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## CHAPTER ONE

PENTECOSTAL ‘DELIVERANCE’ THEOLOGY: A SOLUTION TO OR A PROBLEM FOR MORALITY?

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ABSTRACT

This research was submitted to the University of Manchester by Lord Abraham Elorm-Donkor for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Its title, “Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism: A Theological Analysis of Virtue Theory as a Framework for Integrating Christian and Akan Moral Schemes” indicates the scope of the research within African Pentecostal Studies.

Although scholars and Christian leaders have indicated that there is marked separation between morality and spirituality in the Christian praxis of many Africans and that the African worldview, which African Christians still hold is responsible for this separation, there has not been a detailed study of the issue. The aim of the research is to offer an explanation, of a paradox in Ghanaian society where there is enthusiastic Christian spirituality that is separated from social morality, so that a deeper integration of the Christian and Akan traditional moral schemes can be proposed.

My research focuses on Pentecostals in Ghana whose appropriation of the African worldview into Christian praxis has generally been considered as a positive response to African religiosity. By the use of a practical theological method of correlation whereby the Christian truth is represented by the moral theology of John Wesley and brought in dialogue with the Akan traditional moral scheme, this research offers reasons for and proposes a solution to the lack of social morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism. It uses the virtue theory as a heuristic tool for the analysis of morality in a way that provides explanation for the situation and guides an integration of the two moral schemes at a deeper level. The examination of the two moral schemes has been guided by the elements of character, a central theme of the virtue theory.

It has been shown that the ‘Deliverance Theology’ of Ghanaian Pentecostals involves significant misrepresentation of the Akan traditional scheme, and that this situation causes many Christians to focus on religion as a means for the supply of existential needs rather than the transformation of inner dispositions for moral character formation. This research shows that reinterpreting the Akan view of humanity and integrating it with the Wesleyan account of the Christian truth, transforms the ‘Deliverance Theology’ by portraying the Christian life as a pneumatological characterology. The moral responsibility that this entails will ensure that African Pentecostals understand social morality as an essential outcome of their Christian spirituality.
DECLARATION

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THE AUTHOR

The candidate, Lord Abraham Elorm-Donkor, has undertaken previous research on the Mission of the Elim Church of Pentecost - UK, a Ghanaian Pentecostal migrant church, for an MPhil at the University of Birmingham. He has BA and MA in Theology (Mission Studies). His doctoral research brings together African Pentecostal Studies, African religion and philosophy, Virtue Theory and Wesley Studies to explore explanation for and solution to the separation of spirituality from morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Joyce, and my children Ohemaa Ama, Edem Kwaku and Akorfa Akua for your patience, immense sacrifices, prayers and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the availability of the abundant grace of the Almighty God to me. It is due to God’s care, guidance, protection and provision that I have managed to get this far. Therefore, my foremost thanks and appreciation goes to the impartial and loving God.

In the process of this study I have received support, encouragement and advice from many individuals including my friends and colleagues at the Nazarene Theological College. I wish to thank all of you who in diverse ways have helped me with my research. I cherish your prayers and help but space will not permit me to mention your names individually. I wish to state that your efforts are highly appreciated.

I am particularly thankful to my Supervisors, Dr. David McCulloch and David Rainey. Your guidance, support and encouragement have been wonderful. Thank you indeed. Also, I thank Dr. Jabal Buaben who read through the work and offered very insightful comments on Akan religion and philosophy.

Moreover, I received financial donations from some individuals and organisations for which I am very grateful. I need to mention particularly; The Nazarene Theological College, the Northern District of the British Isles Church of the Nazarene, the Souter Charitable Trust, the National Executive of the Church of Pentecost UK led by Apostle Martin S. Appiah, the Barnsley Church of the Nazarene, Ms. Hazel Kitting of Barnsley, and Mr. and Mrs. Adjei-Kwarteng and others. Without your financial support I could not have completed this research. Thank you very much.

My special thanks go to my wife, Joyce (Aboronoma) and our children; Ohemaa Edem and Akorfa for your sacrifices which enabled to me undertake this study successfully.
A LIST OF SOME ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AoG</td>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>African Independent/ Indigenous/ Initiated Churches</td>
</tr>
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<td>CoP</td>
<td>The Church of Pentecost</td>
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<td>DT</td>
<td>Deliverance Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXCHANGE</td>
<td>Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Ghanaian Pentecostalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPs</td>
<td>Ghanaian Pentecostals</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMCs</td>
<td>Historical Mission Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBMR</td>
<td>International Bulletin of Missionary Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRM</td>
<td>International Review of Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>Journal of Religion in Africa</td>
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<td>JRE</td>
<td>Journal of Religious Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSCE</td>
<td>Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTP</td>
<td>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNEUMA</td>
<td>The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies</td>
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<td>WTJ</td>
<td>Wesleyan Theological Journal</td>
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INTRODUCTION

I. Preamble

One of the things that struck me after converting from an African traditional religion to Christianity was the discrepancy that is often observable between what is preached and taught in churches and the moral lives that are lived in society. This research was initially motivated by the personal religious ‘journey’ which I have been on, seeking to understand why it is that among many genuine Christians generally, there is a marked inconsistency between professing Christ as Lord and saviour on one hand and living the requisite moral life on the other. My curiosity has taken different trajectories: trying to understand the relationship between Christian mission and social transformation in Ghana; considering whether defining Christian mission as holiness would have made a difference in Christian spirituality and moral practice; and exploring reasons why African migrants plant Pentecostal churches in the Diaspora. In all these academic exercises I became increasingly aware of the important influence that the African traditional worldview has on Pentecostal Christianity and spirituality and I began to wonder whether the influence of the African traditional worldview on Christians can account for the attitude of many African Christians towards social morality.

II. The Background to the Problem

This study focuses on a well-known but under-researched paradox in African societies where Christian mission and spirituality flourish alongside social injustices, which are mostly exacerbated by corruption in public life.¹ A report drawn up for the

¹ See Kwadwo Ewusi, The Political Economy of Ghana in the Post Independent Period: Description and Analysis of the Decadence of the Political Economy of Ghana and Survival Techniques of the
centenary of the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh 2010) by West African theologians and church leaders from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, affirms that there is an apparent separation between spirituality and morality in West African Christianity.² It also asserts that this situation poses a challenge to the way Christian spirituality and discipleship translate into social or public morality.³ Matthews Ojo highlights the same situation, and laments the inability of Christian enthusiasm and spirituality in African societies to address the issues of bad political leadership and entrenched moral failure associated with political corruption among Christian politicians.⁴ Ojo observes that due to the corruption in the socio-economic and political environment in Africa, the relevance of Christian spirituality in this context becomes questionable.

According to Ojo, the manner in which many African Christians select certain Christian values over others corresponds to aspirations in the African traditional worldview.⁵ He believes that this inconsistent attitude, which echoes the African traditional religious approach, invariably produces Christians who behave

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³ Asamoah-Gyadu, “Report of West African”.
⁴ For instance President Chiluba of Zambia was a very active evangelical Christian who declared Zambia a Christian country. But he was later accused of corruption and his wife has been convicted of corruption. But to be fair, corruption or lack of morality is a general problem that is not limited to politicians or public figures only.
ambivalently depending on the time and situation. In other words, Ojo attributes the separation of morality from spirituality among African Christians, to the impact that the African traditional religious heritage still has on Christians. Paul Gifford too, ascribes the lack of social morality among Ghanaian Pentecostals to their appropriation of the African traditional worldview. Besides these, Ronald Green has observed that the African worldview creates problems for moral reasoning in African Christianity.

Consequently, Ogbu Kalu has asserted that the influence that traditional beliefs have on behaviour and policy in contemporary African societies calls for an in-depth study of its prominence and resilience. Timothy Tennent also affirms that an explicit response to the challenges posed by traditional beliefs, such as the belief in the reality of evil spirits, to theological reflection is now central and not peripheral to the church’s theological task in Africa.

Although these scholars believe that the African worldview has some influence on the moral attitude of African Christians and that it is time theologians respond to this issue, there has not been any serious reflection on how the relationship between the African traditional worldview and African Christian moral practice may be characterised. Undoubtedly, Christians who still hold worldviews that are different from the Christian/Western worldview are bound to face moral dilemmas in their

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9 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, chapters 4 and 7.
10 Timothy C. Tennent, Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way we Think about and Discuss Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 267.
Christian moral practice, especially if they have not integrated these worldviews congenially.

III. The Problem

The main problem of this study is about how theologians might understand and respond to the challenge that the African traditional worldview poses to the moral practice of African Christians. How can we explain the manner in which a Christian’s holding of a worldview that is different from a Western/Christian worldview affects the morality of that Christian? At least two responses may be considered. First, theologians can regard the African worldview as incompatible with Christian moral thought and recommend the replacement of African traditional moral thought by Western Universalist moral paradigms, as was tried without success by the missionary and imperialist forces.11 Second, theologians may focus rather on analysing how the African worldview has been appropriated for Christian praxis within particular Christian traditions, in order to find an explanation to the situation and to offer a theological resolution of it. The second approach is more desirable because previous efforts to replace the African moral system with the Western ethical system largely failed.12

Therefore, this research focuses on a particular Christian tradition: Ghanaian Pentecostalism, henceforth GP. It seeks to explore whether and how GP’s appropriation of the African worldview into Christian praxis might account for the

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inconsistency observable in Christian moral practice in the Ghanaian context. It is
generally believed that the Pentecostals’ appropriation of the African worldview and
traditional beliefs into Christian praxis accounts for the rapid growth of
Pentecostalism on that continent. Undoubtedly, Pentecostalism has blossomed
generally and especially in places such as Nigeria and Ghana, and has affected the
historical missionary churches (HMCs) to the extent that in Ghana, Pentecostal
expression may well be used to describe Christianity. Hence, any attempt to
exemplify Christian ethics in the African religio-cultural milieu must by necessity
assess the Pentecostals appropriation that has already taken place. This assessment is
necessary in this research for purposes of explanation, correction of previous pitfalls
and guidance in present and future projects of contextualisation.

IV. The Central Thesis

The main proposal of the study is that although GP appropriation of the Akan
worldview might have created an epistemological crisis for Christian morality, the
Virtue theory offers a framework that can act as a heuristic tool for an analysis and
congenial integration of the Christian and Akan moral schemes.

V. Methodology

As theological reflection on morality in African Christianity is still in its infancy, it
was difficult to find a model that could be adapted easily for the theological

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13 Cephas Omenyo, “From the Fringes to the Centre: Pentecostalization of the Mainline Churches in
Ghana, Exchange 34: 1 (2005), 39-60; Omenyo, Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the
Developments of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij
Boekcentrum, 2002); Omenyo, “The Charismatic Renewal Movements in Ghana”, Pneuma 16: 2
reflection required in this study. Anthropological and translation methods of theological contextualisation do not seem to offer readily available methods because they concentrate on missiological and theological matters (albeit, in actuality ethics and theology are not to be separated). Hence, I consider the method of theological reflection that provides an analysis of a situation and moves on to offer theological and pastoral actions on that situation, as the most appropriate for this study. The widely used critical correlation method of theological reflection is therefore adapted for this purpose. This method is considered suitable partly because of its distinctive claim that truth and revelation may be realised beyond the confines of the Christian tradition through the minds, hearts and cultures of all humans. It is held that, however dimly, non-Christian realms of human reason and enquiry are capable of manifesting God’s truth, which then needs to be brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, Charles Taylor has remarked that moral enquiry is a general human phenomenon. Every society has some conception(s) of what human flourishing is all about. As humans try to answer the questions about a fulfilled life, a worthy life and an admirable life, they also define views which they try to live by, views which at another level are organised into philosophical theories, moral codes and religious practices and devotion. This means that whether they are Christians or not,

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Ghanaians have always had and still have ideas of what constitutes morality: behaviour that is good or evil, right or wrong. The fact that until recently, moral conceptions of Africans have existed in an oral form does not mean that they did not exist.\(^{19}\) The morality of Africans derives from rational reflection on, and a philosophical response to, their worldview, cultural values and beliefs.\(^{20}\) Thus, a theological method that recognises the potential of all cultural traditions for offering some truth about morality is most suitable for a study such as this.

From the onset, the analysis required in this study entails dealing with two distinct worldviews. Certainly, the idea of African Christian morality or the morality of any group of Christians who has a worldview which is distinct from that of the West, presupposes the interaction of two different worldviews and moral traditions. It would be simplistic to think that irrespective of cultural, historical and social backgrounds, people who believe in the Christian Gospel and have acquired a Western education will naturally hold the same ethical views and pursue morality in the same way. This may not be the case when they have not consciously synchronised the different worldviews that they hold.

A primary proposition of the correlation method is that theological reflection has two sources: common human experience and the Christian truth. From the perspective of the revised correlation method, David Tracy defines the task of Christian theology as ‘… a philosophical reflection upon the meaning present in common human

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\(^{19}\) Earlier Colonialist notions that Africans had no sense of morality have since been refuted by later anthropological and philosophical studies. See; Mokgethi Motlhabi, ‘The Concept of Morality in African Tradition’, in Itumeleng Mosala and Buti Tlhagale, eds., *Hammering Swords into Ploughshares: Essays in Honour of Archbishop Desmond Tutu* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 85-100.

experience and language and upon the meaning present in the Christian fact’.\textsuperscript{21} Considered in this way, theological reflection occurs through processes of conversations between the revealed Christian truth and common human experience in a cultural context.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, common human experience is termed as a \textit{situation} that needs to be interpreted for theological action.\textsuperscript{23} The sources of information on common human experience include literature, the social sciences, popular culture, or other perspectives that try to interpret human experience.\textsuperscript{24}

Therefore, I have identified the Ghanaian Pentecostal appropriation of the African traditional worldview into Christian praxis as a situation that calls for theological action. This appropriation is described in the study as the ‘Deliverance Theology’, henceforth DT. I identify the DT as a specific example of the way GPs have contextualised the Christian truth within the African religio-cultural context. It is this contemporary religious practice, a common human experience that I have presented in this study as a \textit{situation}, in the morality of GPs.

I start with an assumption that the manner in which GPs appropriate the African worldview into Christian praxis creates an epistemological crisis, and that a deeper understanding of this might lead to questions that can help explain why spirituality and morality are not always found together. Ultimately, I attempt in this study to answer the question: how might theologians of African Christianity undertake the


\textsuperscript{22}Tracy, \textit{Blessed Rage}, 47.


\textsuperscript{24}Whitehead and Whitehead, \textit{Methods in Ministry}, 12-19.
integration of Christian moral thought with an African moral thought without necessarily incurring a wholesale forfeiture of the identity and quintessence of the African moral tradition?\textsuperscript{25}

Another important step in practical theological reflection is the interpretation of the situation the theologian is dealing with. Edward Farley asserts that the interpretation of a situation uncovers the distinctive contents of that situation, probes its repressed past, explores its relation to other situations with which it is intertwined, and also explores the demand the situation makes of the participants in a community.\textsuperscript{26} Since human beings make sense of all their situations through worldviews, interpreting DT in this study will involve identifying factors such as myths, metaphors and social interactions within the Akan traditional scheme.\textsuperscript{27} In this way, the distinctive (Akan traditional) and constituent (Pentecostal) features of DT will be appropriately explained.\textsuperscript{28}

In my interpretation of the DT, I will demonstrate that it lacks a clear and deeper understanding of the Akan scheme, in some important respects and that only a deeper characterisation of the Akan scheme can help us explain the moral situation of GPs. Since the DT is intelligible only in relation to an African traditional religio-cultural heritage, I will present the Akan worldview or conceptual scheme as one of the

\textsuperscript{26} Farley, “Interpreting Situations”, 119-124.
\textsuperscript{27} Williamson noted that from the point of view of religious beliefs, language, customs and political organisation, Ghanaian ethnic groups such as; Akuapem, Ahanta, Akim, Asin, Akwamu, Fanti, Sefwi, Nzema and Brong are all part of the Akan tribe. Williamson, \textit{Akan Religion}, x. Also, see; Eva, Meyerowitz, \textit{The Sacred State of the Akan} (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 21-11; George Parrinder, \textit{West African Traditional Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo and Kindred Peoples} (London: Epworth Press, 1969), 3. The Akan tribe is the largest group constituting about 42\% of the twenty two million population of Ghana.
dialogue partners in this study. Kwesi Wiredu, a renowned Ghanaian philosopher, has argued persuasively that due to the deep affinities that exist between the cultures of the various ethnic groups in Ghana, at least for academic purposes, it is acceptable to speak of a Ghanaian culture and to use the Akan group as representing it.\(^{29}\)

From the characterisation of the Akan traditional moral scheme, an understanding of how morality is pursued in the Akan traditional scheme will help in providing an explanation for the separation of morality and spirituality among Christians. In other words, insights into the Christian tradition will be brought into dialogue with a contemporary human situation that is only understandable through the Akan traditional scheme.\(^{30}\)

In this study I will use the doctrine of sanctification, a particular theological articulation of the Christian truth by John Wesley as a model representing the Christian truth. I refer to this as Wesley’s moral theology. In practical theological reflection, a theologian may select a theological doctrine, or a biblical text, or a particular understanding of either of these to represent the Christian truth.\(^{31}\) My choice of Wesley does not mean that only Wesley’s rendition of the Christian truth is authentic. Instead my choice is based on a personal bias and his distant relationship with the holiness tradition in Pentecostalism.

Since the analysis in this study is basically about morality, it has to be located within a moral philosophical theory that can be used as a heuristic tool. Moral philosophy


always aims at saying something concerning how human beings should live good moral lives, and provides a theoretical framework for authentic moral enquiry.\textsuperscript{32} So, locating the analysis within a philosophical framework is important because, whether it is acknowledged or not, Christian ethics is a synthesis of Western philosophical reasoning on the moral life on one hand and Christian doctrine on the other. For instance, Christian ethics may be undergirded by moral theories such as the Deontological, Consequentialism, or Virtue theories. Thus, the term Christian morality hides more than it reveals because key philosophical perspectives remain fundamental to the content, structure and form of Christian ethics.

I identify the virtue theory as a framework for the analysis. Within this theory is the concept of character, which is also common to the Akan and Christian traditions. The idea of character is an inherent goal for Christian discipleship. Character is seen as the goal for the Christian life, especially in the theology of John Wesley. Similarly, in the Akan moral scheme in Ghana too, character is considered as an evaluative factor in determining true personhood.\textsuperscript{33} In its simplest meaning, character is the consistent manner in which a person acts according to the accepted moral beliefs and norms of his/her community.

Being contextual is crucial, especially when theology is done in a non-western context. I agree with Stephen Bevans that contextual theology is not an option but an imperative for any attempt to understand and explain theology in a particular cultural


context. So, this study takes into serious account the Christian truth that has been kept alive, preserved and defended by the Christian tradition, particularly as this was articulated by a prominent church leader, John Wesley. It also explores how this Christian truth could transform the moral practice of Ghanaian Pentecostals in the present context. In this way, it relates Christian moral tradition to the Akan moral scheme without any imposition. Instead, the two sources are brought into dialogue and allowed to speak for themselves on how they help their adherents to embody morality.

The contextualising process in this study offers GPs a more robust and an unbiased way of pursuing the contextualisation of Christian moral thought in an African Christian context without necessarily losing the African cultural identity. In acknowledging that theology must be based on scripture and tradition, I will also maintain that philosophical and religious thought forms in the context of our theological practice is useful for strengthening and even enriching received theology. Thus, I have not compromised received theology but rather encouraged a creative dialectical conversation that is acceptable to both traditions. This is done with the belief that although every context has things that are unique to it, there are some truths that are shared. For instance, the concept of *ntoro* in the Akan traditional moral scheme can be regarded as unique to the Akans but, as Kwame Gyekye has shown, there are aspects of the Akan culture which can be observed universally. To use

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Bevans’s horticultural term, this approach encourages cross-pollination so that new and sturdier plants more suited to particular environments might be developed. \(^{38}\)

I will derive a question that will be posed to both dialogue partners in the study. Then I will correlate the answers that are obtained from these two sources. \(^{39}\) I will pose the question ‘how successful is the understanding of the concept of character in the moral theology of John Wesley for helping Christians in their pursuit of morality. Whether and how does this make them pursue morality as an intrinsic outcome of religious life’? The same question will be posed to the Akan scheme and the answers obtained from these sources will be correlated. The answers to this question will be based on the use of the four elements of character that I have identified in the virtue theory. Through the correlation I will outline the weaknesses and identify the areas in which each scheme needs to be transformed and attempt an integration of the two moral traditions as my practical theological action to the situation.

A comment on my sources is relevant here. Mainly I will use relevant historical, sociological, philosophical and theological literature on GP rather than conducting another ethnographic study. This is a valid approach in practical theological reflection. \(^{40}\) Also, having been born and bred and having lived in Akan communities for more than three decades, I come to the study with deep insight of the Akan traditional scheme. Moreover, having been an active practitioner of the African


\(^{40}\) Whitehead and Whitehead, observes that the common human experience may be in a form of literature, popular culture etc. *Method in Ministry*, 12-19. Indeed, Don Browning’s *Fundamental Practical Theology* is based on data gleaned from empirical studies done by individuals and groups of scholars on the three churches that constituted the case studies used in his reflections. These studies were edited by Carl S. Dudley and published as *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church* by Harper and Row in London in 1983. It needs adding that after the theoretical framework for a contextualised Christian moral theology has been established there is need for an empirical work to test the framework and advance its relevance and practicality.
traditional religion also offers me rare understanding of the situation and the moral attitudes of GPs. My membership in the largest GP church, and conduct of previous research into one of the groups within this tradition in the UK, has equipped me with deep and valuable experiences that enables me to understand the issues as an insider and as a scholar. Although, this can be a problem, I have tried to allow the analysis to be guided more specifically by the assumptions, questions and the framework as much as is possible.

VI. Significance of the Study

In view of the tremendous growth of Christian mission in Africa generally, and particularly in Ghana, it is expected that Christian spirituality should engender social morality to liberate people from all types of injustice. It is in this respect that this research becomes significant because of the way it offers an explanation for the lack of social morality among Christians in the African context and a proposed resolution to the situation. Secondly, this study will stimulate fresh debates on the irony of religious enthusiasm and social injustice.

Moreover, how virtue theory actually facilitates the integration of Christian and African moral traditions has not been shown before. Thus, this study is significant in two additional ways. First, it offers a framework for explaining the lack of impact of Christian spirituality on social morality in Africa generally, and Ghana particularly. Second, it demonstrates how different worldviews and their moral traditions may be appropriately synthesised by the help of a moral theory (virtue ethics).
VII. Structure of the Thesis

The practical theological method of correlation that has been adopted for this study provides a straightforward structure. In Chapter One, DT is described as the problem. Some of the dilemmas that it poses to Christian moral thought and practice will be explained. I will conclude that although DT is an attempt at contextualisation, it fails on important fronts. Therefore, a more thorough integration of the Christian truth and Akan traditional scheme is still needed. In Chapter Two I present interpretations of DT in light of the separation of spirituality and morality or lack of social morality. I will show that DT is intelligible only in relation to the Akan traditional scheme. Through these interpretations I am able to derive a question for the dialogue partners. Chapter Three is the presentation of the virtue theory. There, I stress that there are elements of character that can be used to assess whether and how a worldview enables its adherents to actually live in accordance with their moral ideal. Chapter Four presents the Akan traditional scheme, and shows the extent to which it is able to help its adherents to successfully conform to accepted moral beliefs and norms.

Chapter Five is a presentation of the moral theology of John Wesley, and shows that the Christian truth has a framework that can help believers to live according to the moral ideal of the Christian truth. In Chapter Six I draw the responses from the Akan and the Christian traditions together, in order to integrate them. I show how African Christians can live consistently according to the moral ideal by pursuing character as an intrinsic religious goal. I also demonstrate that the Akan traditional sense of finitude is caused and promoted by the Akan traditional anthropology and that this is an area where the Akan moral scheme needs transformation. Therefore, I have attempted an integration of the Akan scheme with the Christian truth. Finally, in
conclusion, I provide a summary of the whole study and show its limitations and implications for missions, theology and Christian moral practice.

VIII. Definition of Terms

A. Morality and Ethics

Morality ‘… refers to either a set of social rules and norms for guiding and regulating the conduct of people in a society or to behaviour patterns, that is, responses or attitudes to such rules and norms’. It is the behaviour patterns, responses or attitudes that are in conformity with the accepted moral beliefs and rules of a people.⁴¹ Stanley Grenz states that morality involves the actual living out of one’s beliefs of what is right and good; where such conduct as stealing, cheating and lying are regarded as bad or wrong.⁴² It is the actual practice of ethics and entails the study of the principles and rules or laws that govern behaviour. Ethics ‘… investigate the foundational concepts and principles underlying our judgements of good and evil right and wrong, obligation and optional’.⁴³ It involves the explanations of concepts to show why certain practices are bad or wrong.

⁴¹ Gyekye, An Essay, 130.
⁴³ Wiredu, Philosophy, 171.
CHAPTER ONE

PENTECOSTAL ‘DELIVERANCE’ THEOLOGY: A SOLUTION TO OR A PROBLEM FOR MORALITY?

1. Introduction

A recent theological report states that Pentecostal expression of the Christian faith has become the face of Christianity in the West African sub-continent.\(^4^4\) It is usually claimed that Pentecostalism is able to have a great impact on indigenous cultures because of its readiness and ability to contextualise the Christian message in these cultural milieus.\(^4^5\) Scholars agree that by its contextualisation, Pentecostalism in Africa generally offers answers to its converts’ deep spiritual yearnings for healing, spiritual power over malevolent spirits and socio-economic empowerment.\(^4^6\) Mainly, it is agreed that Pentecostals meet these needs by appropriating and responding to the traditional African worldview and belief in a two-tier world, physical and spiritual, where the spiritual realm influences the physical realm and human affairs.

Like other African Pentecostals, GPs accept and appropriate the African traditional belief that spirit entities are real and do influence the affairs of humans. Subsequently, they have developed a theological response to deal with the African spirit world with the intention of liberating believers from the troubles that the spirit

\(^{4^4}\) Asamoah-Gyadu, “Consultative Report”.


\(^{4^6}\) See works in footnote 45.
realms cause them. This appropriation, which I have termed DT in this study, is regarded as signifying an attempt to contextualise the Christian message in Ghanaian Christianity, and has resulted in the tremendous growth of Pentecostalism in this context. 47

However, ironically, this growth in Christian membership does not seem to have had a serious impact on social morality in Ghanaian society. Professors Paul Gifford and Ogbu Kalu have been engaged in debating the African Pentecostal attitude to social morality, especially in the political domain. The debate was started by Gifford, who has written widely on African Pentecostal Christianity since the early 1980s and lately focused on Ghanaian Pentecostalism. 48 Gifford concludes that some GPs have inculcated wrong ethics and do not play any tangible role in addressing the moral decay evident in the socio-political domain in the country. He claims that GPs do not publically condemn injustices in society or set exemplary moral standards. 49 For Gifford, this attitude is caused by the spiritual orientation of GPs, a situation he attributes to their appropriation of the African traditional religiosity. 50

Professor Ogbu Kalu challenged Gifford’s claim that GPs lack social ethics. 51 Kalu did not deny the laid-back attitude of Pentecostals towards social morality that Gifford indicts per se. But he differs from Gifford in terms of what he perceived as being the reason for this attitude. Whereas Gifford interprets the lack of social

47 See Abstract, Onyinah, *Akan Witchcraft*.
50 Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, chapters 1, 6 and 7.
activism among the new Pentecostals to be a lack of appropriate Christian ethical understanding, Kalu thought that this attitude is based on the Pentecostals’ appropriation of the African worldview.\textsuperscript{52} He affirmed that African Pentecostals consider despotic and dictatorial political leaders as subalterns of the devil and thus resort to prayer rather than socio-political activism for the resolution of the moral failures of politicians.\textsuperscript{53} By this assertion Kalu indicates that the notion of spiritual causality that African Pentecostals appropriated from their traditional religion is responsible for their attitude to social morality. Thus, regardless of their different explanations, Gifford and Kalu agree that Pentecostals’ approach to social ethics is shaped by their African worldview. Matthews Ojo has also attributed the separation of morality and spirituality in African Christianity generally to the appropriation of the African traditional worldview.\textsuperscript{54} But how do we explain the impact of the African worldview on the moral practice of Ghanaian Christians?

So far, analyses on Ghanaian Pentecostal appropriation of the African worldview focus on its psycho-social and religious impact, without adequate attention to the effect that this theological approach has on African moral thought and Christian character formation. Alternatively, the assessment of DT in this study is motivated by a quest for a framework to explain the situation and subsequently suggest the integration of Christian ethics and the Akan traditional moral scheme at a deeper level.

As a first step in the practical theological reflection envisaged in the study, this chapter is a description of what I perceive to be the problem or situation that can

\textsuperscript{52} Kalu, \textit{African Pentecostalism}, chapters 9 and 10.
\textsuperscript{53} Kalu, \textit{African Pentecostalism}, 180.
\textsuperscript{54} Ojo, “African Spirituality”.

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account for the separation of morality and spirituality. I focus on empirical studies that have been carried out on the movement in Ghana to describe the situation. A brief historical overview of the Pentecostal movement in its global and local contexts precedes the discussion to show the background from which DT evolved, and to place the discussion in context.

