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CONTENTS

Editorial

Articles:

**Theological Examination of Necromancy and its Parallel in Dangme
Religio-cultural Setting**

EBENEZER TETTEH FIORGBOR,
EMMANUEL KOJO ENNIN ANTWI &
JONATHAN E. T. KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR 01

The Christian Hope and the Problem of Evil in The 21st Century

FREDERICK MAWUSI AMEVENKU & ISAAC
BOAHENG 27

**Christian-muslim Dialogue in Ghana: Competition or
Cooperation?**

COSMAS EBO SARBAH.....47

The Participation of the Church in Politics

EMMANUEL ASANTE..... 72

**Principles of Trinitarian Leadership (Trinitatis Ductu) for
Pastoral Work**

CHARLES AMARKWEI..... 87

The Doctrine of “redemption from Evil and Corruption”: A Catalyst for Ecological Degradation in Africa	
DZIEDZORM R. ASAFO.....	105
Yahweh, Israel and the Neighbouring Nations: An Analysis of Land Redistribution	
EMMANUEL TWUMASI ANKRAH.....	123
Marital Suspicion: A Comparative Study of Numbers 5:11-31 and the Ancient Near East Mari and Hammurabi Codes	
ELISHA KWABENA MARFO.....	144

EDITORIAL

On behalf of the Managing Editor, I sincerely thank all the contributors to this issue.

Our thanks also go to our in-house and external reviewers for their continued support. Papers submitted that are not in this issue will be published in the next issue.

We continue to encourage scholars in all biblical, religious and theological fields who are interested in academic publishing to send their papers to ERATS.

Our capable internal and external reviewers are ready to work with you.

We are expecting your work.

Professor Prince S Conteh, ThD; PhD
Chief Editor

THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF NECROMANCY AND ITS PARALLEL IN *DANGME* RELIGIO-CULTURAL SETTING

EBENEZER TETTEH FIORGBOR, EMMANUEL KOJO
ENNIN ANTWI & JONATHAN EDWARD TETTEH
KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR¹

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theological examination of necromancy in ancient Israel and its parallel in Dangme religio-cultural setting about the place of the dead. This endeavour is premised on the question: Was King Saul's encounter with the spirit of Samuel, rhetoric or realism? Why was necromancy considered a theological aberrant in biblical theology? What form or nature is life after death? Should theology identify rational grounds for accepting or rejecting the messages from the dead? The paper discusses the Deuteronomistic historian's narrative of King Saul's necromantic inquiry at En-Dor and its sensitivities in biblical history will as the background to the deliberation along with necromantic theories of the of the place of the dead and afterlife in Dangme religious and cultural settings. The paper

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concludes that in Dangme communities, necromancy is practised in spite of the presence of Christianity, which seems to relegate it to the background. There is always a division at the demise of a family member, who is a Dangme first before becoming a Christian. Should a diviner be consulted to ascertain his or her death, and seek information as to how the funeral should be conducted or not? This is not just a rhetorical question but a realistic one that calls for a dialogue between Christianity and Dangme cultures.

Introduction

Science and technology seem to advance the course of human life in the areas of food and medicine, shelter and clothing, life support mechanisms and ultramodern health care devices, transport and communication are amidst the innumerable advancements. Sports and recreation have assumed universal recognition and put people and languages closer than religious pilgrimages. These seem to satiate humans' material needs, thereby redirecting the world's desire to secularism with science and technology as the pillars that support the world today. Notwithstanding, in the deepest secrets of the human's heart is the fear of the unknown and the unexplainable realities surrounding human life, death and the afterlife.

All human societies have speculated about death and the afterlife because it is one of the mysteries that human understanding is still struggling to unravel. As Dyrness puts it "when the gods created man they passed out death to him. Life they kept in one hand".² Death is understood as part of creation hence it is the natural end of life on earth, yet it is not welcomed with smile even at fulfilled age; the visitation of death is always a misery.

² William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 237.

The thanatologist in his quest to study the medical, psychological and sociological aspects of death and the ways in which people deal with it, have not been able to disentangle the mystery of human death and afterlife. The question is, what happens when we die? The ideals, mores, myths and values about death vary with cultures and in different epochs. Culture's conception of death and afterlife goes beyond secularism, scientific and technological explanations, into the scope of philosophy and religion. The belief that the human being is not just a corporeal manifestation, but of soul and spirit permeate human cultures and religious beliefs.

“There are many, and often complicated ceremonies connected with death, burials, funerals, inheritance, and the living dead, among others.”³ This is due to the fact that the human being, dead or alive is a complex manifestation of entanglements.

This paper offers a theological examination of necromancy in ancient Israel and its parallel in Dangme religio-cultural setting about the place of the dead. This endeavour is premised on the questions: Was King Saul's encounter with the spirit of Samuel, rhetoric or realistic? Why was necromancy considered a theological aberrant in biblical theology? What form or nature is life after death? Should theology identify rational grounds for accepting or rejecting the messages from the dead? The Deuteronomistic historian's narrative of King Saul's necromantic inquiry at En-Dor and its sensitivities in biblical history is carefully engaged as the background to the deliberation along with necromantic theories of the of the place of the dead and afterlife in Dangme religious and cultural settings.

African Cultural Antiquity

Necromancy etymologically is from two Greek words *nekros* and *manteia*. *Nekrovor nekros* means ‘deadbody,’ and *manteia* ‘divination or prophecy.’ Necromancy therefore is a form of

³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1969), 149.

magical practice that involves communicating with a dead or deceased person's spirit as an apparition or bodily for the purpose of divination, in order to foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge.

Communicating with the 'spirit of the dead' is as old as human history and prevails in most human cultures. The belief in spirits of deceased persons permeates most cultures. Necromancy was widespread in primeval worlds with records of its practice in ancient Egypt, Babylon, Greece among other nations, and yet necromancers had not been an organised group. Practitioners exhibit special knowledge in the areas such as: speaking with the dead, identifying criminals, finding lost items revealing future events, and so on. Necromancy now describes manoeuvring the spirit of deceased persons by demonic forces to ascertain hidden information. *An Encyclopaedia of Occultism* states:

The art is of almost universal usage. Considerable difference of opinion exists among modern adepts as the exact methods to be properly pursued in the necromantic art, and it must be borne in mind that necromancy, which in the Middle Ages was called *sorcery*, shades into modern spiritualistic practice. There is no doubt, however, necromancy is the touch – stone of occultism, for if, after careful preparation the adept can carry through to a successful issue, the raising of the soul from the other world, he has proved the value of his art⁴.

Most African⁵ communities believe that the human being is not just a corporeal manifestation but has complex component

⁴ Spencer, *An Encyclopaedia of Occultism*, 286

⁵ African, here used in this paper, describes the second largest continent with its indigenous people, especially those that dwell south of the Sahara Desert. The African here refers to the black ethnic groups in the sub-Saharan region with interrelated culture, traditions, languages,

of immortality. The soul and the spirit of the human live on even if the mortal body perish in death. Death necessarily does not end the life of the African, rather when death occurs, the deceased person becomes a spirit being and can be invited into the affairs of the living. Death and the beliefs surrounding it raise religious and theological convictions in life after death. Africans believe that in the passage to death, God the Almighty, grants special power to the living dead for the sake of their families on earth.⁶ The deceased persons take on a spirit form and remain closely connected with the physical world spiritually. The spirits of the dead persons are communicated with as though they are still living. Among a West African people called the Dangme,⁷

⁶ Moses Matonya, *Real Power: Jesus Christ's Authority over the Spirits*, (Oasis International Ltd., 2008), 7.

⁷Dangme are a West African people dwelling in modern Ghana and they are about the third largest ethnic group in southern Ghana aside *Akan* and *Ewe*. There are eight tribes forming the Dangme State and these are: *Adaa*, *Nugo*, *Gbugbla*, *Kpom*, *Sâ*, *Yilô-Klo*, *Manya-Klo* and *Osudoku*; anglicised as: *Ada*, *Ningo*, *Prampram*, *Kpone*, *Shai*, *YiloKrobo*, *ManyaKrobo* and *Osudoku* respectively. The first four tribes are situated along the eastern coast of Ghana, sandwiched between the *Ewe* tribes and the *Ga* people. The other four are interior mountain dwellers also located between the *Akan* tribes; *Akyem*, *Akuapem* and *Akwamu*. They occupy the Eastern Region and the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The Dangme tribes predominantly have fishing, farming, weaving, and carving as their occupation and their language is Dangme. Dangme society in general is patrilineal, yet with a form of matrilineal. Patrilineal in short means: a child belongs to, enjoys first right and owes first duties to his paternal agnatic kin. In the patrilineal system of inheritance, emphasis is placed on legitimacy of the child's procreators, since descent is traced through the father. On the contrary, a relationship in which the essential marital rites are not performed, a child born out of that relationship is not an

worldviews, religious practices, historical experiences, social ideologies and many others. The researcher is not ignorant of the Arab nations occupying Northern Africa; such do not fall within the definition of African in this context.

illegitimate-child, since he or she inherits a kind of matrilineal inheritance. During the process of its development, Dangme suffered inconsistencies in its spelling such as: Adagbe, Adangbe, Adangme or Ada`me. Older manuscripts and books have these variant spellings.

whenever someone of minor⁶ age dies, it is understood that some mystical forces must have killed him or her. The respective inquiry as to the particular cause of death is hardly ever omitted in this case. They may ask the dying person himself or herself; they may as is normally done, consult a diviner. The diviner is believed to know the way of getting in contact with the spirit of the deceased so to inquire of him or her, the cause of the death.⁹

The *gbalô*⁷ diviner or necromancer is able to consult the spirit of the deceased person to speak to critical issues such as what killed him or her, how the funeral rite should be conducted, finding lost items, revealing future, and speaking the truth about pertinent issues of concern to the family.

There are several ways by which the dead are summoned by the necromancers; at death, the deceased is asked of the cause of his or her death and there are some rites to be performed before the burial. On the other hand, after burial, the spirit could be consulted before the funeral rite is performed. Again, the deceased could be summoned after burial and funeral rites to tell about bothering issues of family and tribal concern. Thus the deceased person's spirit does foretelling and forth telling.

Biblical Prohibitions on Necromancy

For whatever reason, *Yhwh* the holy One of Israel prohibits the congregation of the marching Israelites from the practice of necromancy and to sever ties with people who practice such. There are several biblical references that emphatically stressed that

⁶ Minor here means an age may be up to seventy and more, depending on the person's physical strengths and social status at the time of death.

⁹ Hugo Huber, *The Krobo: Traditional Social and Religious Life of a West African People*, (Fribourg: St. Paul's Press, 1973), 194.

⁷ *Gbalô* is the Dangme word for necromancer, a diviner, soothsayer or a prophet.

necromancy and the likes must be abhorred by the congregation of Israel. The following Pentateuchal texts suggests that YHWH's explicitly warns the marching Israelites against diviners, necromancers, mediums, soothsayers, witches, wizards, sorcerers, even before they inherit the Promise Land. YHWH prescribed capital punishment to offenders of these stipulations.

The following Pentateuchal texts suggest YHWH's displeasure with practitioners of necromancy:

“Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:31)

If a person turns to mediums and wizards, playing the harlot after them, I will set my face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people (Lev 20:6). A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be upon them (Lev 20:27).

There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer (Deut 18:10-11).”⁸

The Pericope

The fulcrum of any theological discourse on necromancy in Old Testament scholarship is the Deuteronomistic historian's narrative of King Saul's encounter with the deceased spirit of Samuel at Endor (1Sam 28:3-19). In 1 Samuel 28:3-19, the *locus classicus* for any examination of necromancy in the Hebrew Bible, Saul goes to a necromancer, a “spiritist,” in order to conduct a séance in which he converses with the deceased Samuel.⁹ The role of Samuel in the religious and political history of Israel is enormous. He was a priest, seer, judge, king maker, custodian of the monarchy and an author of the books that bears his name. But

⁸ The biblical texts are not analysed exegetically since that is not the focus of the paper. They are cited to buttress YHWH's strong detest and severe condemnation for necromancy and the likes.

⁹ Bill T. Arnold, “Necromancy and Cleromancy in 1 and 2 Samuel” *CBQ* 66 (2004), 200.

the fact that Samuel is regarded as the author testifies to his stature as the most important person in the Old Testament after Moses.¹⁰

1 Samuel 25:1 (*wayyamots^emu'el*) and Samuel died..... Thus the text reports the death and burial of Samuel at Ramah. The sad event of Samuel's demise has been emphasized at the beginning of the pericope as a lucid explanation (*usemu'el mot...*) The Samuel had died.... (28: 3a). The preceding text is not too clear and contains many gaps that give no cues to understanding of the pericope. For instance, when and why did Saul had put away *spiritists* and necromancers out of Israel (28:3b)? Was Saul suspicious that some *spiritists* will be hiding in Israel? Has his servant ever consulted the witch at En-Dor and how did he get to know of her? The final literary form of the text contains numerous "gaps," more than are customary even for ancient Hebrew narrative, in which such gapping is a standard feature.¹¹ These gaps are many and raise critical questions such as: has Saul ever engaged the service of a necromancer? As if he knows exactly what to do (28:8b). Why did the necromancer fear she will be put to death (28:9)? Why did the necromancer cried out when Samuel appeared (28:12)? How did Samuel's appearance divulge Saul's identity to the necromancer (28:12)? Are the dead still in the ground (28:13)? Are the dead clad in the shroud they were buried with (28:14)? Did the spirit of Samuel really recognise Saul (28:16)? Can the dead remember all that happened during their life on earth (28:17-18)? Does the spirit of the dead predict the future (28:19)? Then is necromancy efficacious?

Textual Analysis

The pericope re-echoed 'and Samuel died' (*us^amuel mot*). Samuel, the prophetic source of divine guidance and the custodian of the monarchy is no more. Arnold opines that the re-announcement of

¹⁰GbileAkanni and Nupanga Weanzana, "1 and 2 Samuel" in

TokunbohAdeyemo (Gen. Ed.) *African Bible Commentary* Nairobi, (Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 325.

¹¹Arnold, 200.

Samuel's death is the narrator's way of *reorienting* the reader and preparing for what follows.¹² Earlier, in his reign, Saul had expelled the mediums from the land (*w^esa'ulhesirha'obotw^e'ethayidd^e 'onimmeha'aresh*). Two terminologies (*ha'obot*) 'the mediums' and (*hayidd^e*) 'the spiritists' projects Saul as subservient to Pentateuchal stipulations, oriented towards the sanctification of the congregation of Israel. But when Saul saw the Philistine army, he sought YHWH for assistance but everywhere seems silent, hence Saul lost every channel with the YHWH's guidance and direction. He could not go to the priests for Doeg the Edomite had killed eighty-five priests and also struck the priestly city of Nob at Saul's command (cf. 1 Sam 22:16-19). He knows that Samuel dwells in 'shades of sheol.'¹³ But how was he to meet Samuel? By necromancy – that is by devilry! At En-Dor, there is a woman possessor of an *Ob* or the spirit by which the dead can be conjured up to whom Saul commanded (*w^eha'ali li 'et 'aser-'omar 'elayik*) 'and bring up for me the one I shall name to you'!

(*s^emu'elha'ali-li*) 'bring up for me Samuel.' The woman, possessor of an *Ob* said to Saul I see a god coming out of the ground/earth. (*'elohimra'iti 'olim min-ha'ares*). Commenting on the *'elohim* Edersheim writes:

The expression *'elohim*, here refers not to a divine but to a supernatural appearance, indicating its *character* as not earthly. But in that supernatural light, she has also recognized her visitor as the King of Israel. Verses 13 and 14 show that Saul had not himself seen the apparition. The question whether the vision of the woman was objective or subjective, is

¹²Arnold, 205.

¹³Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Apollos. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 288.

really of no importance whatever. Suffice that it was *real*, and came to her *ab extra*.¹⁴

Unfortunately, no text explicitly excludes necromancy from monotheistic or monolatrous concerns. Though necromancy is depicted as an act of disloyalty to Yahweh (Deut 18:13, for instance, an attempt to circumvent the limits he places on revelation; cf. Deut 18, Isa 8:16-20), this disloyalty could be a matter of mere disobedience and not necessarily false worship.¹⁵ Commenting on (28:3b), Toorn writes:

Necromancy being intimately related with the cult of the dead (it is conceived of as a consultation of the *ha'obot*, the departed fathers, in 1 Samuel 28:3), it could be seen as a form of divination legitimized by the ideology of family religion. In that capacity, necromancy was a potential threat to the stability of royal rule. The ancestors might inspire resistance to the leadership of national administration, or even format revolution. The suppression of necromancy was not an act of disinterested piety on the part of Saul, but an attempt to secure the state monopoly on divination.¹⁶

The account of Saul's visit to En-Dor assumes that Saul truly communicated with Samuel, consistently referring to the

¹⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Handrickson Publishers Inc., 2009), 504-5.

¹⁵ Hugo Enrique Mendez, 'Condemnation of Necromancy in the Hebrew: An Investigation of Rational.' An Unpublished Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in partial fulfillment for the Degree Master of Arts, Athens Georgia 2009, 54

¹⁶ Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel* (Leiden: EJ Brill Press, 1996), 318 - 9

(*'elohim*) raised by the medium as “Samuel.” Accordingly, one cannot assume the inefficacy of the practice from its condemnation.¹⁷

Dangme Religio-Cultural Setting

The Dangme are a religiously pluralistic people hence it is impossible to have a pre-westernized Dangme who is an atheist or one who does not owe allegiance to any deity. As African people, the Dangme traditional religions cannot be defined, but rather be described, because it has no limits and boundaries. The Dangme believe in *Mau*¹⁸ the creator God who is known among them as God or *Laosiada*.¹⁹ However, *Nyingmo*²⁰ could be the aboriginal name but it is rarely mentioned among them.²¹ Again the creator God among the Dangme has no priests, priestesses, prophets, prophetess nor its own servants. But this creator God is prominently commemorated and officially invoked during public worship and prayers. When the Dangme are offering public

¹⁷ Mendez, ‘Condemnation of Necromancy in the Hebrew, 49.

¹⁸ *Mawuis* the name of the Supreme Being among the Ewe speaking tribes. *Mawu* has an Ewe origin which means ‘the one who surpasses all, in wisdom, strength, might, glory, honour etc. *Mawu* is different from *etrô*, *vodu* etc. *Mawu* etymologically does not make any meaning in Dangme, the mother dialect of Krobo.

¹⁹ J. Abedi-Boafo, *Dangme Nyaii: Classical and Idiomatic Dangme*, (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1980), 85. *Laosiadah* has been spelt as ‘*Lao Siada*’, and translated as ‘The Gracious Father; the Bountiful Giver’ *Laosiada* is an appellation used to qualify the name of the Supreme Being such as *LaosiadaNyingmo*, or *Laosenyingmo*.

²⁰ *Nyingmo* is found among the Dangme as the original name of God and *Nyingmo* is similar to the Ga name of God; *Nyôgmô*.

²¹ J. Zimmermann, *A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Ga-Language and Some Specimens of it from the mouth of the Natives with Adan`me Appendix*. Stuttgart: J.F. Steinkopf, 1858. In this book *Mawu* is found as the name of God, may be because the Ga people also have *Mawu* in their vocabulary.

prayers, which is done by a priest of a deity, or a family head, they mention the names of the objects of worship according to their supremacy. It can be explained and defended that the Dangme has no religion, but a religious life brought forth from generation to generation as they attempt to interact with reality and truth. Traditional religions like cultures grow and when indigenous traditional religion encounters a modern religion, the indigenous religion is sometimes suppressed and killed. This has been the case of the Dangme in the light of its encounter with Westernization and foreign religions. Opoku views African Traditional Religion as one that:

Hardly needs pointing out, [it] is part of the religious heritage of humankind. Born out of the experience and deep reflection of our forebearers, it provides answers to the deep stirring of the human spirit and elaborates on the profundity of experiences of divine-human encounter based on the resources of Africa's own cultural heritage and insight. It also provides answers to the ultimate question posed by men and women in Africa, gives meaning and significance to human life; explains the origin and destiny of human beings, how everything in the world came into being and the relationship that should exist between them. In short, it is Africa's own way of coming to terms with reality.²²

In the excerpt, Opoku tries to describe what African Traditional Religion meant to the African. He writes an apologetic of African tradition religion calling it an ending heritage. In this regard, it is believed that there

²²K. A. Opoku, *African Traditional Religion: An Ending Heritage in Religious Plurality in Africa* in Jacob K. Olupona, and Sulayman S. Nyang (eds) *Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, (New York: Mouton De Gruyter, 1993), 67.

can be no African traditional religion but rather, African traditional religious life. This is to say that every tribe in Africa has its own religious beliefs and cultures which define the tribe's being. The fact remains that no single tribe's religion can stand to represent the whole of the African continent. Africa practices traditional religion. Rather than it being just a doctrine, it is expressed well as Ojike adduces, "if religion consists of deifying one character and crusading around the world to make him acceptable to all mankind, then the African has no religion. But if religion means doing rather than talking, then the African has a religion."²³ It could be deduced that Africa's religions are more ritualistic than ceremonial and that is what Dangme traditional religious life stands to represent.

Another religious phenomenon that is unique to the Dangme is the worship of *Jemawô*²⁴. These cannot be called fetish; rather they are traditionally major deities so to speak. *Jemawô* (singular) and *Jemawôhi* (plural) can be described as supernatural forces. Field describes them as powerful type of intelligent *wô`*,²⁵ not specialized in activities but practically omnipotent and omniscient. *Jemawô* comes and goes like the wind.²⁶ Etymologically, it may be '*jemâ a wô*, which may mean the deities of this world. Huber explains the etymology as *dâemi* (in the world) and *wô* (deity) as the meaning of guardian hence he

²³M. Ojike, *My Africa* (New York: John Day, 1946), 18.

²⁴*Jemawô* has been explained as major deities, or traditional deity. See M.E. KroppDakubu, 'Dangme-English Dictionary Draft' (Legon: NYP, 2013), 41.

²⁵M.J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 4.

Wô` and *dâemawô`* are after the *Ga* spellings among whom the study was conducted. It is written *wô* and *jemawô* with modern Dangme orthography. Hugo Huber, however spelt it *dâemawôhi* (plural) and *dâemawô* (singular) with old Dangme orthography.

²⁶M.J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 4.

concludes that *jemawô* can be translated as ‘guardians in the world.’ From the translations, deity or deities of this world sounds more appropriate compared to ‘guardians in the world as translated by Huber. The question about the origin of the *jemawôhi*, almost always receives one response as God gave them to the Dangme to worship. Another observable fact in Dangme religious life is *wô*, a kind of deity as explained in the Pentateuch ‘and there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of men's hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell (Deut 4:28).

Dangme Ancestral Cult

Prominent to the religious life of the Dangme is the ancestral cult (the veneration of the dead). Dangme as an African society is made up of the unborn, the living and the dead; however spiritual power rests upon the dead –*ancestors*. “They exercise control over the living; all life exists under their surveillance. They are treated with awe, fear, reverence, respect, veneration, occasionally worshipped.”²⁷ The Dangme believe that in the passage to death, God the Almighty grants special power to the living-dead (ancestors) for the sake of their families on earth. With this power, the ancestors can mediate between God and the people of their families; thus the living and the unborn. They are believed to possess the power to bless and curse and they are the unseen hosts in every African home. Gyekye adduces that to be an ancestor one must qualify as a “moral paragon”²⁸ and not necessarily having children as some writers suggested.

In the public prayer²⁹ of the Dangme, ancestors are the third in the hierarchy of prayer and are immortalized by giving

²⁷David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), 119.

²⁸Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996, p. 36.

²⁹Dangmes offer public prayers during social gatherings and in such prayers, the names of the deities to whom the prayers are offered are

their names to new born family members. They believe that once a child is given an ancestor's name, the child possessed the spirit of the person. Therefore, family members who have been corrupt, lazy, immoral, wicked and involved in other social vices die with their names.

The Cult of the Dead

'*Gbogboe hi a je* or *Gbeje*' literally means the world of the dead. The same name will mean *sheol* in Hebrew. The Dangme believe that it is the human body that perishes at death, but the soul goes out in the form of *mumi* (literally meaning spirit or breath) to a place where another form of life exists. At death, the soul departs in a form of spirit or breath to *gbeje*, a stopover kind of place. At *gbeje*, the soul is known as *kpade* (revenant) and waits a form of judgement from the *Nimeli*(ancestors) who are just in their verdict. The revenant hovers between 'the land of the dead' and 'the land of the living' as it awaits the jury's verdict. They believe these two worlds are in constant interaction with each other; hence the dead are always invited into the affairs of the living. The Dangme culture considers the knowledge of the dead to be infinite and their counsels are based on their previous experiences and knowledge acquired in life.

There are several ways by which the dead are consulted. The very commonest is through incantations during libation and through necromancy, where the soul or spirit give information about what killed them, and how their funeral should be conducted.

When death occur, the *nôpulô* (the one whose duty in the family is to bury the deceased person) is informed and

mentioned in a hierarchical order as: *Nyigmo Mau* - the Creator God; *Nyigmozu* - the Earth Goddess; *Jemawôhi* - Territorial deities; *Nimeli* Ancestors or the Living Dead.

he³⁰ summon all people concern for a meeting. At that meeting, three or more men are chosen and send with the instruction: *Nyâyagbanânyâya bi ninâwa le nônâgbelâkânônâ e sanâwa pee!* (Go to the necromancer and inquire of him what killed him/her and we should do?). This happens at a death of someone whose death was unexpected or a younger person. Huber writes: If death thus comes to a person at old age, it is rather taken as something unavoidable, natural, *e be su* (his or her time has come). But whenever someone of minor age dies, it is understood that some mystical agent must have killed him. The respective enquiry as to the particular cause of death is hardly ever omitted in this case. They may ask the dying person himself; they may as it is normally done, consult a diviner. The diviner is believed to know the way of getting in contact with the spirit of the deceased, so as to enquire from him the cause of his death.³¹ This means that necromancy is part of the traditional Dangme cultural setting. It is only with a strong Christian presence that necromancy is omitted. This brings rift in the family as some opt that a diviner is consulted to hear from the deceased person's spirit, while others mainly staunch Christians also object to the proposal.

As part of preparing the corpse for burial, the deceased is washed and adored with specific items for diverse reasons. The corpse is adorned with a family bead and a piece of cloth from his or her family lineage. The purpose is easy identification by the ancestral community of his or her lineage to welcome him or her home. Again the deceased person is given gifts for other relatives. Further, the corpse is adorned with pricey apparel to give him or her, a worthy appearance when entering the ancestral community.

³⁰ *Thenôpulô* is always a male and the head of a *we* (a larger patriarchal extended family). This is so because Dangme is a patriarchal society just like Israel.

³¹ Huber, *The Krobo*, 194. Cf. J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 'Dangme Biblical Hermeneutics: A Case of the New Testament in Dangme' A Doctoral thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2015, 28-31.

The ancestors have the power to bless and curse, to save and to kill, to heal and to afflict with sickness; and whether to accept the deceased being sent to them or not. Geographically, they believe that *gbeje* is beyond *wo se*, the oceans or the seas. Therefore, when a person dies and is about to be buried, money and some items are put in the coffin of the deceased, to enable the departing relative pay the ferry charge so that he or she will be ferried across the oceans and live there with the items. But the dead can be at *gbeje* and oversee the world of the living.

They can be called to help the living solve problems, through a necromancer. It is often heard in Dangme prayer to the dead that: *Ke o ya a n̄o ya da wo kpongun̄n̄o gbaaw̄*³² [When you get there, stand on an Isle in the sea and bless us]. After the judgement from the *Nimeli*, the soul passes to the next stage, *An̄ we* or *Boso we*.³³

Theological Examination

In the light of the above premise, it is possible to critically examine the theological parallel in the pericope and that of Dangme religio-cultural setting.

What Form or Nature is Life After Death?

In 1 Samuel 28:13-14, Samuel obeys Saul's summons; and unmistakable, he appears, as he was wont in life, wrapped in his prophet's *meil* or mantle. The woman sees the apparition, and from her description Saul has no difficulty in recognising Samuel.³⁴ It is not too clear what really happens when death occurs, but from the pericope, Saul, the desperate King says 'bring up the one I require...., bring up Samuel. The necromancer says 'I

³²T.T. Terkpertey, *Dangme BleboN̄o: Dangme Culture Volume One*, (Odumase-Krobo: Universal Printing Press, 2004), 15.

