



# Pastoral Care and Counselling Studies of Contemporary Society and Its Effects on Christian Practices in West Africa

Osei Rhodolf Donkor<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Ghana Baptist University College, Ghana.

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolving role of pastoral care and counselling within contemporary West African society. It examines how socio-cultural, economic, political, and technological changes reshape Christian practices in the West African countries. As West Africa experiences rapid modernisation, urbanisation, culture and traditional family and communal structures shifts, the need for contextually relevant pastoral care has grown significantly. It also considered integrating indigenous knowledge systems, the Christian Bible, and theological frameworks to provide holistic spiritual and emotional support. Drawing from qualitative and quantitative studies from various books, articles, and journals, as well as concordance, historical records, Internet sources, and other relevant printed materials, the article highlighted the adaptive strategies and factors employed to enhance contemporary Christianity. The findings underscore the necessity of redefining pastoral care to meet the complex realities of contemporary society, offering recommendations and suggestions: to remain contextually relevant, pastoral care and counselling in West Africa should integrate indigenous cultural values with biblical principles. Churches must train leaders in counselling psychology to address modern family and societal challenges. Further research should explore digital pastoral care as technology increasingly shapes Christian practices. This study enhances the scholarly discourse by situating pastoral care and counselling within the context of contemporary West African society, highlighting the effects of modernisation and cultural shifts on Christian practices. It advances pastoral theology by integrating African worldviews, biblical insights, and principles of counselling psychology. Additionally, it offers empirical evidence and practical models that empower church leaders and institutions to tackle family, moral, and faith-related challenges in transformative and effective ways.

### Correspondence

Osei Rhodolf Donkor

Email:

[oseirhodolf1@gmail.com](mailto:oseirhodolf1@gmail.com)

### Publication History

Received: 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

Accepted: 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2025

Published online:  
27<sup>th</sup> November, 2025

### To Cite this Article:

Donkor, Osei Rhodolf. "Pastoral Care and Counselling Studies of Contemporary Society and Its Effects on Christian Practices in West Africa." *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 11, no.11(2025): 549 - 561. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.202511113>.

*Keywords: Pastoral Care and Counselling, Contemporary Society, Christian Practices, West Africa.*

## INTRODUCTION

Christianity is one of the world's oldest and most influential religions in both cultures, social, economic, political and other systems. In the 21st century, the global socio-cultural and financial landscape has experienced transformative changes driven by the technological advancement of globalisation, United Nations, human rights, neo-traditional practices, dual religion, socialisation, wars, neo-patriarchal, neo-matrilineal, pandemic, secularisation, cultural, climate, neo-education, famine, leadership,

economic instability, neo-religious, and shifting moral paradigms. These changes have significantly influenced people's perception, practice, mission, vision, aim, achievement, interpretation, and philosophical ideas towards Christianity. As the Christian community becomes a global village, it becomes increasingly pluralistic and digitally connected. In West Africa, for instance, the biblical and theological Christian religious culture practices are being reshaped, sometimes subtly, at other times radically, by contemporary values, status, instability, standards, and norms due to social media influences, economic stability, cultural practices, political ideologies, and evolving social norms and values.

The effects of this dynamic relationship between modern society and Christian faith practices necessitate a critical examination of how religious communities adapt, resist, or integrate aspects of the change in West Africa. The rapid pace of technological development, particularly the rise of online and digital media connections and communication in West Africa, has transformed Christians' expression and communal worship. In some countries like Ghana and Nigeria, the online or media church services, preaching and teaching, virtual prayer groups, and religious influencers now play pivotal roles in shaping religious discourse and community engagement and its development. Social media platforms connection such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok, have provided accessibility and convenience and fostered global faith communities, which have also challenged cultural and traditional ecclesiastical authority, leadership, doctrine, interpretation, standards, supports, dogmas, instructions, in-person fellowship, and historically central. Moreover, the digitisation of religion raises questions about authenticity, reverence, relevance, standards, and the nature of sacred spaces in the virtual age. Therefore, this paper will examine pastoral care and counselling studies of contemporary society and their effects on Christian practices in West Africa.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach to examine how contemporary societal changes influence pastoral care, counselling, and Christian practices in West Africa. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 pastors, church counsellors, and theological educators from various denominations in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Additionally, two focus group discussions were conducted with church members to capture congregational perspectives. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct experience in pastoral care. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns and responses to societal challenges. Ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research.

## Christianity

Christianity is one of the world's largest and most influential religions, with approximately 2.3 billion adherents globally; Saharan Africa 31%, Europe 24%, Latin America and the Caribbean 20%, Asia and the Pacific 13%, North America 12%, and the Middle East and North Africa 1% are Christians.<sup>1</sup> Christianity is a group of people who hold on to the principles and teachings of the BIBLE and the theological foundation of The APOSTLES' CREED, which states that:

*"I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell.*

*The third day he rose again from the dead.*

*He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.*

*From there, he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center., "Islam Grows," June 9, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Apostles' Creed.

