas in Ashanti, women have played leading roles in the founding of some of these churches. The mission churches in Ashanti do not prohibit women from preaching and teaching, but their role is limited because of the "patriarchal structure of the western mission churches.\(^3\)

Contextualization

Contextualization in this context is defined as communicating the gospel in the thought form and pattern of the Ashanti traditionalist so that he or she can identify with the biblical message of salvation within the framework of one's own culture.

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\(^2\)Ibid., 47.

Despite the fact that Christianity has taken root in Ashanti soil, it is still regarded as a foreign religion. Like an uprooted plant in a pot, Christianity was transported from Europe and transplanted into the Ashanti soil in the same pot. The missionaries should have removed Christianity from the European pot and soil and allowed it to take root in the tropical soil of Ashanti and grow. The spiritual churches seem compelled to wrestle with the task of applying the gospel to suit the needs of Ashanti traditionalists.

One of the unique attractions of the spiritual churches is that they fulfill that which is lacking in the mission churches. They provide forms of worship that satisfy the emotional and spiritual needs of the members. This is reflected in the use of the vernacular in worship, locally made musical instruments instead of pipe organs and pianos, dancing, drumming, the naming of the child, and participation in testimony and thanksgiving services. Also, in some of these churches, members are allowed to use charms, amulets, and talismans in the form of rings, and cross signs worn as necklaces. There is also the use of "holy water" for curing diseases. Members generally wear traditional Ghanaian dress instead of the missionary dress such as a jacket and a necktie.

"Holy water" is water that has been "consecrated" by the prophet, which is believed to contain the efficacy of healing. See Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 19.
The spiritual churches reflect the Ashanti culture.

The SDA Church in a way can benefit from the spiritual churches by devoting more time to the prayer requests of its members, and the need for programs such as testimonies and thanksgiving services that involve the participation of church members.

In spite of the urgent need for contextualization, there are also some dangers associated with it. The major problem is syncretism. The process in which elements of the mission churches are assimilated into some traditional beliefs and practices opens the way for accommodation of other religious faiths and cultures.¹

For example, some of the spiritual churches pour libation to seek the goodwill of the ancestors while they pray to seek the goodwill of God.

Again, there is the danger on the part of some of the spiritual churches leaning towards relativism. Since they claim to be Christian and use the Bible, some of these churches tend to justify their beliefs and practices. The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC), for example, supports its position on polygamy and justifies it with the marriage lapses of some "Biblical personalities who practiced polygamy and yet are fathers

The position of the SDA Church on polygamy\(^2\) is clear, and the hope that the practice will be adopted as a catalyst to attract Ashanti traditionalists into the church may be far from realization.

**Summary**

For the past fifty years, spiritual churches have sprung up in large numbers in the Ashanti region of Ghana, and they are growing rapidly. The reasons for their emergence, it was noted, include spiritual hunger, different worldviews, and the need for contextualization.

The spiritual churches tend to be problem-solving, practical, and dynamic churches, satisfying the emotional and spiritual needs of their members. Again, they appear to be more in keeping with traditional ways than the mission churches. As such, the spiritual churches have been able to make some major breakthroughs in the areas of healing, demon exorcising, and an emotional type of worship to attract Ashanti traditionalists.

The SDA Church, it was noted, has emphasized little in these areas. Chapter 6 will help us to know exactly why four barriers, namely, the *abosom* (lesser

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\(^1\)Obeng, 47.

gods), asuman (charms), ancestor veneration, and some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance constitute major barriers to the acceptance of Christianity. This will help in the development of some theological and practical answers to the barriers.
CHAPTER VI

SOME BARRIERS IN TRADITIONAL ASHANTI RELIGION
TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE SDA CHURCH

The focus in this chapter is upon four aspects of Ashanti religious belief and practice that constitute barriers to conscientious membership in the SDA Church.

The Abosom1 (Lesser Gods)

Ashanti traditionalists believe in the abosom, and that belief constitutes an influential factor in Ashanti religious life.2

One reason why abosom are a barrier is the way they are valued and treasured as a family legacy. Many families in Ashanti have their own family gods or abosom. These they keep for many years and pass them on with their rules from one generation to another. Also, the keeping of abosom requires an ongoing role of family members to perform daily and periodic rituals to appease the abosom. Many Ashanti traditionalists, therefore, find it difficult to abandon the abosom as a family

1See pp. 56-59 above.


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legacy in order to accept Christianity.

Again, abosom are a barrier because they are believed to fill the gap created in human life due to disobedience to God. This belief among Ashanti traditionalists is reinforced by the myth surrounding the idea of a withdrawal God in Ashanti worldview. As such, the abosom are worshiped. The Ashanti SDA Church requires a clean break from the worship of abosom in order to enter into baptism to join the church. Whereas this is a requirement by the church, it is also clear that the church has emphasized little to fill the gap created by the idea of a withdrawal god in Ashanti culture. Many Ashantis, therefore, are not convinced to leave their religion to join the SDA Church.

Furthermore, the abosom are considered to be vindictive and rewarding. First, the vindictive nature of the abosom puts fear into the people who worship them. Second, the belief in the reward from the abosom encourages reverence from their worshipers. Many Ashanti traditionalists have faith in the abosom as the immediate providers of the needs of the people. For example, it is a common practice for a barren woman in Ashanti to consult obosom for a cause of her barrenness and ask for a child—a practice that in several instances has proved successful. Even though the Ashanti traditionalists may

^See p. 20 above.
be attracted to Christianity, they are reluctant to renounce the *abosom*, because they fear they will either be punished or lose rewards or both. This is a real barrier.

**Asuman (Charms)**

Several reasons contribute to the use of *asuman* among Ashanti traditionalists, another barrier to the acceptance of Christianity. The reasons are centered on the need for protection. Many Ashanti traditionalists believe in the power of *asuman* to protect them from various kinds of problems and misfortunes, such as sickness, premature death, miscarriages, accidents, marital problems, insecurity in jobs, and the evil intentions of one's enemies. A wealthy Ashanti traditionalist believes that a witch or his enemy can cause his death prematurely or seek his downfall in life. On the other hand, if he is poor or at a disadvantaged position, he claims a witch or his enemy has cast a spell on him to retard his progress in life. At every stage in his life, an Ashanti traditionalist feels that he needs both defensive and offensive powers to counteract his fears and insecurities in life. The *asuman* fulfill this purpose, and as such they become a barrier between him and the acceptance of the gospel. The SDA Church tends not to deal with the problems that encourage the use of *asuman*; instead, the evangelists shift the focus from the
reality of those problems to God. The result is the persistence of fear and insecurities in the lives of many Ashanti traditionalists.

One informant told me a story about an Adventist Christian truck driver in Ashanti, who lost his job because he refused to use the suman offered to him by the owner of the truck, an Ashanti traditionalist. The owner of the truck believed in the power of asuman to protect his truck and the passengers from accidents. The Adventist driver refused on the grounds that God would protect him and the passengers, but that answer caused him to lose his job. It is not only Ashanti traditionalists who use asuman but also some Ashantis who have been converted to Christianity. The worldview change of such Christians has occurred at a surface level and not at a deep level. As Kwesi Forson wrote: "Indeed if conversion to Christianity is to be genuine, it must involve the basic assumptions, values, and allegiances of the people, a change of their worldview."¹

Ancestor Veneration

Belief in life after death and ancestor veneration occupies every aspect of life from birth to death in Ashanti culture. This preoccupation with

ancestors is a barrier to conscientious membership in the SDA Church for the following reasons.

Ashanti society in a sense is dependent on the ancestors for survival as a nation. It is believed that ancestors are close to God and act as intermediaries between God and man; hence, Ashanti traditionalists trust in the ancestors to send help and protection to them. To disregard traditional Ashanti religion and to accept Christianity are perceived as a threat to Ashanti culture, "especially the fabric of their society, and their national or tribal solidarity."¹

Another reason is that Ashanti traditionalists believe the ancestors are vindictive and likely to punish and bring death and misfortune such as disease or an epidemic upon those who neglect them. To cease to perform ancestor-related functions is to come under the retribution of their judgment. The reburial of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, will reinforce this point. About six years ago the government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) built a memorial park and a mausoleum in his honor and his remains were brought from his hometown, Nkroful, and reburied at the mausoleum in Accra. It was felt that as the first president of Ghana and a great ancestor, Dr. Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, will reinforce this point. About six years ago the government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) built a memorial park and a mausoleum in his honor and his remains were brought from his hometown, Nkroful, and reburied at the mausoleum in Accra. It was felt that as the first president of Ghana and a great ancestor, Dr.

Nkrumah needed a fitting burial.\footnote{The Reburial of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and the Commissioning of the Nkrumah Memorial Park. Parts 1 and 2 (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Africa Video City, 1993), videocassette.} The park and the mausoleum were to serve as a memorial where Ghanaians and tourists from abroad could visit and remember this great African leader and ancestor.

Furthermore, an Ashanti traditionalist believes that he must conduct himself appropriately in society in order to win a good report from his ancestors when he joins them one day in the spirit world. Ashanti traditionalists find it difficult to disassociate their thoughts from this belief to accept Christianity.

From the ongoing analysis about the ancestors, there appears to be a kind of compulsive respect on the part of Ashanti traditionalists to the ancestors. The ancestors are therefore venerated with fear, not with love. The Ashanti SDA Church, on the other hand, teaches about a loving God who hates sin but loves the sinner. However, the church has not linked God as the greatest ancestor of the human race to the Ashantis' ancestors.

The church has also not clearly explained to the Ashantis about how the Ashantis should treat their dead in connection with what the Bible says about the patriarchs, prophets, and kings, whose names are still mentioned in the Bible, and the influence the lives of these biblical characters have among Christians today.
Some Aspects of Chieftaincy Related to Stool Allegiance

The fact that there is no Ashanti chief who is a member of the SDA Church affirms that some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance, which are considered as barriers to the acceptance of the gospel, have not yet been broken down by many years of Christian influence. The major reason is the prestigious office of the chiefs and how their traditional role is bound up with the veneration of the ancestors. The chiefs in Ashanti are dignified and respected by the people. They are carried in palanquins, and they decorate themselves with gold. They are considered sacred and speak with authority. The Ashanti chiefs feel that conversion to Christianity may result in a loss of the dignity, respect, command, and leadership they enjoy in the traditional society. Ashanti chiefs also function as intermediaries between the ancestors and the tribe. They venerate the ancestors, propitiate, solicit, and mention their names in prayer to seek their good will for the people. This aspect of the chiefs' role confirms their loyalty to the ancestors and the people. It becomes a burden for the chief to disregard the important function of his religious office to accept Christianity, which is considered the White man's religion.

The next aspect relates to the pouring of libation by the chiefs as a means of communicating with
the Supreme Being and the spirit world for blessings and protection. In the pouring of libation, the spirits of the ancestors and the gods are invoked to come for a drink. For example, libation is poured to Asaase Yaa (the goddess of earth) whose natal day is Thursday, to sanction the beginning of a new farming season. The Ashanti chief feels that conversion to Christianity may sever his relationship with the spirit world, and consequently it will deprive him of protection he continues to enjoy from these powers. The practice of pouring libation has received a national endorsement. At every national and state gathering, before a representative from the Christian council offers a prayer, the state linguist (Okyeame) first offers a libation prayer. During the Fourth Republic inauguration and the swearing into office of the President and the Vice President of Ghana, J. J. Rawlings and N. K. Arkaa, by the chief justice, Philip Archer, the ceremony was begun with a libation prayer.¹

What I witnessed some years ago during an incident that involved libation prayer is worth mentioning here. A school boy attended a summer youth camp and drowned in the Oyon River at Agona-Ashanti. For several hours divers searched for the boy but could not

recover his body. When the incident was reported to the
Chief of Agona, Nana Boakye Yiadom II, he came and
offered libation prayer at the river bank and ordered a
search. Immediately divers recovered the body. The
question Christians face in primal cultures such as that
of the Ashantis in situations such as this is "Why was it
that after libation prayer was said at the bank of the
river, the body was recovered?" Although some Christians
may attribute this to the conflict between the forces of
good and evil, it does not clearly explain the supremacy
of the power of good over evil to convince the Ashanti
traditionalist. To the Ashanti traditionalist, the
solution to the recovery of the body lies in the efficacy
of libation prayer to the river god, ancestors, and the
Supreme Being. This is a real barrier to the acceptance
of Christianity.

Another aspect of chieftaincy that is a barrier
to the acceptance of the gospel is polygamy. The sacred
functions of the chief require him to have more than one
wife. To marry only one wife will result in the chief
not being able to perform his duties.1 Inability to
perform his duties will require a punishment from the
ancestors, and consequently it will lead to his

1It is a taboo for the chief to eat any food
prepared by a woman going through her monthly cycle. He
cannot have intercourse with his wife who is going
through her monthly cycle. He must have a posterity, and
this requires more than one wife to fulfill especially if
one of his wives is not able to have children.
destoolment. In recent years, however, the practice of polygamy has declined, probably due to the influence of Western acculturation and the cost involved in keeping more than one wife and taking care of many children in the modern Ghanaian economy.

**Summary**

Thus far we have seen that four major beliefs and practices in Ashanti culture, namely, the abosom (lesser gods), the asuman (charms), ancestor veneration, and some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance, such as the prestigious position of the chiefs, the pouring of libation by the chiefs, and polygamy, constitute significant barriers to membership in the SDA Church. Although these barriers persist within Ashanti culture, it is also clear that the SDA Church does not deal clearly enough with these barriers that Ashanti traditionalists face. The evangelists and pastors attempt to give quick-fix biblical answers to these barriers, but these are not theological and practical answers that touch the core of the primal worldview of the Ashantis.