³³*An̄we aloo Boso we*; this means *An̄'shome* or *Boso'shome*. This rhetorical question is asked by mourners and sympathizers when someone dies, as to where the person's soul will spend eternity? It is not too clear which place represents punishment and which is for reward.

³⁴Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, 504-5.

see a god coming out of the ground.’ The idea that the deceased rises from the ground reflects the concept of Sheol as a place for the dead beneath the earth to which people descend at death. Johnston observe that:

Sheol is primarily the place of the unrighteous dead or those who die before their time as a result of sin (pp. 69-97). Thus Jacob speaks of going down to Sheol when hears of the premature death of his favoured son Joseph. However, when he goes to Egypt and is restored to his son there is no longer any talk of Sheol. Most biblical references where a specific destiny is described mention it as the place of the ungodly (Num. 16:30, 33; 1 Kings 2:6, 9; etc.). Others focus on it as a place of deceit or a place where all appear to go (Psa. 89:48; Eccl. 7:10). Hezekiah, Job, and Psalms 88:3 interpret Sheol, like Jacob, as a destiny because of divine judgment. Indeed, Psalm 88 and other Psalms (as well as Jonah 2:2) seem to portray the psalmist as in Sheol.³⁵

Sheol is an intermediate state in which souls are dealt with according to their lives on earth. In the Old Testament, Sheol is used in six ways:

- It is a place from which no one can save himself or herself. Once there, a person has no hope of returning to the realm of the living. There is no activity of work, planning, knowledge or wisdom (89:48; Job 7:9; 17:13-16 Eccl 9:10).
- A place where all people will go upon death ‘I will go down to Sheol’(Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31).

³⁵Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 2002.

- A place where the wicked go upon death ‘the steps and the house of an adulteress leads to Sheol (Job 21:13; 24:19; Ps 9:17; 31:17; 49:14).
- A place from which the righteous are saved and moreover Sheol has no lasting hold on the righteous because God will ransom from its power and He will not abandon the righteous in Sheol (Ps 49:15;86:13; Prov. 15:24; Hos. 13:14; Ps 16:10).
- A place over which God has absolute sovereignty and no one can escape from God in Sheol (Amos 9:2), because it is God who brings people down to Sheol (1 Sam 2:6).
- There are many other figurative expressions where Sheol is used as image of greed, murder, jealousy, troubles of life, near-death situations and great sin (Hab. 2:5; Prov. 1:12; 27:20; 30:16; Song 8:6; Ps 88:3; 18:5; 30:3; 116:3; Jonah 2:2).³⁶

Sheol therefore means a place of the dead, though not the final destination of the human soul but a transit kind of place where both the righteous and the wicked go from this earth. The above clarification about Sheol is similar to the Dangme orientation of *gbeje*. The Dangme believe there is a kind of life at Sheol where the dead can be invited into the affairs of the living.

Should Theology Identify Rational Grounds for Accepting or Rejecting the Messages from the Dead?

The question is: are the answers from the spirit dead of the dead true, factual, reliable? If yes, then it is possible that it can be an alternative source of knowing the secret mind of the things of the spirits.

³⁶W.A Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Second Ed.) Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2006), 1099.

YHWH's silence is an indication of sin and disloyalty on the part of Israel hence Israel's attempt to practise necromancy means their unreadiness to show penitence and ask for forgiveness. Whether the messages from the spirit of the dead are factual or not, is not the matter, rather the disconnection from YHWH. Considering the extract:

And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines." (1 Sam 28:16-19, RSV).

The extract substantiates that the messages from the dead spirits are true. The dead spirit of Samuel identified Saul and remembered their conversations during Samuel's time on earth. The spirit was able to predict the future events of Israel and Saul's family. The dead spirit of Samuel further, assured Saul that he and his sons will be at Sheol the next day.

It remains that countless Bible Commentaries concludes that the *elohim* that interacted with the ill-fated King Saul was an evil spirit from Satan; it is the position of this paper that the *elohim* was really the spirit of Samuel. Arnold accentuates: specifically in relations to the worship of ancestors, such comparative research has confirmed that the dead could be referred to as "gods" in an

attempt to describe some type of transcendent character that existed beyond the natural realm (the preternatural).³⁷

In the Dangme religio-cultural setting, ancestral veneration is an intrinsic aspect and the ancestors. *Nimeli*, are accorded same honour as *Jemawôômâ* (the major deities). The issue of accepting their messages is paramount on the grounds that rejection means disaster, usually death. Hence the Dangme is always anxious to hear from the *nimeli*.

Was King Saul's Encounter with the Spirit of Samuel, Rhetoric or Realistic?

The pericope assumes that the encounter between Saul and the revenant at En-Dor was a reality rather than rhetoric. Arnold writes:

Beyond a military crisis, the occasions when some Israelites might turn to ancestor-related necromancy include especially the times when YHWH has ceased to provide much-needed information, which, I will argue, is precisely the canonical function of the episode at Endor as it has been edited by the Deuteronomistic historian. Thus far we have demonstrated that the narrative gathers as much terminology as was available to denote necromancy and does this repeatedly. The rhetorical effect is that the reader cannot avoid the conclusion that the king of Israel has indeed resorted to necromancy.³⁸

The argument is buttressed by the fact that it is possible to communicate with the spirit of the dead through séance. The fact remains that the act of necromancy was strongly opposed and prohibited by YHWH; however, it does not mean that the spirit of

³⁷ Arnold, 203.

³⁸ Arnold, 204.

the dead would not respond to any summons by the living. Also the pericope lends credence to the fact that necromancy and all other forms of divinations were obtainable in ancient Israel to allow them to acquire any spiritual assistance if the voice of YHWH is rare or YHWH has decided to be silent through His approved media.

The Dangme culture *per se* endorses necromancy and it is the advent of Christianity that has relegated the practice to be part non-Christian families. The irony is that at the demise of a staunch Christian, the family may opt to conduct séance if the family so wish.³⁹

Many Christians may reject necromancy not on grounds that it is demon summoning; the art of necromancy exists as a separate entity from demon summoning. Although necromancy is prohibited in the Bible, it is real along with other facets of mystical forces. Even though necromancy though exists, it should be rejected on grounds of inefficacy. It is very difficult to mention that necromancy may not necessarily be idol worship, though the diviner may be an idol worshipper, witch or magician. Dangme and Israel have many cultural identities and necromancy is one of such. In 1 Samuel 3:1, (ûdübar-yhwhhâyâyäqär) the word of the

LORD ‘was precious,’ and Israel might have survived the silence of YHWH through necromancy and the likes.

Why was necromancy considered a theological aberrant in biblical theology?

³⁹ Tetteh Fiorgbor’s father died on Friday, 19th March 2010 at age seventy-two and at the time he was the secretary to the Men’s Fellowship; my mother is a Catechist at her church; one of Tetteh’s elder brothers pastors a Fellowship in Southampton UK and Tetteh was in the final year at the Seminary. Irrespective of their strong Christian background, the first official meeting with the *nôpulô*, suggested that a séance be conducted ascertain the cause of the death. But the children strongly aborted the idea. His comment was ‘if something happens to him after the burial, you would be held responsible.’

There might be several reasons why necromancy was considered abominable act before YHWH. Kaiser in a commentary on Isaiah 1-12, suggests that condemnations of necromancy should be interpreted in light of the Levitical purity law that it is impurity emanating from everything connected with the dead; anyone who had traffic with the spirit of the dead also becomes unclean.⁴⁰ The proposal means that the Holy One of Israel required that Israel be a holy nation unto Him, because YHWH, the God of Israel is a holy God. Their being distinguished from all other nations by peculiar ceremonial laws and customs was intended to separate Israel unto God alone as a holy nation, entirely devoted to the worship and service of YHWH alone. Holiness is an attribute of YHWH that must find expression in the daily activities of the community. Based on this premise, YHWH warn Israel through Moses; saying “do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God (Lev 19:31). Necromancy therefore is depicted as an act of disloyalty to YHWH because it is disobedience. In fact, it is not too easy to accept necromancy as false worship.

Hugo in his thesis stressed that; no biblical text explicitly links necromancy to the threat of cultic impurity. It is therefore safer to assert that the impurity attached to the realm of the dead does not seem to have a controlling concern in the prohibitions of necromancy.⁴¹ This explains that YHWH though expect holiness from the congregation of Israel, this holiness must be in the form of ‘being loyal’ to the ceremonial laws and customs. Hence the abomination of condemning necromancy is based on its link with disloyalty to the moral and religious codes presented to Israel in relation to being YHWH’s elect.

⁴⁰ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*. The Old Testament Library. Tr. John Bowden, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1983), 201.

⁴¹ Hugo Enrique Mendez,

Conclusion

The Old Testament texts discussed in this paper has shown that act of necromancy was strongly opposed and prohibited by YHWH; however, it does not mean that the spirit of the dead would not respond to any summons by the living. In Dangme communities, necromancy is practised in spite of the presence of Christianity, which seems to relegate it to the background. There is always a division at the demise of a family member, who is a Dangme first before becoming a Christian. Should a diviner be consulted to ascertain his or her death, and seek information as to how the funeral should be conducted or not? This is not just a rhetorical question but a realistic one that calls for a dialogue between Christianity and Dangme cultures.

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THE CHRISTIAN HOPE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Persecution and suffering are among the most prominent challenges facing the Church in the 21st century. Day in, day out, we receive news about persecution of Christians in many parts of the world. The numerous cases of beheadings, torture, rape, kidnappings, mass killings, forced starvation, imprisonment and even crucifixions confirm H. van Dam's assertion that, "Christ's Church here on earth is a militant Church — a Church under persistent attack and a Church at war."² This study discusses how biblical eschatology should inform believers to live faithfully to Christ in this era of persecution and suffering. The thesis of the study is

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² H. van Dam, *Teach All Nations: Stories from 2000-year Church History* (nc: Dutch Reformed Tract Society, 2012), 20.

that the Church can be equipped to face her contemporary challenges through the proclamation of eschatological messages that bring hope and comfort in the mist of unceasing evil.

Introduction

The German reformed theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, in his book *The Coming of God*, observed that “a theology of love characterized the Middle Ages, a theology of faith the Reformation, and a theology of hope the modern era.”³ This remark suggests that the message of Christian hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God and the accompanying eschatology has had a relatively more emphasis in modern times than previously. Indeed, the modern era, characterized by Christian suffering, automatically calls for a theology that can give hope to Christians as they wait for the imminent return of the Saviour. Going by Moltmann’s assertion, one wonders how successful biblical eschatology has been — even in modern times — with regards to its role of strengthening believers’ faith and emphasizing the Christian hope.

Typically, when we hear the term eschatology, what comes to mind are the various positions regarding the 1000 year reign of Christ described in Revelation chapter 20, such as premillennialism, a millennialism, postmillennialism and its related last events— for example the rapture, the new earth and the new heaven, tribulation — which are “to break into this world from somewhere beyond history, and to put an end to the history in which all things here live and move.”³ For centuries, eschatological discourses have also centered on wild creatures, torment, hardship, famine, bloodshed, and other cataclysmic events related to the end times. For many Christians, overemphasis on these things may have muddied the waters and detracted from the general concept of hope found in the study of

³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 5.

Eschatology. Consequently, some of the people who preach or write on eschatology tend to make their audience more hopeless and terrified than before. Should this be the case? This cannot be so, because knowledge of Eschatology ought to be applicable to the daily lives of modern Christians.

Eschatology is the theological term that refers to the study of “the last things”⁴, whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, the end of the world or the nature of the Kingdom of God. Thus, Eschatology is the branch of Christian theology that studies the doctrines of the end times. In Moltmann’s view, Eschatology is, “the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it.”⁵ Wayne A. Grudem makes a similar point when he says, “True Christianity trains us ‘to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, *awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*’ (Titus 2:12–13).”⁶ Sharing the same view, Regin Prenter describes Eschatology as “the presentation of the Christian hope as an expectation of the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ, through which, in faith, hope, and love, the life of renewal brings forth the fruit predetermined by God through his acts of creation and election.”⁷ We could clearly deduce from the submissions of these scholars that Eschatology and the Christian hope are intertwined. It is for this reason that it is not uncommon for some scholars to use Eschatology and Christian Hope interchangeably.

The term hope, in the biblical context, may refer to a sure expectation for the good and wonderful things that God has prepared for his children, which transcends their earthly existence. Unlike worldly hope, which is desire for something that we deem

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 964. (pdf)

⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 6. (pdf)

⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 964. (pdf)

⁷ Regin Prenter, *Creation and Redemption* translated by Theodor J. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 546.

good in this earthly life, Christian hope is that which enables one to endure difficult circumstances with joy and peace, knowing that when the Lord is revealed there would be greater comfort for the faithful.

According to Moltmann, “Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God... hope anticipates that it will sometime be revealed; faith is the foundation on which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith.”⁸ There is therefore a strong connection between faith and hope, and more importantly between faith, hope and love. Paul uses the trilogy as a teaching mechanism when he writes, “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

On the relationship between faith and hope in particular, Wolfhart Pannenberg writes: “The core of eschatological hope, hope beyond death, is faith in God. Faith in the eternal God encompasses everything that must be presented as object of Christian hope. Such hope does not come as something additional to faith in God, and it cannot persist without such faith.”⁹ The hope of being present with the Lord at death, of a future resurrection, and of rewards for faithful service, helps to sustain us not only during times of trial and suffering, but also during the tedium of our everyday lives. Indeed, the Christian hope, therefore, is “like an anchor.”¹⁰ In the view of Prenter, eschatological hope centers on three themes. First, it centers on the *parousia*, the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ at the end of history.¹¹ Second, it centers on the eschatological judgment, which is the universal

⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 1011.

⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Task of Christian Eschatology”, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *The Last Things: Biblical & Theological Perspectives on Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 3.

¹⁰ Charles R. Swindoll, *Hope Again* (London: Word Publishing, 1996), 15.

¹¹ Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 546.

acknowledgement of Jesus' glory.¹² Third, it centers on eternal life, which is the final victory of the glorified Christ.¹³ In all of this, it can be seen that the eschatological hope serves to comfort believers who are currently experiencing evil of all kinds.

Eschatology and Godly Living

From time immemorial to the present, people who truly live for God are persecuted in one way or the other. When Cain murdered Abel, it was a form of persecution (Gen. 4). In the Old Testament, people lived with hope of future deliverance from their enemies through faith in the promised Messiah who was to establish God's kingdom. In this wise, Anthony Hoekema points to seven key eschatological realities hoped for by Old Testament believers: the coming Redeemer, the kingdom of God, the new covenant, the restoration of Israel, the outpouring of the Spirit, the day of the Lord, and the new heavens and the new earth.¹⁴ Confirming the eschatological hope of Old Testament believers, the writer of Hebrews states concerning OT saints:

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. (Heb. 11:11-16)

¹²Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 546.

¹³Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 546.

¹⁴Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 11.

The point is that these saints believed that what God had promised them will surely come to pass. For this reason, they were ready to endure suffering so as to secure an inheritance in heaven, the kingdom of heaven. Israel's monotheistic religion, which claimed that only Yahweh is God, gave other nations cause to fight them.

The book of Daniel gives us a classic example of God's people whose faith in Yahweh led to persecution. Religious persecution sent Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furry furnace (Dan. 3). Daniel was sent into the lions' den because of his faith in Yahweh (Dan. 6). As the Jews suffered in the hands of the Babylonians and Persians, they wondered whether the unrighteous would go unpunished and whether the righteous would be vindicated. The answer Yahweh gave to his people was, "...and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Dan. 12:1) We learn from this message that Yahweh will reward us in the end, our toil will not be in vain, and the righteous will shine like a star. Based on such promises, the people were prepared to suffer for Yahweh and to wait patiently for the day Yahweh shall reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

The book of the Acts gives us several examples of Christians who were persecuted. Not long after the Pentecost experience, the disciples began to face persecution. They were charged with teaching in the name of a "heretic" and "blasphemer." They were called before the Sanhedrin, interrogated and ordered not to teach in ~~in~~ Jesus' name. (Acts 5:27-28) Stephen was cast "out of the city and stoned ... to death"¹⁵ because of the faithful way he preached the Gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ. (Acts 7) After Stephen's martyrdom "a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). Also, Christians were arrested, shamed, beaten, censured, and yet they continued with the mission. Eventually, James was also killed (12:2), but even then,

¹⁵Foxe's book of martyrs, 1

the believers remained faithful. Surely, the early church believed that in the end the incompleteness of their present experience of God will be resolved, loose ends will be tied up and wrongs made right. They believed their faithfulness would be rewarded when the Lord returned.

In his book, *Heroes of the Early Church*, Richard Newton brings out lessons from the life of some faithful church fathers. Concerning Clement of Rome (30-100AD)¹⁶, Newton records that at the time of his trial he was made to choose between sacrificing to the Roman gods and being banished. He refused to sacrifice to the gods and was eventually banished.¹⁷ Newton describes Ignatius as a hero.¹⁹ First, Ignatius was cast into prison where he was “subjected to the most severe and unmerciful treatment.”¹⁸ “He was whipped” and also “forced to hold fire with his naked hands, while the sides of his body were burnt with paper dipped in oil.”¹⁹ As Ignatius bore all this suffering without murmuring, his tormentors were “astonished at his perfect endurance.”²⁰ Finally, when the emperor was convinced that no amount of torture could let Ignatius change his mind, he (the emperor) “pronounced the death sentence upon him.”²¹ Ignatius’ last words before his death are very remarkable. “I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast been pleased thus perfectly to honour me with thy love, and hast thought me worthy, with thy holy apostle Paul, to be bound with iron chains.”²² History goes on to say that he cheerfully embraced his chains and after praying earnestly for his church, “he delivered himself into the hands of the soldiers appointed to transport him into the place of execution.”²³ What

¹⁶ Richard Newton, *Heroes of the Early Church: Life changing lessons for the young* (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2005), 9.

¹⁷ Newton, *Heroes of the Early Church*, 13-14.

¹⁸ Newton, *Heroes of the Early Church*, 13-14.

¹⁹ Newton, *Early Church*, 20.

²⁰ Newton, *Early Church*, 21.

²¹ Newton, *Early Church*, 21.

²² Newton, *Early Church*, 21.

²³ Newton, *Early Church*, 21.

about Polycarp? He was asked to forsake his faith and swear by the Roman gods. To this request, he replied, "Eighty and six years I have served my blessed Saviour. He has done nothing but bless me all the time; then how can I forsake him now?"²⁴ Finally, when he was about to be executed, he prayed, "O Lord God Almighty... I bless thee that thou hast graciously brought me to this day and hour, that I might receive a portion among the number of thy martyrs and drink of Christ's cup. Wherefore I praise thee for all thy mercies; I bless thee, I glorify thee through thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ... Amen."²⁵

Christian Hope as Motivation for Victorious Christian Living

At the dawn of the 21st century, Christ's prophecy about persecution of his followers rang as clearly as ever. Day in, day out, we get news about the persecution of Christians in many parts of the world. The numerous cases of beheadings, torture, rape, kidnappings, mass killings, forced starvation, imprisonment and even crucifixions indicate that Christianity is the most persecuted faith in the contemporary world. In view of this, Pope Francis profoundly asserted that, "the 21st century has seen more Christians under siege for their faith than during the time of the early church."²⁶ Today, Christians are required to bribe employers before getting jobs, bribe heads of institutions before gaining admission and so on. All these point to the fact that, the contemporary world makes the practice of Christianity very difficult. Yet biblical eschatology gives believers hope to look forward to the future with a sense of expectancy and anticipation. In this wise, Moltmann persuasively argues that: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also

²⁴Newton, *Early Church*, 33.

²⁵Newton, *Early Church*, 34.

²⁶<http://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-more-persecuted-christianstoday-than-ever-before-122469/>

revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day."²⁷

Eschatology ought to inject into Christian hearts a sense of hope for everyday living. In that sense, it may be valid to argue that to be a Christian is to be a person of hope irrespective of one's circumstances.

Hope in the Complete Reign of God in the World

First, eschatology gives us hope of God's total rule on earth, rule characterized by justice and righteousness. The concept of the kingdom of God in the mind of the OT worshipper was that of God's visible conquest of his enemies, the vindication and restoration of his people, Israel, to supremacy in the land, and the fulfillment of the promises of a Davidic throne and rule upon the earth in power and glory. That this kind of a kingdom was expected by the average Israelite in the first century is indisputable. According to N. T. Wright, "God's kingdom, to the Jew-in-the-village in the first half of the first century, meant the coming vindication of Israel, victory over the pagans, the eventual gift of peace, justice and prosperity. It is scarcely surprising that, when a prophet appeared announcing that this kingdom was dawning, and that Israel's God was at last becoming king, he found an eager audience."²⁸

The New Testament emphasizes the first and second advents of Christ or the Christ Event and Eschatology. At the first advent, Jesus *inaugurated* the blessings of the new age; at the time of his return he will *consummate* them. Jesus declared that his mighty deeds were signs that his kingdom had arrived in his Person. Thus, when Jesus was accused of operating with the power

²⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 6. (pdf)

²⁸ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 204.

of Beelzebub, he responded, "...if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Matt.12:28). His point was that since he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, the kingdom of God was already on earth. Yet in passages such as Matthew 24, John 14:2-4, Matthew 25, Jesus clearly spoke about a future consummation of the kingdom at the end of the world. The setting up of the kingdom of glory is clearly future in those passages, for Jesus declared, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne; All the nations will be gathered before him . . ." (Matt. 25:31-32,). The Kingdom of God can therefore be described as "already but not yet." One of the main focuses of Eschatology is to give the assurance that God will one day establish his rule fully on earth.

Eschatology tells us that Jesus will come again to reign over the earth. The coming kingdom provides the church with a much broader view of reality than merely a private vision of personal salvation. The coming kingdom also creates a confronting and transforming vision of the mission of the church as the people of God. This promise of God is the propelling force of history and the source of continual new impulses toward the realization of righteousness, freedom, and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come. The escalating suffering in the world and in the Church leading up to the Last Day will finally culminate in deliverance for the people of God. Jesus will come back in the flesh and triumph with finality over the devil and over all evil. When the kingdom is fully established humankind will be delivered from the presence of sin - humankind's biggest challenge since the fall of Adam. Jesus will banish all ungodliness, bring a new heaven and a new earth and ensure that there is only righteousness and peace. The governance of the new heaven and earth will be devoid of injustice, corruption, hatred, hardship, persecution and so on. Justice, equality and peace will be its hallmark. Through the study of Eschatology, we come to realize that our struggle with human governments will one day be over.

Hope of Resurrection

Second, Eschatology gives hope of resurrection. According to Prenter, the theme of the *parousia* is “an indispensable expression of faith’s conviction that death, the result of all men’s guilt ... is the entrance to the glory which the resurrection of Jesus Christ revealed as the mystery of his death.”²⁹ Those who have been born again in our Lord Jesus Christ have been promised a living hope through his resurrection. The prophet Daniel describes the final resurrection in these unambiguous words: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan. 12:2) Like other parts of Scripture, the promise of the miracle of the resurrection is closely associated with the Last Day or the Day of the Lord. In Akan, the word for burial is *sie*, the meaning of which seems to suggest that the Akans believe that the corpse will not remain in the ground forever. To *sie* means “to consciously hide something precious at a safe place so that one can go for it anytime the need arises.” This is quite different from the expression *to twene* which means “to throw away” or “to dispose of.” Joseph seems to demand *sie* rather than *to twene* when he instructed the Israelites to carry his bones from Egypt and bury them in Canaan. (Gen. 50:25, Ex. 13:19) Moltmann wrote in the last paragraph of his *Theology of Hope*:

The hope of the resurrection must bring about a new understanding of the world. This world is not the heaven of self-realization, as it is said to be in Idealism. This world is not the hell of selfestrangement, as it is said to be in romanticist and existentialist writing. The world is not yet finished, but it is understood as engaged in history. It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world

²⁹Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 549.

in which we can serve the future, promised truth
and righteousness and peace.³⁰

Eschatology makes us aware of the fact that we will not die and remain in the ground forever, we will resurrect one day. Our present hope is that all those who have ever lived upon the earth will rise again from the dust to which their earthly bodies had returned for them to stand before the Almighty for the public proclamation of their eternal fate. As believers of Christ, this day is very important because it is that day that gives us the assurance that, even though humankind was made from dust and is to return to the dust, that does not end the human story. There is a day when the righteous will be raised from death to live forever with Jesus Christ whereas the wicked will be raised into eternal damnation. “The Hope of Eternal Life”, which is closely connected to the resurrection, is a human desire that is both deeply personal, generally shared and constantly confessed. This eternal life is “the complete restoration of human life through its participation in the glory of the risen Jesus Christ.”³¹ Better still eternal life is the resurrection life in which the power of sin and death are no more, where humankind is forever reconciled with the Creator, with their fellow human beings, and with the entire cosmos.³²

In the Apostles’ Creed, we declare: “I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.” Likewise, in the Nicene Creed, we confess, “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” Christianity, therefore, hinges on the belief that death is not the end of life for the individual, for humanity, or the universe. For this reason, Paul says, “If it is for this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:19). For every Christian,

³⁰Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 338.

³¹Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 546.

³²Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 546.

“to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Death is not the last word, for “death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). This hope is not only for ourselves, but for all things: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19, 21).

During our difficulties Christian hope gives us assurance of the resurrection. Our shared hope is not vague or uncertain, for it focuses on Jesus Christ. “For as by one person’s death came, by one person also the resurrection of the dead has come. Christ “abolished death, brought life and immortality to light” (2 Tim. 1:10). Christ is not simply the reason we hope; he is the content of the Christian hope.

Hope of Eschatological Reward and Glorification

More so, there is hope of reward and glorification. Charles H. Spurgeon opens his discussion on this topic by asserting that, “It is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better.”³³ As the believer is suffering on earth and has no hope in the things or circumstances around him/her, biblical Eschatology gives the assurance that there is going to be a day of reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. For this reason, believers feel even privileged to be part of the suffering which leads to glorification. Biblical Eschatology gives us the hope that we will finally be delivered and numbered among those who awake to everlasting life to be counted among the sheep. The *Te Deum Laudamus* captures this when it says, “to be numbered with saints in glory everlasting.” This glorification comes about not because of any work of our own but because of our faith in our Savior and his redeeming work on our behalf. Yes, it is truly by grace that we

³³Charles H. Spurgeon, *Sermons on the Last Days* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 15.

have been saved and it is truly by grace that we will be raised from death to be numbered among the righteous on the Final Day.

According to the prophet Daniel, all those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3) This is a wonderful promise for faithful Christians, of all ages, who lead others on the path of righteousness and teach them by word and deed. Such people will be among those God will reward by his grace and they will be shining lights in his glorious kingdom. Surely, our hope is that even though these last days may be times of great distress for our world and for the Church, they will end in deliverance for the people of God. Our sure hope is that when the final resurrection occurs, we will know it as a time of great mercy, a time of joyful recognition, of glorified bodies to live with God forever and ever. Paul therefore assures us: The glory that awaits us as children of God seen from eternal perspective supersedes our present sufferings. Paul's point is that our glory is eternal while our sufferings are momentary; our glory is great while our sufferings are but light, our glory is unseen while our suffering is visible. What is visible is temporal but what is unseen is permanent (Rom. 8). A similar passage is found in 2 Peter 3:13-15, which reads: "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him."

Commenting on this passage, Calvin says, "Hope is living and efficacious; therefore, it cannot be but that it will attract us to itself."³⁴ True Christian hope will take on a character of deep longing, but will also long for others to share in the same hope.

For Spurgeon, our eschatological hope is this: "...Glory awaits us, if we abide in Christ. Therefore, keep your garments

³⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles: The Second Epistle of Peter*, ed. and trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 422.

unspotted, your lions girded, your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves as men that look for your Lord, that, when he comes, you may have confidence, and not shame.”³⁵ In view of this, the believer is always ready to go through hardship, if need be, as he/she awaits the glory that lies ahead. “We can also rejoice through suffering because we have a permanent inheritance secured. And our place there is reserved under the safekeeping, under the constant, omnipotent surveillance of Almighty God”³⁶ We rest assured that “nothing can destroy it, defile it, diminish it, or displace it.”³⁷

Hope of Judgment

Furthermore, Eschatology gives us hope of God’s just judgment. Daniel predicts a time of resurrection and judgment for the unbeliever and he reminds God’s people that the Final Day will be for them a time of mercy and joyful recognition and for all those who will inherit eternal life. (Dan. 12:1-3). In the book of Revelation, the martyrs called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (Rev. 6:10) Storm supports this by saying, “The certainty of final judgment is also affirmed ... in 2 Corinthians 5. Paul insists that ‘whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil’ (2 Cor. 5:9–10)”³⁸ God’s righteous and just judgment is indeed certain even it tarries presently.