1.1. Pentecostalism from a Global Perspective

Globally, Pentecostalism emerged from the margins of societies, carved a niche for itself and has now become a truly vibrant force in world Christianity. This growing movement has been described as the third force in the history of Christianity. It has been defined variously but none of these distinctions is yet able to fully capture what exactly Pentecostalism is. This is because the movement continues to grow and change in character, emphasis and practice. Although, there is great diversity in the movement, there are also some shared characteristics which are identifiable in most of the groups. Some of its distinguishing features include: baptism in the Holy Spirit, stress on healing, prophecy, seeing of visions and other similar pneumatic phenomena. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and experience of its manifestations is the most distinguishing feature. The earliest Pentecostals believed, and some classical Pentecostals still hold the view that baptism in the Holy Spirit is evidenced by ‘speaking in tongues’. Allan Anderson has highlighted the difficulty in categorising the Pentecostal movement according to the different emphasis of groups within it. He

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55 The use of text rather than empirical studies is precedential in practical theological reflections. See; Browning, A Fundamental.
defines Pentecostalism as ‘… a movement concerned with the experience of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts…’ and asserts correctly that a broad definition which captures this common feature of all the groups within the movement is preferable.\textsuperscript{59}

Scholars have approached Pentecostal historiography from four perspectives namely: providential, historical, multicultural and functional.\textsuperscript{60} While the origin of the movement is widely agreed to be in the beginning of the twentieth century, the location for its emergence and the name of its founder has always been a contentious issue.\textsuperscript{61} Some scholars regard Charles Parham (in whose bible school at Topeka in the USA a student called Agnes Ozman first spoke in tongues in 1901) as the father of Pentecostalism, and Topeka as its birthplace.\textsuperscript{62} Another school of thought holds that though speaking in tongues occurred at Parham’s Bible school, it was not the first record of the phenomenon in modern times. It is argued that ‘speaking in tongues’ occurred at Edward Irving’s services in London in 1831 and at a Young Women’s Christian Movement (YWCM) meeting in 1875.\textsuperscript{63} Donald Dayton has stated that before the dawn of the twentieth century, speaking in tongues was widespread.\textsuperscript{64}


\textsuperscript{63} Synan, \textit{The Holiness}, 87-88.

\textsuperscript{64} Dayton, \textit{Theological Roots}, 175-178.
Therefore, Walter Hollenweger argues that since the essence of Pentecostalism is in its missionary enterprise rather than in speaking in tongues, only William J. Seymour could be the father of Pentecostalism.\textsuperscript{65} Hollenweger’s assertion is based on the missionary exuberance that followed the Azusa Street revival, as within one year many believers who visited it became missionaries and travelled to almost every continent on the globe.\textsuperscript{66} Seymour, the African American holiness preacher, is regarded as the father of the movement and Azusa Street its birthplace because the global diffusion of the Pentecostal phenomena occurred through this revival.\textsuperscript{67} Certainly, the account of the missionary zeal of the earliest Pentecostals and the rapid spread of the movement throughout the world helps us to better understand not just the origin of global Pentecostalism but the subsequent effects it has had on the shaping of indigenous Christianities.\textsuperscript{68}

Some of the earliest historical accounts of the origin and global spread of Pentecostalism tend to have an expansionist view that the movement originated in North America, and extended from there to other parts of the world through the work of American and European missionaries.\textsuperscript{69} However, though not ignoring the global significance of the North American movement, Allan Anderson has an alternative view that global Pentecostalism has multiple origins, sites and centres.\textsuperscript{70} His approach challenges the ‘… expansionist, missionary [and] Eurocentric … model of

\textsuperscript{65} Walter Hollenweger, “The Black Roots of Pentecostalism”, in Anderson and Hollenweger eds., Pentecostals After a Century, 42-43.
\textsuperscript{66} Faupel, The Everlasting, 214-221; Synan, The Holiness, 129–142.
\textsuperscript{69} Faupel, The Everlasting, 214–221; Roebeck, “Pentecostal Origins”, 176-177; Synan, The Holiness, 98-100.
\textsuperscript{70} Anderson, An Introduction, 15. The entire book contains a colourful exposure to the global view. Also, see Pomerville, The Third Force, 41-62.
writing global Pentecostal history with its centre-to-periphery schema'. Similarly, Ogbu Kalu, supported the view of ‘multiple centres’ and argued that in Africa, Charismatic Ministries emerged as a response to the pressure which primal religion and culture presented to the Christian message without the founders having any connection with Azusa Street. Consequently, because of the multifaceted diversity in the movement, especially, in the non-Western world, this study takes the view which locates the emergence of the movement at different places and times, often connected but sometimes unconnected to each other.

Having said that, it is important to state that at a point in its development in Ghana and in some other African countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, missionaries were invited from Pentecostal denominations in the West to lead and nurture small Pentecostal groups that had already been constituted by Africans. These Western missionaries had a significant impact on further developments and the character of Pentecostalism in Ghana. Even those groups which did not have any formal affiliation with western organisations use the literature of the latter and are thus greatly influenced by them. Although, the external influence on African Pentecostalism is not often highlighted, I will argue that it actually contributed to the development of the DT in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

1.2. Emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghanaian Christianity

GP is a later arrival of the forces of Christianity in Ghana. Attempts by Catholic and Protestant missionaries respectively to establish Christianity in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries failed to yield any immediate results. However, the joint effort by various Western missionary organisations to plant churches in the nineteenth century succeeded. Since then Christianity has had a continuous presence and influence in Ghana. By the close of the nineteenth and the commencement of the twentieth century, a significant growth in conversions to Christianity has occurred and has since continued remarkably. Therefore, before I proceed to present GP and its DT it is necessary to show the religious environment within which the emergence and growth of the movement has taken place. Also, I need to show how the HMCs from the West, who were the first to introduce Christianity into this context, responded to the African traditional religious background. Moreover, the presentation of this religious environment helps us to understand the Ghanaian primal worldview which is essential for any discussion of contextualisation.

1.3. The Religious Background of Ghanaian Christianity

For many Ghanaians, the decision to accept a religious practice and to participate in its rituals is determined by the real or presumed efficacy of that practice for supplying answers to deal with the realities of life. Generally, the assertion that Africans are notoriously and incurably religious and that they take their religion with

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them wherever they go is applicable to most Ghanaians.\textsuperscript{74} Mbiti affirms that African religions ‘… evolved slowly through many centuries as people responded to the situations in their lives and reflected upon their experiences’.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, Gbadegesin asserts rightly that African religiosity is the outcome of humans’ pondering of their loneliness and vulnerability within the vagaries of the African cosmos.\textsuperscript{76}

It is said that in contemplating the universe, the traditional African becomes apprehensive, aware and convinced of the existence of a supreme being or of supernatural powers that influence nature and humanity. This religious attitude is not meant to honour the creator or deities. Instead, it is utilitarian, in that it is motivated by the wellbeing of humans and their community.\textsuperscript{77} African traditional religion is a ‘nature religion’ based on a numinous awareness of the natural as well as the spiritual environment. Its practices are directed towards the furtherance of vitality in the lives of humans and their community.\textsuperscript{78} It does not have prophets appointed by God, nor does it have revelations or sacred scriptures. There are no creeds to be recited, because the creeds are believed to have been written in the hearts of individuals and are transmitted through oral traditions, rituals, and religious


\textsuperscript{75} Mbiti, \textit{Introduction}, 14.


\textsuperscript{77} Gbadegesin, “Origins”, 414; also, see; Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 143-145.

personages. This religion is awe inspiring rather than rational, and has no clear distinction between the secular and the sacred.  

1.4. The Akan Worldview and Primal Cosmology

Although there are several ethnic groups in Ghana there is a very deep affinity between the notions these various groups have of religion. For the sake of specificity, I limit my description of the religious background of Ghanaian Christianity to that of the Akans in Ghana. Akan traditional religion presupposes a worldview that conceives of the universe as constituting a spiritual and a physical realm. The Akan universe is conceived as a hierarchy of beings with Onyankopong or Onyame at the apex, then the deities, ancestors, humans and the world of natural objects and phenomena in that order. It is believed that the spiritual realm influences the natural and physical realm of humans. A brief description of each level of the spiritual entities shows their relevance for morality in Ghanaian culture.

A. The Supreme Being, Onyankopong (God)

Akans believe in a creator called Onyankopong or Onyame (God). He is the Supreme Being, the source of all life, human and non-human. The Supreme Being is conceived of as wholly good and not to be lightly approached or bothered with trivial human affairs. Hence, he has delegated authority to the deities who act in his place. Accordingly, the Supreme Being is not worshipped as such but the Akan maxim obi nnkyere abofra Nyame, (no one teaches a child to know God), asserts the self-

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evidence of God in the thought of the Akan. The relationship between this conception of the Supreme Being and morality is somehow indirect and scant, in that Onyankopong is not thought to be the direct source of moral knowledge as it is believed in the Christian and other Abrahamic traditions. In other words, the determination of truth and what is good is not based on what Onyankopong has said or revealed. However, the relations that exist between the spiritual realm, human beings and the material world show that among the Akans, morality is essential for survival of the community. Although this interrelatedness is a major strength for the Akan scheme, it is also one of its main weaknesses that will be discussed in chapter four.

B. The Deities or lesser gods (abosom)

The deities or abosom are sometimes termed ‘children of God’ and are believed to wield a lot of power that is both beneficent and malevolent. They are called upon through various mediums to intervene in the affairs of humans. Prominent among the deities are the nature gods, such as the Earth goddess and the river gods who are perceived to be the aegis of the spiritual lineage called ntoro. They are also believed to provide moral sanctions for the community because it is thought that they enforce morality by punishing or rewarding people for their moral behaviour. In short, like other Africans, Akans believe that the deities are there to supervise the wellbeing of living human beings. Consequently, they are treated with respect

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83 Pobee, Toward an African, 47.
84 Types of deities such as tribal and personal.
85 Pobee, Toward an African, 47.
when they deliver and with contempt if they fail. It is essential to note that the deities are not held as models of morality as such. Further, they do not live in the same realm as humans anyway, so they cannot be exemplars for human beings. Idowu pointed out that not all African divinities ‘… have been models of good breeding’.\textsuperscript{87} So, people could actually abandon a deity for another for its inability to ensure the wellbeing of the community or the extended family.\textsuperscript{88} With regard to morality, the main role of the divinities is in their rewarding and punishing of moral actions.

C. The Ancestors or Nananom

The ancestors are the living dead who have finished their work here on earth and have gone ahead to the spirit world. Strictly speaking, ancestorship is earned in that Akans do not venerate all dead people as ancestors. Instead, to qualify as an ancestor, one must have lived an exemplary life in the community and also lived to a ‘ripe’ old age or has done much to enhance the image of the clan, family and tribe.\textsuperscript{89} It is believed that these dead fore-parents are powerful and can influence the course of life for those living for good or evil because of their interest in perpetuating the harmonious existence of their clans. The ancestors also provide moral sanctions for the community either by punishing or rewarding moral behaviour. A more direct significance of the ancestors for morality in the Akan scheme is that they are looked upon from a historical perspective as moral exemplars.\textsuperscript{90} So, the nature of Akan moral life is demonstrated by the community’s understanding of the good moral character as it was embodied in specific persons whom the community reveres as

\textsuperscript{87} Idowu, \textit{Oludumare}, 153.
\textsuperscript{88} Busia, “The Ashanti”, 197; Pobee, \textit{African Theology}, 48; Gyekeye, \textit{An Essay}, 137.
exemplars. An important factor related to the ancestors is that, from the teleological perspective, achievement of ancestorship is seen as the goal for human life.\textsuperscript{91}

From the above, it is clear that Akans see \textit{Onyankopong} as the creator of the world and all reality, including humans, deities and the ecosystem. However, because the Supreme Being is wholly good and should not be bothered with trivial matters, the deities are introduced to relate to humans for their day to day needs. Besides, the ancestors are held in high esteem for being exemplars and, also for having spiritual oversight over the community.

\textbf{1.5. Akan Religious Expectations}

Diedrich Westermann affirmed that the belief of the African in the finiteness of humans to defend themselves against malevolent spiritual forces is an important motivation for religious practices.\textsuperscript{92} Akan traditional religion reflects the worldview that hosts of spirit beings, both malevolent and beneficent, inhabit the universe and that people’s circumstances \textit{can} be determined by forces beyond their control. This belief in the finitude of humans causes relentless longing for a power that can deliver people from their situation and place them in life-affirming conditions where they can grow towards authentic humanity.\textsuperscript{93} Therefore, there is a constant need for people to placate the divinities to their own advantage. Within this context religious attitudes tend to be teleological as religious rituals are always aimed at achieving the

\textsuperscript{91} Ephirim-Donkor, \textit{African Spirituality}, 110.
\textsuperscript{92} Diedrich Westermann, \textit{Africa and Christianity} (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 76 -78; Gifford, \textit{Ghana’s New Christianity}, 83.
\textsuperscript{93} Mercy Amba Oduyoye, \textit{Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflection on Theology in Africa} (4\textsuperscript{th} Print) (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 42.
practical ends of general wellbeing, that is, success or prosperity in life.\textsuperscript{94} In the Akan community almost every communal event is connected with religion. Events such as birth, death, marriage, widowhood, harvest and appointments of people to political offices have a religious dimension to them.\textsuperscript{95} Akans and most Africans see religion as a reliable means to preserve life in its totality.\textsuperscript{96} In Akan terms, life takes on a wider meaning. Nkwa, the vernacular word for life in the Akan language, means among other things, long life, health, wealth, prosperity, happiness, felicity, riches, peace, children and freedom from perturbation.\textsuperscript{97} Here, life is synonymous with wellbeing.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that among Ghanaians wellbeing is the basis, the central motivation and the pivotal point for religion. ‘Life is the one great thing which matters. To preserve life is the real aim of religious practice’.\textsuperscript{98} Consequently, like most African societies, the traditional Ghanaian society is anthropocentric. However, although, human wellbeing is central to religious pursuits, this is never to be divorced from the existence of other entities such as the Supreme Being, deities and ancestors. The unending relational networks that exist between humans and these other entities, make the religious life of Akans not just anthropocentric but also cosmic or, rather, theocentric.\textsuperscript{99} In this context, religion is essentially related to problem-solving, and its validity and potency are judged according to its ability to

\textsuperscript{94} Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘‘Christ is the Answer’ What is the Question?: A Ghanaian Airways Prayer Vigil and its Implications for Religion, Evil and Public Space’, \textit{JRA} 31: 1 (2005), 114.
\textsuperscript{95} Pobee, \textit{African Theology}, 44.
\textsuperscript{97} Larbi, ‘The Nature of Continuity’.
\textsuperscript{98} Westermann, \textit{Africa and Christianity}, 80.
resolve problems relating to the wellbeing of individuals and their communities. It is in this religious environment that the messengers of Christianity operated. How did they fare in this situation?

1.6. The Response of the HMCs

Despite the great achievements made by Western missionaries in the provision of education, health, commercial and political institutions, in their Christian preaching and practice they missed the appropriate integration of the Ghanaian religio-cultural heritage with the gospel. Although, Ghanaian communities still believed in the reality of spirits and witchcraft, the Western missionaries to Ghana used Enlightenment (modern) epistemology to dismiss long-held African beliefs. Ghanaians were told by the missionaries of the HMCs that belief in the spiritual realm and witchcraft was superstition and psychological delusion respectively. The earliest missionaries and imperialists did not think that there was anything dignified and uplifting about the moral ideas of Africans or that they were worthy of respect by a civilised world. So, through colonialism, Western education and Christianity, Western ethics was imposed in the name of Christianity and civilisation to replace traditional African moral schemes.

Denouncing Ghanaian traditional religions without an adequate substitute earned the earliest missionaries a bad reputation as destroyers of the high moral principles and

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orderliness of the indigenous society. Their approach created conflicts between indigenous values and Western ones, causing displacement of the authority of traditional rulers and leaders because the faith of the new converts made them flout the authority of the unconverted chiefs. Also, believers treated their unbelieving parents and members of their extended families with suspicion and contempt.

The missionaries’ attitude to Ghanaian indigenous religion and culture caused what Mercy Oduyoye has called the ‘Africans’ superficial acceptance of Christianity’. Also, Mathias Forson terms the same situation, whereby converts held on to the Christian faith but still believed and interpreted their life events through the prism of the African traditional conceptual scheme, as ‘split-level’ Christianity.

E. A. Asamoah’s statement to the International Missionary Council at Willingen in 1952 reveals that many Ghanaian converts of the missionary churches were living with two conflicting worldviews. They maintained membership in a church and subscribed to a statement of Christian faith. However, beneath the scheme of conscious Christian beliefs were profoundly embedded traditions and customs which entailed quite a different interpretation of the universe and the world of spirit from that which Christian interpretations allow. So, during crises in life, instead of using Western/Christian epistemology to interpret situations, these Christians used their traditional epistemology. Asamoah stated that there was a fear of the vague unknown

107 Mathias Forson, “Split-Level Christianity in Africa: A Case Study of the Persistence of Traditional Beliefs and Practices among Akan Methodists of Ghana” (PhD. Diss.: Asbury Theological Seminary 1993), 4. Forson defines this situation as “the co-existence within the same person of both traditional and Christian beliefs often leading to a conflict either consciously or unconsciously within the individual”.
forces of evil, even in the minds of younger people who had forgotten or had never really known clearly what their forebears believed. This fear made them easy converts to some fetish shrines. Asamoah’s opinion of the situation was that it made African Christians sociologically wretched beings with divided personalities which were neither here nor there. He believed that there was a section of the African mind, ‘a sphere of the African soul world’ that missionary Christianity did not succeed in penetrating.

Consequently, members of the churches drifted back to the traditional religions, especially to the Tigare cult which purported to be offering life to its supplicants. Hans Debrunner’s historical account of the era reveals that members of the churches who could not get the answers they expected from Christianity returned to the traditional religious succour that they were familiar with. He reckoned that in some places half of the entire membership left the churches and followed the cults. Even, the intervention of the Christian Council of Ghana by its publication of the pamphlet called Tigare or Christ? could not reverse the situation or change the belief in, and fear of, witchcraft and other evil spirits. Apparently, the emergence of the earliest Pentecostal churches was necessitated by the cerebral Christianity of the HMCs and their failure to address the African belief in spirits and the fear of witches and evil spirits.

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112 Debrunner, A History, 319, 320, 325.
1.7. The Emergence and Nomenclature of GP

Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana has been characterised by epochal metamorphosis, with the strand in each period responding to specific socio-spiritual and religious needs. The Liberian Prophet Wade Harris’s itinerant preaching, which started in 1914 in the Ivory Coast and continued along the West African coast, is described as involving Pentecostal manifestations that gave impetus to the establishment of the *Spiritual Churches* (AICs) in Ghana.\footnote{David Shank, *Prophet Harris: The Black Elijah of West Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 57. Shank shows that speaking of tongues prophecy and healing characterised Harris’s ministry.} Although the Spiritual Churches are regarded as the beginners of the Pentecostal movement in Ghana, Pentecostal bodies in Ghana do not accept the Spiritual Churches as Pentecostal denominations nor do the Charismatic (neo-Pentecostal) denominations accept them.\footnote{AIC means African Independent, or Initiated, or Indigenous churches. See; Bengt G. M. Sundkler *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); J. Y. D. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); H. W. Turner, *African Independent Church: The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord Aladura* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).} Also, the neo-Pentecostal denominations are not categorised with the classical Pentecostals though they operate with the same ethos. The categorisations within GP can confuse those who are not familiar with the Ghanaian religious scene because these transmutations are complex and ongoing. Therefore, a brief taxonomy is necessary to curtail the complexity.

The first group to emerge on the Ghanaian Christian scene were the Spiritual Churches which resulted from the ministry of Ghanaian charismatic leaders who withdrew from the HMCs to plant indigenous churches. The classical Pentecostals were the second strand to appear in Ghana in the 1920s. These are churches which were either planted by or affiliated with Western Pentecostal denominations. They include the Assemblies of God (AoG) and three Apostolic Churches, one of which
became the Church of Pentecost (CoP) that splintered from their affiliation with the Apostolic Church in the UK. Following these were the renewal movements within the HMCs. Also, in the late sixties and early seventies several Para-church organisations, including the Scripture Union, became very active and successful in creating the environment for the emergence of new groups. Subsequently, the neo-Pentecostal stirring started in the late seventies and has become one of the dominant strands, particularly in the urban cities around the country and also in many cities in Western Europe and North America.

Generally speaking, the neo-Pentecostals can be regarded as a prevailing transformation within GP because their leaders came out from one or a combination of other strands to offer what they perceived was lacking in the movement. Yet, another group is the Prayer Camps or Healing Centres which operate as units of some denominations or have seceded from established denominations to become separate churches. In spite of these differences, this study has categorised all the groups, including the Spiritual Churches as Pentecostals for phenomenological and theological reasons. Whereas the Spiritual Churches focused on the power of God to heal, a more balanced neo-Pentecostals focus on the power of the Holy Spirit to make Christians prosper. The important thing to note is that all the groups teach DT and practice ‘deliverance’ ritual, albeit to differing extents.

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115 These are the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast (Ghana), Christ Apostolic Church and Ghana Apostolic Church, later CoP see; Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 69–70; Asamoah-Gyadu, 88–91; Robert W. Wyllie, “Pioneers of Ghanaian Pentecostalism: Peter Anim and James McKeown”, *JRA* 6: 2 (1974), 109–221.

1.8. DT and the Growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana

It is undeniable that DT has contributed immensely to the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in Ghana. However, the religious beliefs and indigenous exegesis of Pentecostals are often taken for granted while scholars use social deprivation theory to explain the rapid growth of the movement.\textsuperscript{117} This theory holds that people are attracted to Pentecostalism as a means of rectifying some social or economic deprivation (defects or crises) in their lives.\textsuperscript{118} As I have shown elsewhere, this view is simplistic because it ignores vital cultural and religious information that is crucial for understanding the conversion of many Africans to Pentecostalism.\textsuperscript{119}

Converts to Pentecostal churches seek spiritual help because of the holistic orientation of African traditional religiosity which sees human life as part of a cosmic whole. Baëta has shown that the emergence of the earliest Pentecostals, the Spiritual Churches, had more to do with religious pragmatism than economic or political oppression.\textsuperscript{120} Although social and economic factors play a part, these should not be seen as the main motivation for conversions to GP. This is because irrespective of social standing, many Ghanaians are shaped by belief in the activities

\textsuperscript{117} Albert G. Miller, “Pentecostalism and a Social Movement: Beyond the Theory of Deprivation”, \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 9 (1996), 113.
\textsuperscript{119} Lord Elorm-Donkor, “The Mission of the Elim Church of Pentecost in the UK”, (MPhil Diss., The University of Birmingham, 2007) see Chapter 4. Although, economic and social factors cannot be ruled out, it is not the main reason for conversion to Pentecostal Christianity.
\textsuperscript{120} Baëta, \textit{Prophetism in Ghana}. In other parts of Africa, Ethiopianism, which was a religious movement that started in South Africa in the colonial era, was seen as a reaction against political oppression.
of evil spirits on human life. Therefore, Pomerville’s assertion that deprivation can also refer to the spiritual or the lack of supernatural experience is more useful for explaining conversions to Pentecostalism in Ghana. The emergence and growth of GP can be considered as a reaction against spiritual deprivation in the HMCs. It is said that the failure of the HMCs to meet the deep yearning of their members for spiritual power and for wholeness helped the Pentecostal churches to reap where the historical churches have sown. Thus, the emergence of the Pentecostal renewal in Ghanaian Christianity is regarded as an indigenous Christian response to religious, socio-economic and political issues in order to provide social solidarity, emotional experience, healing and security from assumed maleficent forces. This indigenous Christian response is articulated by what I term the DT.

1.9. GP and Christian Doctrine

Before I proceed with the description of the DT, it is important to state that African Pentecostals are Christians from every perspective of that designation. Unlike the picture Gifford paints of a section of the movement in Ghana, which observes that they do not emphasise sin, there is widespread evidence that in most cases members of all the Pentecostal churches clearly understand original sin in Christian terms. They believe that through faith in Jesus Christ and repentance from their sins, they are saved by the grace of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Their major focus, though, is on the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Importantly, they do not merely transfer the possession of ancestral spirits to the Holy

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121 Larbi affirms that trained scientists and peasants alike believe in the activities of witches and other spirit beings. Larbi, Pentecostals, 428.
122 Pomerville, The Third Force, 44.
123 Larbi, Pentecostalism, 182.
124 The Spiritual Churches are the first strand of Pentecostalism in Ghana. Debrunner, A History, 325 - 326.
125 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 80 - 88.
Spirits. Like most Pentecostals elsewhere, GPs are evangelical in that they identify scriptures as the ultimate authority in matters of spirituality, doctrine and ethics. They highlight the death of Christ as the only source of redemption, and focus on conversion and a life-changing religious experience. They actively engage in sharing the Christian gospel through evangelism. However, in their approach they could rightly be described as Biblicist, conversionist, crucicentric and particularly pneumacentric. GPs believe that the bible is divinely authoritative for teaching, correction and direction and they insist on the contemporary and contextual relevance of the word of God. Characteristically, GPs appropriate the bible literally to suit their schema, the fight against the demonic realm. Also, they see their missionary task as taking the gospel to the unsaved, having dominion over principalities and setting captives free by casting out demonic entities and healing the sick. In doing these, they expect the same signs and wonders that followed the New Testament apostles to follow their proclamation today, especially in their effort to set the captives free from the alleged wicked spirits of the African cosmos.

1.10. DT as Contextualisation

It is important to make two clarifications from the onset before providing any description of the DT. Firstly, the Christian expression being described here is not a strange belief held by only a small population of the Ghanaian society who are perhaps illiterate and poor. As shown below, it is a generally held position in GP.

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126 Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 422.
130 Three important pieces of research by Ghanaian theologians and observations of other scholars give us a clear understanding of the Christian expression. Asamoah-Gyadu’s *African Charismatics* is a revision of his PhD. thesis presented at the University of Birmingham in 2000. Larbi’s *Pentecostals*
Secondly, in strictest terms, the DT may not be designated as a theology since it is not a rational analysis or an intellectual reflection upon the nature, purpose and activity of God in relation to the world.\textsuperscript{131} William Kay has termed the DT type of theological articulation as ‘Ordinary theology’ and states that it is the first level of theology and is distinct from, but related to the other levels, which are the theology of seminary trained local pastors and the theology of professional theologians of academic institutions.\textsuperscript{132} The DT is a theology of the everyday believer who has no formal theological training whose beliefs are formed out of personal bible reading, the sermons and religious experience.\textsuperscript{133} It focuses on the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and on how it might be used to deal with the evil spirits of the African cosmos. In this way it can be termed as a local theology.\textsuperscript{134}

In Pentecostal circles, there is a belief that the Christian life is fraught with the ongoing struggles between God and local or territorial [demonic] spirits.\textsuperscript{135} African Pentecostals perceive salvation as an ongoing process which is teleological. Salvation presupposes a linear growth that is at the same time troubled with resistance from evil spirit entities. Hence, there is need for close monitoring to ensure that salvation proceeds uninterrupted.\textsuperscript{136} The growth in salvation is always expected to manifest in righteousness, good health, abundant wealth and general success in

\textsuperscript{131} Alistair McGrath, \textit{Theology: An Introduction} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 141.
\textsuperscript{133} Kay, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 57.
\textsuperscript{135} Joel Robins, “Globalisation of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity”, \textit{Annual Review of Anthropology} 33 (2004), 117 -143. In the northern Hemisphere, John Wimber and Peter Wagner, a former Professor at the Fuller Theological Seminary, are strong proponents of such beliefs. See; Wagner, \textit{Confronting the Powers} (Ventura: Regal Books, 1996); \textit{Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural in Spiritual Warfare} (Ventura: Regal Books, 1990).
life. For this reason, there is a persistent need to identify and eliminate anything that impedes these manifestations. GPs use the DT as their way of using Christian doctrines to respond to the African religious dilemma. It always seeks to offer liberation from the bondages of oppression and possession.

For instance, when one suffers or is frustrated by ongoing problems such as sickness, insomnia, business failures, unemployment, academic failures, or any similar situations, it is interpreted as oppression by evil and demonic spirits on that person’s life (demonic oppression). On the other hand, demonic ‘possession refers to altered states of consciousness, conditions in which suffering or ‘unatural behaviour’ is deemed to be the result of an invasion of the human body by an alien spirit’. Although this belief is considered as resonating with African traditional religiosity, GPs find support for it from the scriptures. Asamoah-Gyadu explains that GPs see the biblical account of the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5: 1-20, where the actions of the demoniac was involuntary, as possession by evil spirits, whereas the woman whose back was bent for eighteen years (Luke 13: 10-17) is seen as a sufferer of a satanic oppression upon her life (Luke 13: 17).

Basically, the DT teaches that both oppression and possession are caused by generational and ancestral curses that emanate from the spiritual covenant one’s forebears may have entered into knowingly or unknowingly. These curses can only be cancelled through the ‘deliverance’ ritual, which removes all spiritual

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impediments for the Christian to live a successful life.\textsuperscript{139} Since the main issue here is warfare against the evil spirits of the African cosmos, GPs contextualised Jesus Christ as \textit{osahene} (a war lord or a field marshall) who has overcome the powers and principalities, disarming them by his blood and the power of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{140} In this way, the DT can be regarded as a Christian response to the assumed malevolent activities of the African cosmos. Hence, the DT is rightly regarded as an attempt by GPs to contextualise the Christian message in an African milieu.\textsuperscript{141}

The research conducted by Apostle Opoku Onyinah, the current Chairman of the CoP, into the belief in witchcraft and ‘deliverance’ ritual (exorcism) in that church, remains the most detailed account of exorcism in GP.\textsuperscript{142} Onyinah’s survey of over 1200 Ghanaians of different faith backgrounds revealed that ‘deliverance’ is widely accessed by people from all walks of life, including politicians, business personalities, Christians, Muslims, people with other faiths and traditional religious people.\textsuperscript{143} It also revealed that belief in the existence of witches and activities of evil spirits is not limited to illiterates or village folk. As Larbi puts it, this belief is not ‘just a figment or the imagination of the ignorant’. Rather, both trained scientists and illiterate peasants believe in the African cosmology, which includes the belief that spiritual forces are able to inflict negative influences on human life.\textsuperscript{144} Acceptance of and response to this traditional belief by GPs is often seen as a positive appropriation or an attempt to achieve contextualisation.