Chapter 7 is an attempt to suggest some biblical and practical responses to some of the issues involved in the barriers.
CHAPTER VII

BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL RESPONSES TO SOME OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE BARRIERS

Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to seek to understand and analyze four elements of Ashanti belief and practice that pose significant barriers to conscientious membership in the SDA Church. The four barriers are: belief in abosom, the use of asuman (charms) for protection against evil spirits and misfortune, ancestor veneration, and some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance.

Even though the mission churches were able to make a breakthrough in some of their approaches to engage Ashanti traditionalists with the gospel, it is also clear that they failed to adequately relate the message to the cultural setting of the hearers. Many religious concerns were not addressed. For example, the message of the second coming of Jesus, the state of the dead, and the resurrection of the body engaged Ashanti traditionalists' thought, but the intermediary role of Christ on behalf of humanity was not clearly presented to displace the role of the abosom and ancestors in Ashanti religion. While
the Ashanti SDA Church affirms the good side of the missionary achievement, it must also avoid the mistakes.

The main focus of this chapter is to provide some biblical and practical responses that can engage the thought patterns of Ashanti traditionalists to deal with some of the barriers that impede a decision to the acceptance of Christianity.

The Abosom (Lesser Gods)¹

The Problem

Ashanti traditionalists perceive God as one who is withdrawn and far removed from this world as a result of our misconduct.² This concept of God as withdrawn is interpreted by Ashantis in their own worldview. God disappeared behind the clouds, far away and removed from the immediate problems of man. He is transcendent. Such a concept of God by the Ashantis has eclipsed the clear picture of who God is and pushed Him at a distance far from the immediate concerns of man. The result is fear and insecurity in the cultural milieu of the Ashantis. Consequently, God is considered as one "charged with power, both beneficent and dangerous."³ He is vindictive, fearful, and punishes those who break His

¹See pp. 56-58.
²See Gyekye, 196.
³Ibid. See also John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 47.
laws. But He is also perceived as one who takes a long
time to act. One Ashanti proverb affirms this. It says,
Se Onvame fa ne bo a, onto no ntem, which literally
means, "God does not avenge His enemies speedily."

This concept about God also gives the impression
that God is preoccupied with other things, therefore, He
does not deal directly with the ordinary affairs of life.
Ashanti traditionalists therefore approach God through
the abosom. The abosom then act as Nyame mma (the
children of God), also charged with power by God to deal
with the day-to-day problems of the Ashantis. Unlike God
who is perceived as one who remains in the background of
religious lives of the Ashantis, the abosom are directly
involved in everyday experience.¹ "They are immanent,
and their relation to human beings is reciprocal."²
 Hence, they require shrines, images, rituals, and priests
as well as sacrifices to facilitate their constant
interactions with people.³

This is a real problem in that such a concept of
God limits God’s power to act directly on behalf of His
people. At the same time it shares God’s power with the
abosom. The concept of a great and distant God who is
approached through the abosom demands both biblical and

"African Religions: An Overview."
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
practical responses to engage Ashanti traditionalists' thought, that God is transcendent, but also immanent.

Biblical Responses to Belief in Abosom

Transcendence and Immanence of God

What has been noted above about Ashanti traditionalists' concept of God as distant and withdrawn from man is a misconception about the nature of God, which is grounded in Ashanti worldview. The Christian worldview balances the transcendence and immanence of God.

The transcendence of God is presented in the Bible, not as one who is unconcerned with His creation, but in terms of His holiness, greatness, power, knowledge, and goodness.¹

Isa 6:1-5 gives a clear picture of divine transcendence in the Bible. Here Isaiah depicts God as one who is "sitting on a throne high and lifted up." Because of His awesomeness and sovereignty, the seraphim cry one to another "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (vs. 3). Isaiah then senses the purity of God and sees perfectly his own uncleanness (vs. 5). Apart from His transcendent nature, the Bible also affirms the immanence of God. Unlike the traditional Ashanti view of God as one who is far removed from the earth,

¹Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 312.
Christianity unveils the true picture of God as one who is involved and active in the history of this world. The presence of God is felt on the earth. Jer 23:24 emphasizes this. "Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him? says the Lord; Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." God is therefore not "detached or divorced" from creation, He is involved. Being involved also implies that God offers protection and security directly to His people and not through the abosom.

Christianity is a personal religion that teaches how God relates to humanity and how humanity should relate to God. Christianity also teaches about a kind of God who walks with people. The experience Enoch had with God gives us a picture of a distant God who is also close. He is a personal God who interacts and communues with people. For 300 years Enoch walked with God. He set his heart to do God’s will and was in constant communion with God. He came to know God as a father who has the interest of His people at heart and protects them. His daily walk with God reached such a high level that God took him (Gen 5:21-24).

This concept of God that Christianity teaches is totally different and alien from the traditionalists’ concept of God. To the traditionalists, God is a stranger and, even if He comes close, He is dangerous, for how could this be that such a God walked with Enoch?
But Christian teaching brings to the understanding of man a concept of God who is distant and hates sin, but also He is close and loves sinners and wants to be with them. This has been demonstrated through the incarnation of Jesus.

The Incarnation

Traditional Ashanti religion attempts to bridge the gap of separation between God and man through the intermediary role of the abosom. The incarnation of Jesus offers a profound dimension of Christian teaching, in which God reveals Himself through His Son Jesus as one with the human race, and not withdrawn. Christian teaching about the incarnation is that Jesus, who is God, also took human form through His birth by a woman, and lived like one of us (Matt 1:23). "But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). The only thing that separates humanity from God is sin (Isa 59:1-2), and yet it is God Himself who takes the initiative of dealing with the sin problem. The idea, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," introduces the real essence of the incarnation, which is "God with us." The incarnation is God's way of reconciling sinners to Himself (2 Cor 5:18-19). It establishes a kind of intimacy with God, whereby we are
redeemed as sons and daughters of God, and if so, then we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). This is what the apostle Paul means when he says, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). Both texts mention the part Jesus plays in the redemption and reconciliation of the human race. The first text, Gal 4:4 says, "... God sent forth His Son." The second text also reads, "... reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ." These two references emphasize that it is only through Jesus that the redemption and reconciliation of the human race are achieved. Likewise, through Jesus, we have access to the Father, and not through the abosom. This is the purpose of the incarnation, and that rules out any misconception of God as withdrawn and dangerous.

Sin and Salvation

In Ashanti thought, sin is a destruction of the social order through an offense committed against the abosom, ancestors, God, and man. Ashantis believe that, ultimately, sin is an offense against God. This concept of sin reinforces the idea of a distant God who is vengeful and dangerous. One cannot approach God without meeting His retribution if the person has offended his or her neighbor, the abosom, or ancestors.
Again, such a concept of sin by the traditionalists influences their thought of God as one who has separated from man. The results of the separation are felt by the traditionalists in the form of pain, sickness, and death (Isa 59:1-2; Rom 3:23).

The traditional Ashanti concepts of sin and a God who is distant require sacrifice as a means to appease God, so that the abosom can ask for forgiveness and the good will of God for the offender. This is a real problem in that the role of the abosom in the Ashanti cultic system grants the abosom priestly roles and functions, which is the exclusive role of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 5:5-6).

Another problem is that traditional Ashanti religion lacks a clearly defined eschatology. The issue of the here and now is clear, but the hereafter is blurred by the traditionalists' concept of life after death in the spirit world. The Christian message of salvation is the hope for the Ashanti traditionalists.

Christianity teaches that God hates sin but loves the sinner. If the sinner appeals to God’s grace through confession in the blood of Jesus, he is forgiven and cleansed from all his sins (1 John 1:9). Christ is the mediator between God and man, and not the abosom. There are several Bible passages that clearly portray how God deals with sin and offers salvation to humanity through His son Jesus. Two of these passages are of interest to
us because they reveal Christ as a sin bearer, and at the same time as the only mediator between God and man. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21). Without the death of Christ, there is no hope of forgiveness because He is the only perfect sacrifice for the sinner. Besides, He is the only one whom God has chosen to deal with the sin problem (John 3:16, Heb 8:11-15).

The next passage deals with the priestly ministry of Jesus which is one of the strong points Christianity offers to deal with the Old Testament priestly office that has been replaced by the new and perfect ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Heb 7:25-26).

These two passages present a unique theological basis to engage Ashanti traditionalist thought about the role of the Ashanti priests and the abosom. The compelling force is the efficacy of Christ’s death and the superiority of Christ’s priestly ministry over the Levitical priesthood (Heb 9:11-22), as well as the

1Hereafter OT.
abosom, in Ashanti religion. The writer of Hebrews establishes Christ’s ministry as superior to the OT cultic services of Aaron. In Heb 7:11, we see a clear distinction of Christ’s priestly ministry from the Aaronic order. This is of vital importance to the discussion because it will clearly help to displace the role of the abosom, priests, and diviners in the Ashanti cultic rituals. The key words here are order and perfection. The writer of this epistle wants to emphasize that the Aaronic order was inadequate to fulfill the mediatorial functions that in the divine purpose were to be discharged between man and God.

The imperfection of the Aaronic order as compared to Christ’s order becomes even more evident as one moves to vss. 15 and 17. Here a new and superior priest enters the scene. The inadequacy of the Aaronic order and the adequacy of the new is seen in the author’s reference of the OT text, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:17). The Aaronic priest did not live forever, and could not continue by reason of death, but Christ lives forever (Heb 9:12, 25, 26) and ministers by virtue of the life He possesses that

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2F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 143.
can never be taken away. If Christ's ministration as high priest supersedes and replaces that of Aaron, how much more the ministration of the abosom in traditional Ashanti religion. "There can only be one true high priest for there is only one being in the universe who is identified with both God and man in his person."\(^1\) The emphasis here is that "God has come in the person of Jesus to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves."\(^2\) Christ's role as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is a means through which God deals with sin as the cause of the separation between God and man. Based on the Christian concept of how God deals with the sin problem and offers salvation to man through His only Son, Jesus, we can conclude that the abosom have no part to play in the salvation of man.

Practical Response to Belief in Abosom

Christian Influence Among Ashanti Traditionalists

Christianity has made an impact on the lives of Ashanti traditionalists. A large number of Ashantis, who have converted from traditional Ashanti religion to Christianity, used to worship abosom. About 60 percent of the Ashanti population is Christian. Many of them

\(^1\)Staples, 437.

have made a clean break from belief in abosom, and show a sense of religious vitality which is the evidence of their newfound faith.

The powerful impact of the Christian message about sin and salvation, the second coming of Jesus, the state of the dead, and a hope in the future resurrection have influenced Ashanti converts to Christianity. They believe in God as one who is transcendent, but also immanent. God has been presented to the traditionalists as loving, caring, and interested in the well-being of humanity. God is also understood by Ashanti Christians as a loving Father who is involved in the history of this world and not withdrawn and unapproachable as taught by the traditionalists.

It would be unreal not to accept that, after a century of Christian influence among Ashanti traditionalists, belief in abosom does not exist. There are some traditionalists who are influenced by the impact of the worship of abosom. They believe God has distanced Himself from man and He is unapproachable, hence, the abosom who are close to man act as intermediaries between God and man.

In spite of this belief, Christian teaching about the nature of God has contributed to shift allegiance of many Ashanti traditionalists from belief in the abosom to God. A recent event that occurred at Adom Kwame in the
Ashanti region of Ghana, in which a fetish priestess was converted to Adventism, is a good example of what has been described above.¹

The fetish priestess, Polina Menka, served the village obosom² (god) for eleven years. As a fetish priestess, the villagers "came to her for healing, protection from evil spirits and insight into some future event."³ Through prayers, offered for her by some Adventist pastors, Polina has pledged allegiance to God, and has left her priestly office in serving the village obosom. Several such cases have occurred among Ashanti traditionalists,⁴ which are indications of the impact of Christianity upon Ashanti traditionalists.

What can be deduced from Christian influence among Ashanti traditionalists is that, upon conversion to Christianity, many of the traditionalists shift their allegiance from the abosom to God. Again, their understanding of God as transcendent, dangerous, and unapproachable is understood in terms of God's holiness, greatness, awesomeness, power, knowledge, and goodness.

²Obosom is the singular for abosom.
³Zachary, 20.
⁴Unfortunately, statistics of this kind are not kept by the Ashanti SDA Church.
The Asuman

The Problem

The use of asuman is grounded in the worldview of the Ashanti culture. There is a mindset among Ashanti traditionalists that the outside world is dangerous and fearful. Evil spirits prevail, enemies are all around to cast spells, there is an evil eye, witches are active to destroy, there are also forces to cause impotency, barrenness, premature deaths, and to retard a person’s intentions to aspire.

The Ashanti traditionalists are gripped with fear and insecurity, and therefore need protection to counteract these forces that haunt them in life. The other concern of the traditionalists is that upon conversion to Christianity their fears will remain and they will lose the protection offered by their traditional religion. Their traditional religion seems to offer something that satisfies their needs.

In addition to these fears, Ashanti traditionalists have the concept that God is far removed from this world and unapproachable. If He comes close, He is also dangerous. In their concept God is concerned with greater things than trivial matters, and therefore He cannot be burdened with the ordinary things in life.

\[1^\text{See pp. 58-60 above.}\]
These concepts about God cause fear and insecurity in life. Ashanti traditionalists need immediate protection. This they seem to find in the use of asuman.

It is not only Ashanti traditionalists who depend on the asuman for protection, but also among some Ashantis who have been converted to Christianity. The worldview change of such Christians, as was noted earlier, has occurred on the surface level and not at the very heart of the culture.

One would have thought that the Ashanti SDA Church would offer protection through prayer and fasting, but issues pertaining to the spirit world of the Ashantis have not been the primary concern of the church. The primary concern of the church has been to evangelize and prepare converts for God’s future kingdom. But the church has also missed the task of responding to such human needs that require a response in the here and now. As a result of this neglect on the part of the church, the fears and insecurities of the traditionalists remain. The traditionalists, therefore, trust in the efficacy of asuman to counteract such fears, and this also constitutes a significant barrier to the acceptance of Christianity.