³⁵ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Sermons on the Last Days* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), back cover.

³⁶ Swindoll, *Hope Again*, 16.

³⁷ Swindoll, *Hope Again*, 16.

³⁸ Sam Storm, *The Restoration of All Things* (Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 16. (pdf)

Implications for Contemporary Living

What are the implications of the Christian hope for our lives in the present? Hardly a day passes without reports of unresolved murders, terrorist attacks by Boko Haram, Al Shabab, ISIS, etc and arbitrary executions, political turmoil, corruption and exploitation of the vulnerable among other evils. Even the Church is no longer a place of solace for those for which life is turmoil. Many leaders of the Christian community are nothing but magicians and occult practitioners who are happily exploiting gullible and unsuspecting followers to their personal material advantage. No wonder it is not uncommon to hear some of them tell their followers that a Christian life without suffering and persecution is entirely possible and they claim to have keys to such Christian practice. As we live in these troubled times, we do not have to be surprised, even though the end times will be marked by greater and greater distress culminating in Judgment Day. We have to live our daily lives with last days' promises in mind. Biblical Eschatology helps Christians to smile through their sufferings, since they are reminded that their present situation is not the end of the story — “it's simply the rough journey that leads to the right destination.”³⁹ We are assured that the wicked will not go unpunished. God will surely punish all wickedness. Therefore, it is incumbent on all genuine Christians to be bold and stand up to the truth, fight injustice and challenge the powers that be to let justice and righteousness prevail no matter the cost involved. This is how to remain faithful to the Lord as our forebears did and this is how to live out the Christian hope, the blessed hope.

Conclusion

Clearly, Eschatology has good news for believers. To the believer, Eschatology is not frightening but comforting. In this article, we have contended that Eschatology, when properly understood and taught will infuse joy into believers' lives and hope for the future regardless of prevailing circumstances. The Christian life has to

³⁹Swindoll, *Hope Again*, 15.

be lived with eschatological expectation that God is in control of our lives and world. Such a hope will eventually lead us to live for Christ in all circumstances of life. Proper biblical Eschatology will comfort the broken hearted such that the persecuted will smile in his/her persecution. Swindoll suggests that we can cope with a situation whereby we run low on hope by accepting the “mystery of hardship, suffering, misfortune, or mistreatment” and trusting God protect us by his “power from this very moment to the dawning of eternity.”⁴⁰ Surely, to be able to accept suffering and trust God for his final deliverance is exactly one of the various roles which biblical Eschatology plays to firm our faith. Being a double -edged sword, biblical Eschatology has the power to invoke confidence and hope in those who love and serve God, as well as invoking fear of impending judgment in those living in rebellion against him. Eschatology, therefore, speaks to unbelievers by sending a warning that unbelief will lead them to eternal punishment. Life on earth is very short; eternal life has no end but whatever a person does on earth has eternal consequences.

With eschatological hope, the believer’s response should include the mission of the church to all nations, the hunger for righteousness in the world, and love for the true life of the endangered and damaged creation. The church should therefore be the people of hope, who continually experience the God who is present in his promises. Indeed, we must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope. D. Edmond Hiebert has stated that, "the hope of Christ's return is an essential part of the believer's equipment for fruitful Christian living. The anticipation of the Lord's return must have an impact on present Christian conduct. In the face of persecution from without, believers, inspired by their hope of the future, must band together in loving service to each other to the glory of God."⁴¹

⁴⁰Swindoll, *Hope Again*, 17.

⁴¹D. Edmond Hiebert, *Living in the Light of Christ's Return: An Exposition of 1 Peter 4:7-11* *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139 (1982) 243-254. 243.

His point is that as we study Eschatology, it must affect our present way of living. Eschatology deals with expectation, with hope, with death, with the future. It gives the assurance that not everything about human beings is over after death, that death is not human beings' radical end and absolute destination, and that there is something beyond. We conclude with Moltmann's assertion that, "The coming lordship of the risen Christ cannot be merely hoped for and awaited. This hope and expectation also sets its stamp on life, action and suffering in the history of society."⁴²

Finally, since the *parousia* "marks the end of history, the time for its occurrence cannot be predicted. It will in the strictest sense be unexpected. (Mark 13:32-37, Acts 1:7; I Thess. 5:1-4)."⁴³ In fact the *parousia* does not depend on forces which are already in operation in the is world. For this reason, it cannot "be related to any general historical development so that it should be possible in advance to calculate when it will take place."⁴⁴ This means that we should be watchful all the time for the *parousia*. Having said all these, it is appropriate to conclude with the words of Prenter that, "The church's entire life of worship, rightly understood, is nothing other than a perpetual witness concerning the unexpectedness of the second coming as expressed in the cry of the ancient church, *Marana tha!* To go to church is to go there to await the Lord's return."⁴⁵

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⁴²Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 338.

⁴³Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, 551.

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CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE IN GHANA: COMPETITION OR CO-OPERATION?

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ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that the contemporary Ghanaian society is religiously pluralistic just like most societies of the world today. This religious plurality poses a major challenge to the general society. It has led to the emergence of various religious communities such as Christian and Muslim communities, which though distinct by virtue of their beliefs, practices, and spirituality, also constitute components of the larger human society. Between hostility and co-operation there is the issue of competition between these communities which could easily degenerate into social tension and eventual conflict. In the spirit of competition, each community endeavours to advance its own course, promoting its agenda without due regard for the needs and interest of the larger human society. The Christian and Muslim communities end up becoming parallel

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components or ghettos which do not engage adequately with each other. The paper posits that the challenges of religious diversity in Ghanaian societies as a result of distinct religious communities competing excessively among themselves could be met by the engagement of these communities in fruitful co-operation based on indigenous Ghanaian communal values.

Introduction

Of vital importance to religious traditions, particularly Islam and Christianity, is a sense of a community in which members live in harmony with one another. This explains why we frequently hear of Islamic (*ummah*) community (sūrah 2:143; sūrah 3:104; sūrah 5:48) and Christian community (*Redemptoris Missio*, 51) especially in parts of the world where there exists a large following of each of the traditions.² Each of the communities is different and has the right to be different. The fundamental differences do not only exist in the theologies underpinning their creeds in the Ultimate Reality and scriptures but also in their spirituality and worship. The Christian community holds on to the belief in the Trinity (three persons in one God), the Incarnation, and the Bible (Old and New Testaments) as scripture. It is centred in and characterised by belief in Jesus Christ who died and rose to redeem them and whose mystical body they are (1 Cor 12:27). This, notwithstanding, the Christian community is not one homogenous body of members. It is made up of several denominations such as the Mission churches - Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians etc. Others are the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Though these denominations also have their differences in terms of doctrines,

² Glory Dharmaraj, & Jacob Dharmaraj, *Christianity and Islam: A Missiological Encounter* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 34.

spirituality, rituals and symbols they are united by the person of Christ Jesus and a common scripture-the Bible.

The Muslim community adheres to the *tawhīd* (the concept of the one God), the Qur'ān (the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad) and the *hadīth* (records of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad) as the bases of guidance that lead to the moral and religious transformation of society. Like the Christian community, the Muslim community constitutes a collective body with branches which include mainstream Muslims of the various moderate sufi traditions, the western-styled Ahmadiyya Movement, and the strict, legalistic, *Ahlus Sunna*. Despite the differences based on doctrine and administrative system, the community manages to present a high level of solidarity with an attractive community life which hinges on common worship and law.

Competition between the Christian and Muslim communities, though not easily or openly admitted by adherents of the religious traditions and often ignored or disregarded in academic discourses, is alive and well in interreligious relations. Competition takes place between the religious individuals in their quest to outdo the other in numbers, education, personal pride, economic, and even social status. In that case, religious competitors see themselves as potential rivals competing for the soul of the society in which they live. Competition between religious communities as such is not bad but in excess its severity becomes a menace in the society as a whole and a formidable challenge to a nation that strives to be a community, a human family, and a unity in diversity. At stake in competition are the great values of peace and harmony, particularly in areas of armed conflict, solidarity in the struggle for social change, unity in healing social ills, integrity, and social justice in the nation. Despite this high stake any attempt to promote the interest of the larger community is met with serious challenges of small religious communities unduly engaged in competition. The society needs to find a way of dealing with this menace of competition if it is to promote peaceful co-existence among religious communities.

Dialogue of Christian-Muslim Competition

Christians and Muslims in Competition

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, human competition is a contest in which there are two or more people. In a contest, typically, only one or a few participants will win and others will not. A competition actually exists when there is a scarcity of a desired outcome. Individuals and/or groups are then in a position that they must vie for the attainment of that outcome. For example, in sports, two individuals or two teams engage in competition for the purpose of winning usually a prize which could be a medal, a trophy or a belt. But one may ask: what at all has competition got to do with religions? Or what, at all, is at stake in religious competition? What do religious traditions strive to win? These questions could be adequately answered with another question: what is the ultimate goal of religious traditions? Or what are religious communities meant to achieve?

The ultimate goal of religious bodies or institutions to us is: to help individuals and societies or communities to attain perfection, to improve and become better people. When human perfection and communal development are at stake, competition between religions loses its significance. Religious communities come to realise not only that there is no need for competition between them but also that there is no competition at all; they collaborate with one another. However, competition comes in the field of religions when religious practitioners and leaders of the various traditions create a more or less competitive field by the way they encourage their followers to think and treat one another as competitors. And so competition comes in when what is at stake is reduced unfortunately and sadly to: which of the religious traditions are best placed to assist individuals and communities to achieve the ultimate objective of human perfection and continual survival? Or which community has the best beliefs and doctrines, history and scriptures, practices, and rites? Or which religion is the best and the most excellent, and which community is the most dignified? In all these cases each

religious community conceives of itself as the best means to the desired end and so develops highly exclusivist doctrines meant eventually to outdo and to crash the other.

Thus, the competitive field is usually generated firstly on beliefs, doctrines, scriptures, and its interpretation. All religions have their accepted dogma, or articles of faith meant to be accepted without question. Rigid acceptance of doctrines and dogmas often leads to inflexibility and intolerance in the face of other beliefs since the word of God cannot be compromised. Furthermore, scriptures of religions are often vague and open to interpretation. Thus, in a competitive setting, conflict can arise over whose scripture and its interpretation is the correct or the best or most authentic one; a conflict or competition that ultimately cannot be resolved because there is no arbiter. Competition on the issue of dogma and scriptures are frequently compounded when believers are called upon to spread the word of God and increase the numbers of the flock in Christian evangelization and Muslim *da'wah*. In an extreme case, a competitive religious group may seek to deny other religions the opportunity to practise let alone to propagate their faith.

In a religiously pluralistic situation, this competition can be so fierce that the ultimate goal of attainment of human betterment and communal security often is relegated to the background, if not completely hampered. Consequently, religious groups lose focus, ignoring their core goals of ensuring individual and collective perfection and concentrate all their efforts, resources and time on the peripheral goals of competing on authenticity of deposits of faith. In other words, religions focus on core goals when they put advancing human and societal growth and perfection at the fore front of their activities. They focus on peripheral goals when all their activities as well as programmes centre ultimately on numbers, physical expansion, and competition. Marshalling all effort, resources, and activities on the peripheral goals actually means that these peripheral goals are sadly made to take the place of the core goals. Competition on authenticity deposits of faith between and even within religious communities often translates further into contestation

for such peripheral goals like members, financial contributions, legitimacy, and even political influence. Whether at the level of prestige building of ever-grander churches and mosques within spitting distance of each other, at the level of duplicating educational, economic and health facilities to ensure that each community can be self-sufficient religious competition is loudly displayed.³

Though Ghanaian Muslims and Christians would not openly admit the competition seriously existing between them, certain occasional outbursts, suspicion and fear of the other betray them. There are occasions when Muslims and Christians have been acutely and extremely worried about the rising numbers and influence of the other. As such serious activities and programmes are put in place by each group to ultimately offset or avert the situation. In his book, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, Nathan Samwini discusses the factors that contributed to the Muslim resurgence in Ghana. Samwini contends that the development of Muslim groups and revival movements in Ghana, like their Christian counterparts, has not only been a constant struggle between the “more authentic” or the “orthodox against “heterodox” tendencies, often associated with allegedly “non-Islamic” influences,⁴ but also most importantly it raises the competitive spirit of Muslims in view of non-Muslims. For instance, the arrival of the Tijāniyya and Qādiriyya tarīqa, the *mahdī* revivalists, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana from 1900 to 1950 brought a new spirit of devotion to Islam which has persisted till date. The new Muslim zeal and impetus, largely devotional at first, also translated into opportunity to deal with the growing Christian dominance in social and political arena, ultimately confronting

³ John B. Taylor, “Community Relationship between Christians and Muslims”, in *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, Papers presented at the Broumana, 12-18 July, 1972 (World Council of Churches: Geneva, 1973), 90.

⁴ Nathan Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 66.

both Islam and Christianity with theological, ideological, and social disputation.⁵

The confrontation takes place in two broad fronts: the media level and the communal level. Regarding the media, Christian and Muslim bodies use television, radio, audio cassettes, books and pamphlets as means for evangelization and *da'wah* and other discussions. *'Aqīda*, a weekly magazine for Muslims was introduced on the national television in 1985 as an education as well as *da'wah* programme. The fact that Christians did not only see increased Muslim usage of the media as an opportunity to learn about Islam but also as a threat points to the existence of certain level of competitiveness.⁶ The reaction of Christians to the Muslim zeal and influence on the media as well as the social and political front is summed up by Abdul al-Haqq. In his booklet "The Fast Takeover of Ghana by Hausa Yankasa Group" al-Haqq describes the rising dominance of Islam, portraying the Yankasa group as the one leading a Muslim desire "to takeover Ghana" and for which reason he calls on all true Ghanaians to rise up and fight to redeem Ghana from the shackles of Islam.⁷ The Ghana Evangelism Committee also has consistently organized series of "Islamic Awareness Seminars" for church leaders from the 1990s to the present. This committee has also produced a 22 page "Outreach to Muslim Guidelines" for Christian outreach programmes to Muslims; all obviously meant to thwart the Muslim threat.

The other social disputation is amply demonstrated in Ghana, especially where Muslims and Christians virtually live in separate communities in particular towns and villages, making meaningful integration of Christians and Muslims a very difficult venture. In southern Ghana, for instance, most Muslim communities are largely found in the *zongos* at the outskirts of the villages and towns. These Muslims are mainly the descendents of immigrants of Wangara, Kotokoli, Hausa,

⁵ Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, 87.

⁶ Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, 298.

⁷ Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, 202-203.

Yoruba and Fulani.⁴² Upon arrival, the Muslims set up their quarters in the trading and mining towns and villages, which later came to be called 'Zongos'. Unlike their counterparts in the northern parts of the country, the Muslims in the south lived in their quarters and did not get involved in the local politics and socio-religious affairs of chiefs and people.⁸ The indigenous southerners, mainly Christians and adherents of indigenous religions live in the villages and towns. A clear boundary between the Muslim and Christian communities and the competition, constant mistrust and tension that ensued and has existed till today, have been a challenge to intra and interreligious relations.

Such competitive situations often spill over, resulting in some Christians and Muslims, particularly those with fundamentalist orientation, engaging each other in rather confrontational and polemical ways, sometimes burning churches, Bible, or Qur'ān. As a result, we have experienced violent eruptions between Christians and Muslims, and between Muslims, in towns such as Agona Nyakrom, Takoradi, Kumasi, Oda and Wenchi.⁹ According to James Anquandah, between 1987 and 1989, there were twenty reported cases of intra and inter-religious clashes in Ghana, which resulted in the loss of human lives and property. Some examples included riots between Christians and Muslims at Walewale, Sekondi, Kumasi, Tamale and Mampong-Asante. There were other cases of riots between Christians and Traditionalists at Half Assini, Labadi and Korle Gonno. Strangely, there have been reports of intra-Muslim clashes among Muslims in 1995-1998 at Akim

⁴²Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 240.

⁸Enid Schildkrout, *The People of the Zongo: The transformation of ethnic identities in Ghana*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 69-265.

⁹Elizabeth Amoah, "African Indigenous Religions and Interreligious Relationship," paper presented at Westminster College, Oxford, autumnal IIC2 lecture, held on October 22, 1998, 4.

Critique of the Various Stances for Competition

Two widely acceptable legitimate positions on competition could be identified: (1) enthusiastic support and (2) qualified support. The advocates of enthusiastic support for competition hold that the more societal members immerse themselves in rivalry the better. This line of thinking would hold that the more religious communities engage in competition and rivalry, the more religion is enriched, proclaimed, and promoted. Competition then builds and helps improve not only religious beliefs, practices and rites but also character and produce excellence. On the other hand, proponents of the second stance admit that our society has gotten carried away with the need to be Number One that we push ourselves too hard and too fast to become winners. They insist that competition can be healthy and fun if we keep it in perspective. Such school of thought would contend that healthy competitions between Christians and Muslims are necessary.¹¹

In his book *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* Alfie Kohn offers a critique of the two positions in favour of competition and argues that our struggle to defeat each other in contestation turns all of us into losers. Competition, according Kohn, ought not to be considered as an inevitable part of human nature and structures which motivates us to come out with our best or to succeed. Yes, competition can bring out the best in us

¹⁰James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 Years of the Christian Council of Ghana* (Accra: Asempa, 2009), 70.

¹¹Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 67-75.

but it also has a damaging effect on our relationships; contestation ruins relationship.¹²

Competition: A Disincentive to Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Though Kohn's research is on education of children in schools, his findings and conclusions are equally true of or applicable to religious relations. Competition between religious traditions, though many will not admit, exists in our world of religions. Throughout history, competition, whether open or hidden, has been bad news for interreligious dialogue and relations, particularly Christian-Muslim dialogue. As a result, there is no need for competition at all between religious communities and the phrase "healthy competition" is actually a contradiction in terms. Competition on religious grounds, which simply means that one religious group can succeed only if others fail, is inherently destructive and a disincentive to Christian-Muslim dialogue. In a competitive culture the individual or a religious group is made to understand that to win you must triumph over others. This is also to say that a particular religion is true, authentic when it triumphs over the other. In view of this, success comes to be defined as victory over the other, even though these are really two different terms. Competition is and always will be unnecessary and inappropriate in interfaith encounters because in that case religion is hardly able to be a source of unity, executing its organizing and unifying functions of bringing together and actually integrating into a whole its several parts.¹³

¹²Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 45.

¹³Robert T. Parsons, *Religion in an African Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 183. Also see T. Goode, *Religion among the Primitives* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1951), 54.

Thus, competition between religious communities is a recipe for religious hostility. Only a group can win a contest or competition and so both Christian and Muslim communities cannot win in contest of religions. In view of this, each religious group comes to regard others as obstacles to their own success which would not augur well for fruitful Christian-Muslim encounters. Competition in every field of endeavour including even between religious communities leads to envy and suspicion of the others. It ruins relationships, making it difficult to regard adherents of the religious other as potential friends or collaborators but easy as potential threats, rivals, and enemies. The truth is that trying to outdo someone is not conducive to trust. A competitive spirit underpinned the early period of Christian-Muslim encounters which though saw basic Christian and Islamic doctrines debated upon and developed¹⁴ yet was also characterised largely by prolonged polemics well known for negativity and profound bitterness which hampered fruitful religious associations.¹⁵ It is the same competitive spirit which reduced interreligious dialogue to mere debates of experts sharing more of their various irreconcilable theological positions than their reconcilable faith experiences as Christians and Muslims. At Christian-Muslim debate, each group attempts to score point by defending logically and philosophically theological positions.¹⁶ Dialogue of debate by experts is the off-shoot of exclusivist conception of religious encounters which considered a particular religious belief system as absolutely true and all others are false. However, the experience of dialogue has proven beyond doubt that competitive understanding of religious relations is counterproductive. At the height of competition, religious encounters degenerate into a growing mistrust and hatred, where even an offer of friendship is seen as

¹⁴J. M. Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History I* (Roma: PISAI, 2000), 25.

¹⁵Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes*, 27.

¹⁶Kenneth Cracknell, (trans.). *Christians and Muslims Talking Together* (London: British Council of Churches, 1986), 114.

a temptation to be rejected, and culminate often into religious discrimination and incessant wars. Moreover, the never-ending desire to win in competition often leads to the adoption of crude methods and unwholesome strategy by competing parties in which negativity is hyped, stereotypes and prejudices encouraged, deepened and made to thrive. Competition between religious communities makes religion a latent source of conflict.

Furthermore, when Ghanaian Christians and Muslims compete on the basis of religious differences they become less able to consider, let alone take the perspective of each other. They are unable to see the world from each other's point of view. In view of this, it is hardly possible to consider and reflect upon questions posed by the spiritual experiences and moral values of other traditions such as Christianity, Islam and Ghanaian indigenous religions. This means that the spiritual values and moral virtues inherent in these other religions and cultures would be largely discarded.^{43 17} This also means an outright rejection of the other's beliefs and practices without any critical or due consideration.

Dialogue of Christian-Muslim Co-Operation

Christian and Muslim Co-operation

It is worth noting that the Christian and Muslim communities do not exist in separate compartments of their own. They live in a larger community as a nation, town or village. As such their activities - beliefs, worship and laws - ought not to address solely the daily challenges of one community but the general

¹⁷Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1989), 200. See also Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 256-258; F.K. Buah. *A History of Ghana*, Revised and Updated (Malaysia: Macmillan, 1998), 139.

community as well. Consequently, solidarity cannot be limited within one community. The Christian community should not only be concerned about building a strong and/but closed community. A Muslim or Christian community that does not concern itself with the needs of non-Muslims or non-Christians respectively falls short of expectation. In other words, as already noted, a clear boundary has the tendency of engendering superiority discourses which eventually keeps the two communities further apart from each other. A clear boundary between the Muslim and Christian communities could be a potential source of tension and conflict in human relations.

Rather, the two communities can and should work diligently at positioning themselves in such a way that they become more deeply rooted in the “human” community. This calls for co-operation and collaboration between the religious traditions. In the spirit of co-operation, religious traditions work to advance the course not only of the general society but also importantly of religion itself. When Christian-Muslim relations are based on co-operation rather than competition, adherents of the religions feel better about themselves and religion ultimately wins. Muslims and Christians would not need to work against a common enemy. In this case, they work with each other instead of against each other. For, real co-operation does not require triumphing over another group.¹⁸ It ensures that in the end both communities triumph. Cooperation is marvelously successful at helping religious traditions to communicate effectively, to trust in others and to accept those who are different from themselves. Competition, on the other hand, interferes with these goals and often results in outright antisocial behaviour. The choice is ours: We can blame the religious individual who cheats, turns extremist and violent or withdraws, or we can face the fact that competition itself is responsible for such ugliness.

¹⁸David W. Johnson, and Roger T. Johnson. *Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research*. (Edina, Minn.: Interaction Book Co., 1989), 67.

Theological Basis for Co-operation

Despite belonging to various religious communities, Ghanaian Christians and Muslims have to acknowledge the common humanity of all human beings as they engage in dialogue.¹⁹ An Akan proverb goes: *nyinpa nyinara ye Nyame mba; obiara nnyeasaase ba*-("All human beings are children of God; no one is a child of the earth"). An Akan epigram teaches that "all belong to one family, though they are separate stalks." To this effect, Kwesi Wiredu notes that human value among the Akan is "...intrinsicly linked with recognition of the unity of all people, whether or not they are biologically related"²⁰ and so whether or not they are of diverse religious backgrounds or kinship groups. In view of this common humanity, Muslims and Christians, in fact adherents of all religions constitute one universal human family, the most important source of communal unity and a valuable model for peaceful Christian-Muslim co-existence. Despite the differences in their beliefs, worship and spirituality, Muslims and Christians need not only acknowledge their belongingness to universal human family but also work hard to promote its essential values.

This perspective of common humanity is shared by Muslim intellectual Al-Faruqi in his rendition of "humane universalism". AlFaruqi argues that "humane universalism"and so common humanity, is a fundamental teaching of Islam, which has universal appeal and significance as the most authentic and central issue in the field of inter-religious encounters and peaceful co-existence.²¹ In fact, it is an offshoot of the concept

¹⁹ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 24.

²⁰ Kwesi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 76.

²¹ Al-Faruqi, Isma' il. "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah", in Emilio Castro & Khurshid Ahmad (eds.). *Christian Mission and Islamic*

of *tawhīd* (the absolute oneness of Allāh) which brings all human creatures under the divine authority of the Supreme Deity.²² Likewise, the Second Vatican Council, in its document *Nostra Aetate*, draws humanity's attention to this human connectivity: "One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth"(*Nostra Aetate*, 1). In Pope Paul VI's document on the Church, *Ecclessiam Suam*, the Pope notes that the Church shares "...with the whole of human race a common nature, common life"(*Ecclessiam Suam*, 97). Also, in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the council fathers note that:

"God, who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, who "...from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely, God Himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24).

In these documents the Catholic Church acknowledges the common humanity of all people, touting it as the unique theological foundation for inter-religious dialogue, communal harmony and peaceful co-existence. Common humanity for communal survival is also the framework on which the British Council of Churches set out its guidelines in 1981, *Relations with People of Other Faith* which among other things say: "What makes dialogue between us possible is our common humanity, created in the image of God.

Da'wah: Preceedings of the Chambesy Dialogue Consultation (Leicester (UK): The Islamic Foundation, 1982), 39-40

²²Al-Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah", 33-34.

We all experience the joys and sorrows of human life.”²³

Co-operation in Advancing Collective Well-being

Christian and Muslim communities do not always demonstrate their unity in a universal human family. Their obvious differences often put them in distinct religious communities who compete excessively among themselves. The traditional Ghanaian society places premium on the continuous survival of the larger community and considers its interest supreme.^{44 24} Consequently, the activities of the various societal groups ought to ultimately gear towards advancing the course of the society in general. In other words, the well-being of the community becomes the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society. This explains the Akan proverb: the sticks of the bloom cannot be broken when together, *woka prae bo mu a, ennbu*.⁴⁵²⁵ Thus, the triumph of the society translates into the success of various groups constituting its component parts.

This traditional concept of community could be brought to bear on Christian and Muslim communities to reduce to the barest minimum undue competition and its attendant evils such as mistrust, acrimony, and strife, enabling them to recognise themselves as partners or associates. Consequently, Christians and Muslims with a communal sense of life and worldview are to be team players, who recognise each other as partners whose activities and programmes ought to complement each other in

²³ British Council of Churches, now called Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland, is a subsidiary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The guidelines quoted here are actually based on the general guidelines provided by WCC.

²⁴ John S. Pobee, *Toward An African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon), 49. See also G. F. Arthur, *Cloth as Metaphor: Re-reading the Adinkra Cloth Symbols of the Akan of Ghana* (Legon- Ghana: CEFIKS, Inc., 2001), 82.

²⁵ G. F. Arthur *Cloth as Metaphor: Re-reading the Adinkra Cloth Symbols of the Akan of Ghana* 2001, 82.

advancing the societal course. In this case, individuals and religious groups pursue their own agenda but which always promote ultimately that of the society. Christians and Muslims then, would highlight tenets of their faith which help build community as a whole such as tolerance, patience, restraint, forgiveness and eschew those with extremist, superior, and divisive tendencies. In this way, various religious communities exercise their religious freedom but in a socially responsible manner (*Dignitatis Humane*, 7).

When religious communities cooperate and collaborate for communal good, intolerance, tension, and conflict between them are reduced to the barest minimum, if not, eliminated completely. For intolerance, tension and conflicts of religious communities in a given society are the logical outcome of the clash of individuals and institutions, even religious, touting their own parochial interests (of religious traditions) to the detriment of the entire community. The attempts to implement the *Sharī'a* in the Northern Nigeria and the Sudan and their catastrophic consequences are obvious examples of factional religious interest flouting national constitution and freedom of worship of the entire citizenry.²⁶ A clear case of sectarian interest overriding communal interest is the adoption of policies of assimilation and inquisition in Spain orchestrated in 1478 to coerce, on pain of death, all Muslims and Jews to Christian religion on the assumption that political unity always calls for religious unity.²⁷ In advancing their own interests, individuals and the various religious traditions tend to paint a picture of the other which is far from reality or truth; a recipe for confusion and instability.