\textsuperscript{139} Robins, “On the Paradoxes”, 225. Onyinah, \textit{Akan Witchcraft}, chapters 3 and 4 describes the actual ‘deliverance’ ritual. Although the ritual is important the scope of this work does not permit a thorough description of it.
\textsuperscript{140} Larbi, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 425.
\textsuperscript{141} See Onyinah, \textit{Akan Witchcraft}, Abstract.
\textsuperscript{142} Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft” is an important research that my study has relied on to provide an understanding of the Deliverance Theology among Ghanaian Pentecostals.
\textsuperscript{143} Onyinah, \textit{Akan Witchcraft}, 258.
\textsuperscript{144} Larbi, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 424.
1.11. The Extent of the Belief in the Spiritual Realm

It is not an exaggeration to state that belief in the existence and the negative influences of spirit beings on human life is widespread in Ghana. All the respondents of Onyinah’s survey who have university degrees believed not only that witches and evil spirits exist, but also that these spirit entities do have a negative influence on human affairs. One of the interviewees referred to in the study as Ferkah, who was then a PhD student at the University of Oslo in Norway, even believed that evil spirits were actually responsible for his health problems. The persistence of this belief in the history of Ghanaian Christianity is noteworthy.

In the 1940s Ephraim Amu stated that belief in the reality of spirits and fear of evil spirits was as strong as ever among many Ghanaian Christians of all classes: literates, illiterates and non-Christians alike. Six decades later, Onyinah’s study affirms that there is still widespread belief that evil spirit entities influence human life. Subsequently, the belief that the Christian life is a struggle between a believer and demonic powers receives a lot of emphasis in both the preaching and evangelism of GPs. Although this is considered as appropriation of the African traditional belief in spirit beings, still, proponents of the DT want it to be seen as a biblical response rather than an African one.

1.12. Sources of Demonic Influences

GPs believe that traditional religions and certain aspects of Ghanaian culture are sources of curses that, on becoming a born-again, one should by all means break away from. People who had participated in various family and community rituals in

147 Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 177.
their upbringing where the ancestors were venerated or at a religious shrine where the deities were consulted, are believed to have formed bonds with spiritual forces. Again, social events such as outdooring or the naming ceremony of a new-born child in the community, puberty rites, and religious initiations or the use of traditional healing methods where deities and ancestors are consulted through the pouring of libation, are all regarded as ‘doorways’ for spiritual covenants.\(^{148}\) Further, it is held that whenever a sorcerer, deity or evil spirit places a curse on a family, an individual or a community, Satan stands behind the spirits to enforce the curse which subsequently blocks success in the life of an individual or family over many generations.

### 1.13. Responses of DT to the African Spirit Realm

Consequent to their belief that before conversion to Christianity every African carries curses from their past, the DT teaches that the growth process in salvation only really takes off after the believer has broken every link with his/her past. It is not simply ungodly habits and sinful activities that people have to break away from. In addition, they need to break away from friends and family members who are unbelievers or are not born-again. The fear is that because of ‘the power in the ties of blood and amity’ such individuals pose the greatest threat to a ‘new life in Christ’.\(^ {149}\) In other words, kinship ties may be avenues for the demonic activity in the believer’s life.

Brigit Meyer conducted ethnographic research into one of the groups in Ghana, and affirms that ‘breaking with the past’ often involves the ‘rejection of many aspects of


cultural life’ such as customary rites and festivals.\textsuperscript{150} Moreover, the break also involves the ability to identify reasons for lack of progress in life, discerning the future and the power to change it for the better through exorcising the demonic powers and releasing prosperity to believers.\textsuperscript{151}

Onyinah considers the deliverance ritual that demonstrates the DT as a divinatory consultation where people seek to know what has gone wrong in order to find a spiritual remedy.\textsuperscript{152} Thus for GPs, breaking with the past is crucial for the freedom to live a successful new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. It does not simply mean repentance from sin to living a holy life in Jesus Christ, though that is the ultimate essence. Basically, GPs consider severing spiritual, and sometimes, even physical, ties with the extended family as being necessary for the prosperity or success of the ‘born again’ Christian, especially if those ties are perceived as being a hindrance to subsequent progress in the ‘born again’ life. Many Pentecostals consider the ‘deliverance’ ritual as a way of cultivating a ‘… transformational faith that is powerful enough to redeem the Pentecostal Christians from the clutches of demonic agents’.\textsuperscript{153} It is also perceived as the spiritual breaking of the links that keep people tangled with their past, a past that is regarded as backward.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{150} Meyer, “Make a Complete”, 317.
\textsuperscript{151} Emmanuel Anim, “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?: An Analysis of Prosperity Teaching in the Charismatic Ministries (Churches) in Ghana and its Wider Impact” (PhD. Thesis: The Open University, 2003), 378. Onyinah shows that it is based on the Akan \textit{abisa} or divinatory consultation which seeks to explain the causal factors of events and issues. See; Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{152} Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, chapter 3.
1.14. Reasons for Seeking Deliverance

Those who access the ‘deliverance’ ritual do so to alleviate various problems ranging from the simplest to the most complex. Usually, ancestral and generational curses are believed to be responsible for issues such as barrenness, alcoholism, misfortune and failures of all sorts, which have assumed patterns, become incurable or happen repetitively.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, “Mission to Set The Captives Free: Healing, Deliverance and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism”, IRM 93: 370/371 (2004), 396.} For instance, issues in a particular family such as persistent child mortality or the persistent inability of women to have lasting marriage relationships or to enter one, disability and chronic disease and history of mental health disorders, may all be interpreted as signs of demonic oppression in that family.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, “Mission to Set The Captives Free: Healing, Deliverance and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism”, IRM 93: 370/371 (2004), 391-96.} Genetic or biological interpretations do not feature in this aetiology.

Even if some issues are attributed to natural causations, it is still believed that malevolent powers may take advantage of a situation and worsen the plights of victims, and sometimes even perpetuate their misfortune along their family lines.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”, 102.}

It is for this reason that individuals attending ‘deliverance’ sessions are required to fill in a questionnaire.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, “Faith, Healing and Mission: Reflections on a Consultative Process”, IRM 93: 370/371 (2004), 374.} This helps the exorcists to identify ‘patterns of failure’ in a person’s life and to link them to various religious rituals in which the person had participated, in order to break the covenant they entailed and to set the person free.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, “Mission to Set”, 396-97. Some exorcists rely on spontaneous intuition and do not use questionnaires.}

Sometimes, freedom from behavioural problems is sought as well. For instance, the issues that the largest population in Onyinah’s survey sought to solve through the
‘deliverance’ ritual can be considered rather appropriately as problems relating to bad conduct and irresponsible moral behaviour. More than twenty percent of the respondents in that survey were trying to solve problems which included addiction to alcohol and other substances, bad temper, promiscuity and lack of love in their marriages and families. Respondents with these issues had attended ‘deliverance’ in order to be set free from demonic oppression and possession so that they could be filled with the Holy Spirit and be protected against witches and sorcerers, who are believed to be responsible for such problems. This situation is not limited to Ghanaians. It is an African issue. Deji Ayegboyin comments on Pentecostals in Nigeria and says that they too:

give spiritual interpretation to virtually everything, especially, misfortune and failures in life such as barrenness, illnesses, unemployment, disappointment, poverty, and so on. This underlying belief in spiritual causations of all events explains why spirit-induced services, faith healing and the expectations of the miraculous feature prominently in their deliverance services.

1.15. Effects of GP Contextualisation

Generally, the DT is considered as a positive appropriation of the African traditional religious heritage. It is perceived as being particularly effective for dealing with healing and the everyday life issues of Ghanaians. Its promise and practice of healing is common and prominent. In December 2002 the WCC held a consultation on this issue in Ghana. The consultation, which was hosted by the CoP and themed Faith, Healing and Mission, aimed at seeking a proper understanding of the healing practice

and finding a remedy to the lapses that have been associated with it.\textsuperscript{163} A greeting sent to the consultation by the Ghana Pentecostal Council affirmed that ‘many unethical manipulations and practices are taking place in the name of faith healing with many so-called men of God masquerading as prophets and healers, and riding on the emotions and ignorance of the people profiting from their ailments and agonies’.\textsuperscript{164} The Council hoped that the consultation will help it identify and remove those who use healing for economic gain in order to restore sanity in the practice. This statement shows that the DT is fraught with moral issues.

\textbf{1.16. Effectiveness of DT as Contextualisation}

Scholars of African Pentecostalism agree that Pentecostalism has been effective in Africa, because it addresses the relevant concerns that Africans have about working out how to live in a hostile environment.\textsuperscript{165} Anderson claims that the Pentecostals’ emphasis on freedom in the Spirit makes the movement essentially flexible in different cultural and social contexts.\textsuperscript{166} He argues that, because Africans believe their world is filled with fearsome and unpredictable occurrences which demand Christian answers, only a soteriology that seeks to proclaim a message of deliverance from sin, sickness, and all forms of oppression and from every fear of evil that haunts people, is relevant in Africa.\textsuperscript{167} Anderson affirms that among African Pentecostals, salvation entails a ‘… sense of well-being evidenced in freedom from sickness,

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{163} Noel A. Davies and Martin Conway, eds. \textit{World Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A Reader} (London: SCM Press, 2008), 81. The group reports on the consultation and responses to it were published in the \textit{International Review of Mission IRM} 93: 369/370 (2004).
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{164} Quoted in Asamoah-Gyadu, “Faith, Healing and Mission”, 376–77.
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{166} Anderson and Hollenweger, \textit{Pentecostals}, 221.
\bibitem{} \textsuperscript{167} Anderson, \textit{Zion and Pentecost}, 274.
\end{thebibliography}
poverty, misfortune as well as in deliverance from sin and evil’.\textsuperscript{168} Pentecostalism is inspired to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of Africans and to offer solutions to, and ways for coping with, problems in a threatening and hostile world.\textsuperscript{169}

This implies that prospective African converts to Christianity are attracted to Pentecostalism because the latter is sympathetic or at least has a serious approach ‘… to African life and culture, fears and uncertainties, and to the worldview of spirits, magic and witchcraft’.\textsuperscript{170} Thus for Anderson, the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa is due to the Pentecostals’ success in providing a contextualised Christianity where the HMCs had failed, especially in the area of holistic healing which is a real need in Africa.\textsuperscript{171}

Anderson’s view is very important for understanding Pentecostalism in Africa. His view on the general effect of Pentecostal appropriation of African traditional religiosity is shared by other scholars. Kingsley Larbi, a Ghanaian theologian, asserts that the growth of GP was due to the Pentecostals’ ability to relate traditional beliefs about the cosmic struggles between humans and spirits entities to Christian doctrine.\textsuperscript{172} Larbi posits that in the African primal cosmology people see themselves as always exposed to the influences of evil spirits that are sometimes manipulated by other people to inflict pain through acts of sorcery, witchcraft, charms, which prevent them from enjoying abundant life. Thus, ‘… the central focus of religious exercise is directed towards harnessing spiritual power’ for the advantage of human beings.

\textsuperscript{168} Anderson, and Hollenweger, \textit{Pentecostals}, 215.
\textsuperscript{169} Anderson, \textit{An Introduction}, 199.
\textsuperscript{170} Anderson, \textit{Zion and Pentecost}, 125; Anderson, \textit{An Introduction}, 201.
\textsuperscript{171} Anderson, \textit{An Introduction}, 122.
\textsuperscript{172} Larbi, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 425.
Larbi sees the success of GP as lying in their ability to present the traditional understanding of the struggle with evil spirits in a way that Christian doctrine can respond to.\footnote{Larbi, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 425.}

Similarly, John Mbiti affirms that Pentecostalism helps African Christians to see, know and experience Jesus Christ as the conqueror over forces such as poverty, witchcraft, sorcery, anxiety, sickness and death from which Africa needs liberation.\footnote{Mbiti, “Some African Concepts of Christology”, in George F. Vicedom, ed. \textit{Christ and the Younger Churches: Theological Contributions from Asia, Africa and Latin America} (London: SPCK, 1972), 51-62.} Thus the impact of the Pentecostal expression of Christianity is considered on the basis of its ability to provide the power to ward off evil spirits so that people can live successful lives. It is maintained that when Pentecostals preach salvation amidst authentic signs and wonders of healings, their hearers have no problem shifting allegiance, and even priests/esses of traditional religious cults have converted to Pentecostalism.\footnote{Larbi, \textit{Pentecostalism}, 186.} The focus of these scholars is not in assessing Pentecostal teaching and practices in the light of Christian moral development, although the traditional African understanding of dilemmas in life is linked to morality.

\subsection*{1.17. DT as Transformation and Empowerment}

Another Ghanaian theologian, Asamoah-Gyadu, has written extensively on this movement and considers that Pentecostal Christianity is successful because of its openness to the supernatural, through its interventionist and oral theological forms
that resonate with traditional African piety.\textsuperscript{176} He posits that in spite of some extremities and abuses, Pentecostal renewal in Ghanaian Christianity has engendered empowerment and transformation in the lives of many people.\textsuperscript{177} For example, through empowerment by the Holy Spirit and the endowment of the spiritual gifts for ministry, the Pentecostal renewal makes ministers out of ordinary laypeople who do not have any theological training.\textsuperscript{178} Another benefit of Pentecostalism is its support for lay participation. This has helped the laity to progress in their salvation and to turn their gifts and talents into proper assets for use by Christ.\textsuperscript{179} Thus, for Asamoah-Gyadu, the keyword associated with the success of Pentecostalism in Ghana is \textit{relevance}. He sees Pentecostal spirituality as speaking to the African experience in a relevant way, as it emphasises the immediacy of God’s presence and ability to deal with all situations.\textsuperscript{180} Like the other scholars, Asamoah-Gyadu concerns himself more with presenting a picture of what Pentecostal Christianity actually entails in Ghana.

Assessment of Pentecostal contextualisation in terms of its impact on Christian moral formation is not yet the main focus of Pentecostal studies in this context. It is undeniable that the DT is an attempt to contextualise the Christian message in the Ghanaian context. Louis Luzbetak explains contextualisation as a process by which a local church integrates the gospel message (the text) with its local culture (the context).\textsuperscript{181} Basically, contextualisation involves the way the Gospel and Culture

\textsuperscript{177} See Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, chapter five.
\textsuperscript{178} Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, 238.
\textsuperscript{179} Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, 239.
\textsuperscript{180} Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, 236; also chapters five through to seven.
relate to one another across different contexts. It is an attempt to communicate the Gospel in word and in deed in a manner that makes sense, meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their worldview. Further, it is a way that allows people to follow Christ while remaining within their own culture.\footnote{Darrell L. Whiteman, “Contextualisation: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge”, IBMR 21: 1 (1992), 2.} The liberational, dialectical and translational or dynamic equivalent models of contextualisation have all been used for this purpose in different contexts and times with varying results.\footnote{David Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 420-450; Luzbetak, The Church and Cultures, 69; See also, David Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-culturally (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); James Douglas ed. Let the World Hear His Voice (Minneapolis: Word Publications, 1975).}

Unlike the HMCs, GPs accept the reality of the spirit realm but claim that the evil forces can be overcome through teachings on repentance, holiness and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They ultimately seek to overpower the acts of evil forces by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the DT addresses the worldview of Ghanaians. Also, the prognosis the DT gives for the existential worries of Ghanaians sustains believers and provides hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, which is necessary for survival in that context. It is also true that by using the gospel to respond to the existential questions, fears and needs of their members in contrast with the earlier denial by the HMCs, the DT bridges aspects of the gap between Christianity and the African worldview.\footnote{Dovlo, “African Culture”, 33.} Moreover, by offering scriptural interpretations which are more fully accommodating of the indigenous preoccupations, than any of the HMCs, GP clearly provides an important catalyst for addressing existential issues and meeting some of the deepest needs of Ghanaians. The DT also offers a ‘basis for the assimilation of Christian procedures into traditional concerns’ such as religious healing.\footnote{Assimeng, Saints and Social Structures, 157-158.}
Therefore, generally, GP has been successful in negotiating Christian doctrines and African traditional beliefs to produce a spirituality that is considerably Christian and culturally relevant.\footnote{Elorm-Donkor, “The Mission”, 43-51.} However, because the DT wages war against the evil forces of the African cosmos as if it was the major issue for humanity in Africa that needs addressing, the imitation of the moral character of Jesus Christ that is required in Christian praxis, has not been given the necessary attention in this contextualisation. Perhaps this is because morality is not a likely topic in warfare situations.

1.18. DT and Social Morality

Gifford argues that the overemphasis of the DT on spiritual warfare to resolve problems without an accompanying scientific and empirical approach has failed to supply answers to Ghana’s chronic socio-political and economic problems.\footnote{Gifford, \textit{Ghana’s New Christianity}, 140–200.} But he is right only as far as macro socio-economic and political issues are concerned. On the micro level where individuals and households are concerned, there is evidence that GP practices have empowered individuals to emerge from their misery and self-pity to take advantage of the power available to them through the Holy Spirit, and this has transformed their lives and circumstances, socially, economically and psychologically.\footnote{Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, chapters five through seven.} There are countless testimonies which prove that converts experience dramatic personality transformations too. Some of these are: recovery from ill-health, reversal of failures in life endeavours, and the restoration of personal
dignity, for example when people convert to GP and give up alcoholism, womanising, drug abuse, prostitution and other similar habits.¹⁸⁹

Scholars of Pentecostal movements elsewhere have shown that these personal transformations in Ghana reflect a general trend within global Pentecostalism. David Martin has observed changes in the lifestyles of Latin America Pentecostals which, he asserts, are positive economic indicators,¹⁹⁰ while Elizabeth Brusco believes that the Pentecostal phenomenon has transformed family relations in Latin America.¹⁹¹

Also, Harvey Cox alludes to this view when he posits that the work ethic of Pentecostal churches helps explain Korea’s economic success.¹⁹² Furthermore, Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori have catalogued various positive social impacts of Pentecostalism around the world.¹⁹³ Therefore, the issue is not about whether Pentecostalism engenders transformation in believers’ moral conduct or not. It is almost taken for granted that the ‘born again’ ethic of many Pentecostals has potential for their moral aptness.

However, there is a genuine concern that the transformed individual attitudes that GP is responsible for does not necessarily translate into social morality and political action to save African nations from their socio-political and economical crisis.¹⁹⁴ As shown above, scholars attribute this situation to the influence of the African worldview on Christian praxis. Although this is a valid concern, it does not mean that

¹⁸⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 237. My personal experience in the movement and study of the mission of the Elim Church of Pentecost in the UK confirms this assertion.
¹⁹² Cox, Fire From Heaven, 234 - 236.
Pentecostals are oblivious of morality or of social responsibility. Even when they are seen as not getting involved in political activism, Kalu shows that this is because they use another approach. They pray rather than speak about or directly address undesirable political situations.

This inconsistency in the area of social morality is due to GP’s lack of a coherent theological framework by which personal transformations can be channelled towards formation of Christian character that can be felt in the public domain. So the positive impacts of the GP notwithstanding, its over-spiritualisation of human affairs should be seen as an indictment on the success of the Christian message in Ghanaian society. This is because many times the attitude fostered by the DT has absolved people from taking practical moral responsibility for their conduct.195 This may not necessarily be seen as deliberate. Instead, it is regarded in this study as an inadvertent outcome of the inappropriate appropriation of African traditional religiosity by GPs. By this shortfall, GPs use the DT to attribute human moral failures to evil spirit beings.

1.19. Moral Dilemma of DT Causal Ascription

One of the major moral problems of the DT is its ascription of misfortune, sickness and moral failures to spiritual causality. A prayer vigil recounted by Asamoah-Gyadu, and similar attitudes of Christians shown in Onyinah’s study discussed above, show that attribution of human moral failure to spiritual causalities clearly absolves people from taking moral responsibility for their actions.196

195 Gifford, Ghana’s New, 125–132. An exception is Pastor Mensah Otabil whose teachings are seen as opposing the over-spiritualisation of human affairs that is entailed in DT.

196 Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”.

Asamoah-Gyadu narrates that, in 2003, Ghana Airways Corporation was indebted to several aviation organisations and could not fulfil its financial obligations. An investment and finance lawyer appointed by the government of Ghana to report on the issue recommended strongly that the airline go into liquidation because it was not viable. Her reasons were that the airline was hugely indebted and lacked the necessary operational tools. Despite this recommendation the management and staff opted for a supernatural intervention to keep the corporation afloat, while the CEOs changed three times within four years, without any success. Arguably, this approach to the resolution of problems is engendered by the DT.

After Mr. Philip Owusu was appointed the CEO in 2003 one of his first actions to save the airline was to participate in an all-night vigil, which was themed ‘Christ is the Answer’, and to partake in ‘deliverance’ prayers. The prayer vigil was organised by the management and staff in conjunction with the Christian Fellowship within the corporation. Rev. Dr. Lawrence Tetteh, a London-based Ghanaian charismatic evangelist was flown to Ghana to minister at the event, with the aim of overcoming the spiritual forces and removing all impediments to the success and prosperity of the corporation. On the question of how a corporation can be demonised, Asamoah-Gyadu affirms that in the DT diagnosis, the performance of certain religious rituals by anyone to secure his own position in the corporation, or to push out another person through supernatural means, can open the corporation to the assault of demonic powers. So, the prayer vigil was needed to liberate (exorcise) the corporation from the demonic oppression that was believed to be behind its bankruptcy.

197 Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”, 101.
198 Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”, 104.
Similarly, a respondent known in Onyinah’s study as Kwadwo, was deported to Ghana from Germany because he did not have the requisite visa to live in that country. But he blamed his deportation on his mother, an alleged witch, and actually attempted to kill her.\textsuperscript{199} Another interviewee known in the study as Akua who had a troubled marriage claimed that another person’s witchcraft was responsible for her immoral conduct of infidelity and stealing. Although she accepted that disloyalty to her husband and stealing could wreck her marriage, she did not consider herself as ultimately responsible for her behaviour.\textsuperscript{200} Both of them accessed the ‘deliverance’ ritual to exorcise the evil spirits that are assumed to be responsible for their plight. Obviously, these attitudes were based on diagnosis of the DT.

Although, human failure such as misappropriation of resources, abuse of staff privileges, pilfering, stealing, illegality, immoral sexual conduct and imprudent business decisions, apparently account for the collapse of the airline, the deportation of Kwadwo and the marital troubles of Akua, Pentecostal interventions did not and do not include checks for probity and moral character. Instead, the supernatural realm is implored through the power of the Holy Spirit to solve the issues that have been caused by moral shortcomings.

Certainly, casting human struggles in super-naturalistic terms without an appropriate theological framework runs the risk of preventing people from understanding their moral responsibility, and exonerating those who hold leadership positions in the

\textsuperscript{199} Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, 284.
\textsuperscript{200} Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, 277.
church and state political institutions from any accountability.\textsuperscript{201} The issues above can normally be interpreted and expressed in practical terms as human moral failures that require pragmatic and bold decisions for moral transformation.\textsuperscript{202} Besides this, the overemphasis of the DT on the power of religion to deal with existential life issues in a quasi fashion portrays the DT as a means to explain and perhaps even to condone moral failures.

1.20. DT as an Explanatory Device

Robins argue that the DT serves as a device for explaining the non-achievement of the great promises a convert to Pentecostal Christianity makes on conversion or on becoming a ‘born again’.\textsuperscript{203} There is some truth in this assertion. Firstly, Ghanaian classical Pentecostal churches lay emphasis on righteous living. Starting in the late 1930s, the classical Pentecostal churches emphasised ‘holiness’ of life, thereby presenting a more positive alternative to the moral lapses that characterised the Spiritual Churches and the HMCs.\textsuperscript{204} They followed holiness and moral codes that ‘… ban contact with the satanic world by forbidding drinking and drug use, extramarital sexuality, fighting and aggressive displays, gambling, … and participation in secular entertainments such as cinema and dancing’.\textsuperscript{205} By so doing the classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana obtained a good public image.\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{201} Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”, 115.
\textsuperscript{202} Asamoah-Gyadu, “Christ is the Answer”, 105.
\textsuperscript{203} Robins, “Globalisation”, 128.
\textsuperscript{204} Worsford, The Origins, 96-106; Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 126.
\textsuperscript{205} Robins, “Globalisation”, 128.
\textsuperscript{206} Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 89.
Alfred Koduah affirms that strong emphasis on ‘holiness’ is a main reason for the rapid growth of the CoP. Further, in the interviews Robert Wyllie conducted to ascertain the reasons for conversion of Ghanaians to Pentecostalism, a respondent had this to say:

What prompted me to join the Apostolic Church was the piety and decent lives the members of the church led. I was a first-class drunkard, a good smoker, and, in fact, I led the sort of indecent life commonly found among young people today. Suddenly, I decided to put away this worldly cloak and aspire to a heavenly cloak. As soon as I enrolled as a member in the church, as if by good luck, I stopped smoking, drinking, fighting and causing all sorts of trouble in public places.

Apparently, a rigorist moral orientation of Ghanaian classical Pentecostals, alongside their demonstration of spiritual powers for healing and for victory over witches, has arrested the social imagination of most Ghanaians. Following after their theological forebears, the Western Holiness movement, Ghanaian classical Pentecostals hold that righteous living is possible for anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their saviour, has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and partakes in the ordinances of the church and the fellowship of the saints. They also believe that holy living ensures that the grace and blessings of God opens ‘doors’ in the believer’s life.

A popular chorus of the early days is relevant here:

I know the Lord will make a way for me
I know the Lord will make a way for me
If I live a holy life
I shun the wrong and do the right
I know the Lord will make a way for me.

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This chorus used to be sung repetitively with deep assurance and the expectation of God’s intervention. In this way, a holy life was seen as a ‘trump card’ for God’s providence here on earth and in the world to come. Unbeknown to GPs, this understanding of the relation between righteousness and blessing is tinted by their traditional religious views, where the good behaviour of a person is believed to ensure that the person has an unhindered access to luck from benevolent spirits.\(^{209}\)

In a way this is biblical as well.\(^{210}\) In a denomination such as the CoP members who commit an ‘open sin’ such as fornication, alcohol and drug abuse, stealing and similar moral lapses, are suspended from church membership. Sadly, frequent suspensions of members and a number of dismissals of members of the clergy shows that, these Christians are not always able to live according to the ideals of the Christian moral life that they claim.\(^{211}\)

Contemporarily, the DT considers that these moral failures are derived from the satanic influence on believers rather than the believer failing to live up to the desired morality of the faith. Kalu affirmed that ‘Pentecostals imagine and objectify the persistence of the sinful drive as externally originating from Satan who hinders and attempts to destroy the ability of the Christian to run a good race’.\(^{212}\) The DT explains that a person may be a Christian and may be a regular participant in all that Christian spirituality entails yet may sin or may seriously fall short of the moral mark of the Christian faith through demonic attacks on their lives. In this way too, the DT acts as a device for explaining the moral failures of human beings.


\(^{210}\) The Old Testament teaches that when Israel obeys their God he will bless them with material blessings. Deut. 28: 1-14.

\(^{211}\) Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, 176, footnote 298.

Secondly, often the promise of prosperity that God will supply both health and wealth unhindered is not fulfilled. Many of the believers do not get wealthy or healthy or receive answers to their prayers in accordance with the promised manifold blessings of God. Therefore, there is need for an explanation. Since God is all-powerful, generous and kind and mightier than the African divinities, there must be a reason for the lack of the successes promised in the DT. Here too, the DT comes in handy to shift human responsibilities onto the activities of evil spirits. It gives the impression that although one’s moral lapses may hinder his/her progress, the activities of evil and demonic forces are ultimately responsible for these failures.\textsuperscript{213} In this scheme, when the promises of prosperity fail or when things do not go as well as expected, ancestral curses, demonic forces, and witches offer a ready explanation as to why people remain unemployed, barren, sick or why their businesses continue to fail even when they tithe regularly and undergo the ‘deliverance’ ritual repeatedly.\textsuperscript{214}

1.21. DT Lacks a Theological Framework

It should be understood that GP started as a grass-roots movement and did not have the intellectual capacity and expertise to undertake a more serious critical reflection on the theological impact of the DT on Christian moral formation. What is not excusable, though, is the problem of the over-spiritualisation of human affairs. As far as Christian morality is concerned, the major problem with DT is the extent to which it believes supra-human elements control human affairs. This attitude is a ruthless departure from the humanistic orientation of Akan community and its understanding of personhood. I discuss this issue in the next chapter when I offer interpretations of

\textsuperscript{213} Onyinah, “Akan Witchcraft”, 298.
DT. Suffice it to state at this point that when human beings are relegated to the status of mere subservient entities whose capacity for decision and action is influenced by forces beyond them, then an important theological understanding of humanity, a framework for Christian morality, is lost.

It has been made sufficiently clear that GPs believe in the bible as God’s rule for salvation and subsequent Christian life. They also believe in the Trinitarian God: the Father, the atonement of the Son, and especially in the transforming and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Why then is it that Christian moral reasoning is not seen as flowing naturally from their Christian practice? Why does the African oriented Pentecostal expression of Christianity separate spirituality from morality?

Before I proceed, it is important to stress that the view of this study is not that GPs are immoral believers as such. It is rather that the nature of the Pentecostal contextualisation in Ghana makes it difficult for a coherent account of Christian morality and character formation to emerge. This point is taken up in the next chapter.

At this point it should be realised that the moral issues discussed in this chapter are evidence that something is amiss. I argue that this problem is caused by the lack of a theological framework, within which questions regarding the vulnerability of human beings to the alleged evil activities of spirit entities can be explained coherently and addressed consistently within the salvific work of Jesus Christ. Such a framework would have answered questions about human capacity for thought and action, human involvement with emotions and passions, the impact of tragedies on life and human
capacity for interpreting what happens to them theologically. The lack of such a framework makes the DT a problem rather than a solution for Christian morality in an African context. Therefore, to resolve this situation a further exploration of the Akan traditional scheme is needed.