The task, therefore, is to develop some biblical and practical responses that can engage the

1See p. 147 above.
traditionalists’ thought about the use of asuman, and also help to shift the allegiance from the asuman to trust in the protection of God.

**Biblical Responses to Belief in Asuman**

**Transcendence and Immanence of God**

The issue of God’s transcendence and immanence discussed earlier in this chapter as a biblical response to the problem of abosom is a similar response to the problem of the use of asuman. I therefore deal specifically with what pertains to the asuman, which is different from the abosom.

The danger involved in the use of asuman is that it shifts a person’s allegiance to the asuman itself, or the person who gave it, instead of God. God, therefore, remains at a distance in the life of the person. It also leads to a trust in the efficacy of the asuman, and not a trust in what God can do for the individual. This heightens the problem that God is transcendent rather than immanent. What the Ashanti traditionalists need to hear is that, upon conversion to Christianity, their fears will no longer control them, but they will find peace of mind to trust in the protection of the sovereign God, who rules over all forces (Isa 26:3).

Several biblical passages emphasize God’s protection for His people and seem to shift the focus

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1See pp. 159-161 above.
away from a misconception of God as distant and unconcerned. Ps 27:1-3 is vital to this discussion. This text is an exuberant declaration of faith in God by David. "Such faith is confident and sure in God yet also totally dependent on and submission to God."¹ This is a description of a man who has developed faith and trust in God, so much that fear does not overcome him. Even his enemies could not prevail against him, but they "stumbled and fell." The issue is that David is on the Lord's side, and because of this, he is secure and not afraid. Here is a man who has enjoyed the protection of God in the past, and can look back in retrospect at a time when war rose against him, and can positively say, "In this I will be confident (vs. 3). Not even the forces of men that have surrounded him will make him afraid (vs. 3).

The crux of the matter is wherever any one of God's children is, he is at peace with God, because that child trusts in God for protection (Isa 26:3). The implication here is that when the Ashanti traditionalist accepts Christ as his personal savior, he becomes a child of God and enjoys God's protection. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:13). God, therefore, is not far from those who are His

children, but He may seem far away to those who shut Him completely from their lives to trust in other powers, such as the asuman. Ironically, the power of asuman does not last forever, but God "neither faints nor is weary," He endures forever (Isa 40:28-31).

Furthermore, some Biblical promises that emphasize God's protection and concern for humanity can be used to draw attention to God as one who is close to humanity and takes care of our fears. Some of these promises are,

1. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 27:1).
2. "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel . . . I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God" (Isa 44:6).
3. "God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling" (Ps 46:1-3).
4. "But whosoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil" (Pro 1:33).

The Ashanti SDA leaders, pastors, evangelists and laymen need to be taught how to trust in the promises
given in the Bible to deal with the deeply felt problems of the traditionalists, and also encourage the traditionalists to believe and trust in these promises. The best description of God's concern for humanity has been demonstrated by Jesus through the incarnation.

The Incarnation

The subject of the incarnation has been discussed earlier in this chapter\(^1\) as a biblical response to the abosom. This is a similar response to the problem of asuman. But the focus here is upon how Christ came to this world to deal with our fears and insecurities.

The incarnation of Jesus establishes that the Ashanti traditionalists' concept about God as one who is withdrawn and does not protect His children directly is a misconception. Through the incarnation God is revealed as one who is close to man, and also as one who is interested in the protection of His people.

The incarnation of Jesus has brought a sense of security and hope to humanity. The presence of Jesus on earth was an invasion of Satan's kingdom, to usher in the present and the future realization of the kingdom of God. This is the kingdom that destroys all principalities, powers, and evil forces. With power, Jesus worked miracles to set men and women free from sickness, fear, demonic control, and death, and He also preached the good

\(^1\)See pp. 161-162 above.
news of salvation to the poor (Luke 4:18). These are issues that confront Ashanti traditionalists daily, who are more concerned about getting these problems solved through diviners and the use of asuman.

Jesus is more willing to solve our problems just as He did when He was on earth. Through His incarnation, earthly ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and priestly ministry in heaven, Jesus has subjugated all forces under His control, and this has opened the way for humanity to "cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us" (1 Pet 5:7).

The Ashanti SDA Church has emphasized little about the incarnation and miracles of Jesus to counteract the fears and insecurities in the lives of Ashanti traditionalists. The Ashanti pastors, evangelists, and lay people should place more emphasis on the power and reality of the incarnation, and the hope it offers for the fears and insecurities of Ashanti traditionalists. "For God with us means" God cares about our needs. One writer puts it more vividly:

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.1

This is the message that the Ashanti

1White, The Desire of Ages, 25.
traditionalists need to hear. Jesus is the solution to our fears and insecurities because He is well acquainted with our needs.

**Practical Response to Belief in Asuman**

**Prayer and Fasting**

One of the reasons many Ashanti traditionalists are afraid to make a clean break from the use of *asuman* to accept membership in the SDA Church is that, upon conversion to Christianity, the traditionalists are afraid their fears will remain and they will lose the protection offered by both the traditional religion and Christianity.

In order for the Ashanti SDA Church to attract many Ashanti traditionalists to join the church, it must encourage its pastors, evangelists, and laypeople to practice more prayer and fasting to deal with the problems of the people. It is not surprising that Jesus admonished His disciples that only through prayer and fasting can unclean spirits, such as the one recorded in Mark 9, be defeated. Many Ashanti traditionalists flock to the shrines for *asuman* (charms), and to the leaders of the spiritual churches for prayers and holy water to deal with their problems and pressing needs, such as freedom from sickness, demon possession, infertility, job and marriage insecurities, and protection from evil spirits. The Ashanti SDA Church tends not to focus on the issues
pertaining to such pressing needs. Instead, it emphasizes more of a truth and an allegiance encounter. The following statement from Ellen G. White has implications for the SDA work among Ashantis:

We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing and to inspire hope in the hopeless. . . . Through His servants, God designs that the sick, the unfortunate, and those possessed of evil spirits shall hear his voice. Through His human agencies He desires to be a comforter such as the world knows not.¹

A balanced ministry² that emphasizes prayer and fasting, a truth, and an allegiance encounter will engage the mindset of Ashanti traditionalists on the use of asuman.

The Bible records that there are principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual forces in heavenly places (Eph 6:12). Before Paul warns about the presence of these forces, he admonishes his readers wrestling with such forces in this world to put on the whole armor of God in order to be able to stand against such forces (vs. 11). He further mentions the Christian armor that can defeat all the forces of evil in this world (vss. 13-18).

What the Bible says about these forces is considered as real in traditional Ashanti religion.

¹White, The Ministry of Healing, 106.
²Kraft, "What Kind of Encounters Do We Need in Our Christian Witness?" 260.
Adherents of this religion believe that between God and man there is a realm occupied by spiritual beings, principalities, and powers. The traditionalists protect themselves from these forces with the use of asuman. Paul Hiebert describes this realm as the "excluded middle."1 It is so important among traditionalists that to exclude this zone is to be ill-prepared to answer the day-to-day questions that baffle them.

Ashanti SDA evangelists, pastors, and laypeople could help their traditionalist neighbors better by offering protection through prayer and fasting, and by laying claim to the Holy Spirit to deal with the problems of the Ashanti traditionalists, recognizing that Jesus is more powerful than the false Gods, feared and worshiped by the traditionalists.2 Biblical encounters such as Moses' confrontation and defeat of the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex 7:12) and Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kg 18) are powerful stories that can attract Ashanti traditionalists to Christianity.

A recent event that occurred in Kumasi is cited to emphasize the need for prayer and fasting alongside a truth-and-allegiance encounter among Ashanti


traditionalists. Emmanuel Cann, a Charismatic Church pastor in Kumasi, was delivered from his fears and the forces that controlled him through prayer. Cann confessed that he used "fetish charms and other demonic materials to give additional power to his ministry."\(^1\) Upon his confession during an Adventist evangelistic meeting, prayers were offered for him and the charms were destroyed, and he and his wife were baptized. His positive move led three of his former followers to prepare for baptism in the SDA Church.\(^2\)

Inasmuch as prayer and fasting, as well as a truth-and-allegiance encounter, are not limited to a particular occasion, it is necessary that during evangelistic meetings some days should be devoted purposely to pray for the immediate needs and concerns of the audience. It is advisable for the Ashanti SDA evangelists to set aside some days for private soul-searching, confession, meditation, as well as prayer and fasting prior to these special night programs. The sermonette must center on miracles, healing, and prayer-answered themes in the Bible. For example, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34), the boy healed from demonic control (Mark 9:14-29), and the

\(^1\)Zachary, 20-21.

\(^2\)Ibid., 21.
healing of Mary Magdalene from demon possession (Luke 8:2).

The Ashanti SDA evangelists and pastors must believe that God has promised and is willing to give the Holy Spirit to His church to accomplish greater things, including deliverance from the use of asuman, and to trust in the protection of God (Luke 11:13; John 14:12-13). In addition, the Ashanti SDA evangelists should also consider that the Holy Spirit cannot be subjected to human manipulation. He is given by God at His own will for the advancement of the work for His glory (Acts 1:8ff.).

Despite the positive results that usually accompany prayer and fasting in setting people free from their fears and evil spirits, there are also some dangers that need to be avoided. Usually, self sometimes replaces Christ, and this leads to arrogance on the part of the evangelist, especially when God blesses his ministry with success. Sometimes, the attention of those healed or freed from problems tends to shift to the evangelist as the problem solver, instead of God. There is also the danger that the ministry of the evangelist will become narrow and focus primarily on deliverance ministry, instead of a balance with a truth-and-allegiance encounter.

Ashanti SDA evangelists can avoid these dangers through humility, daily submission of self to Christ,
prayer, Bible study, as well as consenting to a periodic assessment of their ministry through counseling and advice from the Ministerial Secretary of the Central Ghana Conference, 1 with the approval of the Executive Committee of the CGC.

The Ancestors

The Problem

Traditional Ashanti religion is described as ancestor worship 2 because the adherents of this religion preoccupy themselves with the veneration of their ancestors. The problem is that there is no defined concept of a future resurrection with a glorious body as taught by Christianity. The afterlife in the concept of Ashanti traditionalists is seen in terms of a transition from this world to the spirit world, where the dead continue to live as ancestral spirits, to maintain a relationship with the living members of society, bringing both benefits and punishments.

It is believed that ancestors live close to God. As such, Ashantis depend on them for help and protection. The well-being of Ashanti society also depends on how they maintain good relations with their ancestors. 3

1Hereafter CGC.
3Ibid., 26.
Ashanti traditionalists therefore venerate their ancestors in order to keep their ongoing role in society. This is a real problem to the acceptance of Christianity in that refusing to perform ancestral-related functions to keep the solidarity with the ancestors may result in the disintegration of the Ashanti social structure.¹

The contact with the ancestors is maintained through the ancestral cult.² The cult exists to provide answers through ritual action to deal with the problem of death, but these answers have not convinced the Ashanti traditionalists to face death with a hope in the future resurrection as taught by Christianity. Thus, ancestor veneration "shows a concern for this life and may contribute to its harmony and prosperity, but has no reference to an after-life."³ Everything surrounding the cult seems to "be measured in terms of its reciprocal benefit to the living."⁴ It does not go beyond Asamando (the place of the departed) to explain the resurrection of the body and eternal life in the presence of God.⁵

Since this is a problem to the acceptance of


²See pp. 46-47 above.


⁴Staples, 272.

⁵Ibid.
Christianity, the Ashanti SDA Church needs to take a positive approach to deal with the belief in ancestors and life after death among Ashanti traditionalists. I discuss the biblical and practical responses to the ancestors next.

**Biblical Response to Belief in Ancestors**

**Christ and Life After Death**

The biblical response in this section focuses upon the Christian teaching of a future resurrection with a glorious body as an approach to the Ashanti concept of life after death.

The Bible rejects the Ashanti traditionalists' concept of the soul as being conscious in the spirit world, fashioned on much the same pattern as this present world.¹ Instead, it presents a positive response that the dead remain in an unconscious state until the resurrection of the body "through the merit and power of Christ."²

The Ashanti SDA Church follows the biblical teaching about the unconscious state of the dead. The church does not accept the teaching that man, or any part of him, continues to live after death as the traditionalists believe. The position of the SDA Church

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¹See p. 43 above.

is based on the biblical teaching of conditional immortality\(^1\) (John 3:16). Immortality is not innate to humanity but a gift from God\(^2\) (Gen 2:17). Man, therefore, is a "creature subject to death, with the possibility of eternal life only because Christ has paid the penalty for sin and offers His life to the repentant sinner."\(^3\)

Paul's description of the risen Christ and the destruction of death as the last enemy in 1 Cor 15 is worthy of a discussion.

In this chapter, Paul reminds the Corinthian church of the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus which he had preached to them. "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, . . . by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain" (vss. 1, 2). Paul supports the story about the resurrection of Jesus with proof of testimonies of eyewitnesses, such as Peter, James, the apostles, as well as about five hundred people, and later Paul himself (vss. 5-8).

It seems there were some among the Corinthians

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\(^2\)Ibid.

who struggled with the concept of bodily resurrection and thought it an impossibility. If the supposition is accepted that Christ is not risen, it would destroy the foundation and evidence of Christianity\(^1\) (vss. 12-19). And yet, it is only through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus that all humanity can be saved, including the Ashanti traditionalist.

In vss. 21 and 22, Paul introduces the analogy of the two Adams, which is also found in Rom 5. "For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." The first Adam is the father of the human race. We are all descendants from Adam. There is a kind of corporate solidarity between humanity and the first Adam. Our solidarity with Adam also establishes the truth that, through the first Adam, sin and death came to all humanity.