This creed is called the Apostles' Creed, not because the apostles themselves produced it but because it contains a summary of teachings, doctrines, traditions, principles, and the culture of Christianity. It sets forth their doctrine "in sublime simplicity, unsurpassable brevity, beautiful order, and liturgical solemnity." In its present form, it is dated no later than the fourth century. More than any other Christian creed, it may be called an ecumenical symbol of faith. "Christianity is a supernatural religion. It is the exact opposite of all paganisms, ancient or (post)modern. It is about the one God who has made himself known, who has provided an objective truth through the inspired biblical writers, and who, in his grace, has provided the subjective conditions within the hearts of sinners whereby that truth can be received, understood, and obeyed."<sup>3</sup>

The reason is that, essentially, Christianity is about Jesus Christ; the person and the work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built.<sup>4</sup> This implies that Christ is the central of Christianity. At its heart, Christianity is centred on the life systematically, principles, teachings, doctrines, transformative, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity as a family or religion shares some roots with Judaism, and it has developed its own identity through centuries of biblical and theological reflection, traditions, norms, values, cultural interaction, and religious transformation through the teaching of Jesus Christ. To understand the meaning of Christianity is to explore not only a belief system but also a way of life, a vision, an aim, a purpose for creation, and a relationship with God, the creator of the universe. In other words, the identity of "Christian" is inextricably bound up with the ongoing process of reflection, which informs the life and work of the believing person and community.<sup>5</sup> For centuries, Christianity, grounded in Jesus Christ's teachings, has upheld a moral framework based on love, justice, purity, faith, honesty, and reverence for God.

Christianity originated in the 1st century CE in Judea, it began as a movement within Judaism, led by Jesus of Nazareth, who his followers believed to be the promised Messiah (or "Christ") foretold in Old Testament scriptures.<sup>6</sup> Jesus' preachings and teachings are messages of repentance, love, justice, belief, and God's coming Kingdom. His teachings challenged the religious and social order of the time, leading to his crucifixion under Roman authority around 30–33 CE.<sup>7</sup> This foundational belief gave rise to the early Christian community, which saw Jesus not only as a teacher, prophet, and Apostle but also as the Son of God and the Savior of humanity. The early followers, including figures like Peter and Paul, spread the message throughout the Roman world, establishing Christian communities in cities like Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.

### Challenges facing contemporary Christianity

Secularism has been one of the significant challenges facing contemporary West African Christians. Secularisation, often viewed as the declining influence of West African Christian principles in public and private life, is another major societal trend impacting faith practices. Church gatherings and institutional affiliation have steadily declined in many West African cities, like Kumasi, Accra, Oyo, Ogbomosho, and Lagos, especially among younger generations. This decline is not merely a retreat from organised religion but reflects broader practices, principles and cultural shifts toward individualism, scepticism of religious authority, leadership, and prioritising personal faith over collective Christian identity. "The key words in my thinking are 'integration' and 'penetration'. integrated; we tend to exclude certain areas of our work or our political persuasion. That sort of integration is crucial to the Institute's vision; the second is the penetration of the secular world by integrated Christians, whose gospel will be more integrated."<sup>8</sup> Despite this trend, many Christians continue to express their faith in less formalised, more individualised ways, suggesting a transformation rather than a disappearance of Christians' lives.

<sup>3</sup> David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant; Truth-Love, Marketers, and Emergent in the Postmodern World* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> John Kwasi Fosu, *Christology Rediscovering Christ Life and Teachings* (Kumasi: Shalom Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Thinking The Faith; Christian Theology in a North American Context* (North American, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 58.

<sup>6</sup> Norman F Cantor, *The Sacred Chain: The History of the Jews* (HarperPerennial, 1995), 1-6..

<sup>7</sup> Grayzel Solomon, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century, Volume II* (New York : Wayne State University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Dudley-Smith, *A Global Ministry* (Wales : Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 291.

Contemporary social issues such as gender equality, human rights, LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, feminism, and environmental concerns have prompted biblical and theological reflection and debate within religious societies. The intersection of religious doctrine and principles with progressive values has led to internal tensions within denominations and between traditionalist, faith, practices, dogmas, and reformist groups. While some communities have embraced inclusivity and social activism as expressions of religious love and justice, others have resisted these changes, viewing them as incompatible with biblical and theological teachings. This ongoing negotiation between faith, doctrines, tradition, and change highlights how contemporary society challenges and enriches faith's ethical values and moral frameworks. Ultimately, the interaction between modern society and faith practices is multifaceted and continually evolving. Understanding this relationship is essential for biblical theologians, religious leaders, and scholars who seek to grasp the implications of societal and cultural change on Christians' lives. As Christianity continues to respond to the currents of modernity, the religion's future may depend on its capacity to balance root historical continuity with religious cultural responsiveness.