1.22. Closing Remarks

I have shown in this chapter that GP has developed an indigenous theology in response to the African traditional worldview and that this appropriation has been regarded as their attempt at contextualisation. It has also been shown that this appropriation is very instrumental in the success of Pentecostalism in Ghana. However, despite the psychological relief, spiritual and physical healing, socio-economic empowerment, and personal transformations that the DT brings about, it lacks a theological framework that engenders Christian character formation and social morality. This is because the DT holds that spirit entities do influence the life and behaviour of Christians. By so doing it loses sight of the humanistic orientation of traditional African religiosity that is very crucial to moral reasoning and conduct. Therefore, the DT is a problem rather than a solution to Christian moral thought and practice.
CHAPTER TWO

PENTECOSTAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF AKAN WORLDVIEW

2. Introduction

In chapter one, it was noted that GPs consider the persistent drive of people toward immoral acts as externally instigated by demonic entities which obstruct and attempt to destroy the ability of Christians to live according to the character of Christ.  

Thus, the DT gives much more power to spirit beings than it gives human beings over human actions. This Pentecostal attitude, which forces a separation between people’s morality and spirituality, is due to the way the African worldview has been appropriated into Christian praxis.

But in what way does the African worldview or religio-cultural heritage influence Christian moral reasoning? How can we explain this situation in a way that renders it analysable? This chapter offers some interpretations of the situation and indicates the implications that this has for moral reasoning and action among Ghanaian Pentecostals. These interpretations are given so that questions can be derived for a practical theological analysis of morality in this context. I argue that the over-spiritualisation of human affairs in the DT, which gives the impression that in their actions humans are sometimes controlled by forces external to them, is a significant departure from the worldview of the Akan traditional scheme. Therefore, it creates an epistemological crisis for Christian moral reasoning and practice among GPs.

2.1. The Epistemological Crises

It is important to explain the assertion that the DT creates an epistemological crisis for moral reasoning among GPs before I offer any interpretation of the situation because this can enhance understanding of the interpretations. Firstly, it needs pointing out that generally, when Africans accept the gospel message as mediated to them initially through Western emissaries, they sign up to holding the Western/Christian worldview without abandoning their African worldview. To a very large extent, commitment to the Christian faith is also an acceptance of Western worldview, philosophy and ethics, which rivals the Akan traditional worldview conceptually and metaphysically.

Tennent has noted how in the West, the enlightenment worldview created a high wall that disconnected the ‘experiential world of the sense – governed by reason and subject to scientific enquiry, from the unseen world beyond the wall’, a world that is regarded either as nonexistent (naturalism) or a world about which we can know very little (deism). However, this enlightenment approach resulted basically in a two-tiered universe that separates the world of science from the world of religion.

But for most Africans, the two worlds of the enlightenment rationality is one reality, which impacts on morality in a very significant way. The African worldview is holistic and makes no bifurcation between the sacred and profane. William Schweiker asserts that philosophical conceptions of morality are linked to the worldview of a people in a way that defies the easy separation which is often made

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between ontology, ethics, art, politics, and religious conviction.\textsuperscript{218} Since worldviews serve as our lenses by which we view reality, the process of knowing the truth and what is good is largely influenced by it. Therefore, whenever we use two different lenses to behold the same reality our perceptions are significantly influenced unless we synchronise these lenses.

\textbf{2.2. Subjugation or Synthesis?}

Despite the clear differences that exist between Western/Christian ethics and the Akan traditional moral scheme, a desirable synthesis of the two has not been pursued. Instead of seeking a proper understanding of the African worldview and its ethics, the earliest Christian emissaries and the imperialists did not think that there was anything dignified and uplifting about the moral ideas of Africans which was worthy of respect by a civilised world.\textsuperscript{219} So, through colonialism, Western education and Christianity, Western ethics were imposed on Africa in the name of Christianity and civilisation to replace African traditional moral schemes.\textsuperscript{220}

Arguably, this near obliteration of the moral scheme of African traditional societies without an appropriate moral framework has caused uncertainties and confused moral reasoning among many African Christians.\textsuperscript{221} This issue has been exacerbated by the Pentecostal DT. Although the continuity in and response to the African traditional belief in the spirit realm by GPs make their Christian expression attractive to many Ghanaians, the nature of the appropriation poses moral dilemmas that are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{218} Schweiker, “Responsibility”, 477-478.
  \item \textsuperscript{219} Adjei, “Imperialism and Spiritual”, 194.
  \item \textsuperscript{220} Williamson, \textit{Akan Religion}, 171. Jennings, \textit{Leading Virtue}, 25.
\end{itemize}
concerning, especially with regard to the way truth and good are determined. For instance, is it good to hope that our prayers alone will change a despotic leader without condemning and confronting the leader’s tyrannical acts that are causing pain and death? Also, if one accepts that the stealing habit of one’s spouse is actually caused by the oppression of demonic entities, how would that person act morally when he/she has evidence of a theft that can lead to a prison sentence of the spouse? These are questions that a Ghanaian Pentecostal needs to be able to answer in a way that is consistent with Christian beliefs. But the answers obtainable from the DT are inadequate for moral dilemmas such as these and hence DT should be regarded as being in crisis.

2.3. Understanding the Crises

When we understand that our determination of truth is based on our means for knowing it, then we can realise that our simultaneous use of two epistemologies that are contradictory to each other is bound to cause confusion and make it difficult for us to determine truth and do good. For instance, in African traditional epistemology, paranormal cognition, which includes beliefs in divination, witchcraft, and spirit-mediumship are still important means of knowing. Dzobo asserts that indigenous Ghanaians regard means of acquiring knowledge and truth as the most essential factors for living a meaningful and satisfying moral life. He notes that in the African context there are two ways of knowing: active and passive. Dzobo uses proverbs and verbs in the Akan and Ewe languages in Ghana to explain these methods persuasively. He states that active knowing requires the use of the senses of

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222 See section 1.12.
perception. Knowledge of truth in this sense involves observation, experience and interpretation of the experience.

In this way, knowledge becomes the end-product of intellectual processes which begin in sensation and lead to reflection and inferences. This method is similar to Western empiricism, which holds that knowledge can only be acquired through experimentation and observation. In contrast, the other method, that Dzobo calls ‘passive knowledge’ or ‘passive method of knowing’ is knowledge obtained not by observation and rational interpretation but through experience. Dzobo cites spirit possession and divination as examples of this type of knowing and affirms that though it is subjective, the knowledge thus obtained is still regarded as valid. African indigenous societies do not consider the subjectivity of this type of knowledge as rendering it invalid. Instead they always insist that passive/experiential knowledge must be verified by its ‘positive fruits’ over time. Whether or not the knowledge has positive result is determined by how that knowledge contributes to the ultimate purpose – the wellbeing of the community.

From the discussion thus far, it is clear that the focus of the DT on spiritual causation presupposes a passive/experiential method of knowledge. With this approach to knowledge, Pentecostals believe that witches and wicked demonic spirits are responsible for human suffering, even if those conditions were created by other people. Yet, GPs use this African traditional epistemology in conjunction with received Christian tradition, which to a larger extent presupposes Western epistemology that is based mainly on reason and sense experience expressed through

rationalism and empiricism.\textsuperscript{225} Undoubtedly, this situation is bound to cause confusion in what the African Pentecostal considers to be truth. It will certainly also determine moral decisions.

An epistemological crisis is said to have occurred whenever a tradition is no longer able to offer its adherents satisfying answers to their moral questions.\textsuperscript{226} Arguably, this crisis occurs in GP because the DT has not integrated or synchronised the epistemologies of the Christian and African worldviews congenially. This stand off occurs whenever a religious way of knowing is uncritically related to scientific or naturalistic epistemologies. For instance, Thomas Aquinas dealt with a similar situation when Aristotelian virtue ethics met with Augustinian theology of total depravity in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{227}

This is a crisis that could only be avoided by integrating Christian ethics and the Akan traditional scheme through a theoretical framework that is suitable for both traditions. But this type of integration is possible only when GPs understand both the Akan traditional worldview and the Christian tradition at deeper levels. From the DT, it is doubtful that GPs have obtained the level of understanding required for a congenial synchronisation of the two ‘lenses’ (the two traditions). These are issues that theologians of African Pentecostalism must not fail to address if a proper explanation were to be offered for the moral situation that we are dealing with.

\textsuperscript{225} Stephen Long, John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005), 1-11; Gyekye, An Essay, 6, 201-203.
\textsuperscript{227} This is explained in Chapter Six of this thesis. Also, see MacIntyre, Whose Justice?
The following interpretations of the DT will show that there are observable shortcomings in the understanding that GPs have of their African religio-cultural heritage generally and the Akan conceptual scheme particularly. A deeper understanding of both traditions is needed to guide the theologian to determine which aspect of the schemes needs to be transformed.

2.4. DT is a Departure from the Akan Traditional Scheme

As far as moral reasoning and action are concerned, the most debilitating factor that creates uncertainties for GPs is that their DT departs significantly from the Akan social conception of human beings or personhood. Arguably this is because there is a lack of adequate appreciation of the African traditional scheme. Since morality always presupposes intentional action, whenever an action is believed to have been taken as a result of some influences external to the moral agent, the moral responsibility of a person for such acts is reduced tremendously. There are clear differences between the Akan perception of personhood and DT, which shows that the DT eliminates human beings from the central role that the Akan traditional system assigns to them, a role that constantly makes humans morally responsible for whatever happens in the human domain.

2.5. DT Departs from the Akan Designation of Spirits

An important difference between the DT and the Akan traditional system is that, for GPs the entire African spirit realm is demonic, whereas in the traditional scheme it is not so. Akans believe that spirits are benevolent or evil only on account of their acts. In this scheme even some witches are believed to help people achieve their goals. It is said that ‘… some witchcraft has positive effects for certain individuals, helping
them to achieve great deeds, especially during war, or in business and education.\textsuperscript{228} This shows that in Akan traditional society any extraordinary achievement, whether it is in sports, trade or leadership, is considered as being facilitated by the spiritual realm which may include benevolent deities, witchcraft and magic. For instance, in the 1980s a very successful striker in one of the premier football clubs in Ghana (Asante Kotoko), named Opoku Afriyie, was admirably called \textit{bayie} (witchcraft) for his extraordinary sporting skills. Also, very rich people whose wealth is judged to be in excess of the known sources of income are said to have \textit{sika bayie} (money deriving from witchery).

This means that by branding all spirits as evil, the DT differs from the traditional system. In the DT all bad things are ascribed to evil spirits with nothing good ever being credited to them. Apparently, this is because GPs inherited an earlier tradition, which held that everything pre-Christian in Africa is either harmful or at best valueless and demonic.\textsuperscript{229} This attitude of not seeing anything good in indigenous cultures makes contextualisation difficult. But that is not the main issue here. The problem is the perception the DT offers of the African spirit realm. Since traditional Akans regard the spirit realm as being both good and bad humans are given the central role of judging between the deeds that emanate from the spirits. However, when the DT regards the entire realm as evil, the critical role of humans is eliminated. This too is a problem for morality.

\textsuperscript{228} Appiah-Kubi, \textit{Man Cures}, 13.
\textsuperscript{229} Adrian Hastings, \textit{Church and Mission in Modern Africa} (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 60.
2.6. DT Departs from the Akan Approach to Health and Wealth

As shown in Chapter One, GP preoccupation with healing and wealth is considered as a positive appropriation of the African traditional religious system. The view that healing is a fruit of religion and must be obtained therewith is one of the beliefs of Akan traditional religion. Whilst medical practice used to be specialised, secularised and thus separated from Christian worship within the HMCs, Ghanaian Pentecostal churches have always effortlessly integrated healing and worship. Appiah-Kubi believes rightly that this is in agreement with the Akan traditional scheme because Akans perceive religion to be concerned with the health and fertility of humans, animals and land. So, the DT is regarded as a blending of elements of the Akan religion with Christian doctrine. Anim asserts that by appropriating the traditional perspectives of health, wealth, procreation, wellbeing and protection, Pentecostals are contextualising Christian practice within the African traditional context. This is true. However, the manner of the pursuit of health among GPs is different from that of traditional Akans. These differences have ramifications for moral reasoning and practice which needs to be recognised.

Pentecostals seem to work with the same traditional aetiology upon which traditional healers operate, but a careful critique reveals that the aspect of human responsibility that is associated with Akan traditional aetiology is missing in the diagnosis of the DT. In the event of a person suffering from a health condition that is considered in the community to be inexplicable, Africans immediately look for spiritual and moral

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230 Healing is generally considered as a feature of Pentecostalism everywhere. See; Appiah-Kubi, “Healing in Indigenous African Christian churches” in David Goodacres, ed., World Religions and Medicine (Oxford: Institute of Religion and Medicine, 1983), 56. Today many HMCs incorporate healing practices in their liturgy in order to keep their members from defecting. See; Omenyo, Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism.
explanations that may lead to a scrutiny of human conduct to determine whether there have been moral failures. The Akan traditional scheme explains sufferings that are not immediately understandable as morally deserved.\textsuperscript{233} Also, the cause of sickness could be attributed to factors which can be natural or spiritual. Appiah-Kubi has shown from his research on health and healing among the Akans that the causes of suffering and misfortune ‘may be one’s own doing brought on by an offence against another person or the community, or by failure to perform a religious duty’.\textsuperscript{234} More comprehensively, Kalu explains the moral intent of the causal theory in this way:

\begin{quote}
Affliction is a pivotal issue in the theology of the African primal world. It can be caused by a contravention of moral code. For instance matters such as stealing, incest, and other social forms of wrongdoing such as breakdowns in social relations are abominations to the earth deity. One found guilty of any of these may be visited with different forms of individual or communal affliction including, political instability, economic disaster, upsurge in the mortality rate, an increase in robbery and other unwholesome social facts which are regarded as disease, requiring diagnosis and spiritual cure.\textsuperscript{235}
\end{quote}

From the above quote it is clear that the African traditional system regards most misfortunes as retribution for human misconduct. However, while the Akan traditional healers and diviners may often reveal that a supplicant’s ill-heath is caused by their abuse of another person or a moral infringement, the DT always finds that the causes exist outside of the person, and, in the demonic forces of Satan, many times operating as the witchcraft of a close relative. This Pentecostal tendency to constantly blame misfortune and human failure on evil spirits departs significantly from the Akan traditional perception of spiritual entities. In the same way, GPs discard the strong emphasis on personal moral responsibility that the Akan traditional

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{233} Green, “Religion and Morality”, 13, 14.
\item\textsuperscript{234} Appiah-Kubi, \textit{Man Cures, God Heals: Religion and medical Practice Among the Akans in Ghana} (New York: Friendship Press, 1981), 12.
\item\textsuperscript{235} Kalu, \textit{African Pentecostalism}, 177-78.
\end{itemize}
scheme holds together with the belief in spirits. Therefore, in this aspect too, the DT is not a true appropriation of the Akan traditional religious system as it absolves people from personal responsibility.

2.7. The Origin of Evil in the Akan Tradition

Another major issue that affects personal moral responsibility is the difference that exists between the Akan traditional scheme and the DT with regards to the understanding of the causes of evil. In Akan thought, evil is conceived as emanating from humans and the lower spirit realm. Traditional Akans believe that the Supreme Being is wholly good and did not create evil. Busia asserts that while the deities are believed to have been created by the Supreme Being, they are perceived as having their own realm and right of operation which is indeterminate and separated from the creator. This means that the deities are able to act on their own initiative and their actions are determined by whether or not they feel that they have been treated well by human beings.\(^{236}\) This is because, like humans beings, the deities have free will and thus are able to act in ways that cannot always be described as good. When they feel that they are treated well, the deities reciprocate by acting benevolently towards their supplicants.

Therefore, good moral behaviour is believed to ensure that humans receive constant positive influence from the generous spirits. This means that good moral behaviour offers some level of guarantee for prosperity and protection from evil forces. On the other hand, immoral deeds cause resentment of good spiritual forces and the

\(^{236}\) Busia, “The Ashanti”, 147-149.
withdrawal of their benign influence, thereby subjecting people or an entire community to the wicked actions of evil spirits.\textsuperscript{237}

Perhaps it is also important to note that the idea of evil as it is understood in relation to God in Western theology differs considerably from evil as it is related to the Supreme Being in Akan traditional religion. Busia argues that the problem of theodicy that is often discussed in Western philosophy and theology does not arise in the African concept of deity. He held that it is only when the divinities are postulated as all powerful, omniscient, perfect and loving that the problem of evil meets a philosophical and an intellectual obstacle. In African religion, argued Busia, the Supreme Being is the Creator, the source of life, but between him and humans ‘… lie many powers and principalities good and bad, gods, spirits, magical forces and witches to account for the strange happenings in the world’.\textsuperscript{238}

Alternatively, Gyekye has argued that Busia’s statement is unsatisfactory because the statement presupposes that the Supreme Being has created some bad spiritual forces.\textsuperscript{239} However, a closer reading of Busia reveals that actually he was making two very important points. His use of deity referred to the lesser gods known in the traditional religion as \textit{abosom}. The belief in a Supreme Being who is omnipotent is held along with a belief in lesser deities who are also charged with power that can be expressed in both beneficent and dangerous ways. Busia was affirming that the Supreme Being shares his goodness with the deities as the deities derive their power


In addition, Busia was making a very crucial point that moral responsibility is required even of spirits beings because they were not created evil. They choose to be evil based on their use of free will and response to the perceptions they have of the kind of treatment they receive from humans. Thus, most evil acts that originate in the spirit realm are regarded as having been caused by human conduct in the physical realm.

Busia stated that although the deities are not understood as having bodies like humans; their values, attitudes, thoughts and personality are likened to those of humans. The relationship of the deities with human beings, and between one deity and another, is conceived in human terms. He also asserted that the deities are not habitually good because ‘… they have moods and are sometimes destructive and whimsical’. This inconsistency in the attitude of the deities, which is their lack of character, explains why unlike the Supreme Being and the ancestors, a deity may be treated with contempt or even abandoned when it fails to deliver results.

The foregoing shows that although there is a strong relationship between the physical and spiritual realms, these realms are differentiated by the functions and responsibilities of the entities which constitute them. The deities and humans have their particular roles in their respective realms, from where they are expected to remain morally responsible in their relationship with other realms. The most important lesson in this conception is that consistency in good moral conduct is the ideal, which ensures that people are not mistreated by the spirit realm or their

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240 Busia stated the deities come from the Supreme Being and derive their power from Him. Busia, “The Ashanti”, 193; Pobee, African Theology, 47.
kinsfolk. It is very remarkable that moral responsibility among traditional Akans stretches even to deities, in that deities may pay dearly for their lack of moral character.

2.8. Human Responsibility for Evil in the Akan Scheme

I have shown already that Akans believe that evil comes from two sources: the supernatural forces (deities when they are offended, witches and evil spirits) and human actions. Still, the notion that it is human action that triggers the evil that proceeds from the spiritual realm is explained in the causal theory of Akans. Gyekye affirms that it is generally held that evil is the result of humans exercising the free will that the creator gave them. Although the finitude and mutual dependency of humans on others (humans and spirits) is generally upheld, the notion that human beings are ultimately responsible for much of what happens to them and that they can influence the course of events is highly stressed.

Most probably this is why Ronald Green observed, that Africans live in a morally saturated religious universe in which all-important interpersonal relationships, including essential relationships between humans and spiritual beings, have moral content and are governed by moral considerations. Again, it can be seen that Pentecostal attribution of all evil occurrences to spiritual causality is not consistent with the Akan traditional system. It arises because people are usually not inclined to

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244 Gyekye, “The Problem”, 470.
245 Green, “Religion and Morality”, 5.
easily accept that they are in the wrong. That is why witchcraft and sorcery often become the first resort in the explanation of suffering.\textsuperscript{246}

While people are thought to be mutually dependent on both their fellow humans and spiritual beings, humans are never regarded as passive victims or as being subjugated by forces external to them. What happens to humans is not always seen as completely beyond their control.\textsuperscript{247} In fact, much of what happens to a person is ‘regarded as justifiably and predictably proceeding as consequences from his own precipitating acts’.\textsuperscript{248} Even when spiritual forces are thought to be responsible for an unfortunate event, humans bear the ultimate responsibility, for provoking the attack by their moral infringements against another person/people.

Gyekye argues persuasively that in Akan traditional thought, evil stems from the inability of humans to exercise their moral will or moral sense appropriately. Evil is seen as proceeding from the desire, conscience, character and thoughts of humans, and hence is the outcome of human’s free will.\textsuperscript{249} Hence, Gyekye stresses that in the traditional system the actions of people are determined by their character.\textsuperscript{250} In the Akan system, achieving good character requires that the individual behaves morally, respects others, observes his/her taboos, acquires the necessary ritual and practical knowledge, and avoids spiritual defilement and actions that would bring disgrace. Such behaviour leads to good fortune through the mediation of well-disposed

\textsuperscript{246} Green, “Religion and Morality”, 14.  
\textsuperscript{247} Inexplicable circumstances in life over which people do not have control are interpreted as being caused by their peculiar destiny. See; Danquah, \textit{Akan Doctrine}, Chapter 2 and 3. 
\textsuperscript{248} Minkus, “Causal Theory”, 140.  
\textsuperscript{249} Gyekye, “The Problem”, 470.  
\textsuperscript{250} Gyekye, “The Problem”, 469.
spiritual as well as human benefactors.\textsuperscript{251} This affirmation that Akan traditional morality thrives on the notion of good character is crucial for any contextualisation of Christian morality in Ghanaian Christianity because it shows the central rather than the peripheral role that humans play in the pursuit of morality in the Akan community.

Another vital aspect of Akan traditional belief in spirits for our discussion is that it maintains the kinship between spirit beings, human beings and nature whilst at the same time showing that humans are not mere subservient actors in these relationships. It also helps us see how the Akan sense of human finitude and need for a greater power is fulfilled through the mutual benefit obtained from their relationships with each other and with supernatural entities. It is worth noting that both relationships are based on voluntary actions because at least their continuity depends on the rational choice of humans and the constancy of each party (both human and spirits) in fulfilling their moral obligations to each other.

The fact that people may abandon deities in the event of failures by those deities is an objection to any notion that African traditional morality is a blind following of tribal customs and mores without rational moral deliberation (moral reasoning).\textsuperscript{252} It also shows that the spirit entities and human beings need each other for their continuous participation in the cosmic, natural and social realms. Consequently, for the traditional Akan, the idea of personal responsibility is central to moral reasoning and conduct. From the foregoing, it is clear that the way the DT portrays the

\textsuperscript{251} Minkus, “Causal Theory”, 141.
relationship between the spirit realm and humans is problematic for African Christian morality as it does not make humans always morally responsible in the same way as the Akan traditional scheme does.

To substantiate this point, it is necessary to analyse some statements made by two prominent scholars of GP who, by affirming the continuity of African religiosity in the DT, have also implied the relationship that exists between humans and the spiritual realm. First, Larbi posits that ‘... the search of GPs for salvation or abundant life manifests continuity with the Akan traditional religious sensibility which is this-worldly: a search for salvation in which health, prosperity, fertility, security, vitality and equilibrium within the cosmos are dominant’.253 He argues further that so long as salvation is the goal which every person seeks from religion, GPs ‘will continue to assert that although the eternal wellbeing of humankind is important, unless present fears, desires and aspirations are addressed, the gospel will fail to encounter the soul of Ghanaians at the core of their religious consciousness’.254 Clearly, Larbi implies that GPs consider their present fears, desires and aspirations as a basic concern for religion. This is why they regard the harnessing of spiritual power for human advantage in dealing with existential issues to be the central function of religion.255

On the surface, Larbi is right that the search of GPs for salvation shows continuity with this-worldly expectations of the Akan traditional religion. Clearly, both traditional Akans and GPs expect their religious practices to facilitate the achievement of health, wealth, and general wellbeing. However, although it is so, the

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role each of them allocates to religion for the achievement of these concerns is evidently different. For GPs, the lack of wellbeing in this world is a sign that some evil forces are hindering human progress towards salvation. Therefore, to achieve wellbeing one needs to be connected to spiritual power in the Holy Spirit in order to overcome the evil forces and to set the ‘captives’ free to enjoy salvation in full. In this way, GPs consider religious power as a potent means for liberating people from evil forces, and fail to recognise that actually it is the sense of moral responsibility of humans that brings true liberation to the community. GPs miss the actual focus that the African traditional scheme ascribes to religion. It can be seen that the DT has been too focused on causal theory about sickness, barrenness, poverty and prosperity and has consequently limited the role of humans in the whole cosmic transaction.

2.9. Akan Traditional View of Religion and Morality

The Akan traditional approach to religion has some lessons for GPs. African religiosity is the outcome of humans pondering their loneliness and vulnerability in the midst of the unpredictable situations in the world.256 I have stated that this religious attitude is utilitarian, in that it is motivated by the quest for wellbeing of the community, a wellbeing that is sustained by moral responsibility.257 Although, comparatively the African traditional system is not as developed as post-renaissance Western thought; there is a clear indication that practical reason is an inherent part of the religious practice of the former. This is why practical wisdom that is believed to be linked with old age is much cherished and serves as the basis for the African value of respect for authority of elders.258

258 Wiredu, Philosophy, 4-8.
The fundamental difference between the GP and the Akan traditional approaches to religion lies with the role each believes religion plays in addressing human fears, desires and aspirations to benefit the community. In the Akan scheme, the wellbeing of the community is achieved by the development of effective moral relations that promote communal existence and individual interests.\(^{259}\) It is the congenial coexistence of humans that is the most important factor for ensuring the wellbeing of a community. Therefore, the survival of the Akan community is achieved through morality. Gbadegesin observes that it is morality that advances harmonious relationships within a community, by controlling and enhancing its institutions for the wellbeing of its individual members.\(^{260}\) In this respect, the most obvious role of religion is found in its sanctioning of morality.\(^{261}\) In other words, religion becomes important only because of the moral weaknesses of humans as a deterrent for immorality.

While religion sanctions morality, good moral conduct predisposes humans favourably before the supernatural realm for the receipt of the benevolence in the form of health and wealth from that realm. Wiredu affirms that although the fear of punishment from the deities may focus people’s mind on the path of virtue ‘it is not this that creates the sense of moral obligation’. The fear of arrest can deter a robber but if the robber has a sense of morality in the first place, he would not conceive of the idea of robbing, says Wiredu.\(^{262}\) The point is that human beings rather than deities are the focus of religion. Therefore, though it is correct to say that some continuity with Akan religion can be observed in the DT, this continuity is not deep

\(^{261}\) In Chapter Four, I take up the issue about whether or not morality in the Akan system derives from religion (the Supreme Being and deities) as it is in Christianity.
enough. This is why the DT falls short of a coherent expression of salvation in which morality and spirituality can be held as inseparable.

The second statement I wish to discuss was made by Asamoah-Gyadu, who also maintains that there is continuity of Akan traditional religiosity in GP expressions. What makes his claim relevant to the present discussion is that he directly links Akan religious beliefs with morality in a way that helps clarify my point. Asamoah-Gyadu asserts that the theological principles underlying DT coalesce with African cosmology; especially in the way African traditions attribute sickness and misfortune to spiritual forces. He goes on to affirm that ‘Akan philosophical thought distinguishes bōne (sin) normally used in reference to ordinary moral evils, from mbusu (mystical evil), both of which have the potential to bring misfortune to the whole community’. Mbusuyi is the ‘ritual removal’ of curses, misfortune, and sickness that result from sin or violations of the cosmic order.

From the above statements, Asamoah-Gyadu claims that the DT involves a continuity of Akan traditional religiosity because GP understanding of salvation denotes deliverance from evil and all misfortunes, just as the Akan traditional mbusuyi is a ritual removal of curses, misfortune and sickness. He shows correctly that in the Akan traditional system bōne (sin) or what he terms as ‘ordinary moral evil’ is potentially responsible for the curses, misfortunes, sicknesses and other evils that people suffer. However, although his separation of bōne from mbusu (mystical evil) is correct, his reference to mbusu as mystical evil could mean that mbusu is an

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263 Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 176. *Mbusu or musuo*, (extraordinary evil) comprises acts such as: rape, incest, suicide, murder, theft of things that belong to a deity or ancestral spirits, or having sexual intercourse in the fields (bush). These are considered as taboos or abominations. Gyekye, *An Essay*, 131-134.
evil that is caused mystically or by evil spirits. This separation of ordinary from mystical evil implies a detachment of human beings from the causation of mbusu. Such a rendition of mbusu supports the view of GPs that evil spirits are mystically responsible for the problems humans suffer. However, such differentiation between evils differs from the Akan traditional view. Therefore, it is more appropriate to designate mbusu as ‘extraordinary evil’, in the way Gyekye does, because this shows that in Akan philosophical thought both ordinary and extraordinary evil are moral infringements committed by human beings. Extraordinary evil is only so termed because of its rarity and the severity of its impact on individuals and the community.

From the foregoing, it can be stated that in the Akan religion, moral contraventions by human beings are responsible for the evil, misfortune, sickness and other issues that trouble people. Akans believe that it is the commission of moral violation and omission of moral orders by human beings that triggers punishments from the divinities. These punishments are experienced physically and spiritually as misfortunes of all sorts. Even in cases of sorcery or witchery, sometimes one’s susceptibility depends on his/her moral integrity. However, the belief that bōne (sin) is responsible for some evils, sicknesses and misfortunes is not highlighted in the DT at all.

Although the Pentecostal appropriation is often seen as a continuity of traditional religiosity, as far as the Akan religion is concerned, the role that is believed to be played by spirit entities in human affairs is quite different. Whereas it is implied in the DT that the spirit realm only constitutes a host of wicked parasitic spirits, the

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Akan religion considers these, especially the ancestors and deities, mainly as senior partners in the community whose job is to ensure the wellbeing of the community by enforcing morality and only punishing immoral deeds when necessary.