²⁶A. K. Cragg, *The Christian and Other Religions* (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1977), 8.

²⁷Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes*, 216.

Co-operation for Mutual Benefits

In the spirit of communalism, Christian and Muslim communities would urgently need each other to enrich themselves with regard to basic tenets of faith, rites of worship, and even spirituality. The truth is that Christian and Muslim communities have enriched themselves throughout history as they encounter and interact with each other in larger communities.^{46 28} Shared benefit of Christian and Muslim communities could be attained today just as many instances and situations in history. Whenever Christian civilization clashed with an Islamic one in history there was always an offshoot, a courageous people from both sides (Christians and Muslims) who rose beyond the tenets of their particular tradition, and often contrary to the guidance of their spiritual leadership, not only to reach out to the other in the spirit of common brotherhood but also to embrace whatever good they find in their traditions.

It is in view of mutual benefits Christian-Muslim co-operation is to be understood and appreciated. Nevertheless, this collaboration has received mixed reaction in Ghana. Many are those who worry that co-operation between Christians and Muslims in Ghana would lead to an unfortunate mixing of religions and a general relativization of truth claims with potentially softening of doctrines and more acceptance of existing plurality. A significant number, however, is optimistic that fresh contact initiative would provide Muslims and Christians with a common platform or conversation against secularization particularly of education, tribalism, homosexual partnerships, and alcoholic consumption, etc. In the light of this, the concerns of Norwegian secular liberals articulated by Oddbjørn Leirvik in his *Interreligious Studies* that Christian-Muslim work-together will ultimately promote what they will describe as “conservative positions” which, they believe, will strengthen the religions’ political position could be considered

²⁸Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes*, 245.

legitimate.²⁹ In the Ghanaian situation, where religious exclusivist positions exist more in theory than in praxis a certain level of Christian-Muslim co-operation is very urgently needed to keep the political class in a right balance.

“Missions” in the Larger Community

In Ghana, Christian-Muslim encounters with regard to the issue of “missions” (Christian evangelization and Muslim *da’wah*) have been cordial and hospitable though with scant interest in fruitful dialogue and mutual engagement.⁴⁷³⁰ Often Christians and Muslims avoided each other and instead directed or focused their missionary endeavours and efforts at “winning” practitioners of traditional religion. The Assemblies of God (1906) and the Roman Catholics (1931), the first Christian Churches to start “missions” in the north also worked primarily with the tribes, who for various reasons acquired a certain aversion to Islam. In other words, the Churches directed all their activities toward the evangelization of the non-Muslims. On the Muslim side, until the advent of the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1921, very little is known of active Muslim *da’wah* on Christians in Ghana. Their main target groups were also the traditional believers. The Muslims were probably influenced by the *dhimmi* (people of the book) status of the Christians (Sūrah 29:46) which ensured their protection and so did not make them prime targets of Islamic *da’wah* and even *jihād*.³¹ This cordial Christian-Muslim encounter is, however,

²⁹ Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies; A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014),

³⁰ J. Azumah, “The Ahmadiyya Concept of Jihad and Religious Tolerance in General and Christian-Muslim Relations in Particular: Ghana as a Case Study.” A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Birmingham for the Degree of Masters of Arts, 1985, 56.

³¹ Bat Ye’or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1985), 45.

changing as there are increasing attempts within each faith to gain converts from the other. Christian interest in evangelism among Muslims has been awakened particularly by the work of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC).

With the concept of the larger community in mind, one wonders how Christians and Muslims would be able to undertake their unique “missionary mandate” without necessarily endangering communal peace especially when their missionary approaches and strategies are still potentially tension-ridden. The issue of “missions” must be clearly understood and carried out in a manner other than as perpetuated presently by Christian evangelization (*Ad Gentes*, 6) and Islamic *da'wah*.⁴⁸³² In the light of this, John Paul II, in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* puts “witness” at the heart of evangelization: “...witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family (*and so of Muslim family*), and of the ecclesial community, which reveals a new way of living” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 42-*emphasis mine*). In this way, adherents of Christianity and Islam would move beyond merely debating, fighting and even avoiding each other and killing for their religion but they live for it. Christian missions and Islamic *da'wah* are at their lowest forms when they are orchestrated on religious propagandism often based on wilful ignorance and malignant prejudice aimed at the denigration of the other. Missionary activities carried out in this negative manner are not only vile and depraved but also inefficient and fruitless and they tend eventually to engender tension and acrimony with dire consequences for the larger community. This is against the backdrop that enormous time, effort and money pumped into converting Muslims to Christianity and vice versa in sub-Saharan Africa have had no commensurate results. It is living

³²Rudvin Arne, “The Concept and Practice of Christian Mission”, in Emilio Castro & Khurshid Ahmad (eds.) *Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah: Proceedings of the Chambesy Dialogue Consultation* (Leicester -UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1982), 16-26.

the faith which eliminates the issue of competition and focuses the activities of religious communities toward developing and promoting the human person. Thus, Christians and Muslims of the 21st Century ought to realise that the era is nigh when they can truly “win” souls for their respective religious traditions by actually living the core tenets of their faith in their daily lives.³³ For, people today put more trust in and look more for religious witnesses than religious teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories.

Conclusion

In a religiously pluralistic environment where Christians and Muslims live in such close proximity as in the case of Ghana, these religious communities, whatever the differences they exhibit, could still exist, be vibrant and relevant without necessarily losing their communal spirit and identity. In the spirit of communalism and Christian-Muslim dialogue, values such as caring for others, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocal obligation, and social harmony, which ultimately unite people and ensure peaceful co-existence, are essential and cherished values. Adherents of both Christianity and Islam are to be highly encouraged to champion these values.

In the light of this, the council fathers of Vatican II reiterated its call on all, Christians and Muslims alike, to marshal every resource for the benefit of humanity. It states “...for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values” (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965). Here, the council identifies Muslims as possible and equally capable partners in championing a common cause for the good of their community. In pursuance of this noble objective, Pope John Paul II, in October 27, 1986, organised a forum in Assisi

³³ Kenneth Cracknell, *In Good and Generous Faith: Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Warrington: Epworth, 2005), 177.

which brought members of world religions together to pray for peace and to commit themselves to peace. The forum, actually, rings a bell as to the role that religions can play in championing the cause for the development of people in their society and also in promoting peace. Consequently, a viable way out of the situation probably is the adoption of the traditional religious consciousness which fundamentally rejects polemics but opens up unreservedly to communal co-operation.

If the wider community is to fulfil its hopes and reveal its hidden riches, if its message is to carry and be audible, it is necessary first of all for Christian and Muslim communities to become aware of this important fact and the potentialities it includes. For these potentialities have been inhibited by dissension, misunderstandings and sterile quarrels which not infrequently emanate from competing forces. Hence, the need for true dialogue, a dialogue, naturally, purified of any hidden agenda or mental reservations, real dialogue of cooperation, not competition or manipulations. In a courageous and lucid article R. Arnaldez has brought to light the difficulties inherent in dialogue and the traps it can fall into. Starting from the idea that dialogue is useful when it goes beyond a simple exchange of information to discovering or arriving at points of agreement, Arnaldez concludes that dialogue on fundamental things such as doctrines and dogmas which frequently ends in competition and debate is impossible.⁴⁹ This is incontrovertibly true. To wish to conduct dialogue along such lines is to condemn it in advance to certain failure.

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THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CHURCH IN POLITICS

EMMANUEL ASANTE¹

ABSTRACT

The Christian faith is living; it transcends worship and the issuing of doctrinal statements and veers into socio-political domains. In this paper, the author reflects on Kwesi Yirekyi's work, "The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana;" and also works of the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference; and reiterates the position that, the Church has been playing its prophetic role, not only as a social critic but also in political education, motivating its members to participate in the democratic process. The Church has played this role actively in Ghana since the 1980s. Even though it has generally been non-partisan in politics, the Church has every right to participate in the political process and to make her voice heard on social policies.

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Introduction

The topic one is about to reflect on assumes that the Christian Faith is living; that the Christian faith transcends, worship and the issuing of doctrinal statements. The challenge is for Christians to live out their faith in Christ in socio-political arena. In this article we shall, using Kwasi Yirenkyi's study: "*The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana*," as a major source, attempt to present what one considers to be the churches' participation in the socio-political issues of our country as can be gathered mainly from the works of the Christian Council of Ghana (C.C.G) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC).

The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), recognizing the role of the Church as a major social partner, has since its establishment sought an increased engagement between its churches and affiliated groups with local and national government on social and economic practices that impact human welfare and development.

Through its collaborative work with other Christian bodies and civil society organizations, the Council, has from time to time provided fora for joint action on issues of common interest, the intent of which is to advocate for the voiceless in the Ghanaian society. Through to its objectives, the Council has over the years proven to be the voice of the voiceless in society.

National Politics

In the year 2000 Kwasi Yirenkyi, A Ghanaian Sociologist whose specialty is Sociology of Religion conducted a research on "The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana." The research drew on various forms of data: a 1994 survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews and content analysis of existing data, involving the responses of 335 surveyed individuals, 110 in-depth interviewed individuals, drawn from the Protestant and Catholic churches who were interviewed on a variety of church and political issues.

The study concluded that since the 1980s, Ghanaian Christians have been actively involved in politics than ever before. These findings, according to the study, have important implications for the role religion plays in the political development of Ghana. The study noted that in the absence of viable structures for justice in many African countries that are struggling to evolve new democratic systems, the church claims to speak for the silent majority.

A review of the literature on religion and politics in Ghana reveals that since the 1980s, the church has taken a more activist role in national politics than at any other time in its history. Much of the church's political activity was initiated collectively under the umbrella of the CCG, the CBC with its related body, the National Catholic Secretariat (NCS). Church leaders have in their writings and speeches constantly advocated the church's political participation. For example, in analyzing the church's socio-ethical and historical role in Ghanaian politics, Kudadjie and Aboagye Mensah stated that "the church has a valid case to be involved in the affairs of the state in all aspects including national politics."²

In the second volume of their work, Kudadjie and Aboagye Mensah described the Church as "moral conscience" of the nation, a claim the Christian Council of Ghana constantly made in a number of Pronouncements and Memoranda they issued years before Ghana's Independence. For example, in August 1949 shortly after the Coussey Committee had submitted its proposals for preparing the country for self-government, the Christian Council issued a public statement under the title: *Christianity and Political Development*. This statement, which was signed by fifteen members of the Council's executive Committee including the General Secretary, Revds J. Bardsley, Prof Christian Baeta, M. B. Taylor and Dr Eugene Grau read as follows:

² Joshua N. Kudadjie, and R.K. Aboagye-Mensah, *The Christian and National Politics* Vol. 1 (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991), 3.

We the undersigned are convinced that the political issues of the present time cannot be rightly understood without reference to the moral and spiritual principles underlying them. We therefore call upon all men and women of goodwill to give their assent to the following principles as being in accordance with the Christian faith and to be guided by them in their thinking, speaking and action:

1. We recognize that the Gold Coast, like any other country, has a natural right to self-government. It is the will of God that this country should enjoy good governance, that it should have a government, which finds out, so far as it can, the real will of the people, protects the freedom and rights of conscience of minorities, secures freedom of worship, makes justice available for all, promotes the physical and moral welfare of the people by efficient planning and administration.

2. Good government requires that there should be sufficient men of ability and integrity for the control of the administration at the top for the execution of its orders at other levels.

3. Bribery and corruption should be banished by the vigilance of the authorities, influence of the church, and the absolute refusal of all citizens to take or offer bribes . . .

4. All races are equal before God and have the right to the same respect and to fair and just treatment. The law of Christ condemns all racial or colour discrimination whether aimed against Africans or non-Africans.

5. The church consists of people of goodwill who hold different views on the affairs of their country and support different political, economic and social programmes. The church, therefore,

cannot be identified with any particular party or programme.

6. We believe that peaceful means of effecting political change are still available in this country and that this being so, violent revolution should not be resorted to.

7. Christians are to the world what the soul is to the body. They should be the best citizens of the state, because they pray “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven.”³

In 1960 the Council issued a memorandum reaffirming its position promulgated in the 1940s and 50s. The said memorandum read in part as follows:

. . . . To determine the role of the Christian Council in a modern state, it is necessary to ask: Is it operating in a free country or not? Where there is real freedom, the church rejoices in it and accepts the wider responsibility such freedom brings If the government of Ghana welcomes criticism, it becomes our duty, as a free association in a free country to take the government at its word, and express our mind to it frankly, not because we are so arrogant as to think we are always right, but because it is of the very nature and health and well-being of a free community that men should speak their mind freely and it is the special duty of the church to seek to bring to the scrutiny of

³ James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire, 70 Years of The Christian Council of Ghana 1929 – 2009* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2007), 113-114.

*public affairs a mind and conscience
illuminated by the Spirit of God.*⁴

At no time in the history of the Christian Council has it shirked its political responsibility to the country. The Council opposed the dreaded Preventive Detention Act, which empowered the government to hold some citizens in detention for long periods without trial.

During the military regime of the “National Redemption Council” and “Supreme Military Council”, the Christian Council and the National Catholic Secretariat issued a joint memorandum to the Supreme Military Council (SMC) ¹ expressing grave concern at the atrocities and abuse of freedom of expression associated with the Union Government campaign.

On June 12, 1979, eight days after the overthrow of the SMC ² and the establishment of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) chaired by the Flt Lt J. J. Rawlings, the Christian Council and the NCS issued a joint memorandum to the AFRC protesting against the violence and bloodshed that had characterized the revolution. The memorandum raised serious grievous issues including the following:

- *We regret that there has been so much violence in what we believe was intended to be a bloodless takeover.*
- *We understand that the national house-cleaning should be seen as only part of the serious political and economic problems that need to be tackled. We are glad to learn that it is the intention of the Armed Forces not to cling to power; and we hope that the AFRC would make a public commitment on a firm date for return to constitutional rule, because such a commitment is*

⁴ Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire*, 115.

*necessary to win for us the international sympathy without which our efforts at rebuilding our shattered economy will be virtually impossible.*⁵

Under the Provisional National Democratic Council (PNDC) regime, the Council issued a memorandum, which was read in the member churches. The memorandum signed by the Council's Chairman, the late Rev N. K. Dzobo read as follows:

*In our pastoral letter to you dated 12th January, 1982, after the 31st December Revolution, we drew your attention to some of the negative aspects of our lives that had brought about the need for a change but definitely not the type of change we see today: a change characterized by violence, intimidation, divisiveness, indiscipline, lawlessness and insecurity. As servants of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot sit down unconcerned to see our country torn apart – we owe a duty to our compatriots and to posterity. As your leaders we call on you to join us in asking the PNDC to consider handing over power to a well constituted national government to save our dear country from further destruction. Our call for the PNDC government to hand over power is not out of malice or hatred but purely from a genuine concern and love for our country.*⁶

The above memorandum to the member churches was followed up by another to the PNDC noting with deep concern the following, which had become painfully evident in the country under the PNDC: Firstly, the lack of peace, tranquility and stability in the land and the lack of confidence in Ghana's

⁵ Aquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire*, 117.

⁶ Aquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire* 118-119.

economic future on the basis of which concerns the PNDC was urged to hand over power. The memorandum read as follows:

Before the year 1982 ends, we would like to have peace in the country. The country belongs to all of us, both old and young. As a result, we the Christians are calling for an immediate dialogue between the PNDC and organizations, market women organizations, professional bodies, farmers and fishermen's organizations, artisans, commercial and industrial organizations, elder statesmen, heads of educational institutions, press representatives, students' representatives, teachers, ex-servicemen, etc. In line with our objective of seeking peace and reconciliation, we call upon the PNDC, as soon as arrangements can be made, to hand over the administration of the country to a Government of National Reconciliation composed of all shades of opinion, including identifiable groups, so as to salvage the economy and bring discipline, law and order to the system and prepare country for a popularly-elected government in 1983. We reiterate that this is not out of hostility to the PNDC but out of love for Ghana.⁷

The Most Rev. Peter Akwasi Sarpong, the Archbishop Emeritus of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, in support of Christian participation in the socio-political issues of the country noted as follows: "Christ wants his church not to be

⁷ Aquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire*, 120.

meaningless in society or to be pushed to the periphery . . . [but] to be right at the centre of things, right where the action is.”⁸

There is no doubt that the generality of the Ghanaian Christian leadership, as can be seen from the writings of individual Christian leaders, synodical and Conference statements, pronouncements and communiqué, has not only called on the faithful to be actively involved in socio-political issues but has addressed such issues with a view to ensuring justice and peace in the country. The question is, are Ghanaian Christians listening to the call of the Christian leadership? Should the clergy or the church be involved in politics and does the laity support the clergy in respect of their involvement in politics?

Studies by Kwasi Yirekyi indicates that the laity is evenly divided (41.6%, yes; and 43.3%, no) on the issue of clergy’s active involvement in politics. 14% were not sure and a paltry 1.1% had no strong opinion on the issue of clergy’s involvement in politics. Those who, on the one hand, held the view that it was alright for the clergy to be involved in politics explained their position in terms of the conviction that the clergy constitute a class of people who could not easily be intimidated by any government. They held the view that the clergy were insulated from the risks individual laypersons might face from brutal regimes. Those who had no problems with the clergy getting involved in politics were of the view that the clergy had a moral obligation to be involved in the political process.

Those who, on the other hand did not think that the clergy should be involved in politics did so from a variety of perspectives. One of their explanations is that scripture is at best ambiguous about Christian participation in politics. They also pointed to the variety of theological positions that appear to be irreconcilable with political participation, and to the difficulty associated with their own involvement in politics. For instance,

⁸ Peter K. Sarpong, “What Church, What Priesthood for Africa?” in *Theological Education in Africa: Quo Vadimus?* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990), 9.

they pointed out that politics stirs a lot of emotions and the minister has to learn to walk a tight line to avoid offending a segment of the congregants, thereby dividing his/her congregation and the larger society in the process.

The fact is there is conflicting expectation when it comes to the clergy involvement in politics. A segment of the congregation and the larger society, including various military regimes and governments, expect the clergy to get involved in politics, so long as this involvement does not include criticism of the political parties or social policies they support. When the clergy criticize a government, which has support from the majority of the congregants, they are reminded that their duty is to preach the gospel. Thus, on one hand, the clergy are criticized for getting involved.

On the other hand, if they do not get involved, they are told that their indifference reflects a lack of concern for nation-building. These unflinching expectations in the political arena serve to intimidate some clergy. The unflinching expectations, notwithstanding, extensive calling for Christian participation in the political issues and the ongoing Christian political activities clergy indicate active Christian participation in local and national politics. Many of the current parliamentarians and some of the cabinet ministers claim to be Christians and regularly attend church.

On the question as to whether the pulpit should be used to address specific political issues, 62.4% of the laity respondents wanted the clergy to use the pulpit to address specific political issues, whereas 50% of the clergy supported that position.

The clergy involvement in politics and the use of the pulpit for political discourse have always been controversial issues in many church denominations. There is always the need to weigh one's options and the practical consequences of one's actions.

One agrees with the position on involvement with socio-political issues. However, one would worry that pastors who actively get themselves involved in socio-political issues must note that they may not be able to satisfy everyone in the congregation when they speak out.

Yirenkyi's study⁹, which serves as a major source of this work, indicates: "*it is only in political education that more clergy than laity support church involvement.*" Yirenkye further notes: "nearly three quarters (73.5 percent) of the clergy and 60.7 percent of the laity [surveyed] believe that their churches should be responsible for political education".

Consequently, the church has been actively involved in political education. The church's political education has a twofold objective. The first, as rightly noted by Yirenkyi, "is to prepare Christian for national elections, make them aware of their civil rights, and educate them about government policies and programmes."

"The second," as noted by Yirenkyi "is to act as the moral conscience of the society." Thus "apart from participating in the electoral processes, the churches led by the CCG and NCS with the parent body of CBC have organized numerous educational seminars on a variety of sociopolitical and economic issues at the local, regional and national levels." After these seminars the Christian institutions produced literature in the form of pamphlets to address key socio-political "issues such as the role of the church in the promotion of ecumenism and a democratic culture, individual and other human rights, gender issues, the role of the Christian in the socio-political and economic development of the nation, and the role of the media in a democracy."

Recently, the CCG and National Pentecostal Council as well as the Catholic Secretariat have been involved in the oil and gas issues. A number of sensitization workshops have been held on oil and gas; to build capacity of constituents on the impact and effects of the oil gas production and manage expectations.

⁹ Kwasi Yirenkye "The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflection from Laity and Clergy in Ghana." <https://www.findarticles.com> Published: 01 October 2000. Accessed 2014.

As a moral conscience of society, the church through its bodies, CCG, NCS, Ghana Bishop's Conference (GBC) and Ghana Pentecostal Council (GPC) spoke and continues to speak against the evils of the government and the nation. "They took steps to educate the people and the government on the issues at stake; ... they discouraged violence, chaos and bitterness."¹⁰

Yirenkyi refers to a paper: "The Church and State: Christian Council and National Affairs."¹¹ In this paper, the CCG has presented its moral and prophetic role on some specific sociopolitical issues from 1941-1994. In 1979, for example, the CCG submitted two memoranda urging the government, during the heavy days of political upheaval in the country, to "exercise justice, fair play, and respect for human rights" and also advised against "arbitrary death sentences."¹² In the second memorandum, the Council expressed grave concern about executions and insisted that arrested persons should be given the opportunity of public trial.¹³ A number of such memoranda and pastoral letters touching on a variety of issues were sent in subsequent years aimed at addressing concerns about justice, insecurity coupled with frustration of citizens, socio-economic deterioration, education, and attacks on churches. As observed by Yirenkyi between 1941-1994 about sixty of such letters were issued. Forty of the said sixty were submitted in the 1980s alone. The frequency and the sheer number of these memoranda and pastoral letters served to indicate the seriousness with which the church viewed the political violence against Ghanaians of which the church was hardly spared. The Christian Council's Pastoral letter to Ghanaian Christians regarding attacks on the Methodist Church Ghana, 25th November, 1982; Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of Ghana, 1990, Joint Pastoral Letters, 10th Anniversary, 1980-

¹⁰ John S. Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra Asempa Publishers, 1991), 72.

¹¹ A Call to Citizen 1992; Communiqué, 1994, 1993, 1991.

¹² CCG and GBC Pastoral letters, 12, 22 June 1979.

¹³ CCG and GBC Pastoral Letters, 26 June, 1979.

1990 attest to the attack on the church. “These letters affirm the church’s self-assertion as the “moral conscience of the society.”

One agrees with Professor John Pobee in his assertion that “the historic churches have continued to be the voice of the voiceless; the champion of freedom, integrity, and fair play in natural politics.”¹⁴ Pobee further asserts that “the churches stood guard over human dignity and justice with a human face.... It was a courageous stand to take in a context of immense violence, intolerance, and recklessness of soldiers.”¹⁵ The imminent Ghanaian Sociologist, Professor Max Assimeng had noted earlier: “The act of brutality that intimidated the masses led the church to act collectively.”¹⁶ He further observed:

*Leading Christians have been quite vocal in their assessment of the Rawlings regimes... the terror inherent in their regimes has been such that only established bodies such as the Christian Council, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and the Association of Professional Bodies, have been capable of Collectively expressing condemnation of the regimes.*¹⁷

Conclusion

It is important for us to understand that religion in general has a double function of legitimating both the status quo and protest. Studies in respect of the church’s participation in socio-political issues, have clearly indicated that the Church has creditably undertook this dual responsibility. The church has insisted on its prophetic role as a social critic in the political arena and challenged unparallel politico-military violence. This Ghanaian

¹⁴Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 59.

¹⁵Pobee, Religion and Politics in Ghana, 62.

¹⁷Assimeng, Religion and Social Change in West Africa,242.

Christian political participation has primary been based on social justice issues. The church also educated Christian about their civil rights and motivated them to participate in the democratic process. In fulfilling this educational objective, the generality of the church stayed clear of partisan politics. The church has every right to participate in the political process and to make her voice heard on social policies.

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World Council of Churches, 1990: 6-17. Principles of Trinitarian Leadership (*Trinitatis Ductu*) for Pastoral Work

**PRINCIPLES OF TRINITARIAN LEADERSHIP
(TRINITATIS DUCTU) FOR PASTORAL WORK**

CHARLES AMARKWEI¹

ABSTRACT

In this work, an attempt is made to derive useful principles from Trinitarian theology of leadership. Therefore, the paper is a sequel to the previous work of this writer titled, A Theology of Trinitarian Leadership from the Perspective of the Threefold Office of Jesus Christ. Apart from the concrete expression of the munus triplex in Jesus Christ, the munus triplex in the particular manifestation of the Ga ethnic group of Ghana as the Wulormor is presented. Three main principles of leadership are derived from them. Four pastoral leadership principles as trinitatis ductu concern the divine authority of the pastor; agape service; tenets of freedom and rectitude; and relationality with participatory leadership.

Introduction

The demand for good leadership in the world and especially in developing countries including Africa cannot be overemphasized. There is no doubt that, most of the teething challenges facing the world today are as a result of leadership. What role has the church to play in raising good leaders in the world today? As the light of the world, members of the Christian fraternity have a divine call to express the divine leadership of God to the world through their

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lives. Therefore, the leadership of pastors is paramount to the achievement of raising such leaders. Of course, if the leadership quality of pastors is repudiated by the society, the first point of call for the remedy of leadership is at the door step of pastors.

Therefore, this work is also a call for a new paradigm in pastoral leadership in the churches where many lives are mentored. It means that the quality of leadership for pastors although has remain biblical can no longer be arbitrarily directed. For example, in the past servant leadership has been stressed as the norm. Servant leadership is a ‘Christomonism’ which ignores the Christocentric principle of the Trinitarian *oikonomia*. Therefore, it pays no heed to other aspects of leadership which the leadership of Jesus Christ as the revealed leadership of the triune God shows.

This work is loaded with the burden of deriving general principles of leadership from the theological exposition of the Trinitarian leadership revealed in the munus triplex of Jesus Christ. The concrete expression of the Trinitarian leadership through the munus triplex of Jesus Christ is anticipated by other particular expressions of the munus triplex in history. One of these particular expressions may be located in the *Wulormor* (high priest, king and prophet) of the Ga people of Ghana. Three principles emerging from the concrete expression of divine leadership and the particular expression are; firstly, divine leadership which proceed from the divine is self-emptying and self-humiliating, secondly, it leads towards the divine standards of freedom, and thirdly, it leads through partnerships.

When these principles are translated into pastoral leadership, they lead to four principles of leadership as:

- Pastoral leadership necessarily is divine because it proceeds from God
- Pastoral leadership is self-emptying and self-humiliating driven by agape
- Pastoral leadership aspires to the divine nature while rejecting worldly standards
- Pastoral leadership is relationality and participation.

These are expanded upon a little bit. It is hoped that *trinitatis ductu* shall change the leadership perspectives of pastors irrespective of their status and bring insight into the concept of leadership in general.

The Munus Triplex as an African Heritage and within the Context of the Ga Ethnic Group of Ghana as General Revelation

In the Ga ethnic group of Ghana, the *Wulormor* is the person designated by the principal deity of the Ga nation state as original leader or ruler. Hence, this leadership is first of all seen as a theocratic form of governance which was similar to ancient Egypt² and Israel⁵⁰³. It is a leadership of the deity represented by one person appointed by the deity as the mediator between the people and the deity. It was also a leadership, which provided and inspired vision, wisdom, knowledge which defined the holistic moral, cultural and religious existence of the people. It was also a leadership which provided protection and security for the state through the enforcements of moral, cultural and religious obligations advanced or inspired by the deity. Once again, it may not be an overemphasis that such was the leadership of the Pharaohs and Moses in particular. The position of the *Wulormor* of the Ga of Ghana in a similar manner is no less. The *Wulormor* was by his function the one appointed leader of the deity⁴ who is

² Mckay, Hill, and Buckler, *A History of Western Society Volume I*, 2224.