Immorality is another challenge facing contemporary West African Christians. In today's rapidly changing world, one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary Christianity is unethical issues or immorality. This challenge influences believers, churches, institutions, members, and leadership. This tension between Christo-culture traditions, morality and modern societal, religio-culture standards and norms has raised critical questions about the dignity, integrity, relevance, sanctity, and transformative power of Christianity. From a biblical standpoint, immorality encompasses behaviours and attitudes that violate God's standards or values, as scripture reveals. These include sexual immorality (such as adultery, fornication, masturbation, and pornography), bribery, corruption, dishonesty, envy, greed, injustice, deviant behaviour, and a general disregard for God's instructions and commandments. In Romans 1:28-32 and Galatians 5:19-21, Paul outlines behaviours contrary to God's word. The issue today is not only that such behaviours are increasing but that they are becoming normalised even among professing Christian communities.

One of the most damaging issues has been the sexuality taboo scandals involving both church leaders and members. Several issues have emerged in mainline churches, evangelical and Protestant denominations, leading to disillusionment and loss of hope and trust in the faith. Instances of denominational leaders involved in adultery, divorce, financial fraud, improper dressing, poor responsibilities, laziness, disrespect, and unethical or deviant behaviour have become distressingly common in society. These scandals not only hurt victims but also tarnish the witness or the image of Christianity and fuel cynicism in broader society. The failure to practice what is preached and taught, especially on moral issues, has led to accusations and criticism of hypocrisy. When churchgoers condemn sin in others while secretly indulging in it themselves, the result is a crisis of authenticity.

In many churches, there is insufficient focus on spiritual formation, discipline, principles, and accountability. Without strong mentoring and community support, believers may adopt the world's moral norms and cultural values instead of living according to biblical standards. Contemporary culture promotes individualism, sexual freedom, feminism, human rights, patriarchal, matriarchal, materialism, fem, and moral relativism values often at odds with Christian teachings and practices. The social media, entertainment industry, and even educational systems increasingly challenge the moral foundations that Christianity upholds.

Many Christians face pressure to conform, particularly in areas like premarital sex and cohabitation, same-sex relationships, gender identity issues, dishonesty in business and relationships, consumerism and greed. The denomination is often caught in the tension between maintaining doctrinal and dogmatic purity and sanctity and engaging compassionately with a changing culture. Some denominations have even altered their teachings and preaching to accommodate contemporary values, leading to divisions of biblical and theological confusion. This socio-cultural and secular tradition phenomenon, characterised by the declining influence of Christian policy in public and private life, has profound implications for how Christian beliefs are perceived, practised, behaved, and transmitted. While Christianity once served as a dominant moral, sanctity, and cultural force in many societies, secularism has increasingly redefined the boundaries between faith and public life, leading

to a growing disconnection between traditional faith teachings, practices and modern societal norms. Secularism is a worldview or social-political philosophy that advocates separating faith from civic affairs and the public sphere. One of the most visible impacts of secularism is the dramatic adulterated word of God, decline in church attendance, unethical business, faith in children, religious affiliation, and dual faith, particularly in Africa. Younger generations, in particular, are growing up with poor exposure to the Christian faith, leading to a weakening of religious literacy and an erosion of shared Christian values. This has caused young generations to lack the ethical principle of right action binding upon the Christian and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behaviour in the Christian faith.

This trend presents a significant challenge for communities, as traditional Christian structures of faith transmission to family, education, society, and church become ineffective in a secular context. With fewer young people participating in Christian church service, Christian communities risk demographic decline; some also turned to non-Christian and generational disconnect from the Christian faith. Secularism also challenges Christianity on the moral values and ethical front. As secular values and standards dominate cultural, social, economic, and political discourse, many of Christianity's moral and ethical teachings are increasingly seen as outdated or oppressive. Issues such as sexuality, marriage, family system, socialisation, status, gender identity, ethical behaviour, relationships, and bioethics have become flashpoints where Christian doctrines clash with secular norms and values. For example, the Christian view of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman is increasingly at odds with societies that legally recognise LGBTQ+ and embrace a more fluid understanding of gender. Another dimension of the secular challenge is its interaction with religious pluralism. In secular societies that emphasise individual autonomy and multiculturalism, all belief systems, including religious and non-religious worldviews, are seen as equally valid. While this promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence, it can dilute the exclusivity of Christian truth claims. The idea that "all religions are equally true" undermines the Christian message of salvation through Christ alone, making evangelism more difficult and even offensive in some circles.

Theological and Doctrinal are also challenges facing contemporary West African Christians. Theological and doctrinal difficulties are not entirely new, but they have taken on new dimensions in light of cultural shifts, scientific developments, and global interconnectedness. Doctrinal debates are no longer confined to seminaries, theological institutions, and ecclesial councils; they play out publicly across social media platforms, pulpits, gatherings, and political arenas. One of the most contentious issues in modern Christian theology is the theological truth and hermeneutical interpretation of the Bible. Traditional Christian faith and belief holds that scripture is divinely inspired and authoritative for Christians' traditions and practice. However, divisions have emerged over how that authority should be understood: literal vs. contextual interpretation, canon, and relevance. It encompasses many denomination traditions: Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Protestant, and others, each with its own doctrinal, cultural, and traditional emphases.