The second Adam, on the other hand, is one with us but not in corporate sin. It is through the second Adam that descendants of the first Adam who die are made alive (1 Cor 15:22). The analogy will help to establish among Ashanti traditionalists the reality of the resurrection of the body through Christ.

Paul, in vss. 35-44, uses the seed analogy to explain the power of the resurrection with a glorious

\(^1\)Henry, 7:587.
body. For just as a seed placed in the soil dies and comes out with a fresh body, in a similar manner but with profound distinction concerning the resurrection of the dead, "the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" (vs. 42). In vs. 44, the text reads, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The glorious body after the resurrection is not this physical mortal body, but a spiritual body.¹

Having dealt with the seed analogy, again Paul draws attention to the first and second Adam, to explain the life-giving spirit which is found only in the second Adam. "The first Adam became a living being. The second Adam became a life-giving spirit" (vs. 45). The idea Paul brings across is that the first Adam, of whose descendants we are, has no life of his own. As a result of sin, the mortal body of the first Adam is dependant on the spiritual life-giver for immortality. The second Adam is the solution to the problem of sin and death.

Finally, in vss. 50-57, Paul deals with the final victory over death and its complete annihilation. He explains how this is achieved through a kind of

¹The use of the word "spiritual body" should not be understood to mean that the body would be changed into spirit. The expression should be understood comparatively. At the resurrection, this mortal body will attain a glorious body. "An imperishable body that has received eternal life from Christ." See Frank E. Gaebelein, ed., The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 10:290.
transformation from a corruptible state to an incorruptible state that is attained only through Christ. He says, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and the mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (vs. 54). The transformation into a glorious body at the resurrection is a gift of God through His son, Jesus. It is a victory that is obtained not by human power, but the power of God through Jesus (vs. 57).

The power of the resurrection of a glorious body is the message that Ashanti traditionalists need to hear. The Christian message about the state of the dead and the future resurrection of the body undercuts belief in ancestors. The fact is, the gospel offers life in the body in a glorious world instead of a shadowy existence in the world of the ancestors.

If Ashanti traditionalists understand the biblical concept of the state of the dead, that a person remains in an unconscious state at death until the resurrection, upon conversion to Christianity, the belief in ancestors and life in the spirit world will not be their primary concern. The primary concern will be how they can inherit eternal life through the resurrection offered by Jesus during His second coming.
Ancestors and Life in the Spirit World

The following illustration drawn from the Ashanti culture can engage Ashanti traditionalists on the subject of death. According to tradition, a respected Ashanti priest named Okomfo Anokye\(^1\) decided to go on a trip to conquer death in order to obtain a panacea for death. Okomfo Anokye never returned. It is believed this was because his people at Agona-Ashanti refused to obey the instructions he gave regarding his absence.\(^2\) The connecting link that can help to engage Ashanti traditionalists is that what the Ashanti priest, Anokye, failed to accomplish, Jesus has been able to forge. Jesus took a trip to this earth and by His death conquered all principalities, powers, demons, the forces of evil, and subjugated them under His Lordship and authority. Jesus alone has the panacea for death (Rev 1:18; John 6:54). Rev 1:18 can explain Christ’s victory over the spirit world, which Okomfo Anokye could not defeat.

\(^1\)Okomfo Anokye was one of the most powerful Ashanti priests, who was a friend of the Ashanti king, Osei Tutu, who reigned between 1697 and 1731. He is said to have done many wonderful things. He gave the golden stool to the Ashanti nation; he is said to have used his sandal to climb a big tree. He also placed a sword on the ground which no one has been able to remove. A hospital has been built and named after him near the site where the sword was placed in Kumasi.

Rev 1:18 clearly emphasizes Christ’s victory over death and the spirit world. It tells how Christ conquered death through His resurrection. This is what the Ashanti priest, Okomfo Anokye, in the story narrated above, could not achieve.

The first part of the text says "I am He who lives, and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore." The idea "He who lives" is an indication that Christ has life in Himself. He could lay down His life and take it (John 10:17-18). One writer puts it vividly, "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived." Death, therefore, could not have power over Him. He lives forever, and this is a guarantee that His followers will live also through the power of the resurrection that He will give to them. The last part of Rev 1:18 emphasizes Christ’s authority over death. It says, "And I have the keys of Hades and of death." In Greek religious thought, Hades referred to the realm over which the god of the dead exercised Lordship. It is the underworld where the souls of the dead dwell. It is conceived as a place of

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1White, The Desire of Ages, 530.

2Literally, the unseen world, the underworld, the place of the departed souls. For more information see, The Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), s.v. "Hades, Hell." Also The Encyclopedia of Religion, 1987 ed., s.v. "Hades."

3The Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), s.v. "Hades, Hell."
sadness and gloom,¹ where there is no return for the
dead. It is believed as soon as the new arrivals cross
the threshold of this realm then Hades locks the gates
and his agents who never sleep make sure no one escapes.²
The writer of Revelation intends to establish a firm
belief in the resurrection of Christ in his readers.
Traditionally, no one enters Hades and comes back, "but
by submitting to death Christ has through His death and
resurrection, won complete authority over death."³ He
left death eternally defeated, took the keys from the god
of the underworld, symbolizing Christ's power and
jurisdiction over the grave, which is also a guarantee
that the god of Hades cannot withhold from Christ the
faithful who have died in His name.⁴

Despite the belief in the ancestors and the
continuing existence of the soul in the spirit world by
Ashanti traditionalists, the Christian message of the
resurrection continues to have a profound influence among
them, especially on the occasion of Christian burials and
funeral celebrations. Monica Wilson's description of the
profound effect of Christian funerals upon the Nyakusa is

¹Ibid.

"Hades."

³R. H. Charles, "The Vision of the Son of Man,"
International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, Scotland:

⁴Ibid.
true of the Ashantis. She states:

At a Christian funeral the emphasis all through is on resurrection and life. The hymns sung to comfort the mourners and the prayers and the words of the burial service stress resurrection. . . . Again and again we were told by Christians: "We do not fear death as the pagans do."¹

Many Ashanti Christians have admitted that they joined the church because they wanted to be buried in the Christian way. The fact is, the Christian funeral celebration, which involves a sermon about death and a hope in a future resurrection, adds an eschatological dimension to the concept of life after death among Ashantis. The idea of eternal life through the resurrection of the body profoundly impacts the Ashantis. It is therefore not surprising that some Ashanti traditionalists give themselves to Christ when an appeal is made at a Christian funeral for a decision to accept Christ.

Practical Response to Belief in Ancestors

Some Christian Practices and Ancestor Veneration

There are some records in the Bible on the ancestors that can help to engage Ashanti traditionalists’ thought on the practice of ancestor veneration. The records give the genealogies of Bible characters in which their names, their descendants, and

¹Monica Wilson, Communal Rituals of the Nyakusa (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 178.
events surrounding their lives are mentioned. Ashanti traditionalists can relate to this because Ashantis pay particular attention to the historical records of their family members. The record of each family is kept through oral tradition. The following are a few of the references in the Bible.

In Gen 5, the genealogy of the family of Adam is given, beginning with Adam who is the great ancestor of the human race, and ending with Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Noah is remembered as a faithful ancestor who survived the flood (Gen 6; 7; 8; 9). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are key figures in the OT who are mentioned often in the Bible. Many years after the death of Abraham, the Jews were proud to tell Jesus, "we are Abraham's descendants" (John 8:33). Matt 1 begins, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," and then it continues with the other generations. These are issues in the Bible that Ashanti traditionalists can identify with since they tend to correspond with their traditional belief.

An Ashanti is proud to admit that he or she is a descendant of a respected figure in their history who founded the village or town where they live. Sometimes some go further to mention the names of family elders who have gone before them in successive generations to the present elder.

In addition to the genealogies in the Bible,
there are some similarities between Christian practices and traditional religious practices about ancestors that need mentioning. Some Christians make reference to the deeds of the patriarchs and other Bible characters, and try to apply the lives of these biblical figures as examples Christians can follow. Christian preachers mention the names of Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and David as past heroes of the Bible, and their deeds are repeated from the pulpit as examples for Christians today. Similarly, Ashanti leaders also recall the deeds of their ancestors during festival celebrations.

It is also a common practice for some Christians to keep pictures of their deceased relatives in their purse and also hang them on the walls in their rooms. Ashantis keep some properties of their dead ones, such as clothes and cooking utensils. Some Christians visit the graves of their deceased relatives with flowers. Sometimes monuments are erected for them, wreaths are laid on their graves, and the names and date of the deceased are written on gravestones to keep their memory alive. Ashanti traditionalists put bits of food and a drink on the ground to their deceased ones, and also pour libation to them as a means of respect, to keep in touch with their ancestors.

Paul Hiebert seems to raise the question that baffles Africans and Asians about the ancestors in the
following words. "What shall we do about our ancestors?"¹ Hiebert goes on to say that Western theology has not given much attention to the issue of ancestors, even though the Bible is not silent about them.² He states further:

Jehovah is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The fifth commandment, the first with a promise, calls us to respect our parents. What shall we say when people ask about their ancestors? Are they saved? Should the people feed them or put flowers on their graves?³

Hiebert says we should not brush such questions aside lightly "for ancestors are important in the lives of the people."⁴ The issue of ancestors is a crucial one, and it affects both Christians and traditionalists. But the Christian teaching about the state of the dead and the future resurrection with a glorious body seems to offer much hope to both Christians and traditionalists, instead of a belief in a shadowy existence of ancestors in the spirit world.

Based on the biblical and practical responses above, it seems that remembering the ancestors and respecting them, as well as recalling their deeds, are not bad, as long as there is no sense of worship or


²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.
belief that the dead are still alive\(^1\) in the spirit world, and that they continue to influence the affairs of the living members of society.

### Some Aspects of Chieftaincy Related to Stool Allegiance

#### The Problem

The role of the chief in traditional Ashanti religion reveals some aspects related to stool allegiance that pose barriers to the acceptance of Christianity. These include the sacred position of the chief, which is centered on his religious functions such as libation prayer, ancestor veneration, and the sacred stools.

Among Ashantis, as it is also common among other Akan tribes in Ghana, kingship is regarded as being of divine origin\(^2\). The king\(^3\) occupies a sacred position. He is regarded as a "counterpart of the deity and is accordingly a representative of Nyame" (God), on earth\(^4\).


\(^3\)A title used for the ruler of the entire tribe. Apart from the king, there are chiefs who rule the towns and villages. Both positions are regarded as sacred.

Busia describes the sacred office of the Ashanti chief as follows:

Chiefship in Ashanti is a sacred office. This has been shown by the rites of the chiefs enstoolment and by his part in ceremonies. . . . As long as he sits upon the stool of the ancestors, his person is sacred.¹

The sacredness of the chief is emphasized by taboos.² Therefore as Sawyer has described, the chief cannot be approached easily. He is approached only through an intermediary (linguist), known in Twi as Okyeame. He also addresses his people only through a linguist.³ Yet, he is regarded as the father of the people.⁴

The sacredness attached to the chief sanctions his religious role as an intermediary between God, the ancestors, and the people he rules.⁵ The chief pours libation to God, abosom, and ancestors. In the pouring of libation the names of the abosom and ancestors are mentioned together with the Supreme Being, and their goodwill are sought on behalf of the people. This is a real problem because it ascribes an almost divine role to the abosom and the ancestors. The chief also leads out

¹Busia, The Position of the Chief, 36-37.
²See p. 53 above.
³Sawyer, 7.
⁵Meyerowitz, The Divine Kingship in Ghana and Ancient Egypt, 29.
in the veneration of the ancestors during festival days such as the Adae,\(^1\) dedicated to the ancestors.

The sacred stools of the ancestors that the chiefs sit upon also present a major difficulty to the acceptance of Christianity. This is because the stools are believed to contain the spirits of the ancestors and as such serve as the uniting symbol of the society. The golden stool\(^2\) of Ashanti, for example, is believed to contain the soul of the Ashanti people,\(^3\) and if captured the Ashanti nation will collapse.\(^4\) The first stool belongs to the first ruler of the tribe because it was he who founded the village or town. The stools are kept at the stool house and the veneration of the ancestors are centered around them, especially the blackened stool.\(^5\)

The above discussion about some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance raises some questions as to whether the Ashanti SDA Church should recognize the religious functions of the chiefs as sacred, and accept the chiefs into membership of the

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\(^1\)See pp. 47-50 above.
\(^2\)See pp. 17-18 above.
\(^4\)An attempt by the Colonial governor, Hodgson, to demand the golden stool resulted in the Asante war of 1900, led by the queen mother, Yaa Asantewaa. See ibid., 495.
\(^5\)See p. 54 above.
church, or require the chiefs to make a clean break from traditions in order to join the church. Presently, there is no Ashanti chief who is a member of the SDA Church. Next, I discuss the biblical and practical responses to some of the issues raised above.

Biblical Response to Some Aspects of Chieftaincy Related to Stool Allegiance

The Nature of God

Some characteristics of the nature of God set Him apart from all other beings in the universe. These include eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and immutability.¹ These characteristics make God the only one who is divine, immortal, and all powerful. I discuss briefly the first three characteristics.

God is eternal, without beginning and without end. He describes Himself as I AM THAT I AM (Exod 3:14). He has existed from eternity. The Scripture testifies of Him as follows, "Before the mountains were brought forth or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). The text reveals God as the creator of the world. Man is a creature of God, created in His own image (Gen 1:26-27). However, this does not in any way make man equal to God in nature and power.²

¹Jemison, 75-76.
²Ibid., 126.
In traditional Ashanti religion, the kings and chiefs are counterparts of deity and the moment they are enstooled, they become sacred. It is acceptable as well as our Christian duty to recognize and respect authority (Rom 13:1-7). The traditional office of the chief is no exception. However, the Bible does not recognize man as a divine being. Divinity is an attribute of God.