Alternatively, demonization of the entire spirit realm in the DT suggests that human beings are just passive and innocent victims who are at the mercy of wicked and evil spirits. Therefore, instead of seeing most of the events in human life as outcomes of human action, GPs focus on fighting evil spirits who are alleged to be behind these misfortunes. Since in the DT all evil and misfortunes are considered as emanating from spirit entities there is a lack of direct motivation for self-assessment of the role people play in bringing about the issues for which they blame evil spirits. Hence, harmful habits that disrupt the harmonious flow of one’s life are explained in terms of curses and demonic oppression.\textsuperscript{265} This type of attitude is inimical to Akan traditional religiosity.

\textbf{2.10. Religion as Moral Sanction}

It is by no means being suggested here that religion is only contingent on the traditional system. In the Ghanaian context, religion is central to the organisation of social, political, and cultural life. It ‘regulates the relationship between people and their physical and spiritual environment’ and by so doing also functions as the meaning-giving substance of culture.\textsuperscript{266} Although we may speak of religion and culture in separate terms, in actual functionality they are intertwined.\textsuperscript{267} For


Ghanaians, like many other Africans, religion is expressive, experiential and pragmatic in dealing with concrete life issues. Yet, the focus of traditional religion such as that of the Akan is not simply about fighting enemy spirits to allow people to live successful lives. Instead, religion enforces morality and works to ensure the congenial coexistence and the wellbeing of people. In this way, religion is not totally irrational in Akan traditional society as it is often made to appear in the DT. African religion and traditional thought is ‘eminently rational in character’ and could not have been practised without some level of inherent consistency.\textsuperscript{268} Unfortunately, it is not always shown in the DT that the chief role of religion is the enforcement of morality and enhancement of the vital life force for the wellbeing of the human community.

To show that the sanctioning of morality is a more primary role of religion than the fighting of enemy spirits, Gbadegesin is instructive. Gbadegesin affirms that in many African religions such as that of the Yoruba of Nigeria, the divinities punish moral infringements. For instance, ‘whoever swears on the altar of \textit{sango} the god of thunder and justice and breaks the oath is punished with death’. He contrasts this with Christianity and notes that although Christians may swear on the bible and sometimes contradict their oath, there is no belief that any empirical punishment will follow their action.

On the other hand, African religions hold that even moral infractions that are not serious enough to be punished with death, are punished appropriately in many other

\textsuperscript{268} Robin Horton, “African Traditional Though and Western Science”, \textit{Africa: Journal of the International African Institute} 37 (1967), 162; Reprinted in Brian Wilson, \textit{Rationality} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); Gyekye, \textit{Tradition and Modernity}, 29. People were able to abandon a deity when it failed to deliver on its promises.
ways in this earthly life or towards the end of it. The sentence for such breaches may include a complete reversal of one’s fortunes, that is, losing everything he/she has gained in life through inexplicable occurrences. Given that the future is largely unknown, people try to please the deities by living good moral lives to avoid any future impediment to their wellbeing.269

Hence, by demonising the spiritual realm, GPs totally deny religion its important role of moral enforcement that the traditional system ascribes to it. This situation is lamented by a very important Ghanaian churchman and musicologist, Ephraim Amu. His concern was that:

The fear of the evil consequences of immoral behaviour which existed with superstition and the fear of evil spirits have been dispelled by Christianity. As things are now, we are like a seedling taken out of its bed, its root cut off and then planted in another bed; it stood all right in the cool weather of the morning but withered with the hot sun. We have no root to support us, how can we stand, how can we grow?270

In the above quote Amu is making the significant point that religious contextualisation should be about the transformation of an existing religious heritage rather than the replacement of it. Also, he implies that when Africans converted to Christianity and realised that there was no need to fear the spiritual retribution that might follow their moral infringements, a significant aspect of their sense of morality that the traditional system vehemently upheld was lost and some of them are able to behave in ways that cannot be acceptable under the traditional scheme.271

269 Gbadegesin, “Origins”, 417; The equivalent of Sango in the Akan tradition is the Nyamaa shrine near Kumasi.
271 In a study conducted on marriage and adultery in Ghana, it was found that adultery occurred more frequently among Christians than it did among adherents of traditional religion. See G. K. Nukunya, Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1992), 128.
From the discussion this far, it is unsurprising that the DT cannot offer answers to questions regarding structural moral issues such as economic exploitation, political and economic corruption, nepotism, and unfair international trade practices that have contributed to creating misery and poverty in Africa.\textsuperscript{272} Both Gifford and Asamoah-Gyadu affirms that GPs lack practical action against injustice, poverty, oppression and economic deprivation.\textsuperscript{273} Similarly, both Larbi and Kalu affirm that African Pentecostals prefer to use intercessory prayers to deal with political issues.\textsuperscript{274} I argue that this attitude does not derive wholly from African traditional religiosity. Instead, it is because the DT clouds the vision of morality that is obtainable from the Christian truth and the Akan traditional scheme.

Naturally, the DT does not offer a theological framework within which morality can be understood as an important and inherent outcome of the emancipating power of the atonement of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. I have shown that the appropriation of the worldview is not done at a level that is deep enough to reveal the Akan traditional view of morality: the relationship of religion and morality in Akan thought, the central role that the Akan tradition assigns to human beings and the responsibility that humans have for all the occurrences in their affairs. Such information is necessary in order to determine whether and how the appropriation of the worldviews causes the separation of morality and spirituality. Also, these insights are necessary for understanding the Akan traditional moral scheme before a proper appropriation of it within Christian praxis can be achieved.

\textsuperscript{272} Asamoah-Gyadu, “Healing and Missions”, 398.
\textsuperscript{273} Gifford,\textit{ Ghana’s New Christianity}, 169-171; Asamoah-Gyadu,\textit{ African Charismatics}, 244.
\textsuperscript{274} Larbi,\textit{ Pentecostalism}, 431; Kalu,\textit{ African Pentecostalism}, 178-180.
2.11. Character as a Framework for Moral Contextualisation

It should be clear that assessing Pentecostal contextualisation simply on the basis of the concrete psychological relief from stress, and the healing and socio-economic breakthrough that it offers its adherents is not adequate to explain the lack of social morality or separation of spirituality from morality. These benefits are good, but because the traditional worldview has not been appropriated appropriately the DT loses the framework that the indigenous religion offers for sound moral reasoning and actions.

Normally, the idea of morality presupposes the capacity and ability people have for rational and intentional action. Capacity for rational action is a prerequisite for morality. Ghanaian traditional societies uphold this important social conception about the status of human beings or personhood. In fact this social conception is what they use to differentiate human beings from the lower animals. ‘A person is defined in terms of moral qualities or capacities; a human person is a being who has a moral sense and is capable of making moral judgements’. In this way, humans are regarded as having the capacity for virtue, and for moral judgement, and hence are capable of rational moral choice. As this study has shown, Akan culture is humanistic, as all religious practices, rituals and prayers have utilitarian intent – they are for the sake of human wellbeing.

Wiredu asserts that procedures associated with the spirit realm are all utilitarian programmes for tapping the physical, spiritual, personal and quasi-personal resources

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275 Anderson, Zion and Pentecost, 269.
276 Dzobo, “Knowledge and Truth: Ewe and Akan Conceptions”, in Wiredu and Gyekye, eds., Person and Community, 74.
277 Gyekye, “Person and Community”, 110-111.
that God has invested in the cosmos for human good. The implication of the foregoing claim is that human beings are seen as capable of providing the wellbeing of their community, a feat achievable by their morality, which depends on their knowledge of truth and good. Conversely, the DT creates the impression that people do not always exercise that capacity due to the influence of evil forces. This situation dislocates human beings from the status they have in the cosmic structure and hampers moral character formation.

On the other hand, the Akan religion emphasises moral character and acknowledges that it is a requirement for social harmony and justice, which is the mandate of the divinities. In the Ghanaian traditional context, where religion is considered in utilitarian and pragmatic terms, the key to religious devotion is the character of each devotee. In this religious context, one’s moral character serves as an amulet, or guarantees the effectiveness of any spiritual protection the person may have. It is character that judges the individual in the events of sorcery or witchery and at the end of life on earth. In this system, religion does not only protect people from evil forces. Even, more importantly, religious belief in the spirit realm does not reveal that the deities control people’s behaviour or cause them to do things that they may not want to do.

By sanctioning morality, religion provides a framework within which humans are seen as being in charge of, and thus responsible for, their decisions and actions. This then moulds their character and ensures that they have protection against evil forces ensuring their wellbeing. The problem with the Akan scheme, which I will discuss

later in this study, is that as human beings try to live morally by their own efforts they realise that they have an inherent weakness that limits their potential. This is a very important point that any attempt to contextualise Christian ethics in an African context should heed, because it provides an important bridge for cultural transformation. However, to understand and be able to compare the Akan system to the Christian scheme demands the use of a theory that is congenial for both of them.

2.12. The Need for a Moral Theory

Robert Louden has argued that philosophical theories are essential for understanding morality.\(^{281}\) He believes that there are five things that only moral theories can do in incomparable ways. Moral theories help us to explain, conceptually explore, criticise, imagine and be curious about moral acts of people and institutions.\(^{282}\) According to him a moral theory provides explanation when it is used in reference to the moral character of somebody to explain why that person acted the way he/she did.\(^{283}\) Moral theory also helps us identify what it is about a person, or act or institution that makes it have the impact that it has.\(^{284}\) Considered from another angle, moral theories help identify what it is about a tradition that causes it to have or not to have the desired moral impact.

My interest in a moral theory is to use it as an explanatory device by which the two moral traditions can be analysed. Also, moral theory offers us the means to conceptual exploration. For example, what are the conceptual frameworks that we use in thinking about the morality of GPs? In order to have a good understanding of

\(^{282}\) Louden, *Morality*, 143.
\(^{283}\) Louden, *Morality*, 144.
\(^{284}\) Louden, *Morality*, 145.
moral traditions it is necessary to reveal the worldview, metaphors, models and frameworks that direct the moral viewpoint of people.\textsuperscript{285} The moral theory is also necessary for critically evaluating how the Akan and Christian narratives are able or otherwise to help their adherents to achieve the moral ideal of their community. It will also help to show what are the weaknesses and strengths of the narrative of the worldviews and to show why and how they may be transformed. I have chosen the virtue moral theory, which I will discuss in Chapter Three to direct the analysis.

\textbf{2.13. Closing Remarks}

I have shown that Pentecostal appropriation of belief in the role of witchcraft and other spirit beings in the lives of people absolve them from accepting responsibility for their immoral behaviour. Even personal sins, incompetence and inadequacies are all blamed on forces outside the individual. It has also been shown that the DT does not adequately present the traditional view that human wellbeing depends on their good relationships with one another, and to the spirit entities that constitute the community. It also fails to show that in the traditional system both people and spirits are always expected to be morally responsible in all their interactions. An important contribution that this chapter makes on the field of African Christian ethics is that it has shown that at a deeper level, African traditional morality requires the pursuit of personal voluntary acts which culminate in good character, and that this factor might serve as a bridge for the contextualisation of Christian ethics in an African context.

\textsuperscript{285} Louden, \textit{Morality}, 147.
CHAPTER THREE

VIRTUE ETHICS: THE ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING MORALITY

3. Introduction

It has been stated that the concept of character is central to the Akan conception of morality, and that character might offer a bridge that facilitates an integration of Christian and Akan moral traditions. This chapter presents virtue theory, which holds the idea of character as its central motif. I start with a review of the relevant literature on African Christian ethics that affirms that virtue theory is more suitable for theological reflection on African Christian ethics than other Western modern universalist paradigms. After an appropriate description of virtue theory, the chapter focuses on the concept of character and shows that the elements of character can serve as a heuristic tool for analysing and assessing the pursuit of morality in the Christian and Akan traditions.

3.1. Virtue Ethics in African Christianity

Some scholars have argued that Western modern universalist ethics is unsuitable for the integration of the Christian and African moral traditions. Paris, Richardson, Bujo and Jennings have all published work in this area and shown that virtue ethics suits the African traditional culture and its moral systems better than other Western models. However, each of them has used the virtue theory in ways that differ

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significantly from what is intended in this study. A review of those studies shows that although they are significant contributions to Christian ethics in African Christianity, they lack the necessary philosophical depth that is needed for the integration of the African traditional moral scheme and Christian thought.

A. Bénézet Bujo

Bénézet Bujo’s work focuses mainly on the Catholic Magisterial and its relation to African morality. Bujo asserts that although the main goal of African ethics is the promotion and preservation of the vital life force of the community, the spiritual dimension is one of its most essential components. For him, an African community is the context for moral behaviour, just as it is held in the virtue tradition that the community is central for moral formation. The community depends on individuals for ethical conduct, but this is realised through a relational network that is ‘equally anthropocentric, cosmic and theocentric’. 287 By this, Bujo affirms the importance of the African traditional belief in spirit beings for moral conduct. He also maintains that African thought cannot be simply subsumed under other modes of thought but demands to be taken seriously as a dialogue partner.

Bujo proposes that Jesus Christ should be contextualised as the Proto-ancestor of the African community. He based this idea on Paul’s model of Christ as the ‘first born of those who sleep and the second Adam’. He does not advocate that Jesus should replace the African ancestors, but rather that Jesus be the premier amongst the

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ancestors. He believes that giving Jesus such a place in African thought will remedy the immoral aspects of many African cultural practices.²⁸⁸

Bujo’s positive regard for African traditions is commendable and his view of contextualisation is a bold attempt. However, its practical applicability is not obvious because for Pentecostals who consider the ancestors as demonic, his proposal is obviously anathema and cannot transform their belief in any meaningful way. In fact, the Christian understanding of Jesus is dissimilar from the African idea of an ancestor. Whereas Jesus is believed in as God who dwells in all believers through the Holy Spirit, empowering and guiding them to live like he did, (Jn. 14: 15-21) there is no such equivalence, at least, not in the Akan concept of ancestors. Therefore, with regard to the contextualisation of Christian morality in GP, Bujo’s proposal falls short because it cannot address the central issues, that is, GP attribution of evil and misfortune to the spirits, which poses a challenge to Christian moral reasoning.

**B. Neville Richardson**

Richardson has published articles and a book chapter on ethics in African Christianity. He affirms rightly that the study of African Christian ethics is only in its embryonic stage and not yet even in its infancy.²⁸⁹ Richardson maintains that Christian ethics in Africa has generally been dominated by Western Enlightenment thinking with its view that there is a universalising ethics, which is shared by all people despite their cultures. This approach to ethics is Universalist, ahistoricist and individualistic.²⁹⁰ He posits that this Western model considers effectiveness as a moral factor, places action above personal character, prioritises right over good, and

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²⁹⁰ Richardson, “Christian Ethics”, 41.
frees ethics from any religious connection by making it secular. Therefore, this framework is not practical for theological reflection on African ethics because African morality stands contrary to the Enlightenment view in many essential ways. Further, Richardson asserts that modern ethics makes contextualisation of Christian ethics in an African Christian context difficult. But whereas the Enlightenment-based Western ethics hampers the integration of Christian ethics in African Christianity, virtue ethics provides a theoretical framework for achieving this goal.

The virtue framework has both similarities with some of the essential features of African moral tradition such as community and has a prospect of being especially beneficial in Africa. He affirms strongly that it is through virtue theory that ‘Christian ethics can find its way in Africa’. Also, he considers virtue ethics as a solution to the general sense of loss of community and the individualism that characterise Western societies and which is becoming a norm in contemporary Africa. However, Richardson regards the lack of a historical founder of African religions as a serious element of discontinuity between African religion and Christianity, which brings the discussion of contextualisation to a crisis point.

Although, Richardson himself does not demonstrate sufficient evidence of his understanding of the African traditional system, especially with regard to belief in spirit beings, his recognition of the need for integration of the two traditions is

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291 Richardson, “Christian Ethics”, 47.
293 Richardson, “Community”, 378.
295 Richardson, “Christian Ethics”, 53.
296 Richardson, “Ethics of Character”, 97.
297 Richardson, “Community”, 385, 381.
commendable. However, it could be deduced from Richardson’s discussions that he does not see the possibility of expressing Christian moral thought in a way that responds to the African spirit world. He comes across as implying wrongly that the gospel has a narrative and hence a culture of its own which needs to be maintained at all cost. However, the gospel rather finds embodiment wherever it travels and does not have a culture of its own. Consequently, the question about contextualisation should concern how Africans integrate the Christian narrative within their traditional narrative without the former losing its essence. In other words the Christian narrative should be rooted (incarnate) in the African conceptual milieu rather than replacing it.

On the whole, Richardson has made an important contribution to the studies of Christian ethics in Africa by pointing to the need for in-depth studies of the African traditional scheme, and by upholding virtue ethics as a better framework and stressing community, although his view on contextualisation is not convincing.

John Taylor has noted that a religious system may decline or even disappear from public view or vanish altogether while much of the religious culture with which it has been associated continues. Also, many of the beliefs, values, and the views about reality, humanity, and the world that prevailed in a primal society may survive the loss of its overt religious system. These may even continue to provide part of the terms of reference for the society in new and more complex situations, even within a new religious faith and practice. Precisely, this is the situation in Africa where

297 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 93-120; Hastings, *Church and Mission*, 60; *Tabula rasa* was a philosophical view that the mind of the baby is like a clean slate on which new things were to be written as the baby grows. It later became a widely intellectual view in Europe that the African mind was a clean slate on which the Christian missionary was to write or inculcate Christian faith and morals. See; Kwame Bediako, “Africa and Christianity on the Threshold of the Third Millennium: The Religious Dimension”, *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 303 -323.

traditional beliefs persist in Christian praxis and that is why there is need to engage with the traditional worldview before an acceptable contextualisation can be achieved.

**C. Brian Jennings**

Brian Jennings’ doctoral thesis at the University of Birmingham aimed at discovering a method for integrating the Christian and African moral traditions. Jennings used MacIntyre’s concepts of *practices, tradition, virtues* and *narratives* to show the interaction between the Christian moral scheme and the Akan (Fanti) moral scheme in Ghana. He used six Akan practices and explored the nature of the interaction of Methodism with the Akan practices and concluded that some contextualisation has taken place in the leadership practices of some Akan chiefs.

Jennings makes a very significant contribution that by studying particular Akan practices one is able to observe the contextualisation which has already taken place. His work is very informative on both the history of Methodism in Ghana and on the Akan moral tradition. However, although he shows that there have been integrations at various levels of the community’s practices he does not show whether these occurred in spite of the worldview and the belief in spirit beings or alongside the negative influence of spirit beings.

Although Jennings accepts that Akan morality has a religious framework, his discussion on the relationship between the central belief of the Akan traditional

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299 Jennings, “Christian Virtue”.
300 Jennings, “Christian Virtue”, 64-86.
301 Forson’s research shows that Ghanaian Methodists hold the belief in the existence and activities of the spiritual realm. But Jennings does not account for the influence of such beliefs on Christian morality. See Forson, *Split-level Christianity*. 
religion and the actual practice of morality is lacking. This is because although he outlined the three approaches of MacIntyre’s tradition constituted rationality he opted to explore whether or not integration has taken place between the two traditions. \(^{302}\) Whereas Jennings’ research develops a method for analysing how moral contextualisation takes place, this study offers explanation of the moral situation and proposes a method for integrating two moral traditions.

Though these scholars identify virtue ethics as a more suitable model for the contextualisation of Christian ethics in African Christianity, they have not shown how this integration may be achieved. I propose that through a framework of virtue theory provided in the concept of character, it is possible to integrate the Christian and Akan moral traditions.

### 3.2. Moral Traditions in the West

Before discussing virtue ethics and character, a brief outline of alternative dominant traditions of moral philosophy which undergird Western moral thought and Christian ethics is relevant. In order to show why an option for virtue theory is considered more practical, I provide a very brief account of each of the dominant traditions of moral philosophy which have deeply impacted Christian ethics. These traditions are just different ways in which answers have been provided for the three fundamental questions that preoccupy moral philosophers in the West. The questions about what sort of person one should be, what consequences one should be pursuing, and which ways of acting are right or good are central to Western moral theories. \(^{303}\) In answering these questions, three dominant moral traditions have emerged in which

\(^{302}\) Jennings, “Virtue Ethics”, 44-54.

the questions have been approached differently. The main disagreement between the traditions stems from the determination of the question that should be regarded conceptually as the most basic. Those who think that the question of consequence is the most basic are known broadly as Consequentialist or Utilitarian. Those who hold the view that the question of right acts is most basic are known as deontologists, and those who think that the question of the sort of person one should be is the most basic are known as virtue ethicists.

A. Consequential/Utilitarianism

Moral philosophers who argue that the most essential question for guiding moral action should be concerned with determining which consequences are the most desirable to pursue are called Consequentialist. Consequentialists argue that if we know which consequences are the best to pursue, then we can decide which actions are right and what sort of people we should try to be. For instance, if we regard the pursuit of personal happiness as the most important then we can choose what action will attain this end. Utilitarianism, one of the most popular forms of Consequentialist ethics, proposes that the right acts are those that give us the maximum happiness, and the character traits to struggle for will be those that promote the greatest personal happiness.

B. Deontological

Other moral philosophers have argued that the question of how to act is more essential than the consequences of our actions. The Christian version of this thinking holds that if we believe that we have a duty to our creator and to live in compliance

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304 Welchman, The Practice, ix.
305 Welchman, The Practice, ix.
with his divine commands, and that other people have the fundamental rights and need to be treated in particular ways, then we cannot determine what acts are right just by judging the consequences of those acts. The question of whether or not a particular action violates another person’s rights or God’s command takes priority over the consequences of the act. Also, a violation of our creator’s command or another person’s right inevitably renders an act wrong, irrespective of the consequences of the act. With this approach, our determination of virtues and vices are based on standards (principles and rules) of right and wrong. With this view, what people need for making right moral decisions are moral principles and rules which must be universal for all people in all places. Followers of this tradition are called deontological theorists (from the Greek word *deon*, which means duty or requirement, and *logos*, which means knowledge).\footnote{Welchman, *The Practice*, ix - x.}

Emmanuel Kant remains the most prominent source for contemporary ethical theories in the deontological tradition.

### C. Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is a tradition that has variety of theories rather than one theory.\footnote{Rosalind Hursthouse has noted that even among neo-Aristotelian philosophers there are varieties of positions some of which claim no relations with Aristotle at all. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8; Joseph Kotva Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 16; Welchman, *The Practice*, vii – xxii.}

Unlike the act-centeredness of the other moral traditions, virtue ethics is tradition-based and agent-centred as it locates morality in personal character rather than just in acts.\footnote{Anthony Rees, “Virtues, Vision and Values in Moral Philosophy and Moral Theology”, (MPhil Diss., The University of Manchester, 2006), 24.} This means that a good person is not determined simply by acts, but more importantly by the quality of that person’s character. Classical virtue theorists have claimed that people who have character do not depend on rules to prevent them from
hurting another person, although rules are not incompatible with virtue ethics. A person who possesses and practices virtues such as courage, generosity, justice, prudence, honesty, and compassion is better equipped to deal with choices of what to do (how to act rightly) and what consequences to pursue. According to the virtue approach, until we have decided on what sort of persons we should be, it is premature for us to determine which consequences are most worth pursuing or how we should treat other people, because who we are ultimately affects how we act.

3.3. A Brief Comparison of the Moral Traditions

Some scholars regard the Deontological and the Consequentialist theoretical explanations of the nature of basic moral norms and how these relate to each other as unconvincing. Edmond Pincoffs argues that principle-based approaches to ethics reduce morality and the moral life to a series of quandaries. The result of such an approach is that the determination of a good person depends on how conscientiously or otherwise a person applies an appropriate ethical principle to the resolution of a moral puzzle. Accordingly, to be considered as moral, one simply needs to stick to some set of moral principles or rules. Although these theories do not necessarily exclude character from their notion of ethics, unlike virtue ethics, they do not make character central. The moral character of people does not really matter, so long as they know how to apply the rules and principles appropriately in their moral activities.

309 Welchman, The Practice, x.
But the use of prescribed set of rules that direct people as to what they should do in particular situations does not provide them with enough motivation to act when confronted with social injustices that cause poverty, which is endemic in Africa. The focus on rules at the expense of stressing personal character engenders moral emotivism and personal interests. MacIntyre has shown that individualism and emotivism tend to engender a type of morality which is based on personal rights, feelings and desires that may exclude the general welfare of other people in the community. He claims that this situation is caused by the emotivist factor in modern ethics. Consequently, when moral situations which are not covered explicitly in ethical rules and principles emerge there are no persons who are sufficiently equipped to intervene.

MacIntyre has been criticised for overstating his case that we are living through a period that is morally gloomier than other historical periods. Also, virtue theory has been criticised for not being rigorous and definite, as it does not prescribe principles and rules that govern the moral life. Virtue ethicists have also been indicted for not having a consensus on which human qualities are the virtues. It is also claimed that virtue ethics cannot tell us what to do, they only tells us how to be. Conversely, Hursthouse has refuted these criticisms. She has indicated that

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312 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 11-12
actually, a virtue-ethical approach gives us direction and guidance to have the right attitude to human life, relationships and death. Virtue ethics provides us with knowledge of what constitutes a good life. When faced with a moral problem, it helps us assess the facts about the situation in order to determine what the right attitude in relation to these facts is.\textsuperscript{317}

Since the main focus of this research is about finding a suitable framework for analysing morality in order to pursue contextualisation of the Christian and Akan moral traditions, my choice of virtue theory is mainly due to its tradition constitutive nature. I follow Aristotelian virtue ethics via a MacIntyrean-Thomism version because MacIntyre builds on Aquinas’s advancement of the Aristotelian tradition to stress that virtues presuppose a tradition and that traditions are crucial for moral inquiry. \textsuperscript{318} MacIntyre’s articulation of the important role traditions play in determining truth and goodness provides an effective guidance for the contextualisation of a rival tradition such as Christian ethics within an African religio-cultural milieu.

3.4. The Virtues: A Brief Overview

The virtues have been defined variously.\textsuperscript{319} Among both classic and contemporary virtue ethicists the actual lists of virtues vary significantly. Aristotle’s list of the virtues include: courage, justice, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and

\textsuperscript{318} The Nicomachean Ethics particularly is used here to get to the root of moral decision making and character formation which was not MacIntyre’s focus. But relevant views of other scholars are reflected upon.
righteous indignation. Aquinas listed four cardinal virtues and three theological virtues. He regarded prudence, courage, justice and temperance as the cardinal virtues, while his theological virtues are faith, hope and charity. Contemporary virtue theorists also have produced several lists, some repeating the above but adding many more that sometimes deviate from the Aristotelian list.

It is almost impossible to do justice to the various definitions. Since my focus is only to show how the idea of character can be used as a methodological tool, I will only focus on the definitions of MacIntyre. He defines a virtue as ‘an acquired human quality, the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods’. He contrasts ‘man-as-he-happens-to-be’ with ‘man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realised-his-telos’, and states that the virtues enable people to make the transition from the former to the latter state. This gives MacIntyrean virtue ethics a tripartite structure. First, the present state of humans; second, the desired end (telos) of humans; and finally, the dispositions, capacities and traits which make it possible for humans to reach their desired end. According to MacIntyre, the virtues are also to be understood as the dispositions, capabilities and traits which sustain humans in their quest to be good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and furnishing us with increasing self knowledge and knowledge of the good.

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321 Aquinas, *Suma Theologica*.
324 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.
Central to this definition is the view that human life has a purpose - a goal - but our present untutored state requires that we nurture some dispositions and capacities which subsequently enable us to achieve our end in spite of the adverse pressures and conflicts we may encounter. Virtue ethicists believe that, naturally, there are possible impediments that could frustrate and distract humans from pursuing being good. Accordingly, the virtues are seen as those dispositions that sustain continuity by ordering the way people choose and act in pursuance of certain ends, and how they use appropriate dispositions in particular settings.

From the foregoing, it can be stated that the virtues facilitate the shaping of human character by enabling people to act sensitively, sensibly and effectively in accordance with the norms and moral goals of their community. Also, the definition offers us some understanding of the relationship between the virtues and character. In this sense, a good person is one who lives and acts according to the virtues in a way that is distinctive to the person. Generally, the virtues are to be understood as being functionally good to, rather than beneficial to the possessor. Virtue ethicists agree that the virtues help order human options by enabling us to properly discern what is morally good, and to discriminate appropriately between moral situations. They are seen as providing the means for acting rationally not merely on external factors such as knowledge of the good but also, essentially, being guided by one’s inner dispositions. The virtues are understood as human traits which are nurtured and which aid people to behave as good people. Having said that, it is important to note that, thankfully, the virtues are not seen as necessarily innate or genetically pre-

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327 Brodie, “Developing Character”, 106.
329 Hursthouse, Virtue Ethics, Pincoffs, Moral Quandaries.
determined ways of conduct, whereby only people with certain genes can have a good moral character. Instead, in virtue ethics, character is available to all people in all places and at all times.