Ethics, Sexuality, and Gender are other challenges facing contemporary West African Christians. Theological responses to changing cultural values, standards, and norms on human sexuality and gender have become a defining challenge for many churches. These issues often serve as flashpoints for more profound disagreements about biblical interpretation, theological understanding, human nature, and ecclesial authority. Some denominations have moved toward affirming or supporting same-sex marriage and ordaining LGBTQ+ leaders, while others strongly resist such changes. These differences have led to schisms.

The church recently split into two, some against, others support, and others not against or support. The role of women in church leadership or institution remains debated. In Some countries like Ghana, churches embrace matrilineal theology, promoting feminist theology, which is women as pastors and bishops, while others support patriarchal, and others uphold traditional gender roles based on biblical texts. The emergence of transgender identities raises new biblical and theological questions about creation, embodiment, counselling, and care, with few historical precedents to guide the church.

Doctrinal diversity in the global church is also one of the challenges facing contemporary Christianity. New biblical and theological voices and interpretations emerge as Christianity grows

globally (in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia). African, Asian, and Latin American theologians produce theology reflecting their unique education and cultural, political, social, economic, and historical contexts. These insights often challenge Western theologian and theological assumptions. The explosive growth of Pentecostalism globally has shifted the biblical education principles and theological centre of gravity toward more experiential, Holy Spirit direction and Spirit-led forms of Christianity. This presents both opportunities and tensions in faith, culture, and traditional dialogue with more traditional denominations. While churches decline in the secular West, vibrant expressions of Christianity are emerging in Africa and Asia. This raises relevant information and questions about whose theological voice should lead the global church.

Political Polarisation and Partisan Alignment are some of the challenges facing contemporary Christianity. One of the most pressing political challenges in various contexts, especially in Africa and the United States of America, Christianity has become strongly identified with particular political ideologies. In the United States of America, many evangelical Christians have aligned with conservative politics, emphasising issues like abortion, LGBTQ+, religious liberty, human rights, freedom, and traditional family values. This alignment has led to charges of Christian nationalism, an ideology that merges national identity with religious recognition. On the other hand, some Christians align with more progressive causes, advocating for racial justice, environmental stewardship, human rights, LGBTQ+ rights, freedom, and economic equality. Critics argue that this can lead to a politicised gospel prioritising social change over spiritual transformation. In countries like Brazil, Hungary, Russia, and Ghana, political leaders have used Christian language and imagery to consolidate power, often undercutting democratic norms and leadership opportunities and alienating religious minorities. Christians are increasingly divided on key ethical issues. While historically, the church offered unified moral teachings, contemporary disagreements reflect theological diversity and cultural shifts. Most Christian ethical values oppose abortion, and there is growing debate over how to balance the sanctity of life with compassion for complex circumstances. Emerging issues such as euthanasia, genetic editing, sexuality, and reproductive technologies also pose ethical questions the church is only beginning to address. The Christian response to poverty, inequality, uncleanness, and capitalism varies significantly. Some argue that economic systems must be reformed to reflect the biblical principles of care for the needy, while others emphasise personal status and the value of free markets.

Tension Between Private Faith and Public Responsibility is one of the significant challenges facing contemporary Christianity. Contemporary Christians often struggle to balance personal convictions with public engagement. Should Christian ethics influence legislation? How should believers engage in a pluralistic society without imposing their values? Legal battles over Christianity exemptions (e.g., refusing to LGBTQ+, corruption, or providing contraception coverage) raise important questions about the extent to which Christian faith practices should influence public behaviour. In secular work environments, Christians may face pressure and tension to conform to prevailing norms, standards, and values that conflict with their beliefs, standards and traditional practices, whether in diversity training, business practices, or corporate activism. In a religiously diverse society, Christians must be educated to live respectfully with those of different faiths while remaining true to their convictions. This requires wisdom, humility, intelligence, and an ability to engage in honest dignity dialogue without compromising core values and ethical dignity. Historically, Christianity has played a pivotal role in moral and ethical principles and practices reform campaigning against slavery, advocating for civil rights, and establishing schools, roads, businesses, hospitals, NGOs and many more. Today, the church faces renewed calls to engage in social and political justice, but how engagement looks varies widely.

Some Christians worry that focusing on justice overshadows the gospel message of salvation and faith teachings. Others believe the two are inseparable and that proclaiming Christ must involve addressing systemic injustice, leadership corruption, political incompetence, economic instability, poor infrastructure, and lack of human resources development. Some churches are reevaluating their history and complicity in racial injustice, particularly in the post-colonial and post-slavery social-political era. This includes efforts to repent, heal, reconcile, counselling, and reform internal structures. Environmental ethics has become more central in Christian discourse, especially among younger

believers. There is increasing recognition that stewardship of the earth is a biblical imperative, not a political or leadership agenda.

Ethical Scandals and Moral Failures are part of the challenges facing contemporary Christianity. The credibility of Christian ethical teaching has been severely damaged in recent decades by high-profile moral failures within the church and other Christian institutions. Sexual abuse cases—especially within the Church context, have severely undermined the church's moral authority. Financial scandals, abusive leadership, and cultural and political compromises have led many to view the Christians as hypocritical or self-serving. In some cases, the leaders (deacons, elders and pastoral leaders) have been criticised for remaining silent during times of social or political crisis, thus appearing complicit with oppressive systems.