Paul describes God as the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who alone is wise (1 Tim 1:17). He further says that God alone has immortality, and He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see (1 Tim 6:16). These characteristics of God are limited to Him alone. He does not share with any human being. God is also omnipresent. He is everywhere in terms of a spiritual presence and not a material one. The divine kings and chiefs in Ashanti can only be located at one place at a time. The psalmist’s description of God’s perfect knowledge of man clearly shows the unlimitedness of God, and man’s limited nature.

Where can I go from Your Spirit Or where can I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold you are there, If I take the winds of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me. (Ps 139:7-10)

The above text reveals that wherever man finds himself,

1Ibid., 25.
the presence of God is felt. Therefore, no man can hide himself from God.

Furthermore, God is considered as omnipotent, and as such He is able to do what He wishes to do. Nothing is too hard for Him at any given moment of time. The divine kings and chiefs of Ashanti are dependant on God, the abosom, and ancestors for help in order to accomplish what they want to do. And even they do so through the pouring of libation. God in His omnipotence is self-sufficient and is not dependent on man. Jesus' statement in Matt 19:26 reinforces this point. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Here again, we see the limitedness of man including the Ashanti chiefs, and the unlimitedness of God. The three attributes of God discussed above, namely, eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent are attributes that are exclusively part of the nature of God, which human beings do not possess, including the Ashanti chiefs.

Practical Response to Some Aspects of Chieftaincy Related to Stool Allegiance

Adventists and Ashanti Chiefs

The fact that there is no Ashanti chief who is a member of the SDA Church raises some concerns as to how the Ashanti SDA Church can engage the traditional chiefs with the gospel. The Ashanti SDA Church does not consider it a priority to evangelize the Ashanti chiefs.
The answer usually given by the church is that chieftaincy is an old institution that is bound up with the veneration of the ancestors, and that is incompatible with Christian beliefs. Also, the religious and political functions of the chief reinforce his allegiance to the stool and the people he rules. The chief, as the church assumes, will not abandon his ancestral-related functions to accept Christianity.

However, the evidence suggests that the Ashanti SDA Church has on several occasions been accused by the chiefs of refusing to obey the customs and laws of the land, especially those customs that pertain to the taboo1 days (dabone) dedicated to the abosom and the ancestors. The church has not taken any official steps to deal with this problem with their own members and the chiefs.

The taboo days are regarded as sacred days, such as the Kwasidae or Adae Kese, which occurs on a Sunday, and Wukudae or Kudapaakuo which occurs on a Wednesday. These are held every twenty-one days.2 Traditionally, on these days every member of society is supposed to stay away from the farm and from going to the stream to fetch

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1Taboos are special rules that control the behavior of members in a traditional society such as that of the Ashantis. A person offends the gods and ancestors if he or she breaks a taboo. For example, it is a taboo for the chief to stumble when he walks. If he does stumble, the expected calamity "has to be averted with a sacrifice." See Busia, The Position of the Chief, 24-25.

2See pp. 47-48 above.
water. This traditional practice among the Ashantis has in several instances resulted in a conflict between Ashanti Christians and the chiefs.¹

There are other issues also related to stool allegiance which Christians refuse to honor. Busia mentions that Ashanti Christians,² because of their religion, have refused to comply with traditions such as "swearing an oath in the traditional way, providing a sheep for sacrifice at a hearing of a case, carrying a stool or sword on ceremonial occasions, and doing communal labor on the road.³ Usually, the answers given by these Christians are that "I now go to church, and these laws are against the laws of the church, and the priest says we must not do them."⁴ The chiefs see their own people as turning their backs to their traditional

¹Colonial Reports: Ashanti, 1905, quoted in Busia, The Position of the Chief, 133.

²This includes Adventists.

³Busia, The Position of the Chief, 137. On the part of Adventists as regards communal labor, if it occurs on Saturday, the church refuses to attend. On one occasion that I witnessed at Agona, the church did not attend the communal labor scheduled on Saturday. The Ashanti SDA Church stood on the biblical principle not to violate the Sabbath. However, the next day, which was Sunday, all the members attended to their part of the work. It was later learned that some of the elders of the church had gone to negotiate with the traditional chief, to agree with the church members to do their work the next day, which was Sunday. It must be noted that matters concerning communal labor are not as serious as those pertaining to the taboo days.

⁴Ibid.
religion. They also see Christianity as a means of destabilizing the fabric of their society. What heightens the tension is the way in which Christians approach the issue.

One SDA Church informant says that the chiefs in such situations have always found a way of resolving the issue, and where the matter has gone a step forward to the courthouse, the court has always ruled in favor of the church.\(^1\) He went further to say that with the exception of the taboo days, which in the past have resulted in conflict between the church and the chiefs, the relationship between the chiefs and Adventists has been cordial.\(^2\)

What the Ashanti SDA Church needs to struggle with is how the church can avoid future conflicts with the Ashanti chiefs, and what steps the church can take to engage the chiefs with the gospel. There can be no quick-fix answers when dealing with such questions about the Ashanti chiefs. It is more of a relational approach that helps to bridge the gap between the chiefs and the church, rather than a quick-fix answer.

The Ashanti SDA leaders can consult the traditional chiefs and dialogue on matters conflicting with the biblical doctrine, instead of taking the laws into their own hands. The position of the church should

\(^1\)M. A. Bediako, telephone interview by author, April 6, 1997.

\(^2\)Ibid.
be made clear without compromising the biblical principles. However, in matters concerning the taboo days, it has been observed that church members could have avoided much conflict with the chiefs if they had not shown too much zeal in placing Christian beliefs above traditional beliefs and practices.

Apart from this, the local churches can initiate visits to the chiefs whereby members can acquaint themselves with traditional laws and customs, and also use that as an opportunity to pray for the chiefs and the elders. In addition to this, church invitations can be extended to the chiefs. The late chief of Agona, Nana Boakye Yiadom II, accepted several invitations to attend the Agona SDA Church services. In fact, he was educated at Agona SDA School, his first wife is a member of the SDA Church, and one of his sons, Kwaning Boakye, is a trained SDA pastor, working with the CGC. The initial results from the above approach to the Ashanti chiefs may not be spectacular, but the end result may be encouraging.

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1 When I was serving as a teacher at Agona SDA Secondary School from 1980-1984, the headmaster, C. A. Mensah, each year organized staff visits to the late chief of Agona, Nana Boakye Yiadom II. This fostered a good relationship between the traditional elders and the school teachers.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In this study, we have learned that in spite of the influence of Christianity among the Ashantis, traditional Ashanti religion persists and remains influential among about 30 percent of the four million people in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

The Ashantis, as it was noted, are a distinct people in the sense that they possess a religion and culture which for many years have shaped and influenced their thoughts and decisions in life. They believe in the Supreme Being and the existence of lesser gods. They also believe man was created by God. In their concept, death does not terminate the existence of a human being, rather it is a transition from this world to the spirit world where the dead continue to live as ancestral spirits and maintain relationships with the living. Ashantis, therefore, venerate their ancestors. They practice a chieftaincy system, some aspects of which are socio-political whereas others are religious. Politically the enstoolment of the chief makes him the legislative head and a judge of the people he rules. He summons an assembly to
discuss the welfare of the community. He is also the commander-in-chief of the army. Religiously, the chief acts as an intermediary between God, the ancestors, and the people. He is regarded as sacred and as a representative of Nyame on earth. The religious practices of the chief include ancestor-related functions, such as the pouring of libation and prayers offered to the Supreme Being, through the abosom and the ancestors.

Ashantis also believe in the destructive powers of the spirit world and witches, therefore many Ashanti traditionalists rely on the power of asuman (charms) to counteract those forces. Again, Ashantis believe sin is an offense against the Supreme Being, the gods, ancestors, and man. They believe punishment comes to man in the form of sickness, death, or misfortune from the Supreme Being, the gods, and ancestors due to a person's misconduct. Furthermore, Ashantis believe in sacrifice as a means of restoring broken relationships with the Supreme Being, the gods, ancestors, and fellow human beings.

Four elements of Ashanti belief and practice pose significant barriers to conscientious membership in the SDA Church. These barriers are belief in (1) abosom (lesser gods), (2) asuman (charms), (3) ancestor veneration, and (4) some aspects of chieftaincy related to stool allegiance.

The evidence suggests that the Christian church has not adequately dealt with this-worldly religious needs
for protection and blessing. Many Ashanti traditionalists are searching for security in life. They feel the need for protection from evil spirits, witchcraft, job and marriage insecurity, disease, charms, displeased ancestors who may cause misfortune, and several other concerns in life.

The Christian church, it was noted, has been able to make a breakthrough in its emphasis on truth as this relates to salvation in a transcendent sense. Belief in the Supreme Being, the second coming of Jesus, and the resurrection of the body have profoundly engaged Ashanti traditionalists. But the church has tended to give less emphasis to issues relating to evil spirits, the spirit world of the ancestors, and to prayer and fasting as a form of deliverance. Thus, certain basic beliefs and practices remain unchallenged and unmet and these impede a decision to join the SDA Church.

The evangelistic approach by the Ashanti SDA Church to reach Ashanti traditionalists is not widely different from that of the other Christian churches. However, in some ways the points of differentiation is found in the Adventist teachings about the state of the dead, the resurrection of the body, and the Sabbath as Saturday not Sunday. Concerning the Sabbath as Saturday the Ashanti SDA Church has the opportunity to engage Ashanti traditionalists with their own tradition of Saturday worship. However, the church tends not to use traditional
beliefs and practices in presenting the biblical Sabbath. It was also discovered that the Ashanti SDA Church does not balance the truth-and-allegiance encounter with a power encounter\(^1\) utilizing prayer and fasting as a form of deliverance. The spiritual churches, as it was discovered, are meeting the needs of the Ashanti traditionalists through the practice of deliverance ministries. This includes demon exorcising, faith healing, and freedom from fear and misfortune.

It is my conviction based on this study that the Ashanti SDA Church needs to make adjustments to its evangelistic approach in order to effectively engage Ashanti traditionalists.

**Conclusions**

As a result of the study, some conclusions may be drawn.

1. The Ashanti SDA evangelists and lay people have emphasized a truth-and-allegiance encounter in their approach to the traditionalists. It is also clear that the evangelists and lay people have not balanced this with prayer and fasting, to deal with the day-to-day problems of traditionalists. The crux of the matter is that the church has not been very sensitive to the this-worldly religious 

\(^1\)Power encounter is a visible and practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the false gods or spirits worshipped or feared by a group of people. See p. 177 above. Asamoah, class notes.
needs that confront Ashanti traditionalists in their day-to-day life. Instead, those problems have been treated as if they do not exist. The result is the persistence of traditional belief and practice among 30 percent of Ashanti traditionalists. In addition to a-truth-and-allegiance encounter the evangelists and lay people can offer protection to traditionalists by appealing to the power of God through prayer and fasting.

2. The Ashanti concept that God is withdrawn, unapproachable, and dangerous encourages the traditionalists to worship the abosom as intermediaries between God and man. The Ashanti SDA Church, it was noted can positively engage the traditionalists' thought by stressing the immanence of God and His care for human beings. In addition to this the Christian belief in the intermediary role of Jesus Christ in providing access to God can be shown to displace the traditional role of the abosom.

3. Since traditionalists believe God is withdrawn, unapproachable, dangerous, and does not deal directly with the day-to-day problems of man, the traditionalists seek protection from evil spirits, witches, and misfortune through the use of asuman. The Ashanti SDA Church has not done much to offer protection to the traditionalists through prayer and fasting as a form of deliverance ministry. What the Ashanti SDA Church can do is to take seriously the needs of the traditionalists, and offer solutions to those needs through prayer and fasting. At
the same time the church can emphasize the need to trust in the power of God to save them from their fears.

Many Ashanti traditionalists tend to be attracted to the spiritual churches more than to the SDA Church because the spiritual churches seem to fulfill the this-worldly religious needs of the traditionalists. This includes protection from evil eye, witches, barrenness, impotency, as well as job and marriage insecurities.

4. Ashantis ascribe a divine role and sacredness to the traditional office of the chief. The reason is that the chief is regarded as a representative of Nyame on earth. The chief speaks with authority and is approached only through a linguist. In response to this the Ashanti SDA Church can emphasize strongly that only God is divine. He is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and immutable. God alone possesses these attributes and that set Him apart from human beings in the universe.

5. The Ashanti' concept of the survival of the disembodied soul¹ at death presupposes the belief in life after death, and the existence of the ancestors in the spirit world as family members who continue to influence the affairs of life. The traditionalists, therefore, venerate their ancestors in order to maintain the ongoing role of the ancestors in society. In addition to the

¹The Ashanti concept of the survival of the disembodied soul is that, at death, the soul (Okra) does not perish with the body (honam), but continues to live as an ancestral spirit. See Gyekye, 99-103.
message of bodily resurrection the Christian teaching of immortality as a gift of God and not a property in human nature needs to be adequately stressed to disprove the traditional concept of the survival of the disembodied soul at death.

6. The study has shown that the Ashanti SDA Church has the opportunity to engage traditionalists with the gospel since the church has many points of contact with them. These include a belief in God, a seven-day concept of creation, and the Sabbath as Saturday and not Sunday.

7. Ashanti SDA evangelists and lay people lack the basic training in traditional religion to help them understand the real issues with which Ashanti traditionalists struggle. As such, the evangelists and lay people are not equipped to engage their audience with the gospel in matters pertaining to traditional belief and practice. What the Ashanti SDA Church needs to do is to organize quarterly workshops in traditional religion for the pastors, evangelists, and laypeople, in order to equip them to evangelize the Ashanti traditionalists.