³ See the leadership of Melchizedek in Abraham's period (Genesis:18-20; Psalm 110:4; 2Enoch; Hebrews 7) continued by Moses of the

Israelites as prophet, leader and priest (Exodus) with the Judges until Samuel in 1Samuel 8; King David operated more or less in that capacity as prophet, king and priest.

⁴ C C Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basel: Basel Mission, 1895, and Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966 &2007), 106.

a mediator (high priest); the theocratic governor (ruler or king); and the wise teacher or visionary leader (prophet). On that note the *Wulormor* is not only the priest (*wontse*), or king (*mantse*) or prophet (*gbalor*) but is a person who possesses all three offices in their most excellent form in the Ga traditional community.

As the high priest, the *Wulormor* plays the mediatory role and therefore has to perform the rituals stipulated by the deity strictly according to the liturgy prescribed.⁵ The order of the state is determined according to the cyclic performances of rituals and festive occasions. In all cases it is the *Wulormor* who presides over all ceremonies. Rituals are performed to pacify the deity and to expiate as well as propitiate on behalf of the people.⁶ He plays his mediatory role by praying firstly, to God and then secondly, to the deity for mercy, grace and blessings for the people and state. The *Wulormor* as a high priest has a code of conduct stipulated by the deity, which demands piety and ascetic lifestyle.⁷ In some cases, the *Wulormor* is expected to sacrifice himself in death for the people to be saved from a certain evil or danger.

The *Wulormor* as the political leader of the state and people relies on the deity to rule and to direct the nature of administration. According to Akrong, the political governance is done in such a way that administrators are appointed for the all matters and then there is a commander for all the different army units within the state.⁸ Hence, the *Wulormor* is given that role in a theocratic manner as the king and the commander in Chief. Without the approval and sanctioning of the *Wulormor* concerning

⁵ M J Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford Press, 1937&1961), 7; quoted in Amarkwei, *Jesus theOkpelejen Wulormor*, 68.

⁶ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 7.

⁷ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 7.

⁸ A Akrong, "Pre-monarchical Political Leadership among the Gas, With Special Reference to the People of La," in *Research Review Supplement* 17(2006): 141&142; also quoted in Amarkwei, *Jesus theOpelejen Wulormor*, 66.

any issue at stake it shall remain ineffective or void. Therefore, the *Wulormor* carries that power of the ultimate ruler as Carl Reindorf has indicated earlier. In the Ga state of today's Ghana, the *Wulormor* has the final say concerning paramount decisions. It is he who installs all those in authority and prays for their security and prosperity, therefore without the *Wulormor*, it is almost impossible for a state to function properly.

The centre of prophecy, vision, wisdom, and counsel for the any state in Ga is the *Wulormor*. The *Wulormor* barely, prophesies but has a congregation of priests, priestesses, prophets and prophetesses.⁵¹ These people in most cases are the media through which prophecies are received. These people prophesy in the presence of the *Wulormor* or other important dignitaries. It is the *Wulormor* who gives the proper interpretation of the vision, dream and prophecy which are received. Noteworthy is the fact that Ga people are very democratic and respect human rights. Therefore, the work of the *Wulormor* is so decentralized in priesthood, kingship and prophetic office.

The Ga leadership style promotes ecstatic creativity among all the people. It also recognizes and honours individual capabilities by assigning roles to people accordingly. One fundamental right of the people is the freedom of speech. And this is with the belief that God and the deity of the state has the prerogative to grant wisdom and vision to anyone including the least of the common people. In short, the *Wulormor* works with the people. The *Wulormor* is the highest law enforcer in the land and punishes when the need arises. He is loved, revered and honoured by all the people even as a father. He is a friend of the poor, oppressed as his presence is a source of hope to the people. The reign of the *Wulormor* is always peaceful and successful unless deposed by the deity by not following the code of conduct of the office. The leadership of the *Wulormor* is a great source of unity and brotherly love and kindness. This is because he is the centre controlling the social organization, in morals, culture, economics, and political progress of the people. All these are

‘theonomously’ orchestrated and administered in league with the deity in cyclical observations in time.

Having dealt with the general revelation of the *munus triplex* in the *Wulormor*; there is the need to consider what the leadership *par excellence* of Jesus Christ teach. Consequently, bearing in mind, the Trinitarian nature of the *munus triplex* it is crucial to proceed to examine the principles inherent in the dynamics of the Trinitarian nature of the *munus triplex* as leadership principles.

Principles of *Trinitatis Ductu*

Putting the principles of Calvin and Barth together it may be said that *Trinitatis Ductu* is a divine principle of leadership whereby God is recognized as firstly, source of power and authority, which ensures strict adherence of God’s principles by the leader while requiring same from followers. It relies on the power of God as the motivation for enforcement. Secondly, in consonance with the above, it is a leadership in the name of God yet always taking the place of the led even to the point of the tragic. It is a leadership which is based upon a pure love for God and genuine love for humanity (the led) or creation. Thirdly, it is an empowering leadership which ensures that those who are led freely participate based upon the free provision of knowledge, skills, vision and motivation.⁹ The above is evidently revealed in the Christ Event which is at the same time economic Trinity.

In both economic and immanent Trinity one perceives the principle of leadership as a dialectical relationship existing between God and the leader on one hand; and a dialectical relationship between the leader and the led on another hand.

Firstly, the leader proceeds from God in humiliation and sacrifice with the vision of God to the undesirable state of the led. This is a Yes or the thesis movement outwards away from God

⁹ C Amarkwei, *A Trinitarian Theology of Leadership from the Perspective of the Threefold Office of Jesus Christ* (Unpublished Paper: January 2016).

but downwards towards the world. It is more or less a this-worldly motion. It recognizes the goodness inherent in creation and therefore it is motivated to remove the predicament enmeshed in it.

Secondly, the leader then moves the people towards the ultimate fulfilment of life which is found in God alone. This is a No or antithetical movement inwards and upwards towards God. It is other-worldly movement and mostly against the standards of the world. It recognizes the negative elements and the destructive nature of existence; and not only moves away from it towards God for fulfilment, but confronts it in God's power.

Lastly, there is a 'synthesization' in God of the Yes and No motions as animation of the lives of the led. Consequently, they become supporters of the leadership which had suffered for them in order to bring them to their goals of existence. They become animated participants of the same motions of the leader. Therefore, out of the experience of the good leadership, which is fundamentally concerned about the predicament of the led and the endeavour to lead them out, a voluntary, but, irresistible support is generated for the cause of the institution e.g. church, home and society at stake. This principle is somehow reflected in the leadership of the *Wulormor* in Ga states as general revelation. The leadership of the *Wulormor* is the side of this paper which concretizes the concept of *trinitatis ductu* from abstraction and idealism to pragmatism.

At this point it is crucial to relate the above principles to the leadership of the pastor as *trinitatis ductu*.

First *Trinitatis Ductu* Principle: The Leadership of the Pastor is Divine

The pastoral leadership in the light of the above explication would have to be one, which is recognized as a divine leadership ordained, commissioned, envisioned and empowered by God i.e. according to the Father's Will which is revealed in Jesus Christ

and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It does not in any way, compromise, on the position that God is the owner of the mission and the ordained pastor, is only 'co-missioner' of the *oikonomia* ordained by God (John 20:21; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28: 18-20, Acts 1:8; Zech. 4:6). It is a dialectical relationality of proceeding from the Father through the knowledge of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore, important for the pastor to understand that she or he has no personal authority in building any church. No pastor has any personal authority in the building of any church. Once this is understood and imbibed deeply, there is a spiritual or mystical animation of Jesus Christ whereby there is a movement outwards from God towards the lost world and the sheep of God. It should be remembered here that there is a spiration at this dispensation of incarnational ministry that relies on the baptism, ordination and commissioning of the Father. The spiration is the anointment of the Holy Spirit in power for pastoral ministry with passion and grace to be successful. At this point of God's approval, the authority of God for the ministry is released in the power of the Holy Spirit. The pastor should therefore arm the self with the illumination that she or he possesses the authority of the *oikonomia* of God. Hence, at this point, fear and anxiety is doused to barest minimum and boldness, knowledge, wisdom and utterance is given in a supernatural way for the ministry.

The above point brings to bear the source of the pastor's authority and power. It is a worthy point to note because the authority of the pastor does not depend on the age, race, gender, class or any other hierarchical category. This point ought to be stressed because be they as they are important, hierarchical order is already entrapped with ambiguities of the human predicament. Consequently, it is important that the pastor takes refuge in the authority and power given by God, in ordination. Pastors who may not operate with the authority of God, but, with the authority of class, age, race, gender and physical 'ableness' are sure to encounter serious problems in ministry unless the cultural context unfortunately favours it. If pastors operated on human hierarchy alone, they may build their own church without the authority and power of God. Therefore, any pastor without the mystical personal

experience (pietism)¹⁰ of the *trinitatis ductu* as in immanent and economic trinity is a fake pastor. The character of devotion to God in prayer and other practices of the church as means of grace shall never be lacking in a powerful leadership of a pastor.

In another vein, the many pastors who feel inadequate, perhaps, occasioned by the social status or lack of skill or disability such as in the leadership of Gideon, Moses and Jeremiah ought to take seriously, the fact that it is God who has appointed them.¹¹ All these great leaders initially, gauged themselves according to the religio-cultural norm of their societies. Consequently, they were initially, incapacitated if not seriously becoming disobedient to the call of God! Therefore, reliance on family, community, societal, and national support and recognition religio-culturally, socioeconomic and politically; as the primary source of mandate and authority for ministry is a direct negation of the pastoral ministry. The one who is fit for the Lord's work is the one who has the calling of God. And the one who has the calling of God is the one who depends upon God fully, even though; it may be diametrically opposed to the societal norms of his or her context.

Moreover, the sense of inadequacy is more or less a sign of the pastor's calling as one who has really encountered God in God's power for him or her to appreciate his or her own inadequacies in order to rely on God alone. This leads to intimate relationship of love and friendship with God. God is the source of power, therefore, seeking God through good *koinonia*, *liturgia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *didache* cannot be overemphasized.¹² In order to obtain divine authority and power for the duty at hand, the pastor ought to be prayerful and devotional.

¹⁰P Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism* ed C E Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1968), 278-287.

¹¹L Eims, *Be the Leader You Were Meant to Be: What the Bible Says about Leadership* (Illinois: Victor Books, 1975), 8-15.

¹²Eims, *Be the Leader You Were Meant to Be*, 16-25.

Second *Trinitatis Ductu* Principle: The Leadership of the Pastor is realized in a self-emptying and self-denying unconditional love for God and for the Creation of God

The authority of God is not given to show physical or spiritual superiority over the lost world and the sheep of God but for genuine love of the same. It is that altruistic love which could be highly associated with the tragic. In the mode of Christ it denies the self and has martyrdom like spirit of love for God for the sake of God's people.¹³ The love operating in the effective leader as the pastor is agape i.e. the unconditional love of God (John 3:16; John 10:10-11; John 15:13; John 21:15-17; Eze. 34:1-34). Pastoral ministry is experiencing the predicament of the world because of the love to save the world from it. Unconditional love for every member of the church is very paramount in the Trinitarian leadership. It is a Yes, to the whole of creation and the lost sheep of God in a desperate bid to have all creation redeemed. It is that pastoral ministry which leads to the justification of the flock of God and the world at large.

This special love for the whole creation of God including humanity is based upon the gracious love of God revealed in the personal mystical experience of the Pastor. Therefore, it is of paramount concern that, candidates for the pastoral ministry are really selected according to proven manifestations which bear witness to their *unio mystica*.¹⁴ If the figurative expression, "Like begets like" may be upheld, any Pastor who has not experienced the love of God may have a different way of expressing it, if not a total deviation because the nature of God is not resident in him or her. The love of God, which is experienced, is an inner nature which drives the Pastor to share that unconditional love to other people. Pastors always need to remember their first love for God

¹³D L Migliore, *The Power of God and the gods of Power* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 80-83; Won Sul Lee, *Godcentric Leadership* (Seoul: Voice Publishing House, 1997), 27.

¹⁴Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 283-287.

and for the whole of God's creation which is desperately in need for redemption. It is a justifying ministry not a condemnation. This is the ministry of an overwhelming love which allows the reign of God in the life of the pastor.

The unconditional love stressed means that preferences and priorities given to race, class, age, gender and ability in any pastoral ministry is antichrist. The principle of the Trinitarian leadership distinguishes Christian leadership from all other forms of leadership. As Eims points out, "These two things, then, a servant heart and a sensitive spirit [agape] are crucial for a good leader"¹⁵ The pastor as priest of God is a servant to the people of God. In addition, the pastor is called to be full of the love which is agape which is not sensitive love, but love that is full of divine wisdom. The love that is unconditional, yet by wisdom it is very relevant to the needs of the flock of God. It is a love which is not moved by the existential circumstances per se and yet it is moved by the wisdom of God. It is a love which brings meaning and fulfilment to being and existence but which does not move according to the dictates of being and existence. It is the love which moves along with *kairos* in temporal existence and yet not moved by the past, present and future of temporal history. It is the heart of God expressed through the heart of the pastor. Therefore, it is not a love produced from existence but the love of God the Father, revealed through the atoning work of the Son, in the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

Third *Trinitatis Ductu* Principle: The Leadership of the Pastor is realized in the Rule of God and the Rejection of Worldly Standards

At the same time, it is a No to the world because of the predicament of all creation particularly the human estrangement

¹⁵Eims, *Be the Leader You Were Meant to Be*, 46.

under existence. It is a movement upwards and inwards towards God as the solution of the human predicament. It is characterised by taking one's cross and following Jesus (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). It is a purging experience in which the rule of God determines the code of conduct for all living. In other words, it is known as sanctification in which the reign of God is founded firmly in the heart of the leader. This dominating rule of the Father through the knowledge of the Son who is the seat of the Holy Spirit is crucial. It is very crucial because the Christian principle may be at variance with the cultural norm of some nations and societies. At least, the reign confronts the seemingly truism of a global postmodernist culture of science and money making, which is promoted by the deification of the human self.¹⁶

The No to the world in relation to the personal relationship of the pastor as the leader of the church with God is automatically transferred to the importance and place of the church. The conduct of the pastor in leading pure and holy life is a sign of a ministry that is driven by the power of God towards Godself in eternity. The pastor must be disciplined according to the standards of God expounded in scripture so as to be holy example for others to emulate.¹⁷ In other words, the leader "must set an example in his own behaviour that matches the standard of scripture: "A bishop then must be blameless" (1Tim 3:2)."¹⁸

In this vein and in addition, the role of the pastor is to extend the reign of God in the hearts and minds of all who are sheep of God. It is a very important aspect of the *oikonomia* of God whereby souls i.e. hearts and minds are won in total surrender to the obedience of God through the knowledge of the Son in the power of Holy Spirit. The pastor is to depend on the spiration of the Holy Spirit in the event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the process whereby the minds of the sheep are constantly renewed into theonomous conscience. It is a state of mind

¹⁶C Amarkwei, *Church Decline: The Postmodern Ethics and the Spirit of Science and Mammon* (Unpublished Paper, 2014), 7-12.

¹⁷Lee, *Godcentric Leadership*, 76-81.

¹⁸Eims, *Be the Leader You Were Meant to Be*, 27.

whereby the autonomous self, i.e. centred-self of the individual is so grasped by the knowledge and power of God that it is able to accept or reject a heteronomy without anxiety.¹⁹ It is the transformation of the character of the sheep to conform to the image of Christ who is the author and the perfecter of the faith in the sheep. The pastor should always keep this focus of the *oikonomia* of God for it is that which brings the flock fulfilment although, it may be a difficult journey for them (Ps. 23:4). Yet persevering in patience the Lord shall by the power of the Holy Spirit draw them to the Father (Rom. 5:3-5). It is leadership of the cross bearing with the mark of sanctification. Yet it expresses itself in the kingly leadership of the pastor as a disciplinarian and law and order enforcer. A pastor ought to be the protector of the weakling and the defender of the defenceless. The pastor must be fair and firm in the dispensing of justice. The church should be a place of fairness and justice for all.

The pastor ought therefore to be aware of the worldly elements of negativity which war against the flock who make up the body of Christ. The church practices should thus be driven towards attacking these wolves in sheep clothing and the enemies who roar like lion. The church which is the body of Christ; and the members of the body of Christ who are the flock of God are the visible reality of the reign of God in the world through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The pastor works to ensure the extension of the reign of God in the world according to the gracious power of God.

Fourth *Trinitatis Ductu* Principle: The Leadership of the Pastor is realized in Relationality and Free Participation

In working to ensure the extension of the Kingdom of God visibly as realized in the church, there is always a replication of the

¹⁹Tillich, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, 289-290; 320-324.

experience of the Trinitarian dispensations both in immanent trinity and economic trinity. The replications as acts of the trinity are transferred from the pastor to the flock of God. Hence, there is a pastoral leadership which works at all times in lieu of the trinity for others to be drafted into the *oikonomia* as the body of Christ. Mystically, the body of Christ born of the Holy Spirit according to the Will of the Father is an integration of the individual members who form the *ecclesia* (the called out).

The import of this is that, the work of the Pastor should be driven by the urge for the Holy Spirit to call people into the Kingdom of God. It has a Pentecostal and Charismatic (giftedness in God's Spiritual essence) authentication as found in Ephesians chapter four. The employment of the church practices such as *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *didache*, *diakonia*, and *liturgia* is to allow the replication process to go on in the church.²⁰ That through ministry, new people may join the body of Christ as in free participation in the *oikonomia* of God. Therefore, the pastor is an agent of God working on God's behalf but not without God to have the world redeemed. This work involves the call for people to be participants in the glorious inheritance of God, which is the Kingdom of God.²¹ But the sharing in the glorious inheritance of God in Christ also means sharing in the labour (*missio dei*) of the *oikonomia* which is a privilege. In that case, the leadership of the pastor fosters the growth and development of membership through an effective ministry (Eph. 4:1ff; 1Pet. 2:9; Heb. 5: 1 - 6:1 - 3). The goal is for discipleship making, because it concurs with the replication principle of the trinity.²²

Intimate relationship with the flock of God through the practices of the church shall engender, intimate relationship with

²⁰M Yaconelli, 'Focusing Youth Ministry through Christian Practices' in Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark and Dave Rahn, eds. *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 155 - 165.

²¹Westminster Catechism, Accessed: November 18 2004

http://www.creeds.net/Westminster/shorter_catechism.html

²²C Clark, 'The Myth of the Perfect Youth Ministry Model' in Dean *et al.* *Starting Right*, 123.

the triune God through the body of Christ i.e. *unio mystica*. Intimate relationship with the triune God produces living testimonies as members of the church enjoy the glorious inheritance of the Kingdom of God. That same experience leads to a voluntary but mystical and compelling experience for the member to bear witness to the Truth. This idea has been beautifully, explained by Won Sul Lee, in her book, *Godcentric Leadership* by adopting the leadership principles of Jethro to Moses.²³ Remember, that Jethro's principles went a long way to bring about a great leadership for Moses. And this style of leadership involves training and delegation of responsibilities. The act of bearing witness of the Truth which has been experienced is known as vocation. And it is a prophetic ministry of the pastor which involves teaching and training the body of Christ, to bear true witness of the divine revelation in Jesus Christ.

Anthony D'Souza gives the insight that good leaders ought to share their problems, consider the view of members and enjoy the participation of members in making decisions. Furthermore, he shows that in similar good leaders employ persuasion, consultation, participation and delegation.²⁴ The pastor should therefore understand that in *trinitatis ductu*, there is the sharing of every glorious inheritance including power, privileges and service. The work of the pastor should therefore not be viewed as the end of ministry; but a medium through which everybody in church will enjoy the grace of God and share in the labour. Pastors who do not have a ministry of relationality and free participation may not be operating in the light of the economic and immanent trinity in the *trinitatis ductu*.

²³Lee, *Godcentric Leadership*, 100-113.

²⁴A D'Souza, *Being a Leader* (Singapore: Haggai Institute, 1986), 2526; 48-50.

Conclusion

In concluding the discussion done so far regarding the Trinitarian leadership in the *munus triplex*, it is important to state that this discussion has examined a number of issues including, the treatment of the *munus triplex* in the light of Calvin and Barth. The Trinitarian treatment was also made in both immanent and economic trinity. Noteworthy is the pragmatization of the concept in the existential situation of the *Wulormor* as an office of the *munus triplex*. Thereafter, the Trinitarian leadership principles were developed. These principles were applied to develop a Trinitarian pastoral leadership. It is clear that a topic like *trinitatis ductu* has so many ramifications that may be dealt with elsewhere. Nonetheless, this paper may have succeeded in showing that Trinitarian leadership is divine, it is self-denying love, and it meets divine standards, which are fulfilling and moral; and also a leadership that shares power, privileges and labour.

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**THE DOCTRINE OF “REDEMPTION FROM
EVIL AND CORRUPTION”:
A CATALYST FOR ECOLOGICAL
DEGRADATION IN AFRICA**

DZIEDZORM R. ASAFO¹

ABSTRACT

It would seem absurd to Evangelical Christians to suggest that Christians have no regard for the ecology. However, most Christians agree that God’s creation has to be preserved and that is a principle outlined in the Bible. The issue is the concomitant results of Christian activities in much of Africa relating to environmental degradation and hence de-forestation in certain cases. It is to be argued that although the stewardship of God’s creation is enjoined in the Bible, ecological concerns were pushed to the background inadvertently by Christian Missionaries, and theology—through the doctrine of “evil”—gained the upper hand that contributed to ecological disasters in many parts of Africa.

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Introduction

Ecology simply defined is “the branch of science that deals with the relationship living things have to each other and to their environment.”⁵²² The three levels on which Ecologists study the organization of the natural world in which they analyze the structures, activities and variations that occur within and among these levels include (i) population, (ii) communities, and (iii) ecosystems. Without question, the ecology is important to all humans and other creatures in the world, particularly for Africans and for that matter Ghanaians, because it’s conservation is essential for life. Africans pride themselves in the conservation of the environment. This they do by formulating rules that regulate the sustainable use of the natural resources at their disposal. Vegetation – forests and grasslands— water bodies and mineral extraction are managed in this way in a sustainable manner thus bringing equilibrium into the ecosystem.

Unfortunately, Africans who had hitherto been champions of environmental conservation have become its destroyers. There seems to be a paradigm shift. Many areas of Africa are experiencing environmental degradation due to human activities such as mining, urban expansion, estate development, bush fires and unscientific methods of agricultural practices. Michael Stocking³ saw a link between horticulture and environmental degradation through factors such as political, social, economic and physical forces in a case study in Mkushi District of Central Province, Zambia. He did not, however, consider the possibility of cultural, and hence religious, antecedents to the situation. He concluded, though, that “traditional practices show fewer signs of

² Charles A. A. Hall, “Ecology”. *The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 6. (Chicago: World Book, Inc, 2001), 53.

³ Michael Stocking, “Farming and environmental degradation in Zambia: The human dimension.” *Applied Geography* 3/1(1983): 63-77.

soil erosion than commercial farming because of rational decisions taken by each group of farmers.”⁴ This conclusion obviously does not appeal directly to, or credited, any religious underpinnings to the “traditional practices” referred to above. It is known, however, that much of the traditional practices in Africa are intricately imbedded in religious philosophy. J.O.Y. Mante sees three main ways in which the ecological crisis in Africa is demonstrated: extreme desertification, deforestation and high population growth rates.⁵

The paradigm shift mentioned above is to be attributed to the teachings of the missionaries who came to Africa with the intention of purging Africans of evil and corrupt practices. The burden of this paper is to explore how, in the attempt to propagate the gospel, early Christian missionaries by their doctrine of “redemption from evil and corruption” gave the impetus to environmental pollution.

The paper will be discussed in six sections. Section one forms the introduction. Section two portrays African as an environmental Conservationist, and section three gives account of Christian Missions and their encounter with African culture. The fourth section discusses a Paradigm Shift as a result of the Missionaries’ encounters with the African culture. The fifth section suggests some ways in which the downward spiral of the environmental degradation in the continent can be reversed, and finally the Conclusion. We shall adopt the socio-historical approach coupled with etymological study in our deliberations in the paper based on the idea of *the redemption from evil and corruption* alluded to in Romans 12: 9bc, 21.⁶

⁴ Stocking, *Applied Geography*, 63.

⁵ J.O.Y. Mante, *Africa: Theological and Philosophical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, Accra: SonLife Press, 2004, p. 14.

⁶ Bible references shall be from the New King James Version, except otherwise stated for specific reasons.

The African as an Environmental Conservationist

In the African setting, often agricultural practices are mingled with the traditional religion. The traditional gods give directions as to when to start the farming season, when to harvest, when to taste certain food crops, where to farm and even what acreage. Certain forests and rivers and water resources were reserved and could be accessed only during certain days and times. Sacrifices were made to the gods as thanksgivings and appeasements. For water bodies, there were sacred rivers with prohibitions for women for fetching water from the rivers and brooks during their menstrual periods, or sending black pots to fetch water from such sources. There were also sacred forests where no one was permitted to hunt, at least during certain periods, or used for agricultural purposes. Violators of such prohibitions were severely sanctioned and even at times expelled from the community. Much of these norms and taboos were ecological conservation strategies encoded in religious prohibitions.

Christian Missions and their Encounter with African Culture

Christians believe that God is the author of all ecological blue prints for sustainable ecological management. He is thought to have given a specific instruction to the first humans on ecological management in the Garden of Eden. He instructed them “to work it and take care of it” (Gen 2: 15, NIV). This forms the basis for the stewardship of the environment (Gen 2: 26-28). The food chain is clearly outlined in the Bible, first in the creation story and then after the flood (Gen 1:29-30). The very injunction from God to the first dwellers of Eden “to work it and take care of it” (Gen 2:15) indicates the awareness of “ecology” and the efforts to be exerted to promote and maintain a healthy relationship. Right from the word go, there was a harmonious balance in the ecosystem, because God, after creation of the ecosystem declared it to be “very good” (Gen 1: 31). Elsewhere there are other instructions and examples relating to the conduct of humans in

their role in the relationship between organisms and the environment. This includes the various instructions relating to life-styles and agricultural practices of the Israelites during and after the Exodus. A remarkable practice dictated by God to the Israelites before entering Canaan was the Sabbath year (Lev 25:17). This was meant to cause the land to rest (vrs.5) and get rejuvenated.

There is, however, no “ecological” discourse in the New Testament (NT). It is obvious that although the Bible does not use modern scientific terms in describing ecology, it is taken for granted. The NT authors assumed this age-old relationship and only used it as illustrations in their theological discourses as in, for example, the stories of the sower (Matt 13: 1-23/ Mk 4: 1-9; Lk 8: 4-8) and the lost sheep (Matt 18: 10-14/ Lk 15: 3-7). They assumed ecology, for they were aware of the numerous variety of living things from the complex flora and fauna to simpler organisms such as fungi, amebas and bacteria, and their relationships. The NT writers were also aware that each depended in some way on the other living and nonliving things in their environment. But if God declared his creation very good, how come we see something different today. How did the antithesis of good which is “evil” or “corruption” originate? In what context is Paul talking in Rom 12: 9bc, 21? Has this any bearing on ecological concerns? To explore these questions, we shall turn to the doctrine of “evil” and corruption as in the use of the term *sponeros* and *phtheiro*.

It has been established above that Christians have the mandate to manage the ecosystem well to their own benefit. They were also commissioned to make disciples for Jesus Christ (Matt 28: 19-20).

One would think that these two “commandments” would be carried out without one having adverse effect on the other. However, the enthusiasm for missions, the urge to “overcome evil with good,” and for making disciples have had unintended ecological outcomes.

The Good and Evil Dichotomy

In Christian missiology one of the motivating forces is to deliver people who are perishing from *evil* and the *evil one* into the kingdom of God. The mission field is considered *evil* and so was Africa and the non-Christian world. By extension, the religion and culture of the African people were bounded together as *evil* and needed to be delivered and transformed to meet the standards of the cultures of the missionaries in order to obtain the full benefits of the faith. It is understandable that the culture of the African people include elements aimed at sustaining life in the communities. There are, therefore, practices, taboos, norms and values relating to the family, agriculture, health and healing, traditional education, sex and procreation. In the context of our discussion, the issue is with practices, taboos, norms and values concerning agriculture and nature conservation.