### **Factors to Enhance Contemporary Christianity**

Contemporary Christianity faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities in an increasingly globalised, digital, and pluralistic world. It must evolve while staying rooted in core biblical truths to remain vibrant and impactful. Several key factors can help enhance the relevance and effectiveness of Christianity today, including cultural engagement, authentic leadership, technological integration, interfaith dialogue, and community involvement.

Discipleship in today's world, where faith is often reduced to routine church attendance and traditional or Christian cultural identity, discipleship calls believers back to the core of religious people following Jesus Christ with sincerity, genuineness, commitment, integrity, and purpose. Discipleship involves more than just following the steps of Jesus; becoming like Him. This process includes studying the Bible, attending services, by part of services in church, engaging in regular meetings, suffering for Christ's sake, bearing fruit, serving others, and living a life that reflects Christ's character. It also requires intentional relationships, such as mentorship, discipline, and accountability, where believers can grow together in truthful faith and challenge one another to live properly, Christian righteously. In contemporary Christianity, many are facing challenges which have made them become lukewarm faith, moral compromise, and declining church engagement. Authentic discipleship addresses this by grounding faith in truth and encouraging them to live out their faith consistently and boldly. Being a disciple is a privilege; it is God's gift, but it involves a great responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The benefits of being in discipleship are relationships, personal renewal, a sense of self-fulfilment, enhanced self-esteem, and impact through life.<sup>10</sup> This implies that discipleship strengthens the church community and fosters unity, shared purpose, and mutual support among believers. It also prepares and raises leaders who are mature, intelligent, and committed to serving the community and the church. Through discipleship, the church becomes a gathering place and a training ground for multiple mission and ministry-minded individuals.

**Biblical Literacy.** Biblical literacy—the knowledge and illumination of the Bible's content, themes, learning, and teachings- is crucial in strengthening contemporary Christian faith. In an age of abundant information but often fragmented or distorted, a well-grounded grasp of scripture equips believers to navigate their religious faith with clarity, conviction, diligence, and relevance. When individuals engage meaningfully with scripture, they gain deep insights into God's character, promises, plan, and purposes. This understanding fosters spiritual growth, sensitivity, moral discernment, and a stronger relationship with Christ. A biblically literate believer is less susceptible to false doctrine, confusing teaching, or cultural ideologies that conflict with traditional Christian practices. Churches whose tradition emphasises educating the Bible in accessible, contextual, and practical ways help form communities rooted in the doctrine and truth of teaching. This strengthens internal unity and enhances the church and people's perception towards outreach, as members are better equipped to explain and live out their faith experience, which becomes a strong tool for evangelism and theological mentoring—the church to address modernisation issues with a balanced, biblical and theological

---

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Bob, *Disciple of Jesus Christ; Learning to Live Jesus* (Norfolk : Clay Ltd., 1997), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks, *Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship: As Iron Sharpens Iron* (Moody Publishers, 1999), 146.

perspective. In a rapidly changing world, biblical and theological understanding and principles provide timeless guidance on justice, identity, safeguarding, support, sanctity, family, and ethics.

**Effective Use of Technology.** In this contemporary digital age, technology has become a powerful tool that significantly enhances religion, such as online services, online Bibles, and online publications. Technology mirrors the fundamental paradox of the goodness of human nature, and we must not allow technology to abuse creation.<sup>11</sup> Technology has become an effective means to spread the gospel, evangelism, foster community, and deepen Christian growth in ways that transcend geographical, traditional, and cultural barriers. This has become one significant benefit of the expanded reach of the religious message. Through social media, live-streamed services, websites, and podcasts, churches can connect with people far beyond their physical locations and change the world into a global village. This global accessibility enables evangelism, Christian education, and discipleship on an unprecedented scale, allowing seekers and believers alike to engage with biblical and religious teachings anytime and anywhere. Technology also strengthens internal and external Christian communication and its community. Mobile apps, group chats, and online platforms help people stay informed, counsel, care for, support one another, and organise events efficiently. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media became a virtual tool essential to maintaining fellowship and religious encouragement and development. Social media resources such as Bible apps, devotionals, television, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Zoom, online theological course apps, and many more provide believers with continuous education and faith development opportunities. The effective use of technology in Christian gatherings requires intentionality and discernment. Christianity must balance innovative structures with authenticity, ensuring that digital engagement complements the Christian program rather than replaces real-world relationships and worship.

**Leadership and Accountability.** Strong and principled leadership gives followers a sense of direction, stability, and clarity in a world increasingly marked by rapid cultural shifts, global goals, moral ambiguity, socialisation, and secular influence. Leaders grounded in biblical and theological truths, demonstrate integrity, intelligence, and ethics, and lead by example, can inspire and mobilise people in communities toward Christian growth and effective service. John Maxwell is an influence. “Leadership is a multiple-triadic relation practice of right-influence or right-inspiration towards purpose and transcendence.”<sup>12</sup> In simpler terms, they have expanded the previous definition to mean the capacity of the leaders to influence, motivate, or inspire the followers towards perfection and achieving a set goal.