Recommendations

The persistence of traditional belief and practice among about 30 percent of Ashanti traditionalists demands that Ashanti SDA evangelists have a clear understanding of Ashanti religion and a balanced approach in order to effectively engage these people.
The following recommendations have implications for the future growth of the SDA Church among Ashanti traditionalists.

1. The Ashanti SDA leaders, pastors, and lay people should get together to study the Bible and the traditional religion of the Ashantis with the help of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of arriving at a plan of action to guide the church in matters pertaining to traditional belief and practice. For example, some valued Ashanti customs such as those connected with the rites of passage can be studied from a biblical point of view. They include the eight-day ceremony of the child and initiation into manhood or womanhood. Practices that are not in conflict with the teachings of the Bible, should not be made stumbling blocks that deter traditionalists from accepting Christianity.

2. On the institution of chieftaincy and some aspects related to stool allegiance, the position of the Ashanti SDA leaders should be made clear and presented to the traditional chiefs. Some of the functions of the chiefs are socio-political and others are religious. For example, the socio-political function of the chief as ruler and leader of the people may be accepted whereas the intermediary role of the chief between the ancestors and the people cannot be conscientiously endorsed. On the one hand, church members can be advised to respect the traditional office of the chiefs and obey the laws of the land.
if they do not contradict the Bible. On the other hand, matters about which there is conscientious conflict should be carefully explained to both the rulers and church members.

3. While the Ashanti SDA leaders, pastors, and lay people condemn the worship of abosom and the use of asuman, the church at large should also offer protection to the traditionalists through the power of God by means of prayer and fasting.

4. The CGC can encourage the use of more local Christian songs and fewer translated hymns during church services and evangelistic meetings. This will help the traditionalists who visit the Adventist church and attend the evangelistic meetings to identify with the music.

5. A course in traditional Ashanti religion should be incorporated into the curriculum of Valley View College,¹ where most of the SDA Church workers in Ghana are trained. Topics should include:
   a. Characteristics of traditional Ashanti religion
   b. Ashanti worldview
   c. Beliefs and practices of Ashantis regarding the Supreme Being, abosom (lesser gods), asuman, ancestors, chieftaincy and the stool, the nature of man, witchcraft, sin, and salvation

¹Hereafter VVC.
d. Barriers in Ashanti religion to membership in the SDA Church
e. Biblical and practical responses to the barriers.

It is anticipated that in the future the curriculum at VVC will embrace other traditional religions in Ghana.

6. Quarterly workshops should be organized to train the pastors, evangelists, and lay people working for the church in the Ashanti region. This should be under the auspices of the Personal Ministries Department of the CGC.

7. There is an urgent need for a committee appointed by the CGC to study the biblical basis for prayer and fasting as a part of Christian ministry. Truth-and-allegiance encounter should be balanced with prayer and fasting in the Adventist ministry among Ashanti traditionalists.

It is my hope that God will bless the suggestions and their application for a successful ministry among Ashanti traditionalists.
APPENDIX A

MAPS OF GHANA
Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Ghana, 1994

Adapted from LaVerly Berry, ed., Ghana: A Country Study (Maryland: Bernan Lanham, 1995), xxviii.
AREA INHABITED BY THE AKAN–SPEAKING PEOPLE
AREA INHABITED BY THE ASHANTI PEOPLE
APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE
Dear Mr. Amofah,

Your letter to the bishop about the history of Kumasi Diocese is referred to me. Please, find enclosed the research work which I am doing on the Catholic Church in this diocese. It is not published, I am still working on it, and I hope the information in it will be useful to you.

Yours Sincerely,

[Signature]

Fr. James Baffour Addo
13th March 1997

Fax No: (616) 471-9751

ATTENTION: Pastor Amofah A. Asamoah

FAX MESSAGE

BOOKS PRINTED BY THE ADVENT PRESS

Thank you for your fax.

Kindly find below the details of the various books printed by the Advent Press as requested.

1. The Author: NANCY VAN PEIT
   Title: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD
   The city book was published: ACCRA
   Publisher: ADVENT PRESS
   Year book was published: 1990

2. The Author: BEATRICE SHORT NEALL
   Title: THE RULER AND THE REBEL
   The city book was published: ACCRA
   Publisher: ADVENT PRESS
   Year book was published: 1986

3. The Author: E. G. WHITE
   Title: STEPS TO CHRIST
   The city book was published: ACCRA
   Publisher: ADVENT PRESS
   Year book was published: 1986

4. The Author: G. B. MENSAY
   Title: LOOKING UNTO JESUS
   The city book was published: ACCRA
   Publisher: ADVENT PRESS
   Year book was published: 1989
5. The Author: E. G. WHITE  
Title: HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE  
The city book was published: ACCRA  
Publisher: ADVENT PRESS  
Year book was published: 1974

6. The Author: ARTHUR S. MAXWELL  
Title: MAN THE WORLD NEEDS MOST  
The city book was published: ACCRA  
Publisher: ADVENT PRESS  
Year book was published: 1986

7. The Author: E. G. WHITE  
Title: HAPPINESS IN EDUCATION  
The city book was published: ACCRA  
Publisher: ADVENT PRESS  
Year book was published: 1977

Best regards.

Lisa Crentsil  
Secretary
To 

Amofah A. Asamoah

Andrews University
Berrien Spring, Michigan 49104

Fax: 616-471-9754
Phone: (616) 471-9503

(c) List of Books L.E. Are Selling:

1. Your Health in Your Hands
2. The Bible Story (Kid's)
3. A Guide to Family Health
4. Ruler and Rebel
5. Desire of Ages
6. God's Answers
7. Secret Keys
8. Jesus - Friend of Children

(b) Converts into S.D. A. Church (1980-1987)

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1988 - 125
1989 - 115
1990 - 114
1991 - 85
1992 - 70
1993 - 120
1994 - 38
1995 - 20
1996 - 50
1997 - (TBC) 2

Total Souls for the Period (1980 - 1997) 1750

(c) The Appeal L.E. Ministry Has on Ashantis or What the Ashantis Say about L.E. Ministries

The Ashantis always give the L.E. a hearty welcome. They have been helped immensely in terms of decent and healthy living. The good news has transformed the lives of many - more especially the youth.
MISSION STATEMENT
OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH

(Truly, one of the most memorable moments at the
Spring Meeting session was when GC committee members
and invitees voted the mission statement for the world
church. Aside from the short statement of purpose in its
constitution, this is the first mission statement ever voted
for the world church.)

Our Mission:
The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to
proclaim to all peoples the everlasting gospel in the context
of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, lead­
ing them to accept Jesus as personal Saviour and to unite
with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His
soon return.

Our Method:
We pursue this mission under the guidance of the Holy
Spirit through:

Preaching: Accepting Christ’s commission (Matthew
28:18-20), we proclaim to all the world the message of a
loving God, most fully revealed in His Son’s reconciling
ministry and atoning death. Recognizing the Bible to be
God’s infallible revelation of His will, we present its full
message, including the second advent of Christ and the
continuing authority of His Ten Commandment law with
its reminder of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Teaching: Acknowledging that development of mind
and character is essential to God’s redemptive plan, we
promote the growth of a mature understanding of and rela­
tionship to God, His Word, and the created universe.

Healing: Affirming the biblical emphasis on the well­
being of the whole person, we make the preservation of
health and the healing of the sick a priority and through our
ministry to the poor and oppressed, cooperate with the
Creator in His compassionate work of restoration.

Our Vision:
In harmony with the great prophecies of the Scriptures,
we see as the climax of God’s plan the restoration of all
His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righ­
teousness.
GLOBAL STRATEGY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

VOTED: To approve the document "Global Strategy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," which reads as follows:

GLOBAL STRATEGY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Part I

General concepts

Introduction

The changes are stark, unrelenting: world population 5.3 billion, Seventh-day Adventist world membership more than 6 million; world population increasing by 330,000 per day, Adventist membership increasing by 1,800 per day.

The continuing growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in many areas does not mean that the church has finished its task. Even those countries where the membership may reach as high as 100 in 1,000 population contain population groups, urban enclaves, neighborhoods, ethnic communities, and religious affiliations in which there is little or no Adventist presence or appropriate witness.

While there is one Adventist for every 900 people in the world, some areas are woefully unrepresented. China with its more than 1 billion people has as many as approximately 60,000 Adventists—one for every 20,000. India (projected to be earth's most populous nation by A.D. 2010) with its multiple non-Christian religious provinces. Adventism with one of its greatest challenges. The U.S.S.R. with its 290 million has about 35,000 Adventists. And the Muslim world with its 900 million has only a handful of Adventists.

Three categories may be identified:

1. Mission

Seventh-day Adventists accept the mission of proclaiming the everlasting gospel "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Seventh-day Adventists teach that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone and that obedience to His commandments is the true of the salvation experience.

The special mission of the church is to herald the second coming of Christ and to teach and restore neglected truths such as the Seventh-day Sabbath, Christian lifestyle, the Pre-Advent judgment, and the nature of man.

Following the example of Christ's ministry, the church will witness in every neighborhood, preaching the good news, serving mankind, developing disciples, and bringing people into meaningful church fellowship.

Thus, the commitment of every church member and institution is to minister wholeheartedly to men and women by addressing their physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs.

2. Strategy

a. Target Populations

Evangelizing target populations will be most effective if they are divided into people groups, whose group characteristics facilitate a group approach in evangelism and secure decisions for the gospel. The term "people group" loosely describes groups of people who are bound together in some pattern of familial, regional, linguistic, ethnic, political, economic, and/or religious affiliation. It can apply to a village culture, a professional group, or any other group bound by a common bond.

Three categories may be identified:

Primary: ethnolinguistic (kin groups; language groups, etc.).

Secondary: social groups, age groups, class, caste.

Tertiary: occupation, residence, common circumstances, interest, etc.

No definitive figures are available regarding the number of these various categories, which are not only overlapping but also constantly changing. The best estimates speak of about 12,000 primary groups that are largely untouched by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The geographical-political administrative units in many countries represent a natural grouping in which people have organized themselves, taking into account such elements as language, ethnicity, geographical barriers and distances, and often are about 1 million in size.

Each division will determine which are the primary unreached people groups in its territory. Then, based on receptivity, size, and location, the division will prioritize the order in which these groups will be reached.

b. Objectives

1) To provide an ongoing awareness program that will acquaint church members with the need for penetrating all people groups with the Adventist message. Penetration takes place through general announcements, proclamation, or permanent presence.

2) To establish an Adventist presence in all people groups where present there is none. An Adventist presence is defined as an established local congregation. People groups encompass ethnolinguistic, geographic-political, or demographic social units.

3) To foster expansion wherever the church now exists.

3. Implementation

The General Conference is responsible for initiating and monitoring the Global Strategy mission throughout the world. It will use departmental, institutional, and administrative resources to achieve its plans.

The following outline may apply at any level of the church organization:

Direct action: Direct action, where needed, occurs when a higher organization takes the initiative, in consultation with any existing subsidiary organizations, to achieve Global Strategy objectives. It may also occur where no subsidiary exists.

Indirect action: Indirect action occurs when each organization causes its subsidiary organizations to establish and implement its own direct action objectives, which in turn cause their subsidiary organizations to do the same within their assigned territory.

1. Plans to implement Objective 1) above—To create an awareness:

a. Requests major denominational journals to publish articles on Global Strategy.

b. Produce a leaflet on Global Strategy for every church family.

2. Plans to implement objective 2) above—To establish a presence:

a. Identify the population segments where there is some Adventist presence.

b. Assign Global Strategy coordination at each level to the president or chief executive officer.

3. Plans to implement objective 3) above—To foster expansion:

a. Request the major denominational journals to publish articles on Global Strategy.

b. Produce a videocassette on Global Strategy.

c. Prepare an audiovisual program similar to Mission Spotlight.

d. Publish curriculum units for elementary, secondary, and college Bible courses concerning Global Strategy.

4. Reports

a. Publish for church administrators a quarterly Global Strategy newsletter.


5. Publicizing

a. Plans to implement objective 1) above—To create an awareness:

b. Plans to implement objective 2) above—To establish a presence:

1) Study each population segment and select the approach most likely to succeed.

2) Direct action: Direct action, where needed, occurs when a higher organization takes the initiative, in consultation with any existing subsidiary organizations, to achieve Global Strategy objectives. It may also occur where no subsidiary exists.

3) Indirect action: Indirect action occurs when each organization causes its subsidiary organizations to establish and implement its own direct action objectives, which in turn cause their subsidiary organizations to do the same within their assigned territory.

a. Plans to implement Objective 1) above—To create an awareness:

b. Requests major denominational journals to publish articles on Global Strategy.
upon appropriations for operations will calculate the Global Strategy funds as a percentage of total income including tithe and appropriations.

d) Require accountability for the use of the resources allocated.

c) Subsidies of an organization to its subsidiary organizations will be conditioned on the presentation of a plan that is based on need, opportunity, and potential, which includes:

i) Direct action targets at that level.

ii) Motivation of indirect action by subsidiary organizations at the next level through earmarking of funds.

iii) Requirement of matching funds.

iv) Financial resources for supporting the chosen personnel, either through the annual budget or through tagging of funds to be used by subsidiary organizations.

v) Additional funds for Global Strategy may be provided as a result of economies resulting from the evaluation at all levels of the effectiveness of existing services.

f. Monitoring and Accountability—Each organization will be represented in the development of the strategy of its component subsidiary organizations and monitor the attainment of the agreed-upon goals and target dates within an established framework of accountability.

1) Updates at Annual Councils—The General Conference coordinator for Global Strategy will prepare and present global updates with assistance from division Global Strategy coordinators.