The very heart of Christian missions is to convert unbelievers. The central teaching in the conversion process is the teachings of Jesus Christ which fundamental basis is the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Writings (Matt 5: 17-20). For that matter the critical issue of the stern and explicit prohibition of the worship of idols, and obeying their biddings (Exod 20: 4-5) take central stage in Christian missions in Africa, and indeed elsewhere.

The Doctrine of Evil (*poneros*: Romans 12: 9bc, 21)

The first inclining of the mention of the term *good agathos/kalos* is found in Genesis 2: 9, and henceforth is often contrasted with *evil (poneros)* (Gen 3:5; Amos 5:14; see also Rom 12:17, 21). In fact, the idea of *good/goodness* permeates the creation account (Gen 1: 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2: 19-20a), painting a perfect ecological setup.

Christians believe that this perfect ecological balance that had been established in the beginning of the earth had been compromised by sin (Gen 3: 17-18). God warned our great grandparents: “cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall

eat from it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you ...” (Gen 3:17, 18). What necessitated this curse that has resulted in the imbalance of the ecological order? Did Paul have this in mind when he described this condition or act of *evil* in Rom 12: 9, 17, and 21? In his letter to the Romans, Paul repeatedly prompted the congregation there to be aware of the conflict between *evil* (*poneros* and good (*agathos/kalos* and act appropriately. In order to explain the term “evil” we shall give its etymological definition according to biblical usage, and according to Apostle Paul in Rom 12: 9, 17, 21.

An Etymological Sketch of *Poneros*

The term *evil* (*poneros* and its variants appear seventy-eight (78) times in the Greek New Testament and translated *evil*. In the LXX it appears 360 times. The usage of the term went through transformation in the Greek world from the Classical period through to OT (LXX) and later Judaism, then to the New Testament. In the classical Greek it depicts the sense of sorrow and unhappiness, a situation “laden with care.”⁷ It can also denote that which causes trouble and brings sorrow.”⁸ It was used for all unpleasant situations, be it in politics, social or business life. Finally, the term came to assume its moral sense of “morally reprehensible” in conduct towards the gods and men, “willingly and knowingly bad.”⁹ By the close of the Hellenistic period the moral sense of *poneros* meaning “morally reprehensible,” “useless,” “bad,” “evil,” had been established. We thus, find the

⁷ Gunther Harder, “poneros, poneria”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VI, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 548.

⁸ Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 548.

⁹ Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 548.

poneroi –“evil ones,” being “contrasted with the *kaloikagathoi* or ethically with the *agathoi* and *megalopheleis*”¹⁰

In the LXX and other Greek translations, *poneros* used for *raa* is an all inclusive term which encompasses all that is diametrically opposed to the “divinely appointed harmony of the universe.”¹¹ The impulse, the heart, or the eye, particularly the covetous eye are “evil.” Acts are evil or false before both men and God (Neh 2:10; 13:8; Gen 38:7; 1King 11:6; 14:22), but it is only God who determines what is good and evil and hence understood as that which is in opposition to God, for it is only God who is good (Matt 19: 16, 17). For usage *ho poneros* can be used to apply to “the wicked man.” It is expressed sometimes with *adikos*, *skleros*, and *anomos* and sometimes in contrast with *agathos* or *dikaios*. The wicked man is the one who transgresses the Law, does not seek Yahweh or His commands or who will not be guided by him (Ez 11:2); and deserves to be exterminated (Deut 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21, 22:21-24; 24:7). It is worth noting that in this developmental stage of the word, *ho poneros* is not yet used for Satan in the OT.

In the NT *poneros* has maintained its two senses of meaning: (i) the sense of *bad*, *harmful*, *unserviceable*, *useless*; and (ii) the moral sense in terms of its adjectival use in application to *persons*—in antithesis to God, and denoting obstinacy despite God’s offer of salvation; *things and concepts* such as names (James 2: 7); and its noun use in application to the *bad man*—he who do not meet the righteous demands of God; *the devil*—the absolute antithesis to God (Matt 13:19¹²; Eph 6:16; 1Jn2:13, 14; 5:18). The peculiar use of the word for Satan has no precedence until NT times. There is also the debate whether to understand the

¹⁰Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 549.

¹¹ Merrill F. Unger, “Evil”, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*

¹²Compare parallels Mark 4: 15—*erchetai ho satanas* and Luke 8: 12 – *erchetai ho diabolos*. The word however, does not occur in Matthew 4: 10, nor in 12:26. The discussion of why so will not be taken up here as it is not relevant to our discussion in this paper.

rendering *tou ponerou* as masculine thus translated as *the devil* or neuter, *evil* (Jn 17: 5; Matt 6:13). In John, it makes no significant difference as to which way it is interpreted: masculine or neuter.

It is argued, however, that if the petition in Matt 6: 13 is to be taken in its masculine sense to mean *the devil*, it will be because the request is for deliverance from the eschatological tribulation which originator is the devil. For that matter, “the prayer for ultimate deliverance may well refer to him.”¹³ On the other hand, *tou ponerou* may be taken in its neutral sense as seen mostly in Matthew. Harder argues that, “It is evil in the sense of the Jewish prayers, especially the eschatological tribulation. It is also the bad which one might do or plan to do against someone. The eschatological character of the prayer does not allow us to take to *poneron*¹⁵ merely in the sense of temporal evil. The prayer is for definitive, eschatological deliverance.”¹⁴

Christian dogma contrasts two ideologies relating to *evil*: physical evil and moral evil. Physical evil refers to what is called natural evil. This is the disorder in the physical world, the kind of physical causes that is inimical to physical well-being. To some extent, this sort of evil is “the effect or penalty of sin...(Gen 3:10-12; 6: 13).”¹⁵ It is clear that this evil results in suffering as promised by God (Gen 3: 14-19).¹⁶

The second genre of *evil* –“moral evil” relates to morality. As Unger defines it, it is “sin, disorder in the moral world.”¹⁷ He explains that “It is the failure of rational and free beings to conform in character and conduct to the will of God. This is the greatest evil (*see* Rom 1:18-32).”¹⁸ Moral evil, therefore, stands diametrically opposed to the incorruptible nature of God, introducing corruption into the created world that was good

¹³Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 560.

¹⁴Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 561.

¹⁵Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, 382.

¹⁶The debate over whether, or to what extent, physical suffering is necessary to lead to greater good will not be discussed here.

¹⁷Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, 382.

¹⁸Italics in original.

(*agathos/kalos*) (Rom 1:23). This moral evil, which stands against the will of God—the fruit of the Spirit, is detailed by Paul as the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21).

Reconstructing Paul's *evil* theme

In the writings of Paul, the concept of evil receives prominent attention. Paul's days are evil (Eph 5:16), because they are a period of the last days which will usher in the last judgement, made worse by the sufferings of the end time. The moral sense is seen in this as there is a widespread moral corruption (Rom 1:18-32). He also sees the *hemera te ponera*—"the evil day"—in Ephesians 6:13 as evil, dangerous, critical day, a day of distress. What else can make those days evil except the sufferings through persecution on him and fellow Christians? (2Cor 11: 23; Rom 8: 18; 2Tim 1: 8). In 1Tim 6: 4 Paul lists *huponoiai ponerai* —evil suspicions/reservations or insinuations— among a group of unapproved behaviours like *phthonos* (*envy*) *eris* (*strife*) *blasphemiai* (*blasphemies*). These refer to the individual inner impulses as well as the whole inner man as explained in Heb 3:12.¹⁹ In the light of the above discussion, Paul warns about *diephtharmenon anthropon*— "men of corrupt minds." (1Tim 6: 5), humans whose minds have become depraved, hence evil. Paul sees the antithesis in communication: between "corrupt communication" and that which "is good for necessary edification" (Eph 4: 28, 29).

Paul, in the book of Romans, begins his argument of *evil* (and corruption) of humans (and the created things) (1:18-32), talks about servitude to sin (6: 16), advises his congregation in Rome to counteract this evil condition (12: 9-21), and recounts the arduous task in doing *good* as a corrupt/evil person (7: 13-25). He takes it up again (8: 18-23) revisiting the entrance of evil—in its two prong definition, and the hope of deliverance. It was *moral*

¹⁹*kardia ponera* here is in the genitive which denotes the quality of the evil heart. "Its wickedness consists in apostasy from faith, in self-will and turning from God." (Harder, *Theological Dictionary*, 556).

evil that brought about *physical evil* and hence *corruption*. As a result, ecologically, all creation was sold into slavery of corruption and “groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.” (Rom 8: 21, 22). If *evil*—in its morality definition—is equivalent to sin,²⁰ and its concomitant result of corruption, then Paul is right in asserting (in agreement with John 8:34) that the world has been under the *servitude of corruption* (Rom 8:21).

While Paul is urging the Roman congregation (12: 9) to display “genuine love which is free from all dissimulation and guile,”²¹ the antithesis that follows makes the equation *unhypocritical love is equal to good, and hypocrisy is equal to evil*, that is to say, dissimulation and guile are evil. Therefore, this *goodness* should not be allowed to be subdued by *evil*, not even in our relationship with those who injure us in whatever sense (12: 21). Contextually, “by *evil* is intended that malicious iniquity which injures any person; and by *good*, that kindness by which are afforded to others aid and assistance.”²² In general, however, Haldane advises, “We ought not only to avoid doing what is evil, but to accustom ourselves to abhor it, as the vilest and most offensive of things are abhorred. To that which is good we ought to cling with all our hearts.”²³ This kind of relationship is to be extended to the entire creation of God – the ecosystem. The distortion in the relationship due to sin (*evil*) has continued over the years till our day, some due to human activities.

²⁰ Evil, however, does not necessarily have to be seen as sinful.

²¹ Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 563.

²² John Calvin, cited in Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 564 (emphasis in original).

²³ Haldane, *Epistle to the Romans*, 564.

The Paradigm Shift: Consequence of Missionary Encounters with African Culture

As European and American missionaries arrived and did their work of evangelization, one major issue they needed to overcome was to disentangle converts from their native beliefs and practices which more often than not were related to existential concerns. These brought them into sharp confrontation with the African traditional religionists.

The broad spectrum of nineteenth and twentieth century missionaries, due to their fundamental Christian worldview, therefore, interpreted much of African customs and community life as being *evil*, that needed to be avoided. Some of the Christian hymns gave the impression that some parts of the world including Africa was covered by a thick cloud of evil that needed to be rolled away. The lyrics of a missionary hymn, written by Reginald Heber in 1819, and incorporated into the Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal in 1941, hymn no. 445, portrays the mentality of the missionary agenda at the time.²⁴ The first two stanzas of the hymn state that:

*1. "From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Africa's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sands,
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain, they
call us to deliver their land
from error's chain."*

²⁴This hymn can be found also in the 14th edition [nd., ca. 1924] of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Hymnal no. 166, which third and fourth strands of the second stanza were explicitly translated into Ewe as "*Anyigba ya nyo ηutor, Gake amewo gble,*" meaning, "The land is good, but the people are corrupt/evil."

2. *“What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o’er Ceylon’s isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile;
In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strewn;
The heathen in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone.”*

Thus the plot is set to uproot and break the chains of the vestiges of error and evil from the mission fields. Separate communities (Salem) were established for the Christian converts who would normally relocate from their traditional residences to join their faith compatriots. As a result, Christian converts were taught to ignore certain traditional taboos such as not entering certain forests during certain times of the year, or totally disobeying orders for not clearing some forests designated as sacred forests reserved for the traditional gods.

The Christian Civilization Agenda

It is a well established fact that Christianity is a major catalyst in the educational venture in all former European colonies especially in Africa. Missionaries opened schools and developed the literary genre of the local people and translating the Bible into the local languages of the communities they found themselves in all over Africa South of the Sahara. It was believed that European formal education would help the church to achieve three objectives:(i) Manpower Development for the church with a rippling effect on the developing colonial administration in the colonies; (ii)to enhance the chances of the literates to be able to read the Bible both in the colonial master’s language as well as in their own

tongues in order to better appreciate their new faith; and(iii) to “civilize”, or eradicate error from, the communities they were evangelizing.

With the two fundamental operational philosophies: the evil and good dichotomy and the civilization agenda through formal education, the myth about traditional sacred forests and water bodies seemed to have been broken and more and more of these resources got utilized in an unsustainable manner. The situation got aggravated by the rapid expansion of Christianity and population increase. Even nominal Christians became detached from their traditional customs so that while they were not fully initiated into the Church, they no longer believed in or accept most of the traditional customs, considering them “uncivilized”. The fear and regard for the African gods and the guardians of the ecosystems were gone without any alternate systematic ecological worldview introduced. This situation, however, came about by default, though, it was not intended. While this was so, the Christian missions did not develop a concerted and clear cut theology of ecology to instruct their converts about the protection of the ecosystem that forms the natural resources they rely on for survival. Neither did they recognize the ecological essence of relevant traditional practices to isolate them from the morally evil practices such as the extermination of twins among certain ethnic groups in Nigeria in the past, or the *trokosi* system among the Ewes in Ghana, Togo and the Republic of Benin.

Reversing the Trend of Ecological Degradation: The Christian Input

It is obvious from our discussion that the role of Christian missions that has contributed to the dire ecological situation we find ourselves in was not intentional. For that matter the Church, in collaboration with the state, can today make amends by making the effort to reverse that damage caused by the following conscientious actions.

1. Ecclesiological Reorientation

The church should make the effort to debrief believers about some of the cultural regulations which are meant to promote ecological well-being. Members are to be educated to understand the purpose and import of some of the traditional prohibitions, that heeding to them would not lead them into apostasy.

2. Theology of Ecology

The Church should emphasize and establish the theology of ecology²⁵ that taking good care of the environment is as important as keeping the commandments of God, it is in fact an aspect of righteous living as it will demonstrate the Christian's love for God by managing God's creation well. Christian Scholars in their seminars and conferences should write on ecological issues with Christian perspectives, and educational institutions, especially faith/Christian based ones, should be encouraged to include ecology in their curricular.

3. Ecological Activism

Draw up programmes on the Church's calendar to include ecological activism. For example, seminars could be organized in which members will be oriented towards ecological practices like waste disposal and/or recycling, appoint days for environmental clean-ups, and joining ecological day parades, and contribute in any way towards the activities of organizations and funding institutions involved in ecological issues.

²⁵ James D. Berkley, (ed). *Leadership Handbook of Outreach and Care*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 194-195.

4. State Sponsored Activism

In 2002, Gavin Hilson²⁶ identified and proposed possible solutions to the environmental impact, specifically, of smallscale gold mining in Ghana. In his submission he proposed a number of steps if taken will contribute to the reduction of the harsh ecological situation in the country resulting from unscientific small scale mining in the country. In his line of thinking, we propose the following:(1) substantial legal, moral and financial support to the various Commissions and Authorities directly related to environmental concerns such as the Mining commission, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority and the Forestry Commission, etc.; (2) the designing and implementation of national environmental management tools and strategies that are industry-specific; (3) a well coordinated effort in prospecting for deposits befitting small-scale mining in order to prevent unnecessary exploration; and (4) the commissioning of a national industrial mercury study and an implementation of a mercury retorting programme. These programmes may be adopted across Africa with local variations.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul in Rom 12: 9, 17 and 21, juxtaposed the two contrasting terms *good* and *evil*. Etymological discussion of *evil* reveals that *evil*, which has some affinity to the term *corruption* bears two understandings: the physical and the moral. The moral *evil* is attributed to all who are outside the Christian fold and to the mission field, including Africa. In the effort to liberate Africa from evil, many of the African traditional practices which conserve the

²⁶GavinHilson, "The environmental impact of small-scale gold mining in Ghana: identifying problems and possible solutions." *Geographical Journal* 168/1(2002):57-72.

people's sources of livelihood and ecological management were attacked and rendered non-effective through Christian teaching and formal education. The result is a massive shift of paradigm where many African practices meant to ensure ecological propriety were disregarded through ignorance and cultural determinism. This can be reversed though, through a calculated effort on the part of the Christian Church by reorientation, strengthening the institution of a theology of ecology, and a strong programme of ecological activism.

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YAHWEH, ISRAEL AND THE NEIGHBOURING NATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF LAND REDISTRIBUTION

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ABSTRACT

The centrality of 'the promised land' was and remains the most crucial in the history of Israel. Throughout the Torah, the land that Israel occupies was divinely given to them by Yahweh, the landowner. This theological idea of the land of Canaan instigated the spilling of blood in and around Palestine by the forces of possession and dispossession. Israel's continuance occupancy on the 'land' poses ethical, moral and xenophobic problem on the people living around and on Yahweh himself. This paper analyzed the issue from the moral point of view and has suggested that a rethinking, re-interpretation, reconstruction of the texts containing the issue of land be done. We are of the view that hermeneutics of 'live and let me live' on the part of Israel, may go a long way to solving the antagonism going on around Palestine.

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Introduction

The fashion with which the people of Israel went and settled in the land of Canaan is a matter of great academic interest and of vast relevance in both historical and current phenomena in the Middle East. It has implications for our understanding of God, and His relations to the people of Israel in particular, and to the people of the rest of the world.

There is no distinct, lucid view of ‘the land’ in the Bible, but rather a variety of perspectives from periods when ‘the land’ was assessed in various ways. A unified, ample dealing of the theme is quite daunting. The focus of this paper is on some highlights of

‘the land’ in the Old Testament (OT). It examines the various biblical texts on the land and their implications to the instabilities in and around Palestine. This paper approaches the issue of land redistribution in Canaan from the moral and sociological point of view.

The Primeval history (Genesis 1-11) presents its perspective on the origin of the universe, while Genesis 11:27-50:26 presents us with the historical antecedents of the people of Israel, through its ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, down to the death of Jacob and Joseph in Egypt. The focus of many of the texts in the Torah is to present Yahweh as the landowner and land-giver. This idea features prominently, the place of ‘the land’ in Yahweh-Israel relationship and the rippling effects on Israel’s neighbours.

The Land of Canaan, the Core of the Covenant

It is instructive to note that ‘the land’ was so vital in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel that “Out of the 46 references to the promise in the whole sweep of text from Genesis to Judges, only 7 do not mention the land, while 29 refer solely to it (Gen. 28:4);

‘the blessing of Abraham means simply possession of the land’.² The land thus becomes one of the most prominent features of the entire sequel of the (OT). We agree with David J.A. Clines who sees the land promise as the third of the three major elements of the Abrahamic promise: posterity, blessing and land ...but the land promise and possession is never quite reached within the Pentateuch itself.³

There is much support in the Hebrew Scriptures for the belief that the land of Canaan was promised by God to Abraham and his descendants, and that their possession of it was in conformity with His will. Moses, the author of Genesis records: "Abram passed through the land to a place at Shechem to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then Yahweh appeared to Abram, and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land’".⁴

Here, it is presented to us that for the first time, the issue of land is introduced by God in His relationship with Abraham, the ancestor of the people of Israel. The OT idea of God, the landowner and land-giver, is clearly initiated here. But is it not striking to note that the land God gives, originally, ‘belongs’ to the Canaanites? A similar incident is recorded in Genesis 15:1-21 where God put ‘the land’ on the table as His part of the promise to solidify the covenant. The land He gave (promised) was inhabited by some people already.

Abram left the land because of a famine and sojourned in Egypt. After he and his wife were deported (Gen 12:20), they returned to the region of Bethel. Since the land could not support Abram and Lot, tension arose (Gen. 13:5-6). The writer adds, “At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land”.⁵

² Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 78.

³ David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), in Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 70.

⁴ Gen 12:6-7.

⁵ Gen.13:7.

Notwithstanding, Abram and Lot divided the land between them, Lot choosing all the Jordan Valley, and Abram choosing to dwell in the land of Canaan. After this 'land pact' settlement, Yahweh said to Abram:

Raise your eyes now and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring can also be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you' (Gen. 13:14-17)

And so, with divine approval, Abram moved his tent and came to dwell by the oak of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar for ahweh (Gen. 13:18). Yahweh made a covenant with Abram/Abraham, saying:

To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites' (Gen. 15:18-21)... 'No longer shall your name be Abram but shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude and of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your offspring after you. And I will give you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God' (Gen.17:5-8).

Subsequently, the promise is also made to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4), and to guarantee the inheritance, Isaac prayed that the promise to Abraham will be fulfilled in Jacob (Gen.28:4). While Jacob was asleep near Haran, he heard a similar promise (Gen.28:13-15). When God appeared to Jacob a second time, He changed his name to Israel. And promised the land again (Gen.35:12). In the final verses of the book, Joseph said to his brother, "I am about to die; but God will surely come to you and bring you up out of this land and to the land that He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob'" (Gen. 50:24).

The contents of the book of Genesis have had a vital influence on later Biblical writers, and the significance of the story has been critical in both Jewish and Christian circles. It symbolizes the community of Yahweh, rescued by Him from servitude in an alien land and led to the land of promise.

Moses is to assure the people that Yahweh would free them from the burdens of the Egyptians, take them as his people, be their God and bring them into the land that he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exod. 6:6-8). In their dealings with Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron stressed the 'Let my people go' petition, without any reference to where they were to go, except to 'sacrifice to, or serve Yahweh' (Exod.7:14; 8:20'; 9:13; 10:3). Probably, it was because the Promised Land was not something new to the people; Moses needed not to belabour on it. The land of promise appears again in the instructions of the memorial of the Passover (Exod. 12:24-25).

Having been in Egypt for 430 years the Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 men on foot, besides children (Exod.12:37-40). The instructions on celebrating the Passover later included reference to being settled in the land (Exod.12:8):

When Yahweh brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Havites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your ancestors

to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this observance in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to Yahweh' (Exod.13.56).

The gift of the land is reiterated (Exod. 13:11-12). The journey begins. Moses' Song of Victory after the crossing of the Red Sea included reference to the trepidation that the destruction of the Egyptians brought on the inhabitants of Philistia, the chiefs of Edom, the leader of Moab and all the inhabitants of Canaan (Exod.15:1-16). Already the Israelites are virtually settled (Exod.15.17-19). While wandering in the wilderness they ate manna for 40 years until they came to the border of the land of Canaan (16.35). But first there was trouble with Amalek, whom Joshua and his people defeated with the sword at Rephidim (Exod. 17:8-16). Yahweh promised at Sinai that if they obeyed his commandments, the people would be his treasured possession (Exod.19:3-8).⁶

Exodus 20 deals with the words Yahweh spoke to Moses and chapters 21-23 details the ordinance, including those befitting a settled people, including:

When my angels come in front of you, and bring you the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but we shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces' (Exod.23.23-24).

⁶Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism, A Moral Critique*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 20.

In Exodus 23:27-33, the warrior God continues to assure His people:

I will send my terror in front of you...and make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send the pestilence in front of you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites and the Hittites from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year...Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. I will set your borders from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenants with them and their gods. They shall not live in your land, or they will make you sin against me; For if you worship their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

Nevertheless, despite the widespread slaughter of the indigenes, we find the command not to oppress a resident (Exod. 22:21; 23:9). Was Yahweh, the landowner not being partial and selective in His dealings with the inhabitants of Canaan? Yahweh said to Moses, “Go, leave this place you and the people you have brought out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, “To your descendants I will give it”...Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey...”⁷

⁷Exod.34:24.

Yahweh promised to perform marvels for the people, and demanded uncompromising loyalty and separation:

See, I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and the Jebusites. Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going or it will become a snare among you. You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles...You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land..." (Exod.34:11-15)

The Israelites are warned against behaving the same way as the inhabitants of Canaan –not to take foreign wives and make cast idols. They were enjoined to keep the festivals (Exod. 34:26-23). The divine benevolence is reiterated: ‘For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land.’

In Leviticus, the gift of the land of Canaan is recapped (Levi.14:34), and Yahweh presses for the observance of his statutes, rather than of those required to ensure habitation in the land (Levi.18). Sacrifices to gods, sexual relations with animals and homosexuality were prohibited (vv. 21-23). For such abuses, the inhabitants of Canaan would be vomited out. The Israelites would be vomited out also should they commit such abominations (Levi.18:24-30).

The conditions for continuing to reside on the land and the separateness of the people are reiterated (Lev. 20:22-27). After the legislation for the festivals, the entry into the land is brought to the fore: the sabbatical year of rest for the land and the jubilee year are to be observed (Levi. 25:2-3). Chapter 26 of Leviticus outlines the blessings which will befall the people if they carry out what Yahweh requires: fertility of the soil, peace, victory over enemies, abundant offspring and the assurance of Yahweh’s presence (26:3-13). Disobedience will be rewarded by sevenfold punishment (Levi. 26:11-39).

However, if the people confess their iniquity and that of the ancestors, "then will I remember my covenant with Jacob.....and I will remember the land" (Lev.26:40-42). But even in the land of exile, Yahweh will not spurn them nor break his covenant (Lev.26:44-46). This is what is called the prophetic level, where eminent judgment of God is pronounced along with the provision of deliverance and restoration, should the people of God repent and return to Him. Both the Former and the Later Prophets employed this concept in their prophecies.

The Book of Numbers is organized around three phases of the wandering in the wilderness: the organization of the community before its departure from Sinai; the march through the desert and the preparation for entry from Sinai to the plains of Moab (Num.10:11-35). The preparation for entry into the Promised Land from Moab (Num. 22:1-36), no less than 603,550 males from 20 years old and upward (Num.1:45-46) and 8,580 Levites would set out (Num.4.48). They marched through the desert in stages as in liturgical procession from Sinai to the desert of Paran (Num.10:11-12), to the threshold of the Promised Land called the Fertile Crescent⁸ (Num.13:1-15.41). The scouts who were sent out reported that the people who lived in the land were strong, and the towns were fortified and very large (Num.13:27-29). As Michael Prior puts it:

After complaints from the congregation, and proposals to reverse the exodus, Joshua and Caleb besought the people not to rebel against Yahweh. After much entreaty and threat, the people set out (Num.14:25). At Meribah, by striking the rock twice in search of water, Moses was deprived of leading the people into the Promised Land (Num.20:12). Aaron's faith for his lack of trust was more severe and issued in his

⁸ Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, *Topics in Old Testament Studies* (Ghana: SonLife Printing Press and Services, 2005), 65-66.

death (Num.20:22-29). Then things took a more violent turn, with the king of Arad capturing some of the Israelites⁹

After king Sihon of the Amorites refused free passage, Yahweh, was invoked to lead in the annihilation of the inhabitants. Israel killed his troops and took his land (Num.21:21-24). King Og of Bashan met a similar fate (Num.21.34-35). Fearing the people of Israel, the king of Moab summoned Balaam to curse the Israelites, but instead he blessed them (Num.22:24). However, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab, and to yoke themselves to the Baal of Peor. Yahweh's anger was kindled against Israel (Num.25:1-3), but Phinehas assuaged it by killing two idolaters, an Israelite man and a Midianite woman, for which he was rewarded with Yahweh's 'covenant of peace' (Num.25:12). Yahweh commanded Moses to harass the Midianites and defeat them (Num.25:16-17). Moses was to be given another gaze at the land he would never enter and Yahweh appointed Joshua to succeed him¹⁰.

Chapter 32 recounts how Reubenites and the Gadites wished to occupy Transjordan rather than cross the Jordan, but Moses petitioned them to take up arms and cross the Jordan before Yahweh, until he has driven out his enemies from before him and the land is subdued. Then they could cross back and occupy Transjordan (Num.32:6-23).

All of this is to investigate the claim that embedded in the Yahweh-Israel's covenant is the land around the Fertile Crescent promised to them. This claim is confirmed by von Rad that, "the land is interpreted as the nation's 'patrimony' or 'inheritance' (Hebrew *nah^alah*) which stood in the forefront of God's gift to his

⁹Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism, A Moral Critique*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 24.

¹⁰Number 27:1ff

people”¹¹. As a result, Israel was commanded to attack and mercilessly wipe out the inhabitants of the land and take possession of it. The questions some people have asked are that,

“Is it true Yahweh told them to embark on such an inhumane act?” “Were the people on the land not created by Yahweh?” “What would the situation have been if any other group had gone there to do a similar thing against the Jews under the instructions of their so called God?” “Where is the promised land now?” “How can the Christian Jews use the OT as the word of God to evangelize the Palestinians?”