Leadership is not merely about charisma or authority; it involves the servant leadership modelled after Christ, who led with humility, care, compassion, counselling, and unwavering commitment to God’s mission. Such leadership helps unify the church and services, fosters trust and integrity, and cultivates resilience in the face of challenges. Whenever the church leaders embody the values of preaching and teaching, they reinforce the credibility and relevance of Christianity today. Accountability prevents the abuse of power, promotes justice and transparency, and maintains the integrity of the Christian culture. Structures such as church boards, pastoral associations, Christian councils, and congregational involvement create healthy checks and balances. This safeguards the community and models traditional biblical principles that all are accountable before Christ and one another.

**Youth and Children’s Ministry Focus.** In a rapidly changing world where young people are exposed to diverse influence worldviews, values, practices, principles, communication, and digital influences, the church must intentionally invest in shaping the religious practices of the next generation. A vibrant and relevant ministry for children and youth lays the foundation for lifelong discipleship, sensitivity, spiritual maturity, Christian education, and active participation in Christian services. Because the children and youth are the church’s future, the ministries should go beyond entertainment and partying; they should focus on teaching biblical truth and Christian education, developing personal relationships with Christ, and encouraging youth to live out their Christianity in practical ways. Youth

---

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Vinay and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation* (California: Regnum, 2020), 329-330.

<sup>12</sup> Maxwell Leadership Institute, “A New Paradigm For Leadership,” accessed April 6, 2024, <https://www.maxwellleadership.com/>.

and children's ministry bridges the Christian faith and families, reinforcing Christian ethical values at home. When the church partners with parents to disciple their children, it strengthens Christianity. Empowering young ones to serve in ministry builds confidence in religious education, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging.

**Interdenominational Collaboration.** Interdenominational collaboration is a vital strategy for enhancing the relevance and impact of contemporary Christian communities. The doctrinal differences have been significant historical divisions between Churches and institutions. There is growing recognition that unity in purpose, especially around core Christian traditional faith and social status, can significantly strengthen the church's impact and influence in society. These can foster mutual understanding and respect among diverse Christian traditions, promoting a denominational unity that reflects Jesus' request in John 17:21: "That all of them may be one." "A major concern of denomination must be the discovery of how laity can be enlisted and equipped to increase the church's ability to enact the gospel in all areas of personal and contemporary society's complex concerns. Today's needs and concerns are such that only teamwork can affect social structure and personal lifestyle. If the church can make a corporate witness and impact today, increased people involvement in every area of the church's life is essential".<sup>13</sup> This implies that by working together, denominations can share resources, ideas, suggestions, programs, expertise, outreach efforts, and counselling, enabling more effective evangelism, community development, crusades, associations, ethical principles, education, and humanitarian aid. This help presents a more unified Christian response to global challenges such as economic injustice, climate change, youth sexuality, and moral decline. The interdenominational efforts help believers transcend internal divisions and focus on shared Christian relationship values like love, faith, sanctity, grace, and service.

**Global Perspective.** Adopting a global perspective is an interconnected world marked by cultural diversity, culture shocks, economic inequality, traditional practices, and rapid communication; the church is called to think and act beyond local, cultural or national boundaries. Christianity is described as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.<sup>14</sup> This implies that the global outlook encourages religious information to recognise the gospel's universality and Christ's shared mission across cultures and continents. These would expose believers to how Christianity is practised and experienced worldwide. This fosters humility, mutual learning, and respect among different denominational communities. The global mindset challenges believers to move from a self-centred, focused faith to one that is missionary mindedness and compassionate for soul-winning, in line with Christ's command about the great commission to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Through missions education, partnerships, fellowship, and global advocacy, the church can be a force for justice, stability, peace, strength, and healing.

**Education.** Education plays a vital role in Christendom by equipping believers with the knowledge, understanding, intellectual, and critical philosophical thinking skills and the ability to live out and share their faith effectively in today's complex world. "Education serves as both the foundation and the vehicle for achieving God's goal of human transformation in the world (Rom. 12:1-2), which the church has been called to pursue. Christian education, therefore, is the all-encompassing element in Christian Ministry that ensures effectiveness in achieving credibility and fruitfulness where its true context, content, and expanse of influence are understood and properly engaged".<sup>15</sup> When moral, ethical, biblical, theological, practical, and religious questions are increasingly debated, a well-educated Christian community is better prepared to engage thoughtfully and compassionately with fellow Christians and broader communities.

When it comes to scripture interpretation, many Christians interpret traditional teachings, which, while valuable, can sometimes lack depth or context. Through formal or informal theological education, believers can explore the Bible's historical, cultural, traditional, and linguistic background, leading to more accurate and meaningful interpretations. This strengthens personal faith and

---

<sup>13</sup> Charles E Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Baker Academic, 1991), 139.