2) Annual Statistical Report—The General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics will study the modification of the regular reporting system of the church to encompass the objectives of Global Strategy.

b) The basis for reports and monitoring at the General Conference level is initially limited to the 5,000 population segments of 1 million and whatever unreached people groups have been selected by the organizations included in the report.

g) Evaluation—A group appointed by the General Conference Committee for Global Strategy will periodically review the strategy as a whole to reconsider the choice of objectives with the option of going beyond monitoring the achievement of the above agreed-upon objectives.

Conclusion

We want to see Jesus come soon. We envision every church member living in love, speaking constantly of the righteousness of Christ and full of the Holy Spirit. Thus every member makes Christ the center of every presentation and His character their character. To achieve this, God’s people will seek a closer walk with Him through study and feeding upon the Word, a richer prayer life, and a more consistent witness.

Like all great spiritual awakenings, renewal and renewal continue as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He restores us in the image of our Maker and gives us the power to follow Him. The Holy Spirit makes people receptive to the gospel and convinces them of sin and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). He also guides His people where and when to go and teaches them how to communicate the gospel effectively.

Global Strategy will succeed only through the work of the Holy Spirit, who also uses human agencies whose whole life, thought, and activities are consecrated to His service.

Local congregations will develop as caring churches as the Spirit leads through biblical and Christ-centered preaching. Through the gifts of the Spirit the church will be enabled to share the gospel within its neighborhood and participate in the global proclamation to all peoples and each person.

In planning and activity the leaders of the church, its organizations, and its institutions shall maintain and restore the primacy of the gospel and the finishing of God’s work. Leaders shall develop an administrative and management philosophy conducive to achieving the mission of the church in which all activities are evaluated primarily by their contribution to this objective.

The General Conference in session therefore calls each member, congregation, and church leader to share in this Global Strategy with the goal of placing a personal Adventist presence among all people groups throughout the world. We thus seek the fulfillment of our Lord’s command to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Part II

General Conference Involvement

1. Structure for Implementation

a. In order to assure the primacy of Global Strategy in the church, the General Conference Committee will appoint a Global Strategy Committee with the following terms of reference:

1) General a) Coordinate and approve the allocation of resources.

b) Administer the centers of studies for non-Christians.

c) Serve as the board of directors for the Center for International Relations.

d) Delegate to the current administrative committee’s responsibility for ongoing supervision of the existing operations in areas identified as General Conference “direct action” target territories or projects.

e) Evaluate the overall progress of the Global Strategy activities and require corrective measures should conditions so indicate.

2) Coordinate interdivisional efforts to penetrate people groups with specific characteristics.

3) Direct Action a) Establish the direct action objectives to be achieved by the General Conference in its direct action target areas.

b) Administer the infrastructure necessary for accomplishing the division officers’ objectives as they are involved.

c) Foster the primacy of Global Strategy plans and activities within General Conference institutions.

d) Monitor and evaluate progress toward the approved objectives.

3) Indirect Actions

a) Approve the objectives submitted by its subsidiary organizations.

b) Allocate resources, combined with each organization’s funds, that are to be used for the purpose of reaching the approved objectives within that territory.

Appropriations may also be adjusted in the event the Global Strategy Committee recommends to the General Conference Budget Committee that resources be reassigned. It is understood that such adjustments would be made after discussing the particular needs of the church and the mission.

4) Middle East

5) Soviet

6) Coordination of international temperance organizations with Global Strategy planning.

c. Leadership of Global Strategy in the interest of maintaining unity between administration and the mission of Global Strategy, as well as eliminating the need for further staffing, the chief administrative officer (president) will be responsible for the coordination of Global Strategy and be held accountable for its success.

2. General Conference Direct Action

a. Direct action areas for the General Conference are:

1) People’s Republic of China

2) Soviet Union

3) India

4) Middle East

b. Centers for research in approaches to major non-Christian religions are:

1) Islam

2) Buddhism

3) Hinduism

4) Judaism

c. Levels of penetration, monitoring, and funding

1) The General Conference proposes to establish by the year 2000 a Seventh-day Adventist presence in every population segment of 1 million as identified at the beginning of the decade 1990-2000. (This also includes a presence in each of 271 languages spoken by below the world average.)

a) About 3,200 have already been entered.

b) There are about 1,800 to be reached:

1) None in four divisions, 400 in the territory of five other divisions, and 333 in the Northern Union of the Southern Asia Division.

2) Another 1,030 are in the other direct action areas where there is no division organization.

c) This goal requires entering a new population of 1 million every other day for 10 years (5 per week, 15 per month, 180 per year). It also means starting work in 35 new languages in which we have not worked before.

2) The General Conference will monitor the achievement of these objectives in China, the northern areas of the Southern Asia Division, the Middle East, and the Soviet Union; also of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Eastern Africa Division, Euro-Africa Division, Far Eastern Division, and Trans-European Division.

3) The General Conference will first become involved in funding the penetration of these population segments where there is no Adventist presence, but also may become involved, on some agreed-upon proportional matching basis, in the growth and expansion of the SDA presence in areas where 20 contiguous population segments of 1 million are below the world average. (about one SDA per 1,000 population at the time Global Strategy planning was initiated.)
THE WORLD OF MISSION
Brenda Bond Kis, Editor

Rocks crash to the street in a message of liberation. The Berlin Wall is coming apart! Moving scenes of reunited loved ones in Eastern Europe march across the video screen as we hear about tremendous new opportunities to reach people.

Tonight I am in Washington, D.C. at one of George Vandeman’s “Partnership Unlimited” weekends. Surrounded by people with fascinating stories, I am impressed with the variety of our Christian mission. Through the testimonies of Terry Johnson, former member of the Presidential Honor Guard; Dr. James White, great-grandson of James and Ellen White and the “black sheep in the White family”; Doug Wead, special assistant to President George Bush; and Gloria Bentzinger, Pennsylvania minister’s wife who just experienced miraculous healing, I perceive once again that every act of human life is part of “mission.”

Tim Malki is here too. Fluent in English, French, and Arabic, he grew up in the Middle East where his Presbyterian father pastored for 25 years, converting only one Muslim to Christianity. Tim majored in Mechanical Engineering at UCLA and did Arabic translating on the side for CBN. After he graduated, they invited him to join them full-time. As coordinator for CBN programming in the Middle East, he has seen Christian television accomplish what the individual could not. Today over 500 letters a month, 90% of them from Muslims, pour into the station offices of a Christian program aired in the Middle East for the first time just seven years ago. The Word is penetrating cultural and religious barriers.

What you read on the following few pages is a quick and partial glance at the vast world of mission. We invite you to think about yours in new ways as 1990, the “Year of Mission,” comes to a close.

GLOBAL STRATEGY AND THE SEMINARY
Raoul Dederen, Dean

Global Strategy means refocusing our mission resources and activities worldwide in terms of people groups of one million rather than by countries. Although there are some 5,000 ethnolinguistic or demographic groupings of one million people each, the Adventist Church has entered only about 3,200 of them. In other words, 1,800 of these have no Seventh-day Adventist presence. More than two billion people!

If our goal is to plant at least one church in each of these 1,800 groups by the year 2000, the entire church must be mobilized for one purpose: worldwide mission. More than programs or goals, Global Strategy means people—dedicated and converted people. Lay members and ministers.

The international constituency of the Andrews University Theological Seminary continues to reflect its concern for Global Strategy. Two of the degrees we offer, the Master of Divinity and the Doctor of Philosophy/Theology, evidence this rather clearly. Of a total of 401 on-campus seminary students, 270 are currently working toward the M.Div., our basic degree. Approximately 35% of these are international students. In the PhD/ThD program, 73% of the 62 students come from outside of the U.S. - 22% from the Euro-Africa Division, 13% from the Trans-European Division, and 8% each from the South American and Far Eastern Divisions with the remainder from such places as Australia, South Africa and Ghana. The racial and ethnic diversity of the Seventh-day Adventist church is reflected in the faculty as well.

With confidence in God’s leadership and by His grace, the Seminary family accepts the challenge of proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages “to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”

MISSION TO THE UNIVERSE
Miroslav M. Kis, Assoc. Prof. of Ethics

If the impact of our actions determines the extent of our responsibility for them, then the mission and ministry of the church must reach beyond the confines of this planet. Scripture tells us that both the origin and influence of evil predate and transcend its appearance on earth. Lucifer’s rebellion started in heaven and plunged the whole universe into a climate of controversy. From that moment on, every free-willed creature had to face evil as a fait accompli, as an alternate mode of being.

The coming of sin and evil to this planet was an intrusion from beyond. Yet the choice to give it residence here was a free human act by which humans lost their freedom. Whether they chose good or evil, it could only be by cooperation rather than independent operation, evil in cooperation with the hosts of wickedness and good in cooperation with God. Moral
Our personal choices and actions. We cannot lose sight of the global impact of our personal choices and actions. We are watched from beyond (2 Cor. 3:2,3 and Psalms 14:2). As members of an alliance against evil, our cooperation is noted and recognized (Jub 1:8). As a corporate body, the policies and programs, the teachings and hopes of the church receive their cue from beyond in the person of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18).

With evangelism, the supreme task of the church, our assignment has cosmic dimensions. The goal of the church in reaching out is not to simply proselytize and win adherents. The eternal overshadow the temporal and church membership is a means to establishing the Kingdom of Heaven. With every convert, with each decision for Christ, we gain more ground on sin and evil. From the sea of indifference to good and loyalty to evil, emerge islands of God's faithful, rescued subjects.

When the church attends to the nurturing of its members, its work takes on cosmic dimensions as well. Victory over sin must be won on the personal level of each member. The church family provides a context where values, preferences and norms match those in heaven. The church is a project of a social environment where God's will reigns supreme on earth as it does in heaven. In it souls find a haven where good intentions under the influence of the Holy Spirit mature into good actions and good characters.

Thus a vibrant missions-minded church oriented towards establishing the kingdom of heaven in human hearts vindicates the character of God. Like a channel it mediates God's invitation and acceptance and like an open letter it is a witness of His credentials (1 Cor. 4:9). Transformed and committed lives stand as living proof that love can generate genuine obedience to God's will and at the same time bring happiness and safeguard human freedom.

MISSION OF THE MISSION DEPARTMENT
Russell L. Staples, Prof. of Mission

Mission, the most essential function of the Christian church, cannot simply be a department. A sense of Christian mission should pervade everything the Seminary teaches and does. Why, then, should there be a Department of World Mission?

Because churches and institutions tend to lose thrust and revert to organizational maintenance, it is the self-conscious concern of the Department of World Mission to keep the worldwide goals of the gospel commission sharply and clearly before every Seminary student. The department also seeks to motivate to mission service. However, motivation and proper goals in themselves do not constitute adequate preparation for the missionary task. To these must be added concepts of strategy and the tools of understanding and relationship by which the tasks of mission may be accomplished.

Every task is performed within a certain context. Therefore, the department seeks to provide information regarding the world in which the work of the church and its mission is conducted. Christianity, by far the most international and the largest of the world religions, now comprises 34% of the population of the earth and is growing rapidly. Thriving national churches have grown up in many countries and these constitute a great new resource for mission.

Yet in spite of the tremendous achievements of Christian mission, there are still large resistant blocs of people, foremost among which are the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities. It is true that some areas are closed to career missionaries. But Christians can enter. The challenge is much more one of strategy--of who, and how, and under what circumstances--than of impossibility.

As the Adventist Church has spread out and grown (from half a million in 1940 to almost 6.25 million in 1990), and particularly in areas where growth has been very rapid, more of the resources of mission have been devoted to the running and stabilization of the church and the training of leaders than to frontier work. This slow shift from frontier to maintenance has also resulted in a shift in the kind of missionary needed--from frontier-people to skilled medical, academic, and administrative persons. If 1990 and Global Strategy mean anything, the tide will move the other way, but with a fundamental difference, frontier missionaries also need to be equipped with essential conceptual and academic tools.

The department offers courses to enrich and prepare candidates for service in the church through various programs: M.Div., M.A. in Pastoral Ministry, M.A. in Religion, a Missions concentration in the D.Min. program, and Adventist Ministry Studies in the Ph.D. program.

It is expected that an increasing number of missionary candidates will be called directly into service from the Seminary, particularly from the M.Div. program, as the Global Strategy initiative gains momentum. It is hoped that missionaries already in service and some new candidates, especially those performing the tasks which do not require previous theological training, will elect to prepare for more fruitful and rewarding service by concentrating on Mission Studies in the M.A. in Religion program. The Missions emphasis in the D.Min. program has been designed with the special needs of missionaries and candidates from outside North America in mind. This program will help prepare leaders and administrators for the new wave and new style of missions upon which the church is now embarking. Ph.D. programs help prepare candidates for major teaching and leadership roles in the church--men and women who have firsthand knowledge of the literature, possibilities, and challenges of mission.
MISSION IN ADVENTIST HISTORY

P. Gerard Damsteegt, Asst. Prof. of Church History

Our schools were established to prepare our young people for life, to give them a mission, or rather the mission, namely that of living a deeper spirituality and preparing others for Christ’s return. Some years ago this institution was named after J. N. Andrews, the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary. (The poor fellow would probably be shocked and highly embarrassed to know it. He even forbade the Review from publishing an eulogy at his demise.) What did this name signify? What attribute of Elder Andrews did we seek to memorialize by naming the university after him?

Throughout his life Elder Andrews’ burden was to save people. He once stated: “Souls are perishing, who may now be reached, the time of labor is short, the night in which no man can work is at hand. Shall we not then while the day last, do what we can so that by any means we may save some?” J.N. Andrews, Review and Herald, Nov. 25, 1851.