Land Allotment and Redistribution in Israel

Numbers Chapters 34-35 deal with the apportioning of the land, and the provision for the Levites. According to Lohfink as quoted by Prior, “The Book of Deuteronomy is primarily a law book. One of its distinctive emphases is the connection between people and land (Deut.1:3-4). Although it is hailed as the most theological book of the Old Testament, and advocates utopian society in which the disadvantaged are dealt with justly, its treatment of the land and its indigenous inhabitants poses a moral problematic.”¹² The Book of Deuteronomy continues the subject of the promise of the land to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob and their descendants. Speaking in Moab, Moses reminded the people of Yahweh’s instructions at Horeb, “go to the hill country of the Amorites, Arabah, Negeb and the land of the Canaanites as far as the river Euphrates” (Deut.1:6-8).

After Sihon, Amorite king of Heshbon, refused passage to the Israelites, Yahweh gave him over to them. Joshua was not to fear the battles ahead, for Yahweh fights for him (Deut.3:22). Moses would have to be satisfied with a mere view of the land

¹¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, (Eng. Tr. D.M.G), (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 93.

¹² Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, 26.

across the Jordan, which Joshua would occupy (Deut.3:27-29). Entry into the land was conditional upon keeping the statutes and ordinances of the Lord (Deut.4.1-8). Should the new settlers abandon them, they would be scattered among the nations (Deut.4:24-27). Moses repeated the Decalogue of Yahweh (Deut.5:6-21). The centrality of observing the law is again emphasized.

Indeed, this throws some light on why Yahweh would declare the Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Hivites etc. on the land as *persona non-galatas*.¹³ That is, they were not keeping the statutes and ordinances of God, the landlord. Hence, their ejection was justifiable. God the landowner and the land-giver allotted the land to those nations, so He had the right to re-allot to a different nation. This explains why Moses had to give more instructions. He reminds the people of the apostasy at Horeb and invites them to keep the entire commandment so that they may have the strength to occupy the land and live long in it (Deut.11:8-9; cf.11, 31-32). If they do so, Yahweh will drive out all the nations, whom they will dispossess (Deut.11:24). The territory shall extend from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates. The two ways are put clearly before the people: if they obey the commandments of Yahweh, they shall thrive in the land; if not, they shall not live long in the land (Deut.30:15-20).

Joshua was divinely chosen and destined to complete the work of Moses by leading the people into the land, wherein they will observe the commands as a condition of remaining there. The first major part of the book of Joshua (2:1-12.24) describes in epic style the conquest of the land, concentrating on the capture of a few key cities and their treatment in accordance with the law of the holy war. Then we have the division of the land (13:1-21.45). The spies Joshua sent to Jericho reported back that all the inhabitants of the land melted in fear before them (Jos.1:24). The crossing of the Jordan is described in (Jos.3:1-5), followed by the ceremonies at Gilgal (5.2-12) and the destruction of Jericho (5:12-16.27). After the 7th procession of the Ark around the walls of the

¹³Unwanted, hated to the core to the extent that they did not fit to live.

city on the seventh day, the wall fell down flat at the sound of the trumpets and the great shout (Jos. 6:20). The city and all that was in it, with the exception of Rahab and her household would be devoted to Yahweh for destruction (herem) (Jos. 6:17). Joshua pronounced a curse on anyone who tries to rebuild Jericho (6:21-27).

In the first show of Israelite infidelity, Achan took some of the devoted things. The first attack on Ai was repulsed, because of Israel's (Achan's) sin (7:11). The marauding party moved on to Ai at Yahweh's command to do it what was done to Jericho: No one of the 12,000 inhabitants survived or escaped, and Joshua burnt it and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day (8:2, 19-29). The ravaging troops of Joshua and Israel were to be met with a concerted defense of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Hivites (9:1-2). But the inhabitants of Gibeon due to their cunning and deceit were in virtue of a treaty, to be spared the conditions of the ban. They were destined to become hewers of wood and drawers of water for the entire congregation (9:21ff). The elders complained at this lapse in infidelity to the mandate to destroy all the inhabitants of the land (9:24).¹⁴

Joshua took all that land, utterly destroying their inhabitants (Josh 11:16-23). Chapter 12 gives a full list of the kings defeated and the lands conquered, first under Moses on the East side of the Jordan (12:1-6), and then on the West (12:7-24). Chapters 12 to 21 give an Account of the division of the land, which although allegedly all conquered in the account of chapters 1-12, gives most attention to the territory of the later kingdom of Judah. The incompleteness of the conquest is reflected in the opening verses: "Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and Yahweh said to him 'You are old and advanced in years and very much of the land still remains to be possessed. This is the land that still remains'" (13:1). The whole achievement is summed up in

¹⁴Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism, A Moral Critique*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 30.

that Yahweh gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their ancestors that he would give them (Jos. 21:43-45).

In the book of Joshua, one identifies that the land was distributed mainly by lot (Nb. 33:50-55, Jos 14:2; 15:1, 16:1, 18:5-6, 11-20, 19:1-51). However, in the case of Caleb and his family, he received his portion based on merit - his commitment and loyalty, Moses promised to give him a portion (14:6ff). Caleb received this land when he was eighty-five years old. Yet Caleb and his family had to fight to secure Hebron as the inherited portion. Half the tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their portions in the East of Jordan from Moses, before he died (Jos. 13:8ff). This implies that while majority received their portion of the land by casting of lots, others had it on merit and goodwill.

Strangely enough, we find out that the tribe of Dan was searching for a place to dwell because they had not received an inheritance among the people (Jud. 18:1ff). Doak observes that if one looks only to the Biblical materials, then it is difficult to determine why it is that the tribe of Dan does not have a land holding like the other tribes. At first glance, Dan would seem to fall regularly into Israel's history with its own normally allotted place in the lists of tribes.¹⁵ Perhaps the most interesting and most pertinent of our problem is the material in Joshua 19. When lots are cast to determine tribal landholdings in Joshua 18-19, Dan receives the seventh lot in 19:40. Inexplicably, however, Joshua 19:47 ironically reports that the territory of Dan went out.¹⁶ The narrator simply explains that the Danites had difficulty in taking the land so they marched to Lashem, took it, put it to the sword and settled there and named it Dan after their forefather.¹⁷

¹⁵Brian R. Doak, "Some Worthless and Reckless Fellows: Landlessness and Parasocial Leadership in Judges", <http://collections.canada.ca/collection/003008-200-e.html>, [Accessed, March 14, 2016], 11.

¹⁶Doak, "Some Worthless", 12.

¹⁷Joshua 19:47.

It hardly seems plausible that the Danites would find themselves without land twice, and be forced to exterminate the inhabitants of two different cities. In fact, in Judges 1:34 a hint is given that the Danites were forced by the Amorites to retreat back into the hill country. Probably, the Danites did not like the place allotted to them; they preferred a different location altogether. Other than that Yahweh as it were was going to march ahead of them, knocking down all the Amorites in order to give the land to His people, the Danites. To the Israelites, as Trent C. Butler puts it:

Land as a gift was at the same time land to be taken. Occupying nations did not want to give up the land. They knew and feared God's promises. Still they strategized and connived to defend and retain land. This meant land possessed by Israel was land dispossessed from other nations.

Dispossessing was God's way of fulfilling promises to the patriarchs. Gift of land was a call to battle, call to dispose the land. Such call to battle was unconventional. Israelites soldiers fought, but God did the dispossessing, the driving out of the enemy.¹⁸

Exploitation and Abuse of the Land

Conversely, the land that Yahweh gave to his people has been woefully exploited. David Pawson quoting Schurer, says:

The Bible enjoys unique authority within both Synagogue and the church. 'The Torah emanates from heaven. Since it contains the demands which God made on his people, a punctilious observance of its laws is the supreme religious duty. Israelite piety was primarily directed towards zealously

¹⁸Trent C. Butler, "The Theology of Joshua", – *Review and Expositor*, 95. No. 2, (1998), 211.

and lovingly obeying the Torah in all its details. The Bible enjoys a corresponding authority in the church as the word of God. However, the Bible poses a fundamental moral problem for anyone who takes it at face value.¹⁹

In fact, considering the ramifications concerning the occupancy of the land which was integral in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, one would say that Israel has desecrated the land just as the Canaanites were accused of doing; therefore, has no right remaining alive, left alone occupying the land. They fell into syncretism and apostasy as soon as they entered the land. The very things that Yahweh accused the Canaanites of and against which He warned Israel, they fell culprits. Even though one would quickly counter with the fact that Israel was punished by Yahweh with exiles to Babylonia, Assyria, Syria etc. and with diseases, famine and so on, the moral question remains, why are they still on the land? Why were the Canaanites too not spared or sent into exile as their punishment but to be totally destroyed?

Well, the Torah explains that Israel was punished with exiles because they defiled the land. The Prophet Amos for instance, declared “the Lord would eject His people from the land, hurling them and their king into exile” (Amos 5 1 -6; 6:7, 7:10 – 17). They had desecrated the land, oppressed the poor; injustices and unrighteousness were the order of the day. It is quite telling to read Jeremiah’s words on the issue “I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruits and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable.”²⁰

In the words of Wright, “the land becomes the focus of constant struggle between the forces of dispossession, greed, exploitation and land-grabbing on the one hand, and the protest of the prophets on the other”.²¹ On many occasions God used Moses

¹⁹David Pawson, *Unlocking the Bible: A Unique Overview of the Whole Bible*, (Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 181.

²⁰Jeremiah 2:7.

²¹Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 81.

to warn the people to desist from the abuse of the land of God. He says: "Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites."²²

It is clear from the text that the people of Israel were committing murder. A crime of murder is not only an offense against the sanctity of life but also a pollutant to the Lord's sacred land. It is also revealing to note that God, the landowner, constantly lived with Israel, the tenant, on the land. So to defile the land was a gross disaffection and disregard for the authority of God.

Apart from bloodshed, insanitary activities also abuse the land of God. Through Moses, the Lord warned the people at saying "Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourselves. As part of your equipment, have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourselves, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. For the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that He will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you" (Deut. 23:12-14).

All of this is to say that Israel having received the land had an obligation. Their continuance living on the land peacefully and their relationship with the landowner (God) largely depended on how they handled the land. Any time they handled the land with reverence, the nation experienced both spiritual and material blessings but when they abused the land, they experienced the wrath of God.

Rethinking of the Texts on the 'Promised Land'

In the biblical narrative the Hebrew slaves who left Egypt invaded a land already occupied. The occupation of another people's land

²²Numbers 35:33-34.

invariably involves systematic pillage and killing. What distinguishes the biblical accounts of this activity, whether through the blitzkrieg mode represented in the book of Joshua or through the more gradual one reflected in the book of Judges, is that it is presented as having not only divine approval but as being mandated by the divinity. This presentation of God as requiring the destruction of others poses problems for anyone who presumes that the conduct of an ethical God will not fall lower than decent, secular behaviour. 'The destruction commandment is seen in a new light when one recalls how such texts were used in support of colonialism in several regions and periods. 'Prima facie', judged by the standards of ethics and human rights to which our society has become accustomed, the first six books of the Hebrew Bible reflect some ethnocentric, racist and xenophobic sentiments that appear to receive the highest possible legitimacy in the form of divine approval. On moral grounds, one is forced to question whether the Torah continues to provide divine legitimacy for the occupation of other people's land and the virtual destruction of the indigenes.²³

It is an undisputable fact that, the wars, the massacre, suicide bombings and the lootings occurring in the regions of Palestine especially between the Israelites and the Palestinians is occurring because of the issue of the land. Whiles the Israelites claim that the land was given to them by Yahweh, the Palestinians claim that the land belongs to them legitimately since the Israelites went and met them on the land.

If the Torah is so much revered by the people of Israel; as it were if the promise of Yahweh in it was what they solely relied on in invading Canaan, then it is imperative for the Torah believers to relook at the various texts. They claim the Torah encouraged them to possess the land, very well! How about those texts in the Torah that frown at all forms of land abuse and mishandling of our fellow men? From the moral point of view, the land-grabbing,

²³Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism, A Moral Critique*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 34.

lootings, genocide and the bloodshed that went on and are still going on in and around Palestine, undermine the very nature of Yahweh and mankind. This calls for a rethinking of the texts.

Conclusion

The issue of ‘the promised land’ was and remains the most crucial in the history of Israel. From the Torah, the land that Israel occupies was divinely given to them by Yahweh as can be seen throughout the Torah of Hebrew scriptures. That notwithstanding, if one considers the issue from the moral point of view, their continuance on the ‘land’ poses ethical, moral and xenophobic problem on the people living around and on Yahweh himself. In this case, one would suggest that a rethinking, reinterpretation, reconstruction of the texts containing the issue of land be done. Hermeneutics of ‘live and let me live’ may go a long way to solving the antagonism going on around Palestine.

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MARITAL SUSPICION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NUMBERS 5:11-31 AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST MARI AND HAMMURABI CODES

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ABSTRACT

Through a comparative analysis, this study attempted to address the problem of the relationship between Numbers 5:11-31 and the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) concept of adultery. Diverse answers from different perspective have evolved from the question of the relationship between ANE adultery ordeal and that of Numbers 5:11-31. This Study investigates the concept of adultery in Number 5 with the ANE by bringing together the comparative relationship between the two. It is argued that the trial by ordeal in Number 5:11-31 provides the assurance that judgment and

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its related punishment would not be in the hands of the people, but that through this instruction God provides the assurance that He would continue serving as Israel's judge. However, the ANE account have the punishment solely in the hand of the magical person who official the trial. Both accounts, therefore, may point to a single source in the eyes of critical scholars, only that each account focuses mainly on different divine figure which is a crucial element of the ordeal—YHWH or the gods.

Introduction

Scholarly literature on the Old Testament concept of adultery is legion, yet a scholarly consensus seems

impossible with reference to its composition, purpose, and nature as found in Numbers 5:11-31.² The complex nature of the issue and the passage has led some scholars to argue that it is “an evident proof against the doctrine of inspiration.”³ However, the passage irrespective of its interpretations is a

² Thomas B. Dozeman, “The book of Numbers,” *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Lender E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 67;

Jaeyoung Jeon, “Two Laws in the Sotah Passage (Num. v 11-31),” *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007): 181; Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*,

³ John Peter Lange, “Numbers,” *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical*, vol. 3, Numbers-Ruth, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Samuel T. Lowrie and A. Gosman (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 36.

divinely inspired text. The text (vv. 11-12a) וַיִּגְדַּלְב־לְאֹרֶב־מִן־לְאֶרְשָׁאִי suggest divine instruction.

The pericope outlines the procedure to be adopted by a husband who suspects that his wife has committed adultery and has no concrete evidence, and therefore cannot initiate legal charges against her in the courts.⁴

Diverse answers from different perspective have evolved from the question of the relationship between Ancient Near East (ANE) adultery ordeal and that of Numbers 5:11-31. Source criticism scholars generally argue that the Moses' account is a later theological construct⁵ and that Numbers 5:11:31 is a variant and reworking of ANE traditions/practices.⁶

Timothy R. Ashley has pointed out that because Numbers 5:11-13 emanates from the cultural life ANE which was different from the modern societal roles that life presents, modern people and readers should refrain from making the text and practice "into something it is not just because what it is grates on our twentieth-century consciences."⁷ His context comes as there have been attempts to place the origin of Numbers 5:11-31 in the ANE context.⁸ In relation to this, discussions continue to grow on the assertion that Moses

⁴ Samuel Greengus, "A Textbook Case of Adultery in Ancient Mesopotamia," *HUCA* 40-41 (1969-70): 33-44.

⁵ Samuel Greengus, "A Textbook Case of Adultery in Ancient Mesopotamia," *HUCA* 40-41 (1969-70): 33-44.

⁶ A. Rainey, "The Order of Sacrifices in Old Testament Ritual Texts," *Biblica* 51 (1970): 307-318.

⁷ Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 122.

⁸ Richard S. Briggs, "Reading the Sotah Text (Numbers 5:11-31): Holiness and a Hermeneutic Fit for Suspicion," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (2009): 288.

borrowed the ordeal concept from ancient polytheistic nations or not.⁹ For example F. C. Cook argues that Moses adopted the ordeal of Numbers 5:11-31 from already “existing and probably very ancient and widely spread institution,”¹⁰ he does not prove this but further refute his own argument that there is no particular evidence. These assertions are from mere conjecture. While some of these scholars consider both Numbers 5 and the ANE practice as variant account sharing a common tradition,¹¹ others suggest that the accounts are disparate, alternative documents.¹²

On the other hand, scholars from the synchronic perspective maintain that the practices of Numbers 5:11-31 are related in the sense to the ANE ordeals, or the two are complementary, but not from the same source.¹³ For the reason for the similarity of the ordeal in Numbers 5, some also hold that in Numbers 5:11-31 only God commits himself to the proper adjudication whiles in the ANE conveys a mystic responsibility in the practice carried out by the pagan priest.¹⁴ Therefore,

⁹ Frederick L. Moriarty, “Numbers,” *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, The Old Testament, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy (London, UK: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 88; E. J. Ciuba, “Ordeal,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), 10:719-720.

¹⁰F. C. Cook, *The Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 669.

¹¹ John H. Walton, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, vol. 1, Genesis-Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 347-348.

¹² Julian Morgenstern, “Trial by Ordeal among the Semites and in Ancient Israel,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2a (1925): 129.

¹³Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background*, 347-348.

¹⁴Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 284.

though a single practice and source is in view, ANE is particularly meant to give the readers a sign of the authentic practice. Julian Morgenstern would suggest that because all references to the practice or sacrifice were not part of the trail-by-ordeal in Numbers 5:11-31 in its original state, the passage becomes similar to ancient southern Arabian ordeals with which it share the same cultural like-mindedness.¹⁵ To state it differently, Number 5 focuses on God's way of dealing with adultery and ANE practice focuses on rituals with a cultural undertone. Others also argue that the ordeal categorized in Number 5 would have a polytheistic and magical in character which is associated with the cult and sanctuary of God or other deities.¹⁶

Further, while some of these scholars see both accounts (Num 5 and ANE) as referring to a single story tradition in a unified ordeal⁵³¹⁷ others see in them as two distinct but related accounts in concepts due to considerable differences in terms of their nature and procedure.¹⁸ This justifies a critical look at the ANE adultery and the one that pervades in Numbers 5:11-31. Relevant questions in this direction include the following: What is the relationship between Numbers 5 and the ANE concept of adultery? Is Numbers 5 a different ordeal from ANE? How should adultery in both Numbers 5 and ANE be understood? It is

¹⁵Morgenstern, "Trial by Ordeal," 129-131.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷ G. R. Drivers and J. C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1935), 86. See also G. R. Drivers and J. C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws*, 2 vols. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1956), 53.

¹⁸ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 156.

in search of satisfactory answer to this problem that a comparative analysis is conducted.

Historical Background of Numbers 5:11-31

In the history and culture of the people of Israel, adultery was regarded as a major crime that one commits not against his or her spouse but also against the God of Israel and therefore could not be neglected.¹⁹ Offenders of the act were punished. Adultery was among the offenses for which God could banish the Israelites from the Promised Land and execute them (cf. Lev 18:20, 25). Also the prohibition against adultery was inscribed into the national covenant at Mount Sinai to which every Israelite swore allegiance (Exod 24:1-8) and the following generations were equally to adhere to it (Deut 29:9-14). Subsequently in Israel's history most of the prophets drew the attention of the people to the sin of adultery as a violation of the Sinai covenant (cf. Hos 4:2; Jer 7:9). Jeremiah even emphatically stressed that adultery was the cause of Israel's doom and thus God's rejection of them (cf. Jer 5:7-9; 7:9-15; 29:23a). Jacob Milgrom posits that Israel were of the belief that "adultery was an affront to the deity

. . . unless it was punished with death, God would destroy the malefactors and indeed the entire community that had allowed it to go unpunished."²⁰

In resolving the complexity attached the adultery and not to accuse and treat people falsely of the act, many

¹⁹Baruch J. Schwart, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997),

s.v. "Ordeal of Jealousy."

²⁰Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 348-349.

civilization resorted to ordeals to solve the perplexing issues in their nations. George W. Gilmore has pointed out that the purpose and essence of the ordeal has in itself an “appeal to a deity to give a decision in a doubtful case; it assumes that God will bring innocence to light, if need be even by a miracle.”²¹ This ordeal in a way was instituted as “an evident desire to do justice, and in recognition of the fallibility of human knowledge, and discernment.”²² It can be seen that such a trial method came to being due to the lack of substantial evidence to fairly judge an accused person.²³

Several scholars agree that upon marital suspicion, the practice of trial-by-ordeal is used to find out the truth in that regards. Tikva Simone Frymer, Dario Sabbatucci, and Timothy R. Ashley affirms that the ordeal trial was not operating in a vacuum but rather it was used by the people when they could not solve difficult and baffling situation through the normal rules.²⁴ It served its importance in bring a lasting solution to suspicion.

²¹ George William Gilmore, “Ordeal,” *The New Schaff-Heerzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* (1977), 8:249.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ John L. McKenzie, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee, WI:

²⁴ Dario Sabbatucci, “Ordeal,” *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (1987), 11:92; McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Ordeal”; Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 48-49; Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 13; Tikva Simone Frymer, “Ordeal, Judicial,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Supplementary vol., ed. Keith Crim (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976), 638-340.

As many have linked magic to this trial-by-ordeal practice, several scholars as well have denied that fact. The punishment and the associated superstition were not initially part of the practice but were associated with it later as the magic concept crept in²⁵ also the magic ideal became connected with the practice by the notion of chance since magic came later as a secondary reinforcing agent. Crawley has pointed out that “the ordeal in its appeal to the supernatural or to chance made a great step towards practical justice.”²⁶ By refuting the magic concept of the ordeal, Tikva Frymer-Kensky indicates that the practice was undertaken through a divine agent serving as a jury to pronounce someone with the verdict of being guilty or innocent during and after the process of the ordeal.²⁷

In the common practice of the ordeal both the verdict and the associated punishment of the guilty were at the reserve of God as in the case of Numbers 5:11-31. Contrary to this, in the surrounding background the punishment was carried out by human judiciary as the verdict of the divine agent proclaims. Van der Toorn posits that “once the deity has manifested his verdict in the ordeal, the human judges decide the measure to be taken in consequence.”²⁸ This shows that the verdict and the

²⁵ Gilmore, “Ordeal,” 8:249.

²⁶ Alfred E. Crawley, “Ordeal,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethic* (1974), 9:511-512.

²⁷ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Suspected Sotah (Number v 11-31),” *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 24.

²⁸ Karel van der Toorn, “Ordeal,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. Davidson Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 5:40.

punishment are not mixed up or confused in the process of the ordeal trial.

The element mostly employed in these ordeals were fire, water, or the combination of the two. Either the accused person is immersed in water or is asked to drink a potion. In other instances, the person is to retrieve an object in a boiling water or to touch, walk, or carry a heated object.²⁹

Literary Context

The Masoretic parameters (of the Hebrew text) of division confined the chapter to three main units. The chapter can be divided into three pericopes/paragraphs (vv. 1-4; 5-10; 11-31) using the division marking of the *petûhā'* (פ) and *setûmā'* (ס) in Hebrew. The *petûhā'* opens a paragraph or the starting line while the *setûmā'* closes the paragraph. Therefore the *petûhā'* which precedes v. 11 and follows v. 31 indicates that Num 5:11-31 has been considered as a distinct pericope traditionally.

Uniquely, each of the pericopes is introduced by the phrase

מִן־הַיָּמִן אֶל־הַשְּׂמֹאל (vv. 11, 5, 1.א). The phrase is repeated

severally in the book of Numbers which general shows the beginning of new topical units.⁵⁴³⁰ It also shows a connection of the book of Numbers with the rest of the Pentateuch. This

²⁹Frymer, "Ordeal, Judicial," 639.

³⁰ For the occurrences of the phrase in the book of Numbers see Num 1:1, ; 2:1; 3:5, 11, 14, 44; 4:1, 17, 21; 5 ;1, 5, 11; 6:1, 22; 7 ;89; 8 ;1, 5, 23; 9:1, 4, 9; 10:1; 11:24, 25; 13:1; 14:26, 39; 15:1, 17; 16:20, 23, 26; 17:1, 9, 16, 21; 18:8, 25; 19:1; 20:7; 21:5; 25:10, 16; 26:3, 52; 27:15; 28:1; 30:2; 31:1, 3; 33:50; 34:1, 16; 35:1, 9.

is because as an introductory formula is used throughout the Pentateuch.³¹ The phrase begins the pericope in v. 11 and occurs after the end of the unit in 6:1. This is a way that makes the pericope an inclusion which shows a divinely authentic instruction by God to Moses.

Also the theme of holiness and the law/legal text is recurrent issues in the chapter which is related to the Pentateuch. The observance of purity among the Israelites people is seen as a common denominator in all the three pericopes of Num 5. Holiness was valued in Israel due to fact that the community was “organized around the tabernacle, which is the place of the holy divine presence.”³² The holiness of God was to take prominence upon the people of Israel and they were to approach Him as such. The legal material found in the Numbers 5 can be seen as interconnected and linked with other legal text in the entire book. Numbers 5-6, 15, 17-19, 27-30, 32-36 are identified as legal material that permeates the book.³³ These laws were to enhance the relationship and mutual co-existence of God and His people. This has led William W. Hallo to assert that the form of law in Numbers is significantly found in the book. ³⁴

³¹For the occurrences of the phrase in the Pentateuch see Gen 8:15; 17:3; Exod 6:2, 10, 13, 29; 13:1; 14:1; 16:11; 20:1; 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22; 31:1; 32:7; 33:1; 40:1; Lev 1:1; 4:1; 5:14, 20; 6:1, 12, 17; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:14, 16; 22:1, 16, 26; 23:1, 9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 25:1; 27:1; Deut 2:17; 4:12; 32:44, 48.

³²W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Leviticus and Numbers*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 173, 198.

³³Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, ix.

Recurrent Words and Terms in Numbers 5

Some recurrent words or terms are found in Numbers 5.

These include טָמֵא “to be unclean or defiled” (5:2, 3, 13, 14, 19, 20, 27, 28, 29), לַעֲמֹד “to act unfaithfully” (5:6, 12, 27), אֲנָק “to be jealous” (5:14, 15, 18, 25, 29, 30), הַכֹּהֵן “the priest” (5:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 30), יְהוָה “Yahweh” (5:11, 16, 18, 21, 25, 30), and מַיִם “water” (5:17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27). As David

A. Dorsey has pointed out “biblical authors employed structured repetition to convey meaning . . . as . . . it enables an author to make a point subtly, without explicitly saying it.”³⁵ Thus these repetitions of the Hebrew words or terms in a way provide some thematic thoughts to understanding the message of the author and the passage as well.

The use of טָמֵא and לַעֲמֹד can be seen as showing how God wants His people to do away with unclean situation and to maintain purity in their midst.³⁶ Due to God’s dwelling within His people He required the highest level of cleanliness and holiness. B. Maarsingh contends that the holiness of God calls for any uncleanness in the physical and spiritual realm to be done away with from His presence.³⁷ Also in vv. 11-31 the terms are used probably in

³⁵ David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 37.

³⁶ Paluku Mwendambio, “The Function of the Mosaic Water Drinking Ordeal of Num 5:11-31” (PhD diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2010), 48.

³⁷ B. Maarsingh, *Numbers: A Practical Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 21. The same idea is conveyed by Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary*, 100; Budd, *Numbers*, 132.

marital uncleanness. Two key aspects are highlighted in the passage in this direction. The first has to do with breaking of faith against a spouse (particularly husband) as found in vv. 12, 27. The second concerns the discharge from the body as indicated in v. 13. The use of the expression

וְיָרָעָה עֵצְמוֹתָיִךְ seems to suggest that the discharge occurs from the lying of a man with a woman and ejaculating as a result.³⁸ These acts caused serious health and holiness concerns that needed to be addressed by God. The Lord was using such an ordeal to deal with such situation (cf. vv. 16, 18, 21, 30).

The ten times repetition of the term אָנָּק “to be jealous, jealousy, jealous” as used in Numbers 5:11-31 for what comes to the heart of the husband and nature ordeal of the ordeal suggest that, the passage is intended to bring a lasting solution to the problem of jealousy. The reference to the ordeal as accentuates this claim. Also the reference to the אָנָּק suggests

that the key/major player in the ordeal is the priest. He leads out the majority of the process or activities on the ordeal trial. His service as just a bridge between the suspecting couple and God.