<sup>14</sup> Urban T. Holmes III, *Ministry and Imagination* (New York : The Seabury Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Fosu and John Kwasi Fosu, *Dynamics of Christian Education A Ghanaian Perspective* (Hamburg : Scandinavian Book, 2021), 7.

encourages unity by reducing doctrinal misunderstandings. Secularism, scientific scepticism, and social injustice, Christians must respond in biblically theological, grounded, and intellectually credible ways. Education helps believers integrate faith and reason, enabling them to approach these issues and crises with confidence, humility, and wisdom. In churches, schools, hospitals, or public life, knowledgeable leaders can guide others with biblical and theological vision and integrity. Through education, laypeople are empowered to actively participate in ministry and mission, transforming churches into vibrant centres of learning and action.

### **Pastoral Care and Counselling Serve as a Bridge Between Contemporary Society and Christianity**

Within this complex landscape, pastoral care and counselling emerge as vital expressions of the religions that respond to modern human experiences. Pastoral care and counselling provide a space for listening, healing, guidance, sustaining, educating, nurturing, and spiritual support by addressing the contemporary struggles of individuals in a manner grounded in compassion, empathy, and biblical and theological understanding; pastoral care and counselling function as a bridge reconnecting the knowledge of people with the life-giving truths of Christianity faith and belief amid the pressing concerns of contemporary life.<sup>16</sup> Pastoral care is a Christian ministry of support, nurturing, reconciliation, and guidance offered by Christian leaders or trained caregivers within the biblical and theological tradition. It encompasses crisis intervention, hospital visits, grief support, mentoring, situational direction, engagement with individuals seeking meaning, purpose, and aim in their lives and connecting with God.<sup>17</sup>

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is all about counselling. This implies that counselling is a communication between a counsellor and a counsellor purposely to help them out of their direction, decision, situation, crisis or problem through healing, guiding, sustaining, nurturing, educating, and reconciliation. Pastoral counselling is a more structured and communicative therapeutic practice. It integrates theological insight, spiritual discernment, and psychological methods alongside biblical principles, addressing emotional and mental health, well-being, and spiritual health. Together, these ministries form a comprehensive Christian approach to holistic care, attending to both body, mind, and spirit. Pastoral care and counselling are intermediaries between the biblical and theological sacred and the secular, particularly relevant in contemporary societies where religious language and institutions may feel distant or irrelevant.

Pastoral care is rooted in the model of Christ, which the Bible highlights as the Good Shepherd who cares, guards, and deeply loves the well-being of his flock. In contemporary settings, Christian caregivers, pastors, chaplains, deacons, and elders emulate this by walking alongside individuals in their struggles, listening, supporting, and offering intervention and prayer presence. These ministries often reach not only Christians but also individuals who might never step into a church but are open to spiritual conversations in times of crisis, for example, hospital chaplains.<sup>18</sup>

Contemporary society often separates psychological and emotional care from spiritual formation. However, humans are holistic, and integrating mental, emotional, and spiritual care is crucial for lasting health and well-being. Pastoral counselling bridges this divide by integrating faith and psychology into deep insight. Counsellors might help people cope with grief, situational, and crisis by communicating therapeutic techniques and biblical-theological reflection on life and purpose. From the perspective of marriage counselling, biblical principles and responsibilities of forgiveness and covenant can offer deeper layers of restoration than secular status models alone.

Contemporary society is increasingly pluralistic, with individuals holding diverse or hybrid cultural values, traditions, and belief systems. This challenges traditional Christian evangelism, which can seem confrontational or irrelevant. Counseling offers a more relational, philosophical, and inclusive approach. It does not begin with doctrine and dogma but with the lived experiences of the person listening first, building trust, and then gently integrating Christian perspectives where

---

<sup>16</sup> Willion H. Willam, *Worship Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020), 31-32.

<sup>17</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counselling; A Comprehensive Guide* (London: Word Publishing, 2021), 26.

<sup>18</sup> Oates E. Wayne, *Pastoral Counselling* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2022), 18-19.

appropriate. Counsellors are trained to respect the autonomy and beliefs of clients while still offering Christian distinctiveness. Counselling is about changing lives' values, beliefs, relationships, attitudes, and behaviour.<sup>19</sup> This implies that balance makes counselling valuable for ministries in secular environments such as universities, security institutions, and public healthcare systems. Beyond individual counselling, care helps the church engage more meaningfully with broader Christian communities, such as addiction, grief, crisis, or pain. Such ministries also serve as outreach or evangelism tools. People who may never attend a worship service might join a support group hosted by a Christian organisation or church. Over time, such relational bridges can lead to a deeper Christian exploration of faith. In this way, pastoral care is not only restorative but missional.