3.5. The Philosophical Perspective of Character

The question of what character means can be answered variously in different contexts. The word itself is ambiguous and needs some clarification at this point. In general terms, to say that something has character implies that the thing has a definite, striking and, perhaps, excellent feature. Etymologically, the word character derives from the Greek *charassein* which means to scratch or engrave, or make a distinguishing mark, or a stamp made by a seal. This general view does not specify what the word means in relation to humanity. That job is done by Stanley Hauerwas’s overview of the way the language of character operates in everyday usage. In everyday usage, people may be described variously as having a ‘character-trait’, ‘being of a character’, ‘being a type of character’ or ‘having character’. When a person has distinctive styles that are characteristic of portions of their activities, that person may be described as having a character trait. An example is someone who is an introvert or extrovert. Also, one may be described as being generous with his/her money but very frugal with his/her time. This means that although that person is very careful with the use of time, that carefulness does not apply to his/her use of money. Furthermore, one may be described as ‘being a type of character’ or ‘being a character’. The former refers to a person’s possession of distinctive characteristics by which all of his/her activities may be described. On the

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other hand ‘being a character’ refers to the highly distinctive ways a person conducts his/her activities. For instance, we may exclaim, what a character! without necessarily implying any moral judgement.\textsuperscript{332}

The notion of character meant in this study is different from temperament, although it does not exclude temperament because this is usually personified in the kind of character one has.\textsuperscript{333} Having character is the meaning meant in this chapter and the concern of my thesis. Again, having character is different from all the above. It entails an evaluative moral connotation, and a sense of control, and consistency in the way a person demonstrates his/her use of the virtues. As such, a notion of integrity is closely identified with having character, because character is regarded as a more basic moral determinant through which the various virtues receive their exact form.\textsuperscript{334}

In virtue ethics, character is understood as a state which results from the habituation of the virtues toward being changed in a certain way repeatedly and being eventually capable of acting in that way.\textsuperscript{335} David Carr asserts that the choices we make for our actions play an important part in the continuing consolidation of moral preference and decision, and that these contribute to the characterological sedimentation of virtues or vices.\textsuperscript{336} He states that as a person chooses and exercises appropriate virtues continuously, a pattern of conduct emerges in the way the person responds to moral questions or situations. This pattern, normally termed as character, is essential

\textsuperscript{332} Hauerwas, \textit{Character}, 13-14.  
\textsuperscript{333} Hauerwas, \textit{Character}, 13.  
\textsuperscript{334} Hauerwas, \textit{Character}, 16.  
\textsuperscript{336} David Carr, “Character and Moral Choice in the Cultivation of the Virtues”, \textit{Philosophy}, 78 no. 304 (2003), 225.
for guaranteeing consistency in the moral behaviour of a good person. This view of having character gives the impression that on our own, human beings can actually be trained to obtain a good moral character. In this way, having character is regarded as having a consistent and distinctive way of using appropriate virtues to achieve a good moral end. Understanding character in this way is a reinterpretation of Aristotle, who also believed that human beings are capable of achieving character for the pursuance of the good of their communities.

3.6. The Concept of Character in Aristotle

The idea of character was central to the Aristotelian view of ethics. Aristotle believed that moral behaviour should be perceived and directed in terms of virtues or the acquired patterns or qualities of human thought and behaviour which aim toward achieving a particular end or goal. For Aristotle, moral enquiries start with the concept of *eudaimonia* which means flourishing or happiness.\(^{337}\) In this way, his ethics were concerned about what humans need to live a flourishing or happy life. Aristotle disagreed with the view that wealth, health, and social status are the essential requirements for a happy life. He asserted that virtue theory disagreed with such views because none of the above is a sufficient or necessary basis for a flourishing or a happy life. Aristotle reasoned further that some people live flourishing lives even though they are not wealthy or even healthy, whereas some people who are wealthy and healthy do not necessarily live happy lives.\(^{338}\) So, he did not believe that the means to achieve human flourishing is found mainly in circumstances external to human beings. Instead, it is found within humans. Aristotle

\(^{337}\) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1; 1094a5-15.

considered human flourishing as a function of us as persons, particularly the development of our character.\textsuperscript{339}

Jennifer Welchman asserts that through most periods of Western history, moral philosophers viewed the question of inner character as the most fundamental question for moral enquiry.\textsuperscript{340} Indeed, before modern times the notion of character had been an essential aspect of the pursuit of morality. It is therefore not surprising that although Aristotle’s moral enquiry starts with the flourishing of life as its goal, one of its crucial outcomes is the development of an inner state which guides moral decisions and actions towards the achievement of the moral goal. Interestingly, Aristotle and subsequent virtue ethicists believe that the nurturing of an inner state, and the formation of character happens naturally by human efforts. That is to say that on their own, people can develop their character, a view that is only partially true in Christian moral theology.

Aristotle explained the basic process underlying every human act. He held that three conditions arise in the human soul (mind). These are feelings, capacities and states. He described feelings as: appetite, anger, fears, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, jealousy, and in general, whatever implies pleasure or pain. Aristotle considered capacity as that which we have when we are said to be capable of feelings. For instance, we are capable of anger, fear and sorrow so we can say that we have capacity for these feelings (emotions). According to Aristotle, the third condition which arises in the soul is termed as a state. The state relates to the disposition which we have towards our feelings. We can either be well disposed or

\textsuperscript{339} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 4; 1095b5-30.
\textsuperscript{340} Welchman, \textit{The Practice}, x.
badly disposed towards feelings. For example, if our feelings are strong in a particular instance, say towards meat, we are considered as being badly disposed in relation to those feelings, and if our feelings are intermediate then we are considered as being well-disposed in relation to those feelings.\textsuperscript{341}

Basically, this means vices and virtues are just the nature of the responses we give to our feelings. However, our responses to feelings involve voluntary deliberations which are directed by the \textit{state} of the human soul at that point in time. For Aristotle, the fact that human feelings are often influenced by various factors which include: emotional, environmental, social and economic factors, there is the need to nurture the state of the soul (character), such that in all circumstances the state of the soul can direct our feelings. In this way, he believed that particular moral conduct can be reasonably expected of a person who is described as having character. As far as Aristotle was concerned, the \textit{state} in the human soul is developed by habituating the virtues which help people to respond appropriately to their \textit{feelings}. The enhancement of the state of the soul (formation of character) depends on our rational decisions and efforts to choose to do what is morally good by nurturing the virtues which enables us to achieve this.\textsuperscript{342}

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the Aristotelian virtue model regards the responses we give to our feelings as determinative of whether we act virtuously or viciously. Having feelings or even strong feelings, does not necessarily lead to vices. For instance, one can be angry or afraid without a voluntary deliberation or decision to be so. Therefore, one cannot be blamed simply for being angry or for being afraid.

\textsuperscript{341} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 23; 1105b.
\textsuperscript{342} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 23.
A person who is angry should not be accused just because he/she is angry, but can be blamed on the basis of being angry in a particular way, if say, the person acts viciously as a result of the anger.\textsuperscript{343} R. S. Peters elucidates this view with an example that craving for a beef-steak or lusting after a pretty woman reveals the nature of human (capacity for feelings), not character (state). He goes on to state that the character of a man who lusts after a pretty woman is revealed only in what he does about the lust. That man’s character is revealed in the manner in which he regulates, or fails to regulate his feelings.\textsuperscript{344}

If the man has character he would not give in to his inclinations, be easily corrupted, or be negatively influenced by external factors, because there would be some sort of consistency in the manner in which he controls his feelings, thereby exhibiting his character.\textsuperscript{345} The point here is that, all moral questions have their roots in feelings and our mastery or otherwise over our feelings reveals our character through our moral acts. Aristotelian virtue ethics shows how this mastery of our feelings is to be achieved. However, the approach does not offer any guarantee, because it all boils down to human effort through our appropriate use of the different virtues to control and direct our feelings.

Concerning how this might be done, Aristotle considered two types of virtues, the intellectual virtues and virtues of character, and asserted that the former relates to the rational part of the soul and is developed through learning.\textsuperscript{346} On the other hand, the latter (virtues of character) are acquired through habituation or nurturing of the non-

\textsuperscript{343} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 23; 1106a.
\textsuperscript{344} Peters, “Moral Education”, 139.
\textsuperscript{345} Peters, “Moral Education”, 43.
\textsuperscript{346} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 17; 1102b,1-5
rational part of the soul, and help a person to respond appropriately to feelings, sometimes in an almost involuntary manner.

A clarification is needed here before I proceed. To state that character is acquired through habituation of the non-rational part of the soul should not lead us to think that this habituation process is non-cognitive. It need not be so. Nancy Sherman correctly stresses Aristotle’s clarification on this issue, which is that although the desiderative part or the non-rational part of the soul, for instance, an appetite does not on its own engage in reasoning, it listens to reason, and in that way partakes in reasoning. It is held that in that form of participation in the act of reasoning, human feelings can be persuaded, controlled and appropriately directed or ordered by reason.347

It is apt to state that no bifurcation of the virtues is intended in virtue ethics. The virtues of character and the intellectual virtues are not seen as isolated. Although the virtue of character is differentiated from intellectual virtue (practical wisdom), there is a strong connection between them because they are complementary. Thus, to say that one is acting from character is not dissimilar from saying that one is acting rationally, although the two statements are not equal. One may act rationally by following rules and principles without necessary being directed by his/her inner state (character). The view in virtue ethics is that a good moral character is a state from which the rational act of a person can be deemed as good. Apparently, this is because each stage of the process of reading a situation and making a rational choice involves feelings and reason. Basically, in every given situation, people’s feelings determine

347 Sherman, The Fabric of Character, 162-163; Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 9, 18; 1098a4, 1103a3, 1102b26.
how able or otherwise they are to judge a situation correctly, because feelings impact on reasoning. Hence, character is needed to control or direct feelings so that the morally good person can always make reasonably good judgements and act in consonance with such judgements.

From the foregoing, it can be affirmed that in terms of Aristotelian virtue ethics, having character is having the state of the soul that actually directs a person in the determination of the good and the choice of action. In other words, character provides the inner state which a person needs to read a situation correctly prior to acting, because rationally good acts proceed from the correct reading of situations. In this sense, the moral life is regarded in teleological terms as beginning and advancing through a rational and intentional pursuit of the good.

3.7. Character Formation: Practising of Virtue

So what is the process of becoming a good person? Sherman argues convincingly that a developmental model is implied in the purview of Aristotelian virtue ethics. The importance of beginnings and gradual development of good habits and character is understood as emerging from a sequence of stages in cognitive and emotional dimensions. Following Aristotle, Sherman asserts that to live a morally good life a good person; (i) must be brought up properly; (ii) must receive the right kind of instruction in the virtues; (iii) must have formed their character in the right way; and (iv) must possess the necessary external goods such as friendship, citizenship and

348 Sherman, Fabric of Character, 160-161.
family. This means that one does not suddenly acquire or lose character, because it results from a properly coordinated continuous moral education. Acquisition or formation of character is seen as a growth process through persistent practice and progressive advancement. Accordingly, character does not easily disappear because it is acquired through periods of constant intentional and rational efforts.

Furthermore, Sherman posits that every rational action presupposes the discrimination of a situation requiring a response, reactive emotions that mark the response, and desires and beliefs about how and for what ends one should act. This means that in virtue ethics, every moral act is regarded as being directed by reason, and is involved with emotion, belief and a narrative or story. In all these our character is pertinently involved in the process of choosing and acting morally. So, having the capacity for feelings such as fear, anger, pity, goodwill and compassion must be properly tied to learning how to discern the circumstances that warrant these responses and a belief about their consequences.

Burnyeat agrees with Sherman that the stress on the need for practising the virtues does not mean simply that it takes practice to develop character. Rather, it is also that practice has cognitive powers and is not merely about mindless repetitions of an act. Deliberate or intentional practising is a way of learning to be and act good, and anytime one repeats the act his/her skill increases towards the point when it becomes almost second nature. Therefore, instead of considering that humans are moved by

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their feelings to act randomly or whimsically, it is considered in virtue ethics that our character conditions us to act in particularly consistent ways. Besides, having character determines our ability to establish what is right and do what is good.

It is held that unlike some innate abilities or inabilities, we must habituate and possess the virtues through deliberate efforts. Although, the virtues are not innate and do not arise naturally in humans, they are not against human nature. The virtues are distinguished from innate abilities which do not depend on practice. Also, in contrast with the human senses which we possess and use irrespective of our frequent exercise of them, we can only possess the virtues through practice. For instance, when we learn how to make a basket, although what we produce may be of different shapes or sizes they would definitely be baskets. In the same way, we only become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate acts, because the state of our character results from the repetition of the virtues which are appropriate to our intended activities. As explained above, the idea that practising the virtues leads to the formation of character truncates the processes that take place between pre-act deliberations and the act.

These philosophical and psychological views on the formation of character focus on the efforts of humans to consciously work towards achieving it. Aristotle and his descendants in this tradition believe that with the help of other important people in our lives, it is within our capacity or reach to form and shape our character.

356 For example, our having sight or taste is not dependent on our practising tasting or watching things. It is also true that our lack of use of our sense can also impair their effectiveness.
3.8. Character and Community

A very important advantage which virtue ethics have over other models is that because it is tradition-based it tends to be communal in its ethos. Aristotle stated that even though it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good for individuals, it is better and more divine to attain and preserve it for a people or a larger community. He held that because the ‘human being is naturally a political animal’ we should never be satisfied with the self-sufficiency of a solitary person living an isolated life and acting only in his/her own interests. Aristotle stressed that what is considered as self-sufficiency must suffice also for parents, children, wife, and in general, for friends and fellow citizens. Accordingly, community is seen as essential for character formation. In the virtue framework, community is promoted whereas individualism is regarded as obtrusive to the ultimate goal of morality. Though the virtues concern how the individual makes progress from where he/she is to the point of realising his/her true moral goal, that goal is not isolated from the general or corporate activities of the community in which the person is located. This is just one of the reasons why virtue ethics suits African communitarian ethos better than other moral traditions.

MacIntyre asserts that ‘we cannot characterise behaviour independently of intensions and we cannot characterise intensions independently of the settings which make those intensions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others’. In other words, moral conduct is more than just overt actions. It involves attitudes, beliefs, expectations, motivations and aspirations which MacIntyre rightly asserts are not separable from a historically particular context and a tradition that make them

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358 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8; 1097b, 5-10.
359 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 206.
intelligible. MacIntyre’s development of the virtue framework, especially his setting of the virtues in practices and traditions of a community is commendable in this regard. In this process of developing character, story telling plays an essential role in educating children from heroic societies to the medieval era and non-literal societies of our day.

Therefore, the context of the community becomes moral resources, vision and goal for character formation because the good of the community is an ultimate desire of morality. Again, although it is held that friends, parents, teachers and other people in the community contribute to one’s character formation the onus still falls on the individual’s effort. So, personal responsibility is regarded as an inherent requirement for character formation.

### 3.9. Character and Personal Responsibility

Peters rightly observes that typical descriptions of people who have character dwell not so much on the rules which they follow or the particular traits of a substantive sort which they exhibit, but rather on the manner in which they follow or exhibit them. Put another way, virtuous choices and good acts do not follow from simple obedience to social convention, but from reflection upon objective considerations of human harm and flourishing. As such, virtue ethics lean more towards a form of ethical naturalism rather than any kind of social constructivism. In the previous section it has been shown that virtue theory stresses the point that humans develop and form their tendencies and dispositions through their choices and actions.

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361 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 206.  
363 Carr, “Character and Moral”, 220.
Therefore, moral responsibility is central to the virtue framework, as it is held that people are responsible for their character or who they become. Within the virtue framework it cannot be accepted at all that sometimes in their moral decisions and conduct human beings are at the mercy of forces beyond their control. This is because basically, every human act is seen as voluntary and has implication for future acts.

Human tendencies and dispositions in turn inform and direct people’s choices and actions. \(^{364}\) Even past actions inform the persons we become, and the kind of persons we have become informs our present and future choices and actions. David Carr uses an analogy which clarifies the view that our present actions inform the type of persons we become. Carr notes that when a mother invited her son to comment on a new hat she had bought, the man of moral character was confronted with a decision of whether to tell his mother the truth or to lie to avoid breaking his mother’s heart. Carr asserts that ‘although one might say that it hardly matters what I decide in such a [situation], this cannot be so for a virtue ethicist, precisely because my decision is both a cause and a consequence of that moral character whose construction is itself a prime objective of moral choice’. \(^{365}\) While a ‘white lie’ may not harm anybody it will certainly diminish the character of the virtue ethicist further any time he/she tells a lie. \(^{366}\)

In the same way that we form our character by acting according to the virtues, we diminish our character by acting on vices. From the foregoing, it can be concluded

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365 Carr, “Character and Moral”, 266.
that from the philosophical and psychological perspectives it is believed that just as one becomes an accomplished builder or a pianist by repeated acts of building or piano-playing, so also one become temperate by repeated acts of self-control or dishonest by repeated acts of deceit. The implication here is that in making particular choices we are choosing a character and making particular kinds of persons of ourselves.\(^{367}\)

### 3.10. Character and Moral Luck

There is an understanding in virtue tradition that some individuals may not have total control over the formation of their character although they are ultimately responsible for their acts. This is because there are hazards and contingencies which they may not be able to control and for which matter they may be lacking in their development of certain virtues. For instance, those who did not have a good parental upbringing, or were raised up in conflict (war) situations may have missed some vital developmental stages in their upbringing that might have negatively affected their habituation of certain virtues. Also, people born in particular cultural contexts may not necessarily be able to develop what people of other cultures may consider as virtues.

The most important question for this research is whether or not those persons are capable of shaping their moral character in the future? That is, when they come in contact with other cultures or new moral dilemmas and realise that they fall short of the moral expectations of those new contexts and realities, would they be able to change? Whilst Aristotle does not completely deny the possibility of a morally

\(^{367}\) Carr, “Character and Moral”, 228.
disadvantaged person changing his/her future prospects in the pursuit of morality, he thought that it was difficult. However, Jonathan Jacobs argues that in spite of the difficulty people can actually choose their character at any stage in their lives. This is one of the positive elements of this tradition that can benefit African Christianity. It is obvious from the description offered about virtue ethics and character that in the processes of moral deliberation and action, not only is the moral agent central but also, crucially, everything depends on the effort of the person who pursues character. Whether in habituating the virtues or in directing feeling, humans are solely in charge.

Adversely, the Christian view of the moral condition of humanity makes the secular naturalistic idea of morality unrealistic. For the religious ethicists and particularly Christian moral theologians, a very important question is whether or not human beings are really able to do what is morally good on their own, by their rational efforts alone? Second, whether a morally bad person can transform their character just by a determination for change. These questions cannot be avoided. The question remains as to how the idea of character can serve as a framework for analysing morality. In what way does the concept of character become a tool for theological analysis of morality? Answering this question will be my focus in the rest of the chapter.

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3.11. Character: A Methodological Approach

Stanley Hauerwas has attempted to offer an account of character that explains the Christian moral life.\(^{369}\) However, in that study, Hauerwas’s idea of character as the qualification of self-agency leaned more to the psychological and philosophical perspectives than is necessary for theological ethics. Hauerwas himself admits to this shortcoming in his new introduction to the third edition in 1985. He concedes that by stating that ‘character is the qualifications of our self-agency’ he inaccurately implied that there is a kind of dualism whereby a self exists behind our character.\(^{370}\) The Hauerwasian approach looks for a self beyond a person’s character, something that is not realistic.\(^{371}\) Since in this study the idea of character is being used as a methodological tool for relating Christian ethics to an African religio-cultural milieu, it is proper to consider it phenomenologically as an account of human existence in relation to the real world. Here, I consider character in Christian terms as a journey towards being transformed into the image of God in Jesus Christ in the present and future world (2 Cor. 3: 18). Therefore, I need a theological category that can explain the role of religious belief in character formation.

3.12. Richard Bondi’s Elements of Character

Richard Bondi is a theological ethicist educated at the University of Notre Dame who has made a very valuable contribution to the idea of character in Christian ethics. Bondi’s works and those he co-authored with Stanley Hauerwas helped to clarify some important misconceptions about the use of virtues ethics in Christian ethics in

\(^{369}\) Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian*.

\(^{370}\) Hauerwas, *Character*, xx.

its earlier stages and are still useful now.\textsuperscript{372} For instance Gilbert Meilaender had warned Christian ethicists from readily accepting and using virtue ethics in theological ethics because of fear that focus on character might not sit well with the grace of God.\textsuperscript{373}

The philosophical and psychological views on character regard it as a result of reasonable (rational) choices. Clearly, an orthodox Christian view of humanity cannot endorse the totally optimistic view of human capacity for, and ability to, form character, implied in the philosophical and psychological perspectives of character. Neither should a balanced Christian view be entirely pessimistic about the human capacity for character. Human potentialities must be acknowledged and on the other hand the limitations and failures must be accepted. To account for this reality, Bondi introduced the heart metaphor as a category in the elements of character. Bondi held that character is more than just the account of our rational choices or the extent to which ‘the direction of those choices conforms to a truthful story’.\textsuperscript{374} He insists that the concept of character also includes the account of our existence as people of much less control and far more uncertainty. By accepting human limitations in this way Bondi makes room for the grace of God. It is this point that makes virtue ethics relevant to religious or theological ethics.


\textsuperscript{373} Gilbert Meilaender, \textit{The Theory and Practice of Virtue} (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984; repr. 2006)), x, 56.

\textsuperscript{374} Bondi, “The Elements”, 204.
Bondi states that character can be analysed as the interaction of four elements of human experience over time.\textsuperscript{375} The way the four elements combine to direct a person’s life is what represents the formation of that person’s character. Essentially, the formation of character is impacted by powerful stories that touch our hearts and provide us with interpretative lenses to perceive our reasons for deliberate actions, so that we can focus on our affections and control or direct our passions. One important function of the elements of character is that they force us to see ourselves in light of our moral responsibility, and also help us to anticipate a transformation of our character.\textsuperscript{376} Bondi outlines the four elements of character as follows: the capacity of intentional action, involvement with affections and passions, subjection to accidents of history and capacity of the heart. I use Bondi’s elements of character rather than say, the Hauerwasian\textsuperscript{377} view because his use of the capacity of the heart makes virtue theory useful for analysing the reality of the moral life and effective for assessing morality in other traditions.

\textbf{A. The Capacity for Intentional Action}

The Capacity for intentional action describes the capacity human beings have for guiding or directing their conduct according to their belief in a reasonable and verifiable way. The discussion of character in this study has shown that one of its crucial features is the deliberation over our choices and offering of reasons for our acts. For the practical theological ethicist, moral reasoning plays an important role in the moral quest of humanity. In moral theological language a person is said to have character if that person has habituated and exhibits such virtues as love, truthfulness, courage, justice and compassion, just to mention a few. If in the face of temptations

\textsuperscript{375} Bondi, “The Elements”, 212.  
\textsuperscript{376} Bondi, “The Elements”, 204.  
\textsuperscript{377} Hauerwas, \textit{Character and the Christian life}.  

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and adverse pressures a person is able to maintain virtuous thought, emotion and action and has the power to resist undesirable moral influences he/she would be regarded as having character.\textsuperscript{378} In this process, a subjective explanation (reason) is always expected for every moral act.

The capacity for intentional action refers to the ability and power that we have for acting in particular ways rather than in others. Thus, our acts can be explained in terms of this capacity rather than by use of psychological terms such as intellect and will.\textsuperscript{379} Though our psychological make up and our cultural context shape what we are, our character is formed by our own choices rather than it being an account of our passive response to a particular environment. This is because as human beings we have the capacity to choose particular ways of acting.\textsuperscript{380}

B. Involvement with Affections and Passions

Secondly, Bondi asserts that our capacity to direct action is not entirely voluntary because it is involved with our affections and passions, what Aristotle called feelings. So, our efforts to direct our affections and passions are in constant contention with ‘what might better be put as the creative energy of the affections and the disruptive force of the passions’.\textsuperscript{381} Since all moral questions are related to feelings, our mastery or otherwise of our feelings reveals our character through our moral acts. Bondi posits that our feelings operate epistemologically as sensors that relate us to the world. Since we need to interpret our emotions properly in order to make good choices between possible options of action, ignoring our feelings leaves

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Atkinson and Field, \textit{New Dictionary}, 65.
\item Bondi, “The Elements”, 205.
\item Hauerwas, \textit{Character}, 18.
\item Bondi, “The Elements”, 204.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
us disconnected from the world and the significant objects that influence our decisions. Although we experience emotions privately our emotions ‘... have external objects in people, situations, symbols, or the natural world’.  

Therefore, feelings are important for revealing our attachments and obsessions, priorities and habits of engagement, inclinations and desires of our human existence. The role of feelings is crucial because when we discount them we fail to notice, for instance, what our anger, sympathy, depression or lust is saying to us about the way we are relating to the world, a person or a situation. Another important thing to note about feelings is that they are not automatically controlled by us.  

Therefore, awareness that every action of ours is somehow connected to our feelings is important to impel us to examine our feelings in all our moral deliberations.

It has been stated earlier that feelings such as lust, fear and anger emerge in the non-rational part of our soul and can only be controlled by rational engagement and that one cannot be blamed for being angry unless one acts viciously as a result of that anger. Bondi explains that our feelings can be interpreted as affections or passions. Affections refer to those feelings which nurture, focus and express deeply held apprehensions of the good life. On the other hand, passions are those feelings that disrupt our apprehension of the good life and which, if we were to habitually act upon them would be destructive to ourselves and to other people. However, this does not simply mean that passions and affections are opposite to each other, such that passions are strong emotions and erotic desires whilst affections are kind feelings. Affections and passions are determined by the appropriateness or otherwise of their

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384 See; Section 3.6.
use. For instance, ‘erotic desire for one’s spouse may be an affection forging bond of love and commitment’, whereas unbridled erotic desire for another person’s spouse can become a passion that might destroy the lives of the people who are affected.\textsuperscript{385}

Understood in this way, affections and passions are the emotional counterparts of virtues and vices. Therefore, we need to develop the affections and discipline the passions in our day-to-day attempts to form character through pursuing virtues and rejecting vices.\textsuperscript{386} Whereas the virtue tradition presupposes that one is naturally able to control the passions, liberation from disruptive passions is one of the goals of a practical theological ethics of character.\textsuperscript{387} This is why it is essential for a moral theologian to understand that passions and affections are involved in our pursuit of character. Verifying whether or not the awareness of this important element is upheld in a moral tradition becomes a way of assessing that tradition of its effectiveness to guide its adherents in their moral pursuit.

\textbf{C. Subjections to the Accidents of History}

This element describes the reality of our human existence, which shows both limitations and potential for the formation of our character.\textsuperscript{388} Subjection to accidents of history describes such things in our lives over which we do not have any control or choice, and make us acknowledge that in our pursuit of character there are certain things that are beyond our control. It is important to know that the notion of character does not only mean an account of our choices, and the conformation of such choices to the truth of our chosen story (worldview), but also an account of our actual

\textsuperscript{385} Bondi, “The Elements”, 206.
\textsuperscript{386} Bondi, “The Elements”, 207.
\textsuperscript{387} Bondi, “The Elements”, 207.
\textsuperscript{388} Bondi, “The Elements”, 205.
existence and experience in the world, including our frustrations at not having total control over all our choices. The formation of character may be affected by accidents of history, or what some philosophers have termed moral luck.\(^{389}\)

Moral luck or accidents in history include events that are beyond the control of a person or a group, situations in which people just find themselves, such past events that we are unable to change.\(^{390}\) For instance, the historical, biological and psychological conditions of human existence are not something people choose for themselves or can easily change. Also, our cultural beliefs, convictions, symbols and worldviews are not entirely of our choosing.

Of crucial importance is the way we perceive and respond to our subjection to these situations in our lives. In spite of our subjection to these situations and others, such as our inability to choose our parents, work colleagues and certain loyalties, these relations make a lot of difference in our pursuit of character.\(^{391}\) Bondi does not suggest that we are necessarily determined by the circumstances of our past. Instead, he thinks that we can choose the way we interpret these past circumstances in our lives. He believes that the interpretation of such events is the ‘chief liberating force in the formation of character’.\(^{392}\) Therefore, an important task in the formation of character is the ability to define these situations and to respond to the interpretations they offer us about our world and our role in it.\(^{393}\) Again, verifying how well or

\(^{389}\) Jacobs, *Choosing Character*, 4 - 22; Also, see Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

\(^{390}\) Bondi, “The Elements”, 207.

\(^{391}\) Bondi, “The Elements”, 208.

\(^{392}\) Bondi, “The Elements”, 209.

\(^{393}\) Bondi, “The Elements”, 209.
otherwise a moral tradition helps its adherents to be abreast of this factor and to deal appropriately with it is a way of assessing that tradition for its effectiveness.

D. The Capacity of the Heart

The capacity of the heart describes the central role the heart plays in causing us to be transformed according to the truthful story of our community. By this, Bondi uses the heart metaphor to describe the centre of the human being, the part of us that unites intellect and feelings on a very deep level.\(^3\) He considers the heart as the centre where the other elements of character coalesce. ‘The heart is the seat of our deepest memories, of our imaginative exploration of other lives and times, of our yearning for union both of the self and with other people, ideals, and possible ways of life’.\(^4\) The heart is also the place where interpretations of all our subjections are driven, where we find reasons for our actions, focus for our affections, and power to control our passions.

In theological terms, our ability to discriminate between affections and passions and to offer reinterpretations of the accidents of history derives from the freedom of the heart. The heart provides a certainty for direction and gives us an interpretative power of the Christian story.\(^5\) Bondi cites St. Augustine of Hippo to show the difference our heart makes in character formation. He asserts that St. Augustine had good reasons for all his deliberate actions but it was not until his conversion experience in the garden in Milan that he actually felt that he had overcome the problem of the disturbing impact of his passions and his lack of focus on his

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affections. It was only after he was ‘touched at the level of the heart’ that he was able to embark on the difficult task of integrating the elements of his character around the common focus given by the Christian story. Bondi affirms that it is the certainty of direction which the heart offered Augustine that enabled him to form his character as a way of embodying the truth of the story.

John Wesley can be another example. Wesley too had been committed to the faith, and had served the poor and needy through hospital and prison visitations as far back as his student days in Oxford. However, his whole orientation on assurance, direction and understanding was more focused after his heart warming experience in 1738. It should not be surprising therefore that Wesley referred to true or authentic Christianity as religion of the heart. It is in the heart that we contemplate the world by imagination and directing our desire to become the type of people envisaged in the Christian story by being united with its visions.