In a unique way, the expression אָנָּק occurs seven times. YHWH begins and ends the ordeal as the passage indicates (vv. 11, 30). The suspicious wife and the offering are brought before Him (vv. 16, 18, 25, 30). He punishes and set free the woman if either found liable or innocent. The

³⁸B. Maarsingh, *Numbers: A Practical Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 21. The same idea is conveyed by Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary*, 100; Budd, *Numbers*, 132.

judgment rest on Him. Also the term יָדָא is used eleven times. It is what the priest prepares and give to the suspected wife to drink. It is יָדָא and not the יָדָא that finds her guilty or innocent. As Paluku Mwendambio has pointed out “the Lord is the author of the punishment while the water serves as His means to implement it. . . . the Lord, not the water is responsible for what happen to the woman.”³⁹

Structure of Numbers 5:11-31

A brief outline of Numbers 5:11-31 may be helpful here before establishing the literary aspect. Jacob Milgrom has proposed a symmetric chiasitic structure that highlights the unity of the passage as follows.⁴⁰

A. *The Case* (vv. 11-14)

1. introduction (vv. 11-12a)
2. the wife has strayed (vv. 12b-14a)
3. the is innocent (v. 14b)

B. *Preparation of the Ritual Ordeal* (vv. 15-18)

1. minhah (v. 15)
2. water (v. 17)
3. Woman (vv. 18[16])

C *The Oath-Imprecation* (vv. 19-24)

³⁹Mwendambio, “The Function of the Mosaic,” 66.

⁴⁰Milgrom, *Numbers*, 354.

1. oral adjuration (vv. 19-22)
[interpolation, v. 21]
2. written adjuration dissolved
and to be imbibed (vv. 23-24)

B'. *Execution of the Ritual Ordeal* (vv. 25-28)

1. minhah (vv. 25-26a)
2. water (v. 26b)
3. woman, effect on (vv. 27-28)

A'. *The Case* (vv. 29-30)

1. introduction (v. 29a)
2. the wife has strayed (v. 29b)
3. the is innocent (v. 30)
[postscript, v. 31]

Although some scholars regard the passage as coming from two main sources, the structure by Milgrom suggest a unity of the text. Milgrom, however, through the use of interpolation asserts that the vv. 21, 31 were originally “an ancient Near Eastern incantation for an ordeal employing magical water that did not invoke the name of any deity.”⁴¹ He further postulate that the inclusion of the name of God, יהוה, was done by the priest of Israel who wanted to attribute the trial to YHWH instead of the water.⁴² This assertion cannot be considered as true. Several

⁴¹ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 354.

⁴² Milgrom, *Numbers*, 351.

references to אֵשׁ־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ in passage (vv. 11, 16, 18, 25), the chapter, and the entire book were not attributed to ANE source by Milgrom. This seems to suggest that his claim cannot be substantiated by the interpolation. The coherence and unity of the passage even without the interpolations shows that the original Hebrew text is authentic and without any ANE addition or redaction. Also a look at the critical apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* suggest that the editors maintains the text as authentic in disregard to the interpolation of ANE as suggested by Milgrom.⁴³

Purpose of Numbers 5:11-31

There have being much discussions on the purpose of the trial-by-ordeal of Numbers 5:11-31. While some assert that the import of the ordeal is “ambiguous,”⁴⁴ other posits that there are no agreement in purpose of the ritual.⁴⁵ However several purposes have been suggested to the Numbers 5:11-31 ritual:

- To serve as a protection of wives from the abuse of

⁴³ K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983), 219.

⁴⁴ Fishbane, “Accusations of Adultery,” 37.

⁴⁵ Bonna Devora Haberman, “The Suspected Adulteress: A Study of Textual Embodiment,” *Prooftexts* 20 (2000): 16.

their husbands.⁴⁶

- To promote fidelity in marriage, it was to put fear in women and to deter them from adultery.⁴⁷
- To abort the birth of illegitimate child.⁴⁸
- To showcase a metaphorical expression of the relationship between God and the Israelites.
- To serve to secure control over the bodies of wives by their husbands.⁴⁹

In addition to these proposed purposes, it can be seen from the literary analysis that Numbers 5:11-31 probably highlights that jealousy comes about as a result of sexual misconduct or adultery which should be reported to the priest. He upon receiving the allegation is required to transfer the matter to God who will settle it with the drinking of water in the trial by ordeal process. If the woman is innocent or guilty, the Lord will deal with it. Thus in the ordeal God was to distinguish

⁴⁶Herbert Chanan Brichto, "The Case of the Sota and a Reconsideration of Biblical 'Law,'" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975): 55-70. See also Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349-350.

⁴⁷John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 116; Roland K. Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 117.

⁴⁸W. McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 474; Jeon, "Two Laws in the Sotah," 198.

⁴⁹Budd, *Numbers*, 133; Haberman, "The Suspected Adulteress," 16.

the guilty from the innocent. This also in way deal with the issue of punishing before one is found guilty of an offence.

Concept of the Ordeal in Ancient Near East

Adultery was considered as a dangerous act which to some degree valued as a sin of weightier or greater magnitude committed against the gods of the cult in most of the ANE societies.⁵⁰ The act was also seen as a treat to the stability of the society most of which were “a civil and a religious crime.”⁵¹ In Babylon and Egypt, the act was expressed as a “great sin” as many ANE nations equally called it. As a crime in Egypt it was punishable by death or sometimes by emasculation of the offender.⁵² Victor H. Matthew asserts that it was seen as “a crime that Pharaoh and the gods will vindicate.”⁵³ Therefore this act was punished. But in order to ascertain the truthfulness of the matter before judgement is given several ANE communities had a trial process that dealt with the issue.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Howard Tigay, “Adultery,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (2007), 1:424; Martha Roth, “‘She Will Die by the Iron Dagger’: Adultery and Neo-Babylonian Marriage,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 (1988): 186-206.

⁵¹ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349.

⁵² C. J. Eyre, “Crime and Adultery in Ancient Egypt” *The Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 70 (1984): 96-103; J. J. Robinowitz, “The ‘Great Sin’ in Ancient Egyptian Marriage Contracts,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 18 (1959): 73; Isaac Mendelsohn, “Family in the Ancient Near East,” *The Biblical Archeologist* 11 (1948): 24-40.

⁵³ Victor H. Matthew, “Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East,” in *Marriage and Family in Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 23.

In the ANE world two main trial-by-ordeals were employed by the people. These are the water ordeals and the fire ordeals.⁵⁴ However, the water ordeals were prominent and numerous due to the various forms of which water can be used. The text of Mari should be one of these ordeals. The text is a fragment letter that reports a vision a prophet had in the heavenly court of the gods.⁵⁵ An aspect of the text has to do with the drinking of water as a trial of an ordeal. The fragment indicates,

What Asumum [said to Ea] I did not hear. He *ar[ose and thus]* he spoke saying: “[*Before*] we pronounce [the oath], let them take the di[rt] and door-frame of the gate [of Mari] . . . , and then [*let us pronounce*] the oath.” They took the dirt and the door-frame of the ga[te] of Mari and they dissolved (them) in water. Then the gods and goddesses drank. Thus (spoke) Ea: “swear to the gods that [you will not] harm the brickwork the *commissioner* [of Mari].”

The gods and goddesses [swore]: “we will not harm the brickwork or the *commissioner* of

⁵⁴ Norman H. Snaith, “Numbers,” *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London, UK: Nelson, 1962), 256.

See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349; Gilmore, “Ordeal,” 8:249.

⁵⁵ Jimmy J. M. Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 125; Jack M. Sasson, “An Apocalyptic Vision from Mari? Speculations on ARM X 9,” *MARI 1* (1982): 151-167; Wolfgang Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari: A New Translation, With Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 253.

Mari.”⁵⁶

This inscription indicates that the ordeal was a way of settling disputed issues and finding lasting solution to them. In the Mari text water is mixed with dirt and the people in conflict or misunderstanding are directed to drink. The drinking of the mixture is seen as preceding the taking of the oath.

Among the Assyrians, the drinking of water was done in addition to taking an oath. Milgrom asserts that in the ordeal involving water, “they will draw [water], drink, swear and be pure.”⁵⁷This also confirms what Karen van der Toorn has pointed out that the swearing of an oath was done primarily because they understood it as “an act that

linked it to threats of punishment in case of noncompliance.”⁵⁸ This shows that the Assyrians used ordeals in solving complex disputes that came their way.

In Babylon, the practice of ordeal by water was a very common phenomenon. The Babylonian code of Hammurabi, named for the Babylonian king believed to have reigned during 1728-1686 BC, give an account of the practice.⁵⁹Here, the water was not for drinking as the Assyrians and Mari text supports. Rather, the river was used for the

⁵⁶ James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rded. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969),

632 (italic and emphasis his).

⁵⁷ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349.

⁵⁸ van der Toorn, “Ordeal,” 5:41.

⁵⁹ “The Code of Hammurabi,” translated by Theophile Meek (*ANET*, 138). This code was engraved on a stele discovered in 1901-1902. They are laws that represent the oldest extant legal code of Western civilization.

ordeal. The main import of the river ordeal was to resolve complex issues relating to suspicion of adultery and witchcraft. The codes or laws that relates to adultery reads,

If a husband accuses his own wife (of adultery), although she has not seized lying with another male, she shall swear (to her innocence by) an oath by the god, and return to her house.

If a man's wife should have a finger pointed against her in accusation involving another male, although she has not been seized lying with another male, she shall submit to the divine River Ordeal for her husband.⁶⁰

If a seignior has said to a(nother) seignior, "People have lain repeatedly with your wife," since there were no witnesses, they shall make an agreement (and) go to the river (for the water ordeal).⁶¹

The Hammurabi law that dealt with the issue of witchcraft that is resolved by the water ordeal reads,

If a man charges another man with practicing witchcraft but cannot bring proof against him,

⁶⁰Martha Roth, "The Laws of Hammurabi," in *the Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, vol. 2, ed. William W. Hallo (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 344. See also Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 171.

⁶¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 181.

he who is charged with witchcraft shall go to the divine River Ordeal, he shall indeed submit to the divine River Ordeal; if the divine River Ordeal should overwhelm him, his accuser shall take full legal possession of his estate; if the divine River Ordeal should clear that man and should he survive, he who made the charge of witchcraft against him shall be killed; he who submitted to the divine River Ordeal shall take full legal possession of his accuser's estate.⁶²

The code gives instances where a woman can be subject to the ordeal, either she being accused by the husband or someone other than the husband. However, the husband has the privilege to either pardon the adulterous wife or cause her death as the law implied in the case of real adultery seen by either the husband or a second person. In the ordeal here, the accused is not subject to any kind of punishment until she is either proved guilty or innocent. The judge in the Babylonian trial is the gods which the code refers to as the river. The reference to the river is commonly considered the Euphrates. It was considered the divine judge in their understanding. The suspects were thrown into the river and the human jury judged the accused following the results that followed, either by the victim drowning or floating on the water.⁶³ However, one cannot attest to the accuracy of the ordeal in the ANE as it is possible that several people might have died from the ordeal either guilty or innocent.

⁶²Roth, "The Laws of Hammurabi," 337.

⁶³Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 166, 171.

Structural and Content Relationship Between Numbers 5:11-31 and Mari Text

Unlike ANE texts, in Numbers 5:11-31 the ordeal and its procedure covers the whole pericope. The content of the ANE texts and Numbers 5:11-31 may be structured differently. It will feature elements that are deemed visible in both text and not by inferring or imagination. The content of the Mari texts and Numbers 5:11-31 may be structured around the following elements: “material for the ordeal,” “reporter/Accuser,” “procedure taken by the arbiter,” “mode of reporting,” “issue at stake,” “people involved,” “nature of text,” “outcome after the ordeal,” “means/medium/arbiter,” and “divine judge.”⁶⁴

Structural Elements	Numbers	Mari Text
	5:11-31	

⁶⁴In the Bible it appears that each of the biblical concept is structured around some elements, though there are also semblances in structure between biblical concepts and Ancient Near Eastern counterpart. See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 347-349.

for the

Material ordeal	Mixture of holy water in earthenware vessel and dust on the floor of the tabernacle (v. 17)	Mixture of dirt, door-frame of the gate of Mari, and water
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Reporter/Accuser	Husband (vv. unknown 12-14, 30)
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Procedure by the arbiter	taken Taking an oath before the drinking of the mixture (vv. 19-26)	Drinking of the mixture before the taking of an oath
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Mode of reporting	Taking the suspected wife to the priest with an offering (vv. 15-18).	A god or goddess to the other
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Issue at stake	Suspicion of Causing harm adultery (vv. to brickwork 11-14, 30)	or the commissioner of Mari
People involved	Husband and wife	gods and goddesses
Nature of text	Marital issue Vision taking taking place on place in the earth (vv. 11- court of gods 14, 30)	
Outcome after the ordeal	The woman have swelled womb, flatten thigh, infertility (vv. 21, 22, 27, 28)	Unknown
Means/medium/arbitrator	The Priest (vv. 18, 20, 21, 30)	Unknown

Divine Judge	YHWH (vv. 18, 20, 21, 30)	gods and goddesses
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It can be seen that though there is drinking of a potion or mixture in Mari's trial by ordeal along with an oath taking process, the sequence of the actions (trial and oath taking) is different from the ordeal in Numbers 5:11-31. The Mari's account has the oath preceding the drinking of the potion while in Numbers 5:11-31 it is the opposite. Also in the Mari's trail the issue at stake is not clear and its import concerns a disputation between gods. However, in Numbers 5:11-31, the problem is a husband having suspicion on the wife concerning adultery.

In the same vein, the Mari's account is said to be a vision occurring in the heavenly realm's court of gods where certain gods swear not to threaten Mari in the future. However, in the Numbers 5:11-31 narrative the trial by ordeal is about a marital issue happening on earth regarding a past activity of a wife. Therefore, it can be said that the Mari and the Numbers 5:11-31 trial by ordeal accounts are different and has no correlation.

Structural and Content Relationship Between Numbers 5:11-31 and Hammurabi Code

The content of the Hammurabi code and Numbers 5:11-31 may be structured around the following elements: "materials for the

ordeal," "pressing of charges," "judicial procedure," "mode of punishment," "mode of accusation," "nature of ordeal," "protasis," and "apodosis."

Structural Elements	Numbers 5:11-31	Hammurabi Code (131 and 132)
Material for the ordeal	Mixture of holy water in earthenware vessel and dust on the floor of the tabernacle (v. 17)	oath (CH 131), the river (CH 132)
Pressing of Charges Judicial Procedure	Only the husband (vv. 15) combined	Anybody Separated (the oath, then the ordeal)
Mode of punishment	Swelling of womb, flatten	death

thigh, sterility

(vv. 27, 28)

Mode of
accusation

Both suspected
and apprehended
adulteress

Nature of
ordeal

Drinking of
mixture of water
and dust, then
swearing an oath

Swearing an oath,
the submission to
river ordeal

Protasis

If a man suspects
his wife of
infidelity without

(If)⁶⁵ any man
suspects his wife of

infidelity without
proof . . .
(vv. 12b-15a)

proof . . . (CH131)
If someone
accuses another
man's wife of

If you did not
commit adultery
. . . (v. 19)

⁶⁵ Unlike the other protases in the ordeal pericope, the opening protasis does not employ the particle ~a. However, Fishbane point out that the construction *yk vya vya*, rendered here as “if any man” (v. 12b), commonly functions in the OT as the marker of the protasis (cf. Num 5:6, 8; 6:2, 9). See Fishbane, “Accusations of Adultery,” 30.

	If you did commit adultery . . . (v. 27)	adultery . . . (v. 27)
	. . . (vv. 20, 22)	If the woman did not commit adultery . . . (v. 28)
	If the woman committed	adultery without proof . . . (CH 132)
Apodosis	. . . the man shall bring her to the priest, have her swear an oath, and have her drink bitter water (vv. 15b, 28)	
	. . . she shall swear	
	an oath and return home (CH 131) . . . she shall throw herself into the divine river for the sake of her husband (CH 132)	

. . . be unaffected by
the bitter water (v.
19) . . . be rendered
sterile by the bitter
water (vv. 20, 22)
. . . she will be
rendered sterile by
the bitter water (v.
27) . . . she will be
fertile (v. 28)

The summary of the structure and content of Numbers 5:11-31 and the Hammurabi codes 131 and 132 in the table above, indicates that there is some resemblance or parallelism of the two passages. Looking at the parallels of Numbers 5:11-31 with other ANE texts, it seems probable that Numbers 5:11-31 fits the genre of trial by ordeal.⁶⁶In terms of the content and form, the Num 5:11-31 pericope especially resembles the Hammurabi Codes statutes (CH131-32). In regard to content, it can be seen and as pointed out in the chapter 2 of the study Numbers 5:11-31 deals primary with accusation on adultery and here both texts (Num 5:11-31 and the Hammurabi codes) treat unsubstantiated allegations about female infidelity, incorporating an oath (cf. 5:19, 21; compare CH131), a water ordeal (cf. 5:24, 26-27; compare CH132), and an expectation of divine intervention to show guilt or innocence (cf. 5:16, 18, 21, 30; compare CH

⁶⁶Grey, *Numbers*, 44-45.

131-32).

In regard to form, both texts are casuistic possessing protasis and apodosis. The matter of suspected adulteress is shown in the protasis clause, which is followed by the procedure of adjudication in the apodosis clause. As highlighted in the table above, the protasis is the “if... such and such has happened” statement, while the apodosis is the “then... perform such and such an act” statements.

It can be seen that the remarkable parallels of the Hammurabi Codes 131-132 texts to Numbers 5:11-31 suggest that, at least in regard to trials by ordeal, ANE tradition and the biblical account shows some similarities. However, as Odil Hannes Steck has highlighted in the tradition-historical criteria, the history of a concept comes into view when the same concept is located in different texts in different times without indication of literary dependence.⁶⁷ Like these ANE texts, the Numbers 5:11-31 pericope functions in the absence of witnesses and invokes a deity through an oath and a water ordeal.⁶⁸ Although a tradent cannot be determined in regard to *traditio*, the

⁶⁷Odil Hannes Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to Methodology* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1998), 133.

⁶⁸See Frymer-Kensky, “The Strange Case of the Suspected Sotah,” 2425. Frymer-Kensky observes that two key features of trials by ordeal are (1) immediate effects demonstrating the deity’s decision—effects that (2) serve as the built-in punishment in the event of a guilty verdict.

similarities in *traditum* present a “most compelling” case for a similar conceptual orbit as Fishbane puts it.⁶⁹

This is not to suggest that the author of Numbers copied from the Hammurabi code. It rather seems to suggest that similar adultery situations were common during each of the writing periods of the texts and the author addressed it accordingly, with one emanating from magic and the other being a revelation from YHWH. In the biblical, the trial by ordeal takes place when there is a lack of witnesses as to a woman’s unfaithfulness. This makes it difficult to assess the accusation as either true or false. Therefore, the outcome was handed over in the hands of YHWH. The jealous husband brings his wife before a priest, where the accused swears an oath in the presence of YHWH that she has been faithful to her marriage vow and to her husband. The priest presents the wife with a concoction of holy water, dust from the Tabernacle floor, and a piece of paper upon which a curse is written. The curse then dissolves in the water, and the woman is mandated to drink it. In the event of the guiltiness of the woman, YHWH causes the mixture to make the woman’s thighs to flatten and her belly to swell. The result of the trial as seen in a form of a divine judgment is carried out.

As indicated in the content and structure table, in the Babylonian texts, the accusation of adultery can come from another person aside the husband of the accused. This suspicion arising from a third person is not accounted or indicated for in the biblical passage. This shows that the biblical injunction did not follow the Babylonian precedent as some critical scholars assert. From the Numbers 5:11-31 account it can be understood

⁶⁹Fishbane, “Accusations,” 38. See also George B. Grey, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: Scribner’s, 1903), 47.

that in the event of rumour or accusation coming from the community or other persons, it was only the husband who was mandated and could press charges (v. 15).

It can also be seen that the introductory part of Numbers 5:11-31 indicates two things. The guiltiness of the woman or her innocence is undecided in the first. The ordeal is to serve this purpose of proving of guilt and innocence. The second is that the jealousy of the husband is the one that drives the entire ordeal trial. The husband's jealousy has significant implications to the nature of God, and establishing the central role that jealousy plays in the ritual. As Deborah L. Ellens has observed "the original, primary concern of the ritual is to instruct the audience on the execution of a procedure, which has the power to rescue a single male from this condition."⁷⁰ The initiation of the ritual is not caused by any action or inaction of the wife, but is rather forced to occur by the husband's jealousy. The husband's jealousy is thus the operative force of the entire ordeal trial. However, in the Hammurabi code account, the woman is guilty unless she is proven innocent through the oath taking. The driving force is not jealousy but any mere allegation coming from any man irrespective of his relationship with the woman.

Also in the trial or judicial procedures made up of the oath and ordeal, the Biblical account presents both being carried out in a combined manner. On the other hand, that of the Babylonian texts occurred separately. This clearly shows

⁷⁰Deborah L. Ellens, "Numbers 5.11-31: Valuing Male Suspicion," in *God's Word for Our World*, 2 vols., ed. Deborah L. Ellens J. Harold Ellens, Rolf P. Knienm and Isaac Kalimi. Journal for the study of the Old Testament. Supplement series (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 55.

variance in the two ordeals as not emanating from one source. Again in both texts, the trial by ordeal took another form. Whereas the punishment of the guilty adulteress was in the form of sterility or bareness, that of the Hammurabi code was death. This contrasting differences evidently shows the disparity in the two accounts.

The similarities in both text does not suggest that the author of Numbers borrowed the trial by ordeal concept or practice from the ANE. The issue of adultery as indicated was common within the ANE region and all biblical sources agree that the prohibition against adultery was incorporated into the national covenant at Sinai to which every Israelite swore allegiance (cf. Exod 24:1-8; Duet 5:24-26). Also latter generations of Israel were bound (cf. Deut 29:9-14). Prophets like Hosea and Jeremiah spoke vehemently against the sin of adultery and called Israel to respect the Sinaitic covenant and desist from its violations (cf. Hos 4:2; Jer 7:9). Most of Jeremiah prophesy and rebuke of Israel largely centered and highlighted the issue of adultery as the curse of Israel's national doom (Jer 5:7-9; 7:9-15; 29:23a).⁷¹

It may therefore be conjectured that originally the present ordeal was not an ANE incantation for an ordeal employing magical water that did not invoke the name of any deity. The ordeal should be seen as God's revelation to Moses and the people of Israel to deal with the issue of adultery and to

⁷¹See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349. Also the crime is described throughout the HB, such as Gen 20:6; Lev 18:20; Ezek 18:6; Ps 51:6; and Mal 3:5. Also a number of texts discuss the evil of adultery. The Israelites held the act in such harsh light, that a commandment against committing adultery is found in the Ten Commandments. This certainly indicates that extra-marital affairs were viewed in a severe manner.

curtail capital punishment and unnecessary divorces. The import was to inform the people that if an adulteress is convicted by the ordeal, her punishment rests not with them but solely with God.

Furthermore, as Baruch A. Levine has indicated “the Babylonian evidence provides only a partial parallel, but more needs to be said about the relevance of these Old Babylonian laws to the priestly legislation of the Torah.”⁷² This is difference in the treatment of the suspected woman in relation to the accuser in both texts. This seems to separate the two.

In summary, the trial by ordeal in Numbers 5:11-31 provided the assurance that judgment and its related punishment would not be in the hands of the people, but that through this instruction God provided the assurance that He would continue serving as Israel’s judge. He fights for the innocent and punishes the offender. The ANE account rather have the punishment solely in the hand of the magical person who official the trial. Both accounts, therefore, may point to a single source in the eyes of critical scholars, only that each account focuses mainly on different divine figure which is a crucial element of the ordeal— YHWH or the gods. In Numbers 5:11-31, YHWH solemnly reiterated two essential elements made earlier in the study, namely holiness and judgment. Both parts of the ordeal, then, are not rooted substantially from one source as critical scholars initially has outlined. One is from the gods made of human hand with magical inference and the other is from YHWH—the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is a divine judge who witnesses everything and can therefore reach a fair verdict.

⁷²Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, Anchor Bible. Vol. 4a. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 204.

Therefore, Numbers 5:11-31 may be seen as a key conceptual issue for the theological stream that depicts Israel's relationship with YHWH in terms of jealousy, adultery motifs, and threats of violence, which culminate with Israel drinking a cup of divine wrath or judgment. Theologically, the passage informs both jealous husbands and vengeful communities that jurisdiction of the case of adultery lies completely with YHWH, protecting the woman from further human punishment.⁷³

Conclusion

The ordeal in its appeal to the supernatural makes a great step towards practical justice. The practice was undertaken through a divine agent serving as a jury to pronounce someone with the verdict of being guilty or innocent during and after the process of the ordeal. In the practice of the ordeal both the verdict and the associated punishment of the guilty were at the reserve of God as in the case of Numbers 5:11-31. The use of *מִן־אֱלֹהִים* and *לֵעֲשׂוֹת* can be seen as showing how God wants His people to do away with unclean situation and to maintain purity in their midst. Due to God's dwelling within His people He required the highest level of cleanliness and holiness. The repetition (10 times) of *אֵינִי כְּאִשָּׁה* "to be jealous, jealousy, jealous" in Numbers 5:11-31 for what comes to the heart of the husband and nature of the ordeal suggest that, the passage is intended to bring a lasting solution to the problem of jealousy. The reference to the *אֱלֹהִים* suggest that the major player

⁷³Milgrom, *Numbers*, 354. Milgrom observes that *!w[afn* is an idiom for punishment through divine agency.

in the ordeal is the priest. He leads out the majority of the activities on the ordeal trial. His service as just a bridge between the suspecting couple and God.

The expression יְהוָה יִשְׁפֹּט begins and ends the ordeal as the passage indicates (vv. 11, 30). The suspicious wife and the offering are brought before Him (vv. 16, 18, 25, 30). He punishes and set free the woman if either found liable or innocent. The judgment rest on Him. The Lord is the author of the punishment while the water serves as His means to implement it. Thus, YHWH, not the water is responsible for what happen to the woman.

In order to maintain and live a holy life in the marital home, the holiness codes were given to Moses for the Israelites to follow. The ordeal of Numbers 5:11-31 is one code that played a positive aspect in the people's marriages. This ordeal was in its intend to protect the accused woman from wrongful trail and humiliation from the husband. In a communal sense, it was a practice for protection. The role of both the human and divine participation in the process as well as the transferral of the accused wife to God's jurisprudence are essential in understanding the ordeal to the Israelite society. Contrary to the actors in the Hammurabi code text which can be said to be trivial and resulting to magic, that of Numbers 5:11-31 places the process and trail by ordeal in the tabernacle in God's hands and realm thereby giving it a sacred character and backing. God used this ordeal as a means of judgment to prevent immoral activities in the Israelite community where He is at the center of their dwelling. Also in order not to have rampant divorce and marital related offences, God served as the ultimate judge in all the affairs and especially in the marriage related issues. Because of His stand against adultery, the offender was punished and the innocent set free. He welcomes all married partners to constantly

come to His to moral redress and to keep the moral purity of all marriages.

Though there is drinking of a potion or mixture in Mari's trial by ordeal along with an oath taking process, the sequence of the actions (trial and oath taking) is different from the ordeal in Numbers 5:11-31. The Mari's account has the oath preceding the drinking of the potion while in

Numbers 5:11-31 it is the opposite. Also in the Mari's trail the issue at stake is not clear and its import concerns a disputation between gods. However, in Numbers 5:11-31, the problem is a husband having suspicion on the wife concerning adultery.

In the Hammurabi code ordeal, the innocent woman has to survive something harmful, because of the fact of surviving the trail was the proof of innocence. Being injured by an inherently harmful agent (such as throwing the accused in a river or drinking of a concoction) was determined to be proof of guilt, so that the accused woman was guilty until otherwise proven innocent, whereas the Numbers 5:11-31 ordeal trail offered a presumption of innocence. Also in the Numbers 5:11-31 account the woman is not subjected to any form of harm while she is innocent, which differs importantly from the Hammurabi ordeals where the wife if exposed to harm by mostly being plunged into a river.

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