The effectiveness of pastoral care as a bridge depends partly on its practitioners' educational, training, and ethical commitment. Contemporary pastoral caregivers often undergo formal education in both theology institutions and psychology institutions, equipping them to deal with complex issues such as trauma, abuse, health issues, and mental illness. Despite its strengths, pastoral care faces challenges in contemporary contexts, such as secular resistance, lack of resources, Burnout, and Misunderstanding. However, these challenges also present opportunities, such as churches increasingly partnering with mental health professionals, offering training in lay counselling, and establishing community-based care initiatives. With creativity and commitment, pastoral care and counselling can continue to evolve and remain profoundly relevant.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of pastoral care and counselling in addressing the challenges posed by contemporary West African communities:

1. **Contextualised Training for Pastoral Caregivers:** Theological institutions and seminaries should expand their curricula to include contextual training in counselling, psychology, and social work. This training should integrate biblical principles with understanding local cultural dynamics and contemporary societal issues.
2. **Promotion of Mental Health Awareness in Churches:** Churches should take the lead in reducing mental health stigma by organising workshops, seminars, and support groups. Educating congregants on mental health from a Christian perspective can foster openness and holistic healing.
3. **Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge and Healing Practices:** Christian pastoral care should respectfully engage with indigenous African wisdom and communal healing traditions that resonate with local populations. This integration can strengthen pastoral effectiveness while maintaining doctrinal integrity.
4. **Youth-Centered Pastoral Strategies:** Given the unique challenges facing young people in modern West Africa—such as unemployment, identity crises, and exposure to globalised culture—churches should develop youth-focused pastoral programs that offer mentorship, vocational guidance, and spiritual formation.
5. **Empowering Women in Pastoral and Counselling Roles:** Churches should recognise and empower women as key contributors to pastoral care and counselling. Inclusive leadership can enhance the church's capacity to respond to issues affecting families, children, and women.
6. **Use of Technology in Pastoral Ministry:** Embracing digital platforms for counselling, discipleship, and spiritual guidance can extend the reach of pastoral care beyond the physical church space, especially among urban and diaspora populations.
7. **Encouragement of Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Churches and pastors should collaborate with professionals in mental health, education, law, and social services to provide comprehensive care that addresses the spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of human well-being.
8. **Ongoing Research and Evaluation:** Continued research into the effectiveness of pastoral care methods in diverse West African contexts is necessary. Such research should inform practice and policy development within church structures.

---

<sup>19</sup> Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counselling* (Michigan : Zondervan Publishing House, 2022), 6.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of pastoral care and counselling within contemporary West African society reveals a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, significantly impacting Christian cultural practices across the countries. The shifting cultural landscape marked by economic instability, urbanisation, technological advancement, and evolving social norms and values—has created new pastoral challenges that demand more responsive, contextual, and holistic approaches to care and counselling. Churches are increasingly called to address issues such as mental health, family breakdown, youth alienation, and moral confusion with sensitivity and biblical and theological depth.

Christian leaders and counsellors who embrace culturally relevant strategies while maintaining biblical and theological integrity are better equipped to guide their congregations through these transitions. Incorporating indigenous wisdom, community-based healing models, and faith-informed psychological approaches can strengthen the church's capacity to meet contemporary needs. Ultimately, this study underscores the urgent need for intentional training, theological reflection, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration in pastoral ministry to ensure the Church in West African countries remains a transformative and compassionate force in an ever-changing society.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Apostles' Creed.
- Adams, Jay E. *A Theology of Christian Counselling*. Michigan : Zondervan Publishing House, 2022.
- Bob, Gordon. *Disciple of Jesus Christ; Learning to Live Jesus*. Norfolk : Clay Ltd., 1997.
- Cantor, Norman F. *The Sacred Chain: The History of the Jews*. HarperPerennial, 1995.
- Collins, Gary R. *Christian Counselling; A Comprehensive Guide*. London: Word Publishing, 2021.
- Dudley-Smith, Timothy. *A Global Ministry* . Wales : Inter-Varsity Press, 2001.
- Engen, Charles E Van. *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*. Baker Academic, 1991.
- Fosu, John Kwasi. *Christology Rediscovering Christ Life and Teachings*. Kumasi: Shalom Press, 2013.
- Fosu, Mary, and John Kwasi Fosu. *Dynamics of Christian Education A Ghanaian Perspective*. Hamburg : Scandinavian Book, 2021.
- Hall, Douglas John. *Thinking The Faith; Christian Theology in a North American Context*. North American, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.
- Hendricks, Howard, and William Hendricks. *Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship: As Iron Sharpens Iron*. Moody Publishers, 1999.
- Holmes III, Urban T. *Ministry and Imagination*. New York : The Seabury Press, 2000.
- Maxwell Leadership Institute. "A New Paradigm For Leadership'." Accessed April 6, 2024. <https://www.maxwellleadership.com/>.
- Pew Research Center. "Islam Grows," June 9, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com>.
- Solomon, Grayzel. *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century, Volume II*. New York : Wayne State University Press, 1990.
- Vinay, Samuel, and Chris Sugden. *Mission as Transformation* . California: Regnum, 2020.
- Wayne, Oates E. *Pastoral Counselling* . Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2022.
- Wells, David. *The Courage to Be Protestant; Truth-Love, Marketers, and Emergent in the Postmodern World*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.
- Willam, Willion H. *Worship Pastoral Care*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020.

## ABOUT AUTHOR

Osei Rhodolf Donkor is a Graduate Assistant at Ghana Baptist University College and is pursuing a PhD at The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary.