The heart gives us certainty (assurance) of direction which, as an interpretative power of the Christian story, enables us to shape the other elements of our character in the way that moves us towards embodying the truth of the Christian story. This function of the heart makes it possible to talk about the formation of character, and our participation in the formation of our personal character. Moreover, the heart also offers freedom from being controlled by the accidents of history and the destructive impact of the passions. When the heart is free, it has peace and is able to comprehend

399 See detailed discussion in Chapter Five.
400 Bondi, “The Elements”, 211.
401 Bondi, “The Elements”, 211.
the accidents of history as they truly are, and to offer correct reinterpretations of them.⁴⁰²

In the same way, the heart offers liberation from the passions in the sense that it is able to direct the passions to conform to the vision of the normative stories of our communities. A very important aspect of the function of the heart in character formation is that it is through the heart that we have the capacity to use the power of narrative to respond appropriately in our relation to the world. It is in our hearts that we contemplate ourselves and the world through memory and imagination. In our heart we are moved by our desire to become the sort of persons envisaged in the story that we have believed in.⁴⁰³ This particular role of the heart is essential for explaining the deep influence that our worldviews have on our moral reasoning and actions. Also, it is this role that actually reveals the possibility of moral transformation, in that through the heart one may change or modify his/her worldview and by so doing transform his/her character. Our worldviews have their most determinate impact on our character at the level of the heart.

3.13. Worldview and Character

Bondi makes an observation about the relation between moral pursuit and worldview that is vital for this research. He affirms that we are creatures shaped in communities by our adherence to a normative story, and that this formation can best be discussed in the language of character. Our reasons for action are embedded in our worldview or the descriptions we find in the stories that form our convictions about the reality of the world. Normally, our directions in life are shaped by the type of story we choose,

⁴⁰² Bondi, “The Elements”, 211.
⁴⁰³ Bondi, “The Elements”, 211.
or is chosen for us by parents or the significant people in our lives through upbringing.\textsuperscript{404} Thus, character formation could be described as our attempt to embody the normative story of our community. Bondi suggests that the notion of character must by necessity include a phenomenology of the self: that is, about our actual relationship to the world and how we bring our worldview to bear on our experience.\textsuperscript{405}

Worldviews or narratives are important stories, and stories have the ability to touch the heart and also to express truth in very subtle ways that provide us with reasons. This power of stories to provide us with an explanation for the virtuous life also helps us to focus on the affections in order to discipline and direct the passions. This means that we can always try to shape our character in order to embody the truth of the story of our community. In this scheme, the role of the theological ethicist is basically to help in the telling of the normative story in theology, and in pursuing a critical reflection on the stories that are actually at work in shaping present and future generations.\textsuperscript{406} This is exactly what this study is attempting to do. By relating the normative truth of the Christian story to local versions of that story in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, moral transformation is envisaged. Bondi believes quite rightly that whether a particular worldview (story) is effective in helping us form the desired character or not is determined by the actual lives it produces in every era, rather than the doctrines it supports.\textsuperscript{407}

\textsuperscript{404} Bondi, “The Elements”, 203. 
\textsuperscript{405} Bondi, “The Elements”, 203. 
\textsuperscript{406} Bondi, “The Elements”, 213. 
\textsuperscript{407} Bondi, “The Elements”, 214.
Therefore, we can assess whether or not a particular worldview helps its adherents in their moral pursuits by analysing the way their worldview addresses these elements. By this analysis, we are able to verify whether the understanding that traditional Akans have of character from their moral scheme enables them to successfully deal with these elements on their moral journey. Two other important factors can also be clarified. It can be explained whether or not they can anticipate moral transformation from the understanding that their scheme gives them. Secondly, we can tell whether they consider their success on the moral journey as an outcome of religious practice. Through this analysis we are also able to identify areas in which the scheme may need help from other traditions, such as the Christian tradition. In the same way, some strength in the Akan scheme may offer a corrective to the Christian tradition. It is on this basis that I argue that by using these elements as a framework to theologically analyse morality in the two moral traditions, Christian and Akan, we are able to know the way each of them impacts the heart for the shaping of moral character.


I have presented a description of virtue theory as a moral framework for a theological analysis of morality in GP. I have focussed on character, a central motif of virtue theory; this is a moral concept that is common to the Akan and the Christian traditions which can be used to demonstrate that Bondi’s elements of character offer a heuristic tool for the analysis. It has been made clear that understanding that humans have capacity for intentional action, but are influenced by their affections and passions and also subjected to accidents of history in every moral deliberation, is essential for character formation. Also, the role of the heart as the centre where the
human intellect and feelings meet to offer an interpretation of experience has been highlighted. It has been stated that the role of the heart in offering us the right interpretation of the accidents of history, and the destructive impact of our passions is vital for helping us form a character that conforms to the grand narrative or story/worldview of our community. I will now describe the Akan moral scheme and the Christian moral tradition as presented by John Wesley; having in mind the question as to whether an understanding of character that each gives its adherents enables them to deal successfully with these elements in order to embody the moral ideal.
CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTER FORMATION IN THE AKAN MORAL TRADITION

4. Introduction

This chapter describes the pursuit of morality or character formation in the Akan traditional scheme. It has already been made clear that the DT becomes intelligible only with reference to the Akan traditional scheme. The purpose here is to present an understanding of the Akan traditional scheme in such a way that makes it possible to determine whether or not in that worldview, the concept of character helps traditional Akans to pursue morality successfully. Also it is important to know whether the pursuit of morality is considered as an outcome of religious praxis. In other words, to what extent does the tradition succeed in helping its adherents to form moral character in accordance with their moral ideal.

4.1. Review of Extant Work on Akan Morality

Charles Taylor reminds us that moral enquiry is a general human phenomenon and that all peoples, including traditional Akans, ask questions about what makes humans flourish or how to live a moral life.\textsuperscript{408} Therefore, I have relied mainly on Akan philosophical and cultural resources for the supply of deeper insights into the Akan traditional moral scheme. The works of Danquah, Gyekye, Wiredu, Ephirim-Donkor and Jennings offer a depth of philosophical and religious understanding of Akan morality.\textsuperscript{409}

\textsuperscript{408} Taylor, \textit{A Secular Age}, 16.
Danquah conducted extensive empirical research in the 1930s to present an interpretation of the Akan religion and its morality within the wider Western philosophical debates of his day. Although, this work must be respected for its depth, it needs to be read closely with other research, because contemporary Ghanaian commentators on the book wonder about the extent to which the preoccupation of Danquah with the wider Western audience might have invalidated many of his conclusions. Another important work, Ackah’s *Akan Ethics*, was originally a doctoral thesis presented at the University of London in 1959. It focuses on a sociological presentation of the use of moral language for understanding Akan ethics. This thesis offers a wealth of knowledge, especially for those who are not familiar with the Akan way of life, but as pointed out by Pash Obeng, Ackah does not adequately show how the moral ideas he described were actually lived out in the daily lives of Akans. That is to say, the phenomenological value of the work is wanting.

Kwame Gyekye has been one of the most consistent authors on Akan philosophy and particularly its ethics. His research is based on interviews he conducted between 1970 and the 1980s with Akan wise men: chiefs, elders, traditional priests and other experts on traditional wisdom. In this study Gyekye, himself an Akan, presents the Akan moral scheme as a model African moral scheme. Gyekye focuses on the

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centrality of character in the attainment of the moral ideal among Akans. As such his work is very relevant to this study. It is in Gyekye that one really sees the evidence that moral character formation is an indispensable pursuit in the moral scheme of the Akans. Gyekye thinks that unless people have good character and behave accordingly, no institution or system is capable of producing any useful moral reform.\textsuperscript{413}

Ephirim-Donkor, another Akan scholar, has related Akan ethics to the human development model of James Fowler and showed that the entire life of a traditional Akan is seen as a pursuit of moral character with the enduring vision of becoming an ancestor. He shows that in the Akan community, people consciously aspire to gain the title of \textit{nana} whilst they are alive, and to become an ancestor when they pass on to the other side. J. K. Kudadjie alludes to this fact. The pursuit of character which is the means to the quest for becoming an ancestor after life on earth, and which is one of the strongest motivating factors for pursuing and living a good moral life and being morally and religiously responsible, is a lifelong pursuit.\textsuperscript{414}

From these studies, I will show that in African traditional thought even the relationships between humans and the spirits have moral content and are based on moral considerations. Implicitly, this means that both humans and spirit beings are expected to act morally towards each other in a mutually beneficial manner. It has also been realised, that though in the Akan traditional moral scheme belief in the spiritual realm is central to the moral life, this belief does not in anyway compromise

\textsuperscript{413} Gyekye, \textit{Tradition and Modernity}, 205.

or negate the responsibility of the moral agent (persons) for social morality. Rather, belief in the spiritual realm serves to enforce and enhance social morality.

4.2. Worldview and Morality in the Akan Scheme

Don Browning affirms that moral thinking starts in the context of specific traditions and that the self-understanding of the communities which belong to a tradition is shaped by particular narratives, stories and metaphors.\(^{415}\) The deep influence that worldviews have on moral conduct has been mentioned in Chapter Three. To a large extent these narratives, stories and metaphors determine the moral vision, moral values and moral virtues of a community, and what the community expects to be a good life for its members.

In the Akan scheme too, like those of other Africans, morality is based on a worldview that recognises the basic unity of the cosmos, the communitarian nature of human society, a recognition of spiritual realities and a belief that moral education produces a people who are integrated with themselves and with their environment.\(^ {416}\) Essentially, it is the African myths, metaphors and narratives that reveal the implicit moral visions, values and virtues and help the researcher to present the process of moral character formation within this scheme. The first most important and obvious aspect of the Akan worldview is its religious existence.\(^ {417}\) Moral beliefs seem to make sense, at least on the surface, in their relation to religious explanations. But this research delves deeper than the surface to understand the true motivations behind moral behaviour. Since I have already presented aspects of the worldview that relate to the spirit beings I will now focus on human beings.

\(^{415}\) Browning, *Fundamental Practical*, 105.
\(^{416}\) Kinoti, “African Morality”, 76.
\(^{417}\) Pobee, *African Theology*, 44.
4.3. Akan Anthropology and the Idea of Community

Akan conceptual thought has a tripartite idea of a human being (body, soul and spirit). Humans are both biological (material) and spiritual beings.\(^{418}\) Besides the physical body a person is believed to possess a *sunsum* and *okra* (spirit and soul). The *okra* is the life force, the ‘small deposit of the Creator’ that resides in every human being, the absence of which means death.\(^{419}\) In this Akan conception, a human foetus is formed by the blood of the mother after receiving a *sunsum* (spirit) of the father through copulation. The spirit thus received constitutes the ego, the personality, and the distinctive character of a person who is born.\(^{420}\)

Like other African societies it is believed that an Akan community consists of the living humans, the living dead (ancestors) and humans not yet born. Necessarily, the living human beings in the community relate to the ancestors, deities and the material world of the ecosystem for their mutual co-existence.\(^{421}\) By implication, this view of community shapes the Akan understanding of morality in very significant ways. What is considered as good conduct is largely determined by how well or bad an action works to advance congenial human co-existence and human relations with the spirit realm for the achievement of the wellbeing of the community.\(^{422}\)


\(^{419}\) Busia, “The Ashanti”, 197.

\(^{420}\) Gyekye, *An Essay*, 90; Busia, “The Ashanti”, 196. The symbolic relationship and ritual on this spirit-human connection is discussed later under the section on *Ntoro*.


A. The Ebusua /Clan (Family Lineage)

Everybody in an Akan community belongs to an ebusua (clan) of his/her mother. Akan clans are a network of relations, usually called an extended family, which derives from a matrilineal ancestry. The clan relation confers social status to the individual within the lineage, community and tribe. Also, material inheritance, political and social rights and duties are determined by this maternal pedigree.

B. The Ntoro (the Spiritual Lineage)

Essentially, the sunsum (spirit) of a father is believed to be responsible for moulding the personality and dispositions of his children, because it is the intrinsic activating principle which enables the person to exercise power and to function in a characteristic manner. The spirit that the child receives from his/her father is believed to emanate from a deity, commonly understood as a river deity. All people who are related to a particular deity in this spiritual way constitute a spiritual lineage known as ntoro. It should not be forgotten that all deities are sometimes called the children of God. It is also important to note at the onset that the ritual practices that used to accompany the ntoro belief in Akan society have disappeared in contemporary Ghana, and thus are not known to many young people, especially those who live in urban cities. However, the usually unconscious solidarity and cronyism prevalent among Africans generally, and Akans particularly, has some of its roots in this spiritual lineage. Also, the stress on this very important conception is

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423 It is held that there are seven clans in all namely, Oyoko ne Dako, Bretuo ne Agona, Asona, Asene, Aduana, Ekuona ne Asokore and Asakyiri. Busia, “The Ashanti”, 197. In other Ghanaian ethnic groups such the Ewes, the Gas and Krobos, and most African societies the clan derives from a patrilineal ancestor rather than matrilineal.


425 Pobee, African Theology, 44.
because of my belief that, properly articulated, this concept could supply both a psychological and a theological explanation of the transcendental element in human morality in a way that could be transformed for Christian use.

The Akan conception that a child receives a spirit from God through a deity for its subsequent moral development is similar to that of the Yoruba people, who believe that the creator has provided a means that aids a person in his/her moral reasoning and actions. Idowu affirmed that *Oludumare* (God) has placed in every person the oracle of the heart known as *ifa aya*. This oracle guides people in their moral choices. However, it is said that the actual moral life of the person depends on how he/she obeys or disobeys the oracle, that is, how well the person deals with their inner susceptibility to do what is good.\(^{426}\) By implication, there are people who will never become elders of their *ebususa*, not because they have received a faulty infusion of the *sunsum* from their fathers but because they have made choices in their lives that take them to their chosen ‘destination’.

There are some important things to note about the twelve *ntoro* groups in the Akan scheme. Firstly, it is of interest to know that the prefix of their names is the same as the word for gods, which shows that each of the groups is under the aegis of a deity. This means that every member of the group is related spiritually to a particular guardian deity. Another very essential factor about *ntoro* is the belief that there are character traits that are associated with certain *ntoro* and certain surnames as well.

\(^{426}\) Idowu, *Oludumare*, 154.
Obviously, this is because those who bear the names are connected to the same spirit that shapes their ego, personality and character.\textsuperscript{427}

The Akan maxim \textit{agya ye sunsum} (a father is spirit) demands that children revere their fathers and obey them in everything. This is not because fathers have absolute authority that cannot be defied. Rather, it is essentially because it is through a father that a child attains his/her ego and personality, and a father’s withdrawal of blessing can spell doom for his child. Since there have not been any biological or psychological studies on this issue, one can only surmise that psycho-sociological factors may be responsible for such supposed shared traits.

In actuality, it is expected that maturing individuals form their own personality traits through the choices they make in their lives rather than having a predetermined trait from their father. Hence, personal responsibility is critical for the moral life in the Akan traditional scheme. While certain surnames are associated with particular \textit{ntoro} groups, the mere mention of one’s surname may reveal his/her \textit{ntoro} group to anyone who understands it.\textsuperscript{428} Another very significant point to make is that because some surnames are used by members of different clans in various parts of Akan land, although these persons might not have any physical relationship with each other, they are believed to be related spiritually to a guardian deity of an \textit{ntoro} group.


\textsuperscript{428} For instance names associated with some \textit{ntoro} groups such as Bosommmuru are; Osei, Owusu, Poku, Saakoodie, Amankwaas, Safo, Nüt, Anin. Bosompra names are; Dua, Boakye, Boaten, Akyeampom, Ofori, Bediako, etc. Surnames such as Duku, Baafi and Adom are associated with Bosom-Nkktia.
Consequently, they consider each other as distant relatives and have social and moral responsibilities towards each other.\footnote{These responsibilities include sending money to help finance the funeral cost of a member of another community who one may not even know or come into contact with.}

C. The Sense of Finitude

The main rationale behind communal life is the limitedness of individuals if they are left on their own to provide for the spiritual, physical and psycho-social resources they need for mastering their environment.\footnote{Gyekye, An Essay, 154 -156.} This acute sense of being finite necessitates the constant need Akans have to belong to other human beings and the spirit entities through the kinship and spiritual lineage systems in order to enhance one’s vital creative power. Essentially, the type of people and spirits somebody is related to, clearly determines the type of progress the person makes in life.

According to Pobee, this sense of finitude gives undue prominence to a sense of vulnerability to the spirit beings, mostly the witches, and encourages obsessive fear of death.\footnote{Pobee, African Theology, 55.} Thus, a positive aspect of the sense of finitude is that it motivates people toward moral pursuit to form their character in a way that endears them to other people and benevolent spirits. There are no indications that people feared that evil spirits may hinder them from being good people or from making progress in their moral pursuit. Although, the sense of finitude engenders anxiety about life, health, wealth and general wellbeing this anxiety does not involve morality.
4.4. Moral Life in the Akan Traditional Scheme

Basically, the Akan system perceives life as a journey which has a beginning and an end. The entire life (abrabo) of the Akan is considered as a moral existence.\textsuperscript{432} Etymologically, \textit{Obra} means existence (life) and \textit{bo} means to create, shape, fashion out or mould something, just as blacksmiths shape pieces of metal on anvils. This view is affirmed by an Akan maxim, \textit{obra ne wo ara abo}, which means life is whatever you make of it, or life is what you create by yourself. Interestingly, this Akan maxim resembles the first principle of a Western existentialist philosophy defended by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre held that ‘man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself’.\textsuperscript{433} However, the Akan view differs fundamentally from Sartre’s. Whereas the Western existentialist perspective is understood in atheistic notions, the Akan thought is embedded in a theistic metaphysics, which holds that the human being and the world were created by the Supreme Being, and that a person cannot shape a meaningful life in isolation from other people and the supra-human entities in other cosmic realms.\textsuperscript{434} The Akan maxim, therefore, means that although people have support from other members of their community, the responsibility for a person’s actual moral character lies on that person alone as the end reward (blame or praise) awaits him/her.\textsuperscript{435} By implication, the Akan scheme assumes the freedom of human agency, and places full responsibility of every action on humans.\textsuperscript{436}

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\textsuperscript{432} Ephirim-Donkor, \textit{Africa Spirituality}, 108-109. \\
\textsuperscript{433} Jean-Paul Sartre, \textit{Existentialism and Humanism} (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1948, repr. 1965), 28. \\
\textsuperscript{434} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 48. \\
\textsuperscript{435} Ephirim-Donkor, \textit{African Spirituality}, 109. \\
\textsuperscript{436} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 123. 
\end{flushright}
character is seen as being shaped by the choices the individual makes along the way after he/she has started the journey of moral existence.\textsuperscript{437}

Since situations and circumstances change, the Akan do not just hope that by having a moral vision and knowing the moral values and virtues, individuals will always act morally. Akan tradition entertains the fear that on the ‘the moral journey’ an individual may face different sorts of conflicts of interest which could cause that person either to abandon the values and the vision altogether, or to act capriciously and, sometimes, even contrarily to the shared values. Consequently, they do not leave the achievement of the moral ideal to chance. Instead, it is stressed that the formation of a good moral character is a guarantee for good decisions and acts. The Akan scheme believes that the most assured means to remaining consistent in one’s moral conduct is by having a developed moral character.\textsuperscript{438}

**4.5. Moral Virtues in the Akan Scheme**

A major problem that befalls all human societies is the inner weakness of human beings that hampers their effort to do what is good in order to fulfil their moral obligation. Browning asserts that human reason serves generally to spell out principles of obligations, which has a rational structure and is able to deal with these conflicts within and between particular traditions.\textsuperscript{439} He claims that in the Judeo-Christian tradition principles such as love for one’s neighbour, or the golden rule (do unto others as you would want them do to you), becomes an obligation that people within the tradition have to live by.\textsuperscript{440} To a large extent the fulfilment of these


\textsuperscript{439} Browning, *Fundamental*, 105.

\textsuperscript{440} Browning, *Fundamental*, 105.
obligations depends on human disposition and character. As I have shown in Chapter Three, this disposition or virtues are very important for enabling people to follow rules such as the golden rule. Therefore, it is apt to stress the importance of the existence of common virtues in the Akan moral tradition.

Bewaji asserts that in African indigenous thought, moral obligations arise in the social milieu as a result of the competition for the scarce environmental and human resources available in a community. Human needs, such as love, support, respect, compassion, companionship etc. are also scarce and require deliberate efforts in both their generation and equitable distribution.\footnote{John A. I. Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture”, in Kwasi Wiredu ed., \textit{A Companion to African Philosophy} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 397.} Basically, morality is the pursuit of balancing individual needs and interests with communal wellbeing, that is, with the needs and interests of other people in the community.\footnote{Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality”, 396.}

Among Akans, moral behaviour is understood as behaviour in conformity to moral beliefs and values of the community. A morally good person is one whose attitude and response to moral values and beliefs is satisfactory and commendable.\footnote{Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 130.} Since in reality it is not easy to deal with the conflicts that may arise in moral decision making, the Akan traditional scheme considers and values certain human dispositions to be crucial for moral character formation. Virtues such as honesty, reliability, courage, temperance, humility, kindness, compassion, generosity, hospitality, faithfulness, compassion, peaceful demeanour, justice, solidarity, tolerance and respect for authority are considered as imperative for a moral life. Whoever exhibits

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\item Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality”, 396.
\item Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 130.
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these consistently is regarded as having character.\textsuperscript{444} Therefore, the Akan traditional moral scheme encourages and supports people to habituate these virtues in order to live in accordance with the moral ideal. However, my analysis will show that this encouragement and support is inadequate.

### 4.6. Character in the Akan Scheme

The understanding of character (\textit{suban}) among the Akan is similar to that of virtue theory. Character is perceived as a state or condition of the human soul which ‘causes’ a person to perform good deeds in a spontaneous and easy manner to meet the moral expectations in his/her community. The word \textit{suban} (character) can be rendered as a type of, or a specific nature. \textit{Su} or \textit{esu} means nature and \textit{ban} means type. This implies that character is connected with a person’s nature as it develops from certain inborn traits.\textsuperscript{445} Akan thinkers define character in terms of the habits which emerge from a person’s deeds or actions. As such, \textit{suban} is regarded as the configuration of individual acts. Since good character is the result of persistent good deeds, individuals in the Akan community are considered as responsible for having or not having character.\textsuperscript{446} In the Akan language, if someone consistently falls short of the moral ideal that person is described as \textit{onni suban}, which is the same as saying \textit{onnye nipa} (he/she has no character and he/she is not an authentic person).

Similarly, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, morality is concerned with character. There is a Yoruba myth which is used to teach that the only way to a successful life is through a good moral character. Bad character is capable of ruining a good

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\textsuperscript{444} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 68; Gyekye, \textit{Tradition and Modernity}, 49-51.
\textsuperscript{445} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 149.
\textsuperscript{446} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 150.
Consequently, somebody with a good character is described as one who acts like a person and behaves as a person should. A bad person is regarded as socially unworthy, one who as a result of his/her bad character is not fit to be called a person. Even though he/she resembles one, such an individual is only regarded as ‘a mere caricature of a person’. Naturally, this description is harsh but it serves the traditional system well by encouraging people to pursue moral excellence. So important is the notion of character that in traditional African thought, inequality or injustices and other immoral behaviours are considered as ‘fundamentally an inward problem of character’. Essentially, character is seen as the engine of the moral life in practice, the essence of the African moral scheme and the fulcrum of the ‘moral wheel’. But how does character work in practice and in what way can one rely on the good moral character of another person?

4.7. Moral Training in the Akan Scheme

Having shown that character is an essential factor in achieving the wellbeing of the Akan community, it is now time to discuss how the formation of character is achieved. Basically, the communal existence of Akan people ensures the up-bringing of children, physical security and comfort, economic co-operation and social life of every member. Through socialisation, maxims, proverbs, and folktales are used to teach young children and help them to habituate the moral virtues in the community. Wiredu captures the process succinctly when he says that ‘the theatre of moral upbringing is the home, at parents’ feet and within range of kinsmen’s

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447 Idowu, Oludumare, 151, 155.
448 Idowu, Oludumare, 154 - 155.
450 Gyekye, African Cultural, 176, 65.
451 Gyekye, African Cultural, 66.
inputs. The mechanism is precept, examples and correction. This means that from birth through initiation, adolescence and adulthood, the individual who participates fully in the community goes through educational or developmental spheres where they are expected to work toward the moral ideal.

It is necessary to note that the Akan family plays the most important role in moral development. This is because it is the immediate context of moral upbringing in communal values such as love, ‘caring, cohesion, solidarity, interdependence, mutual sympathy and responsibility’. The social obligations, personal rights and privileges which spread out from the household relations of kinship to the larger spheres of lineage and clan affinities provide a natural school for moral character formation. Mbiti affirms that the customs, traditions, rituals, beliefs, and practices of every society includes teaching their ethics for moral welfare, and that people learn their moral lessons as they grow up and become participant members of their community. As members of the community participate in its practices they receive teaching and support that help them to become authentic persons who are capable by their deeds of earning the title of nana here on earth and becoming an ancestor at death. Crucially, the community owes the individual a duty to provide this support just as the individual owes the community a duty of full participation and compliance.

453 Gyekye, Tradition and Modernity, 293.
454 Gyekye, Cultural Universals, 71.
455 Mbiti, Introduction, 180.
4.8. Values as Means to Morality

Having offered a description of Akan anthropology and shown how character is understood, I now turn to show how Akans actually live together. From the intricate web of relationships described above, one wonders how Akans maintain these relationships and still ensure that the needs of everyone are met. According to Browning, in every group of people there are shared values that are used to organise the way basic human needs are met within the group. From shared values people derive principles which guide their moral practice. This means that values are implicit in the moral principles by which individuals live and relate in a community. It also means that the motivation for moral decisions and actions derive from the shared values.

Pugh affirms that values are the source of human motivation. He outlines three primary values that motivate human behaviour as: Selfish Values, Social Values, and Intellectual Values. Selfish values are values directly associated with individual welfare and survival. Social values are values whose purpose is to motivate individual behaviour to contribute to the survival of the group. Intellectual values are values whose purpose is the motivation of efficient rational thought. In the Akan traditional context, social values are promoted above selfish values. It is not that selfish values are not pursued but they are pursued only for the ultimate purpose of fulfilling social values.

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457 Browning, *Fundamental*, 106.
459 Pugh, *The Biological*, 155.
It is essential to note that values may derive from totally humanistic or religious outlooks or even from a mixture of the two. N. K. Dzobo, a former Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana, holds that African humanistic values are invented by communities to serve as judges and guides for human choices and behaviour. Furthermore, it is apt to include that through human interaction in an attempt to meet their personal needs and the needs of their community, people tend to place a higher premium on certain things and ways of relating to each other, which in turn guides their future behaviour. In the next section I discuss how individuals in the Akan traditional setting solve the problem of meeting their basic human needs such as food, shelter, affection, security, belongingness, self-respect, self-cohesion and others without denying other members in the community the same needs.

In the Akan moral scheme there is a very strong focus on communal or social values although personal values are not excluded. So, firstly, I shall discuss these values and examine how the personal and the social are related to each other in the Akan moral scheme. It must be borne in mind that these descriptions are offered so that the question of how the Akan traditional moral scheme succeeds, or otherwise, in helping its adherents to live according to the moral ideal or anticipate moral transformation can be answered.

**4.9. Core Values in the Akan Moral Scheme**

Dzobo asserts that the important core values of Akans and Ghanaians generally are the value of human life, the value of human beings and the value of social

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organisation.\footnote{Dzobo, “Values”, 224.} Similarly, Gyekye has categorised values into personal, social and moral. However, a close reading of the two scholars shows that they deal with the same values. Whereas Dzobo distinguishes the value of life from the value of communal organisation, Gyekye locates and discusses these within communal relatedness as an intrinsic part of it.\footnote{Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 35 -70. In this volume Gyekye presents a general introduction to African cultural values and separates values into, religious, political, economic, aesthetic, individual, social etc., although these can be categorised under the three categories I have used use in the present study.} Despite this, it is more revealing to group the values according to Dzobo because this offers a better understanding of the relationship between different values.

\section*{A. The Value of Human life}

The Akan maxim, \textit{su nkwa na mma nnsu ade} (cry for life but not for material things) and the \textit{Ewe} maxim \textit{agbe nye ga}\footnote{According to Ghana census 2000, 12.7\% of the Ghanaian Population belongs to the Ewe ethnic group. The Ewe language is spoken also along the coastal belt of Togo and Benin in West Africa.} (life is the most supreme or life surpasses everything) are just some of the many aphorisms that show that Akans and Ghanaians generally value human life above all other things. The notion of human life being referred to here is not simply the same as the instinctual life humans share with other animals. Dzobo holds that life is the first and greatest of the human values. He considers life as a creative power in humans which is demonstrated in the form of work, change and growth.\footnote{Dzobo, “Values”, 228.} Accordingly, life in the Akan and the Ghanaian sense generally includes, but transcends, the instinctual in very significant and practical ways. Dzobo states that it is ‘… the life that is founded on the principle of syntropy … [meaning] that there is an urge or dynamic creative energy in life, …which works towards wholeness and healing, towards building up and not pulling down, towards

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creating and not destroying and towards synthesis and not conflict’.\textsuperscript{465} The differentiation between other animated beings and humans suggests that life entails a rational capacity or ability to reason which only humans have.

This view of life is alluded to by Magesa, a Catholic theologian from East Africa who argues that African morality is all about the vital life force, which he also sees as a vital and creative power.\textsuperscript{466} Conceived in this way, life finds its most practical expression in growth, creativity, and multiplicity. These become essential auxiliary values, while impotence, stagnation and lack of progress are regarded as the most dreaded tragedies in life.\textsuperscript{467}

These imply that the human being is capable of reason and creativity. In other words, the Akan scheme also regards humans as having the capacity for intentional action as it is held in virtue theory. So, the Akan maxim, ‘life is what you make of it’ discussed earlier, makes more sense when understood in light of the reasoning and creative capacity humans have. It is important to note that this understanding of life in the Akan system shows that a vital element of character, the capacity for intentional action, is upheld as instrumental for character formation.

\begin{itemize}
  \item **B. The Value for Personhood**

The human individual, who is the repository of the creative and vital power, is the most valued above all material things. The notion of human being, which is being described here, holds that authentic personhood is earned by a person’s character.