Andrews was a scholar of no mean repute. Self-taught, he knew Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French, German, and Italian. He used the first three languages in his careful Bible and history study, the latter three in his preaching and writing. During the seven years he was involved with the European “Signs of the Times,” he wrote more than 480 articles. But it was not merely to see his name in print or to establish his scholarly reputation. All of his learning and writing had a missionary motive. When rumored that he had memorized the whole of Scripture, he demurred saying, “So far as the New Testament is concerned, if it was obliterated, I could reproduce it word for word; but I would not say as much of the Old Testament.” Pioneer Stories Retold, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956, p. 109.

Andrews lived a sacrificial life. Leaving his homeland as a widower with a son of 17 and daughter of 12, he went to another country where some did not understand his motives. Nor was he fully understood by the “brethren” back home. He often labored under trying circumstances. When His daughter died at Battle Creek some years later during a G.C. session, it was too much. His own health broke and he spent his last months in Europe in bed, editing and writing furiously. His mission was not one of ease or luxury. He spent his life that others might know.

So we dare not forget the gifts of his example: a burden for souls, education for the glory of God, a willingness to sacrifice. Elder Andrews, we would love for you to be happy and proud of the products of our education in your name. Missionaries, after the real sense.
MISSION TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

Bruce L. Bauer, Asst. Prof. of Mission

According to the 1990 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, Adventists are working in 184 of the world's 215 countries. Adventist churches are found in more countries than are those of any other single Protestant denomination. We hear encouraging reports like this so frequently that often we develop a feeling that the work is almost finished. However, such feelings are based on incomplete knowledge, for there are still millions who have never heard of Jesus Christ.

Jesus told His followers to "make disciples of all nations." We could easily conclude that "nations" and the 184 countries the Adventist Church is working in are one and the same. But countries defined by geographic boundaries and the "nations" Jesus was talking about are very different concepts. The Greek word used for nations above is ethne. When a person hears the word "ethnic," one immediately thinks of the English word "ethnic." Jesus was saying that we need to make disciples of all ethnic groups.

Kenya, colonized by the British and called British East Africa, includes at least 24 different nations each with its own language, culture, and ethnic identity. These 24 tribes in Kenya are the "nations" that we are commanded to disciple. Kenya as a whole is considered a Christian country with almost 80 percent of the total population being followers of Jesus Christ. But half of the "nations" within Kenya have virtually no Christian witness, no churches, no group strong enough to evangelize the people in those tribes. So even though Kenya is a Christian country, there are still 12 unreached nations.

This new way of looking at the world in terms of unreached people groups (nations) helps us focus on the task that remains to be done. The latest available figures show that there are approximately 24,000 people groups in our world, with 12,000 of them still unreached. Stated another way, there are 5.2 billion people in our world, with around 2.2 billion or 40 percent who have never had a chance to hear about Jesus Christ.

THE MUSLIM WORLD

One third of the world's unreached people groups, about 4,000 groups, are found in the Muslim world. Islam claims 908 million followers, or almost one out of every five people on earth. North Africa and the Middle East are well recognized as areas of Islamic strength. However, the four largest Muslim countries in the world are in Asia: Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

In recent years Muslims have become aggressive in evangelism. The Libyan-based Society for the Preaching and Spreading of Islam has an annual budget of $100 million to promote the establishment of Islamic centers in the West. Kuwait has targeted the nation of Malawi and is dedicated to building and establishing mosques that will be no more than 20 kilometers apart in any direction. Saudi Arabia has a similar project going in Zambia.

When we contrast the zeal and commitment Muslims have in sharing their faith with the feeble attempts of Christians aimed at Muslims, we must ask why we are not doing more. There are only 2,000 Christian missionaries from all denominations working for the 908 million Muslims. Stated another way, there is only one Christian worker to the population here in the United States, there would be only 500 workers from all denominations working in America. Yet 80% of all Muslims have never heard of Jesus Christ.

THE BUDDHIST WORLD

The Buddhist world has traditionally been a resistant field with few breakthroughs in the past century. Thousands of Christian missionaries have worked with little apparent success. When one looks at the percentage of Christians in Buddhist countries today, one wonders how the Gospel will ever truly be heard in those lands. Burma has 6%, Cambodia 1%, China 5%, Japan 2%, Korea 30%, Laos 2%, Malaysia 7%, Taiwan 5%, Thailand 1%, Vietnam 7.5%.

Cambodia has been an especially difficult field. Seventy-five years of Christian mission produced only between 5,000 and 10,000 converts.

THE HINDU WORLD

According to tradition the apostle Thomas took Christianity to India and the Hindu world in A.D. 52. Yet in spite of almost two thousand years of Christian work among the Hindus of India, only 18 million or three percent of the population follow Jesus Christ. Of the 690 million followers of Hinduism, 675 million live in India with the rest in Nepal, Bali and Fiji. Among these millions there are 2,000 unreached people groups.

Hinduism is a fatalistic religion that allows people of the higher castes to look on indifferently while people are born, live and die on the sidewalks outside their rich estates. Hinduism also protects between 200 and 300 million holy cows that devour much that could be used to feed the starving people in India's cities. The poverty and living conditions of many are tragic: eighty percent of the children in Bombay die before their fourth birthday.

The challenge of India is almost overwhelming. If you were to travel through the 600,000 villages of India by bus, for every 1,000 villages you visited 950 of them would have no church, no pastor and no member from any denomination. Stated another way, if you had 1,000 evangelistic teams and each team visited a new village each week, never visiting the same village twice, it would take ten years to take the Gospel to each unreached village in India. And yet the Seventh-day Adventist Church is winning most of its converts from other Christian denominations rather than from Hinduism.
among all the denominations. Then, God worked through the terrible events of the past 15 years to reach the Cambodian people with a message of hope and redemption. Among the thousands of refugees in the Thailand camps, almost 15,000 have accepted the Three Angels’ Messages and are today our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of those converts are now preparing to go back into Cambodia to start new Adventist churches and witness to their countrymen. Others have immigrated to western countries and are longing for Cambodian language churches to be started in their new adopted cities. There are still 320 million Buddhists in 1,000 unreached people groups who need to hear the Gospel in their own tongue and culture.

THE TRIBAL WORLD

One of the large challenges facing our church is how to reach the 140 million tribal people who still live outside of any contact with Christianity. Divided into 3,000 unreached people groups, tribal people are some of the most responsive yet most difficult people to reach.

Sharing the Gospel with a tribe demands long-term commitment since one must often learn a language by pointing to objects and acting out concepts. Witnessing to unreached tribal groups is not very popular. Many Adventist leaders had hoped that as national workers were trained in various parts of the world, they in turn would feel compelled to take the Gospel to the isolated tribal groups. However, few workers from any culture or country, after receiving ministerial training are eager to go to locations where there is no electricity or running water, no motorized transport, no modern means of communication, and no educational or medical work. Communicating God’s love to tribal people is lonely, difficult, unhealthy and demanding work, yet Jesus said, “Go, tell, and make disciples.”

In addition to the challenges listed above, there are others that are equally as great. The cities, the poor, the secularists, and the communist world all challenge us to remain committed to the task of world evangelization. May it never be said of the Adventist Church of the 1990s that we lost sight of the needs of the unreached peoples in our world.

MISSION IN PREPARATION

Pam Swanson of Mission Institute

The Institute of World Mission was first called into existence by an Annual Council action of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1956. Presently located in the Sutherland House, on the campus of Andrews University, the Institute functions with its own board and employs three full-time staff members. Its purpose is to prepare people for their missionary life and work in a cross-cultural setting.

The 55th session of this institute, held July 17-Aug. 11, 1990, welcomed 81 participants from all over the United States and Canada. Included in the group was a couple on an inter-division transfer—from Brazil to Mozambique. The assembled teachers, treasurers, pastors, physicians, nurses, dentists, computer specialists and administrators were destined for countries in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, the Eastern Africa Division, the Euro-Africa Division, the Far Eastern Division, the Inter-American Division, the South American Division, the Southern Asia Division, and the Trans-European Division.

Adventist Frontier Missions, an independent ministry dedicated to reaching unreached people groups, was represented by three couples who are soon to depart for the frontiers of the Philippines and Papua, New Guinea. They were fortunate to be able to acquire some knowledge of their new languages, Tok Pisin and Cebuano, from former missionaries and nationals currently studying at Andrews University.

The goals realized by the Institute were: 1) to affirm the call to mission as a call from God; 2) to strengthen attitudes which are vital to mission service today; 3) to deepen an understanding of what mission really is, given the totally new situations in the world today; 4) to develop a strong sense of fellowship; and 5) to familiarize the appointees with different cultures so that they can live and work in a different cultural setting. The classroom methods incorporated lectures, discussions, small groups, films and case studies for approximately six hours a day. Evening recreational activities were meaningful in the bonding of the group.

A valuable group of people are those who, having already completed one or two terms of service in the mission field without ever having attended an Institute, choose to attend a session before returning to their place of labor. This year there were several such families whose insightful contributions were very helpful. They, in turn, responded that the insights they received deepened their own understanding and perception of their call to mission.
APPENDIX D

PRAYER DELIVERS NEW MEMBERS FROM SATAN'S INFLUENCE
Prayer Delivers New Members From Satan’s Influence

Local members and pastors are instrumental in gaining new members for Christ’s kingdom.

I am a false prophet. My people are being deceived. Please help us!” This desperate appeal came to E. O. Sackey following an evening meeting in Abuakwa village in Ghana.

The meeting was part of a major evangelistic emphasis in the city of Kumasi, Ghana, during December 1993. Nine separate evangelistic meetings brought more than 500 people into the Adventist Church. Three organizations—the Central Ghana Conference, J. H. Zachary, associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, and the Quiet Hour—joined forces to bring good news to this West African country.

Two stories demonstrate the struggles taking place between the powers of heaven and Satan and his followers.

Delivered From Darkness

A non-Adventist pastor from a charismatic church in Kumasi attended the meetings conducted by E. O. Sackey, president of the West African Union. The pastor, Immanuel Cann, and his wife attended the meetings faithfully. One evening after the meeting had concluded, Cann approached Sackey and confessed, “I am a false prophet. My people are being deceived. I know that I’m living in the darkness of Satan. My wife and I want to prepare to meet God. Please help us!”

He then explained that when he entered the ministry, a fellow pastor invited him to use fetish charms and other demonic materials to give “additional power” to his ministry. And when people came to him with problems, he would use these charms to “help” them.

In the ensuing years, Cann and his members would be possessed by spirits that threw them to the ground, shook them violently, and influenced them to engage in other bizarre behaviors. His members were convinced that these were manifestations of the power of God.

Soon Cann began looking for a way of escape as he realized that he was using this “power” to curse his enemies. And members of his church (led by this same power) were involved in prostitution and adultery.

“My wife and I have done terrible things,” he told Sackey. “How can we be saved?”

Sackey urged them to destroy all the charms and fetishes, make a public confession of their faith in Christ, be baptized, and join the Adventist Church. Cann had seen people he had cursed die within five days. He had been told that

Polina Menka formerly served her village in Ghana as a “fetish priestess.”

Now Menka and her family serve the Lord.
if he ever revealed the secret of his power, he would die that very day.

Within a few days a small group of believers accompanied Cann into a patch of banana stalks. And while the group sang hymns and prayed, he placed all his charms on a pile of wood, soaked the pile with kerosene, and set fire to his “devil tools.”

As a result of Cann’s action, three of his followers decided to leave their former “church” and are now preparing for baptism. Immanuel Cann and his wife are among those who have already been baptized into Christ.

Christ Gains the Victory

For 11 years Polina Menka was the fetish priestess of the Adom Kwame village. Menka lived in a home in which the “village god” was kept. At least once every 40 days she would be possessed by the spirits. And villagers came to her for healing, protection from evil spirits, and insight into some future event, and to bring curses on their enemies. The villagers would pay her for her services.

Three years ago Menka was visited by two Adventist pastors. She admitted that she wanted to be released from serving the spirits, but she felt trapped in her current situation. During that visit, even as the Adventist visitors prayed with her before leaving, Menka started to laugh. Her voice changed its tone. Her body shook. She slipped out of the room and into the room in which the “village god” was kept.

When she returned she was covered with white powder, a grass “priestess” skirt hung from her waist, and several charms encircled her wrists and ankles. As she sat on a small stool, villagers came forward for her to sprinkle white powder on them. They began to chant in their language, “We have the victory! We have the victory!”

Last December a Health Expo team from the Quiet Hour visited the village in which Menka lived. She still wanted to become a Christian, but it was difficult to find a place to live where she wouldn’t be influenced by spirits.

A local pastor brought her to a guest house owned by the conference. Local pastors and laypeople then prayed for her. On one occasion spirits began taking possession of her while they prayed. They continued to pray as she lost consciousness. And until she regained consciousness, they encircled the couch where she lay.

In mid-December Polina Menka moved to a new room. Her new friends and fellow believers prayed with her that her new home would be filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit and that God’s angels would protect her from the spirits that had controlled her for so long.

Before leaving, Pastor I. B. Boateng counseled her, “If the devils try to enter your body, pray, ‘Jesus please save me!’”

That very night she felt the evil ones approaching. She repeated the prayer, “Jesus, please save me!” And the next day she reported with a smile, “When I prayed to Jesus, the devils left immediately!”

The next Sabbath as Menka stepped into the river near Kumasi to be baptized, she screamed, her body stiffened, and the spirits tried to take possession of her again.

Four pastors quickly gathered around her, praying for her as hundreds of people silently watched from the water’s edge.

Menka’s body jerked violently, her arms and legs thrashing. The congregation began to sing. Menka became quiet. The pastor baptized her, giving her freedom from her past and new life in Christ.

As she came up out of the water, the believers at the water’s edge began to chant, “Our God is stronger than Satan. Jesus has gotten the victory!”

Polina Menka, Immanuel Cann and his wife, and others have joined the Adventist Church and become citizens of Christ’s kingdom of love.
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