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\textsuperscript{465} Dzobo, “Values”, 227.
\textsuperscript{466} Laurenti Magesa, \textit{Africa Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life} (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), Chapter three.
\textsuperscript{467} Dzobo, “Values”, 227-228.
First of all, a human being is a person who embodies the dynamic creative power to fulfil his destiny in the community. Since individuals have the capacity for intentional action they would be disciplined to live in particular ways that ensure the appropriate use of their creative power for increasing, building up and uniting the community.\(^{468}\) This meaning of personhood has an evaluative connotation to it. Essentially, being human in this African sense is not simply in the ontological sense and thus is not automatic for everybody. Rather, the individual earns this designation by his/her conduct in the community.\(^{469}\) But because all humans are embodiments of the vital creative power, they are all respected equally and given the benefit of the doubt until they prove themselves otherwise. This value serves as a strong motivation for every individual to strive to live according to moral ideals in order to earn the respect that this designation confers.

When an individual’s conduct consistently appears cruel, selfish, ungenerous, or wicked he/she would be referred to as not being an authentic human. Akan thought allows that an individual can be a human without necessarily possessing authentic personhood. This may sound strange but it is a fact that in traditional African thought the practice or pursuit of moral virtue is intrinsic to the concept of personhood.\(^{470}\) Consequently, the statement *oye nipa* translated as, he/she is a human being, is a statement with a moral connotation. It means that the individual has good character; that is, he/she is peaceful, not troublesome, kind, has respect for other people, is humble and has respect for authority and behaves in this way consistently.

\(^{468}\) Dzobo, “Values”, 228.
\(^{469}\) Kudadjie, “Moral and Social”, 213.
A final word on personhood may be taken from Mbiti who said that ‘… to be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in its beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals’ thereby fostering cohesion.\footnote{Mbiti, \textit{African Religions}, 2.} In this regard, individual initiative and responsibility are highly valued, and any self-imposed isolation from active participation in the community is regarded as abnormal and a sign that the individual may be inauthentic.

4.10. Character and the Value of Community

From the relationships discussed above, it is expected that social organisation will be one of the core values of the Akan system. African traditional values for creativity, growth and cohesion on one hand, and on the other hand their value for authentic personhood as repositories of the vital force, are soon met with the realisation of the limitedness of individual capacities and the diversities in individual talents. Consequently, in their own interests, relational organisation becomes a logical progression of human evolution towards the attainment of character and enjoyment of life in full. Wiredu asserts that in the Akan traditional scheme all values derive from human interests, and fellowship is the most important of all human needs.\footnote{Wiredu, “Moral Foundations”, in \textit{Person and Community}, 194. This point seems misleading in view of the religious orientation of Africa but we shall come to that discussion later in the chapter. Suffice it to say that Wiredu differs from other scholars on the issue of the foundation of \textit{Akan} ethics because he does not accept that \textit{Akan} morality is based on the traditional religion.}

But people do not have a choice in determining which community they belong to.

Firstly, a person belongs to the creator (Supreme Being) through the \textit{okra} (soul) the person is given for life. Secondly, he/she is related to a lesser deity, usually physically embodied as a river by means of the spirit and thirdly, he/she is related to all those with whom he/she shares the same maternal ancestry. Finally, that person is
still related to all humans who have a relationship with these other entities. This explains why everybody is a relative of one another in an Akan community. It also shows why social responsibilities among Akans can be unending. Whereas the *ebusua* relations are limited only to those who are of the actual blood pedigree of a particular matrilineal ancestor, the relationships within the *ntoro* (spiritual) lineage stretches further afield. Bujo alludes to this view for Africa generally when he states that ‘... beyond the natural blood relations it is possible in Africa to become a member of a family or a community by acts other than birth’. 473

Thus, the Akan moral scheme is rightly considered as communitarian because it stresses the value of community for character formation. It is often said that in Akan thought the welfare and well-being of the community is the sole criterion for determining goodness. 474 Gyekye stresses that there is persistent concern with human welfare in African morality generally, and that in communalistic societies what is good is that which brings about, or is supposed to bring about, human wellbeing. 475 Accordingly, an act is considered good when it enhances, promotes and protects the wellbeing of the community. It is noteworthy that the African notion of community is a little bit different from the same concept in the West. The African notion of community is not simply an association based on a contract of individuals whose interests and ends are similar. Instead, community is perceived as a group of persons and spirits linked by interpersonal bonds, which are not merely and necessarily biological, but nonetheless who consider themselves primarily as members of a group and who share common goals, values, and interests. 476

As such, social welfare, solidarity, and harmonious human relationships are valued practices. An advantage of this type of communal relatedness is that the intricate web of social relationships which it fosters tends to ensure the social worth of the individual and makes it almost impossible for an individual to feel socially insignificant.\footnote{Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 157. The different role the individual plays in the lives of their neighbours irrespective of how insignificant, is seen as their own important contribution to making life meaningful in the community.} Having said that, it is important to note that it is not only the interpersonal human relationships that the traditional Akan system depends on to ensure the preservation and promotion of life in the community through the formation of the character of its members.

Akan moral tradition also relies on the spiritual dimension to life which is one of the indispensable components of African ethics and morality. It is believed that success in preserving and promoting life in the community is influenced by the relationships which humans maintain with the invisible spiritual world and the material world of the ecosystem. This means that, although in practice Africans tend to be anthropocentric, yet, the spiritual dimension is a primary component of moral pursuit. The perception of themselves as inseparably connected to other cosmic realms gives Akans a sense of indebtedness, great purpose and the basis of their veneration of the supra-human realms.

The cosmic dimension of morality is understood in terms of the relationships humans have with the ancestors, the deities and the material ecosystem around them. Both the spiritual and material dimensions are important for the Akan because immoral handling of any of these may impede the promotion, preservation and protection of the wellbeing of the entire community. In many ways, the enjoyment of life in the
community depends on a good relationship with these realms. For instance, human behaviour toward their environment is considered in moral terms, because irresponsible handling of it may cause drought or floods that would destroy crops, habitations and human lives.\textsuperscript{478} Similarly, in other African communities such as the Igbo of Nigeria, it is believed that the moral lapse of an individual towards nature may bring the wrath and punishment of deities upon all the members of a community.\textsuperscript{479}

The point here is that the onus of maintaining all the relationships that are necessary for moral pursuit or moral character formation lies on human beings. To qualify as a good person one needs to maintain a cosmological balance with all the human and supra-human entities in the community. It is also believed that one’s right action opens the way for a good life, and wrong actions will not only close the way but sometimes may actually incur retribution. Ultimately, the good moral character of individuals is realised basically through a relational network that is person-centred, spiritually sanctioned and deity affirming.\textsuperscript{480}

4.11. Some Moral Issues with Akan Communitarian Ethos

Obviously, this type of kinship relationship in Africa has implications for moral actions, because in this system the first expected social duty of an African is to one’s kinsfolk: from both blood and spiritual lineages. Although this relatedness is seen as

\textsuperscript{478} Instead of using empirical evidences to show why floods or drought may be caused by irresponsible exploitation of the ecosystem often religious meanings are read into almost every tragedy. In the past, farming in certain areas of the forest or fishing in certain parts of the river was prohibited with the excuse that a deity swims in those sections or that it is the resting place of the deity and its family (in case of a forest). Hence, if the river or forest is violated then disaster follows. Egs. Rape in the fields, defecating on a river bank especially near a spot perceived to be the abode of the deity.


\textsuperscript{480} Bujo, \textit{Foundations}, 2.
positive for moral character formation within Akan traditional communities, conflicts do arise when people who are not Akans or who are not considered as belonging to the clan, ntoro and abusua, have to share the limited resources of the modern nation state to satisfy their needs. This is why the creation of modern nation states in Africa, which has brought different ethnic groups and tribes together arbitrarily continues to cause tensions with the traditional system. Previously, social obligations were understood to be toward people from one’s family, clan and tribe. But in the modern nation state, fulfilling social obligations in this way may actually be an immoral practice, especially if one was a government functionary charged with the distribution of goods and services. An example is when government functionaries try to fulfil their kinship and other relational obligations at the expense of the general wellbeing of the country. Also, the sense of belonging to the African traditional community naturally engenders uncritical solidarity with other members of that community, a situation that is responsible for cronyism and nepotism in contemporary African societies. For instance, the moral issues of economic corruption, nepotism, dictatorship, and various forms of injustices including poverty may be seen simply as a continuation of previously accepted social obligations that have not changed when global changes hit African societies.

4.12. The Problem of Autonomy

The communal oriented morality of African societies has received criticisms, some of which cannot be ignored in this study because of their implication for our question on how the Akan worldview and moral scheme shape people to embody the moral ideal. We have seen that among the Akans, the inseparable link between the individual and the community determines the resources available to the individual for
moral decision and action. This kind of communalism has been mistakenly considered as absorbing the individual into the life of the group, thereby reducing individuality, personality, initiative and responsibility, factors that are crucial for moral choice and action. The impression is created that morality in communally oriented societies does not stress the interest and role of the individual adequately.

For instance, Peter Kasenene argues that:

In African cultures the emphasis placed on communalism militates against individual autonomy. Although African societies respect individuals, and members are free to think and act independently, as long as their actions do not harm others or restrict their rights, this autonomy is often disregarded. The good of a group is more important than personal autonomy. This militates against freedom of choice, which is important and must be respected if a person is to be responsible for his or her action.

Kasenene implies correctly that the freedom that individuals have for thinking and acting independently is an essential aspect of their personal autonomy. The statement also implies that freedom of choice and the pursuit of group interests are contrary as one militates against the other. However, this is not necessarily so. The fact that the good of the group is more important does not necessarily negate freedom of choice to act for or against the interests of the community or the group. Some people actually do that, though their personhood may be regarded as inauthentic.

Similar to Kasenene, Jennings has argued that in Akan thought the individual has no autonomous existence, because although Akans strongly emphasis individuality, in reality the individual person has no autonomous existence. According to Jennings, an Akan is ‘defined theistically in terms of his moral purpose in the world (destiny or

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481 The narratives, practices and metaphors of the community provide the point of reference for the member in all moral reasoning and action.

nkrabea); matrilineally in terms of his social identity and existence (mogya); and patrilinеally in terms of his personality (ntoro).\textsuperscript{483} Hence, Jennings claims that it is only in conjunction with these three realities that a person has existence and that such existence is a loss of autonomy. Instead of seeing these realities of an Akan’s existence as being connected, and at the same time distinct areas of human existence that demand a holistic moral response from the individual, Jennings sees it as a loss of autonomy. Although Jennings uses a MacIntyrean virtue framework for his analysis, it appears that he does not fully appreciate the tradition-constitutive nature of the Akan moral scheme.

MacIntyre’s major contention with the Enlightenment is that it has created emotive individuals whose moral rationality was isolated from their traditions and that this was the cause of moral relativism.\textsuperscript{484} Jennings does not acknowledge that the three dimensions of an Akan’s existence (spiritual lineage, blood lineage and destiny) offers him/her a capacity for morality, an identity and a purpose in life, and that these affirm his/her autonomy rather than hinder it. In fact, understanding that an Akan’s existence is embedded in a tradition, provides the Akan with answers to the questions: who am I?, what goals am I to pursue?, and what resources do I have to achieve the goals?, questions that are crucial for the virtue tradition and for the pursuit of morality and character. In Africa, autonomy is understood as the individual’s thought and action with the community rather than individual’s thought and action on his/her own without reference to the community.\textsuperscript{485} Having said that, it is important to note also that this system limits the choices or options an individual may have with regard to specific moral issues.

\textsuperscript{483} Jennings, “Christian Virtue”, 60.
\textsuperscript{484} MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}, 48 - 63.
\textsuperscript{485} Ezekwonna, \textit{African Communitarian}, 73-75; 80-81; 100.
4.13. Moral Responsibility

A sense of moral responsibility is one of the ways by which the Akan system ensures the character formation of its members. Moral responsibility in this context refers to the caring attitude that one is encouraged to have with regard to the wellbeing of other persons in the community. It includes the duty to help those who are distressed, the duty to show concern for the wellbeing and needs of others, and the duty of not harming others in any way, and includes maintaining justice and fairness.\(^{486}\) In the Akan traditional moral system, moral responsibility is elevated above the ethic of individual rights, even though the latter is also upheld.\(^{487}\) As indicated with regard to communal relatedness, moral responsibility also stretches from one’s children and spouse to the ancestors, clansmen, and ultimately the community at large. What this means is that a member of the Akan community has no excuse for not acting morally or not stopping another person from acting immorally although the latter is not always feasible.

With this kind of understanding, it is unthinkable in the Akan traditional moral scheme that despotic and corrupt politicians could be absolved of their moral responsibility and left to inflict pain on their subjects or constituents with the excuse that they are being used by forces beyond their control. Thus, Kalu’s claim about African Pentecostals that they pray for despotic leaders instead of directly engaging with them about their immoral leadership, reveals the inconsistency between the African traditional and Pentecostal approaches to social morality. In Akan traditional society even kings were dethroned when they were found to be consistently wanting

in the virtue of justice, and when they lacked character.\textsuperscript{488} The importance of moral responsibility for character formation is that members of the Akan community are given the right to hold each other responsible for their moral lapses. This can be mistaken as merely an arrangement of mutual help.

Moral responsibility can easily be misconstrued. For instance, Jennings argues that members of the Akan traditional community support each other in the expectation that in the same or other ways they will be supported in return.\textsuperscript{489} This view is only partially true. Akan scholars such as Wiredu, Gyekye and Ephirim-Donkor agree that the welfare of the Akan community is the ultimate goal for morality.\textsuperscript{490} In their view, the value of all human actions is determined by how they serve to preserve and promote the well-being of the community. Expectation of pay-back is not the main motivation. For instance, Kwesi Dickson, a former Akan minister and past chairman of the Methodist Church asserts that Akan cultural life ‘… enshrines values such as care for the underprivileged, brotherhood, and communality’. According to him, these values are needed to ensure that all members of the community are fully integrated into its life, such that inequalities in their talents and circumstances do not lead to the deprivation and neglect of any of them.\textsuperscript{491}

Kudadjie affirms this view with an example from another Ghanaian ethnic group, the Dangme. He claims that the well-being of the community, which is termed as \textit{Kplokoto} in the Dangme language, means a community in which wellbeing is

\textsuperscript{489} Jennings, “Christian Virtue”, 71.
\textsuperscript{490} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 156;
\textsuperscript{491} Dickson, “The Methodist Witness”, 207.
available and may be enjoyed by all. Also, the wellbeing of the community entails a social environment, where the concerns and interests of individual members of the community are part of the concerns and the interests of other members of the community.  

Undoubtedly, Akans have very strong sense of responsibility for the aged and other vulnerable people. Indeed, members who support vulnerable members of the community would not expect that their acts will be repaid in any way by the beneficiaries of their deeds. These deeds should best be understood as discharging a moral responsibility rather than raising expectation of a pay-back. However, people may expect a pay-back from the deities when, as result of fulfilling their moral obligations to other members in the community, the spirits are well disposed toward them and shower fortunes on them. The important point here is that by moral responsibility people are helped to develop character in accordance with the moral ideal of the community.

4.14. The Destiny Factor in Akan Morality

Of course, the description of character being presented in this study is by no means suggesting that all Akans are able to live according to the moral ideal. Some scholars attribute the Akan’s failure to achieve the moral goal to destiny. Jennings states that all the efforts made to live a virtuous life and to represent the community and guide its progress are frustrated if the individual fails to discover his destiny, because one cannot act against his/her destiny.  

It seems that Jennings is influenced by Ephirim-Donkor in this regard, because Ephirim-Donkor also asserts that the goal of the moral life which he terms as ethical existence and generativity, is the ideal life as

492 Kudadjie, “Moral and Social”, 212.
predetermined by one’s purpose of being (nkrabea).\footnote{Ephirim-Donkor, African Spirituality, 110.} In the same volume Ephirim-Donkor states that without the ebusua (the clan) the individual does not exist. Moreover, it is the clan that nurtures and sustains the individual, and offers him/her an identity and meaning that leads to the ideal life.\footnote{Ephirim-Donkor, African Spirituality, 109.} He implies that the individual is expected to contribute to the ideal life of the clan and community.

Therefore, the idea that one’s moral life may be predetermined to work against the wellbeing of the community is absurd, unless it is shown that destiny (nkrabea) is always good and that the creator always gives a person a predetermined destiny which always complies with that of his/her clan. Or unless it is shown that the creator always establishes one’s destiny to contribute to the wellbeing of the community, the view that somebody’s moral life may be predetermined is not persuasive. Actually, it is fatal. The available data shows that nkrabea can be bad or good and that people strive to reverse their bad nkrabea through diviners and religious specialists.\footnote{Mbiti, African Religions.} There is another view that people choose their own nkrabea and that God only ensures that what a person chooses befalls that person in life.\footnote{Danquah, Akan Doctrine.} That is why not all people in the Akan community make it to the status of ancestor. However, nobody can be excused for his/her immorality on the basis of destiny.

This view gives the impression that destiny influences moral behaviour and that people normally go in search of their destiny in order that, by that knowledge, they can pursue character formation. The other side of this view could be that moral capacity is predetermined, and a person only acts according to what has already been
determined. This is a defeatist view of ethics which cannot be successfully defended in the Akan traditional moral scheme. On the first point, it needs to be stressed that in Akan traditional societies people only bother to enquire about their destiny when there are problems, misfortune or failures which are considered to have become a pattern, or are repetitive. A visit to the diviner which is termed *abisa* (literally, enquiry or divinatory consultation) was, and still is mostly but not exclusively, undertaken to find out about why things continue to go wrong.\textsuperscript{498} Therefore, the suggestion that people born in an Akan community search for their destiny in order to live the moral ideal cannot be supported by practical experience in an Akan community.

On the second point, Akan traditional thought does not allow for the view that the creator predetermines moral behaviour when he is thought of as being totally good. An Akan maxim holds that God does not create a bad person and that nobody is born with a ‘bad head’. Literally, this means that bad habits or immoral behaviours are not inborn or innate but rather are acquired by choice.\textsuperscript{499} Having said that, it must be pointed out that although some members in the Akan scheme may lack character there does not seem to be any clear solution apart from advice and counselling that such people receive in the community. The worldview does not have a category of a supernatural means by which people’s moral character may be transformed.

\textbf{4.15. The Humanistic Basis of Morality}

Some African philosophers argue that despite the deep religiosity of African people religion is not the source of their moral knowledge, even though it plays some

\textsuperscript{498} Onyinah, \textit{Akan Witchcraft}. Asamoah-Gyadu, “God is the Answer”.

\textsuperscript{499} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 66. I have noted earlier that the spirit that one gets from his/her father is a capacity rather than a fixed state of conduct.
essential roles in their moral pursuit. These scholars tend to emphasise the humanistic features of African morality; that the wellbeing of the community is the goal for African morality. The most eloquent voice of this view, Kwasi Wiredu, argues that ‘… traditional thinking about the foundation of morality is refreshingly non-super-naturalistic’. Wiredu posits that anyone who reflects on African ways of thinking about morality is bound to see the constant preoccupation of human wellbeing as the motivational factor. He asserts that what is morally good is what befits the human being; what is morally bad is what brings misery, misfortune and disgrace. According to him, traditional African thought on morality does not consider an act as good just because God approves of it. Rather, his view is that God approves of an act because it is good in the first place.  

Wiredu would say that an act is deemed good if it serves the purpose of human wellbeing and when humans can testify by their own standards that such an act is good. Further, he posits that Akan maxims about moral values explicitly or implicitly suggest the ‘… harmonisation of interests as the means and the securing of human wellbeing as the end of all moral endeavours’. Bewaji also argues that religion was developed by human beings out of necessity, and that religion provides a sense of security for them. Therefore, he thinks that in an African community, morality is better understood to be motivated by considerations of human need rather than religion. Bewaji claims that ‘… being morally upright is not as much a matter of pleasing the supernatural forces [for its sake] as it is of promoting human welfare…

500 Wiredu, Philosophy, 6.
[and] devotion to the deities is not as much in the interest of the deities as it is of the humans’. 503

These scholars tend to play down the partial ‘divinity’ of humans in African, and particularly in Akan, traditional thought. The problem with Wiredu’s conclusion is that he does not give enough consideration to the Akan notion of the tripartite nature of human beings. He seems to ignore the fact that in Akan thought, the soul of an individual is believed to derive from the Supreme Being, whilst the spirit is from one of the river deities who in turn derive their existence from the Supreme Being. If this ontology plays an active role in the way humans determine what a good act is, then it is reasonable to think that what Wiredu is referring to as human experiences are actually not really so. A counter argument would be that the divine aspect of humans plays a role in determining what they consider as good acts. In that sense, the moral knowledge of Akans could be considered as divinely derived.

But this is not the main concern of this research. With regard to the role of religion in the pursuit of morality, the concern for this study is to answer the question of whether the Akan would consider success in moral pursuit as an outcome of religious practice. Do traditional Akans expect that their participation in religion will help them to become models of morality? Put another way, is moral uprightness or pursuit of character one of the needs for which they practice religion? These questions are vital for explaining the separation of morality and spirituality in African Christian praxis and I shall examine them in the next section.

4.16. The Religious Basis of Morality

Some African scholars believe that moral knowledge in Africa is founded on religion. The traditional Ghanaian is considered as very religious and spiritual, hardly able to explain human life or natural phenomena without reference to religion and the spirit world. So, it is often taken for granted that religion is the basis of morality. Mbiti asserts that it is believed in many African societies that their morals were given by God. Similarly, Ilogu claims that in Igbo traditional society in Nigeria religion is the basis of morality. Moreover, Idowu alludes to the same view about the religious basis of morality when he asserts that in Yoruba society morality is the fruit of religion.

The problem with this way of basing moral knowledge directly on religion is that there are no revealed sacred texts in African religion as there are in other world religions. Also, there are no direct inferences from the Akan maxims to suggest the link between religion and moral knowledge in this way. This claim can be made only indirectly when it is argued that human beings have a deposit of God in them, and are also given a spirit by a deity, and thus whatever they do can be said to derive from God, or at least has some divine connections. But even this is still debatable because its logical conclusion would be that everything humans do derives from divine sources, a claim that can hardly be defended successfully.

It seems indisputable to me that the morality of Akans is founded essentially on the existential experiences of the people as they live together, and is preserved by their perpetual quest for the best way of living harmoniously together to achieve the

common good of all. As African traditional religion has no scriptures or sacred text, such as the Bible or the Qur'an, and as there is not a single articulated oral resource that is significant to show otherwise, it is reasonable to accept the humanistic nature of the origin of Akan moral knowledge. Moreover, the available data and my personal experience show that traditional Akans do not come to know what is morally good through their visit to the shrines of the deities or by the veneration of their ancestors. That is to say that, in the Akan traditional scheme, moral knowledge is not derived from religious practice. This seems to be inconsistent with the notion in the Akan tradition that the Supreme Being is regarded as wholly good.

Although Gyekye affirms the humanistic nature of Akan morality, he states that ‘… unlike Western humanism however, Akan humanism is not anti-supernaturalistic. On the contrary it maintains a rigid supernaturalistic metaphysics that is rejected by Western humanism’. Further, he states that whereas Western humanism fears that accepting supernaturalism would distract humans from focusing on their needs and interests in this world, rather than in the world to come, Akan thinkers do not consider this a distraction at all. This is because they regard religion in purely utilitarian terms. Indeed, for Akans, it is possible and moral to hold belief in supernatural entities without being necessarily diverted from the pursuits of human wellbeing. This is because the supra-human or cosmic realms are considered as part of the Akan community.

Gyekye, An Essay, 136-137; African Cultural, 70.
Gyekye, An Essay, 143.
Thus, the role of religion in determining what is good conduct should be distinguished from its role in people’s actual moral conduct. If the question is about the basis for determining what is good, then the available data shows that we can not show that the determination of moral knowledge is based on religion. Akan people do not act morally in obedience to what the creator or a deity has instructed. Neither do they act to glorify the deity or the creator. Even when they placate a deity they do so with their self or the community’s interest in mind. They do so in order to receive the protection and benevolence from the deities.

However, what is obvious and cannot be denied is that religion helps to enforce morality.

The promise and expectation, coupled with actual blessing and protection of the supreme God and the other spirit-powers for those who kept the moral code, on the one hand and the fear and threat coupled with actual experience, of punishment and desertion by the spirit-powers kept people doing what was right and avoiding what was wrong.

There is no indication that religion actually provides any spiritual support for people in their actual moral decisions and character formation. Neither is there any indication that Akans expect the deities or ancestral spirits to provide them with some kind of ability so they can live in accordance with accepted moral norms in the same way as they expect the deities and ancestors to facilitate the supply of health, wealth and peace.

I have already shown that members of the Akan traditional community approach religion in a pragmatic way as means to obtaining human needs. This assertion is

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demonstrated in all the prayers that they say to deities and ancestors. However, capacity for morality is not something they think should be provided from supernatural sources. Thus, it is clear that achievement of moral character in the Akan traditional system is not regarded as an outcome of religious practice. Since this point is vital for my research I will illustrate it from some prayers offered to deities and ancestors taken from Gyekye.\(^{511}\)

Oh God, give mercy upon our children who are suffering;
Bring riches today as the sun rises;
Bring all fortunes to me today.

Grandfather, Great Father, Let matters go well with me, for I am going into the forest.

Come to us with a continued rain, O God, fall!

God guard for me the children and the cattle;
God guard for us the cattle
God give us health!
Our father, it is Thy universe, it is Thy will, let us be at peace, let the souls of Thy people be cool; Thy art our Father; remove all evil from our path.

Oh, Mawu Sodza, Aklama,
The provider for hunters and palm-wine tappers,
Grant me a little prosperity; and I will share it with you;
May the barren become fertile; and mothers procreate more;
Let the beasts of the forest bring forth males and females,
And the rivers teem with fish,
Pray, Aklama, grant my petitions,
Let me live in the protection of Mawu forever,
Peace, peace, peace.

Today is \textit{Adae}. Come and receive this and eat;
Let the tribe prosper; let those of child-bearing age bear children;
May all the people get money; long life to us all; long life to the tribe.

\textit{Drobo}, [the name of the deity] the edges of the year have met. The chief has given you yams, he has given you a sheep, he has given you eggs, and now he has brought this drink. Let the tribe prosper; may the women bear children;

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\(^{511}\) Gyekye, \textit{African Values}, 14-15. In African traditional religion prayers are said while offering is made to the deity. This is often called libation. The offering, which can be food, water, wine or strong liquor is poured on the ground while the supplicant at the same time makes the request from the deity.
do not let our children die [ie. Protect them]; those who have gone to trade,
may they get money; may there be peace during the present chief’s reign.\textsuperscript{512}

From these prayers it is not difficult to see that the Akan religion is used as a means
for achieving the needs, interests, and happiness of human beings in this life.\textsuperscript{513} As
we can see, all the prayers above show that the focus is mainly on requests for
earthly fortune such as: health and wealth, social continuity of life, vitality, fertility,
procreation and protection from evil. But the way people live together with each
other to ensure that these supplies are distributed equitably and that everyone’s needs
are met in the community (morality) is left entirely to human effort. There is no
indication in these prayers or in everyday life experiences in an Akan community to
suggest that humans expected the spirit realm to help them deal with their innate
weakness for morality.

4.17. The Akan System and Character Formation

Having described the Akan traditional moral scheme, it is now time to assess its
effectiveness or otherwise in helping Akans to form moral character in accordance
with their moral ideal. It must be remembered that this chapter describes how
morality is understood and pursued in the Akan scheme, in order to determine
whether or not the understanding of the concept of character in that scheme helps
traditional Akans to pursue morality successfully and whether they consider this
success as an intrinsic outcome of religious life.

It has been shown that to achieve the wellbeing of the community, the Akan system
depends essentially on the quality of the character of its members. Gyekye affirms

\textsuperscript{512} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 15.
\textsuperscript{513} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 14.
the Akan position that mere knowledge of moral rules does not make one a good person or produce good character in people.\textsuperscript{514} Kudadjie alludes to this point when he observes that for African societies to have real development they need first to clear the confusion that had ensued from their encounter with other value and belief systems and to pursue moral character formation, which has been the traditional position all this while. Kudadjie and Gyekye agree that as important as well articulated ethical codes are, they are not the answer to the confused moral situation in Africa. They believe that the answer to the African situation lies in the development of the good moral character of members of the African societies.\textsuperscript{515} Gyekye asserts further that character is the most crucial feature in morality, because if a society has a well intellectually articulated ethical code but nonetheless its members have bad character, the codes will be of no use.\textsuperscript{516} These views show that the Akan system promotes the pursuit of character as an indispensable means of morality.

However, it is one thing to say that character is a chief goal for moral pursuit and another to say that a moral tradition (moral beliefs, norms, rules and judgements, training etc.) actually provides a supernatural means by which its adherents achieve this goal. Gyekye is apprehensive about whether the Akan system can continue to produce people of moral character in the future as it has done in the past.\textsuperscript{517} In fact, Bewaji asserts persuasively that many of the leadership crises and their attendant socio-political and economical problems in Africa today are caused by the

\textsuperscript{514} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 149 - 150.
\textsuperscript{515} Kudadjie, “Moral and Social”, 221-222.
\textsuperscript{516} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 149.
\textsuperscript{517} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 61-62.
breakdown of the indigenous ethic. This means that in the mono-cultural contexts in the past the Akan traditional scheme had been successful to some extent, on its own terms in helping members to achieve a level moral aptness.

However, there is anxiety for the future because of the reality of a globalised contemporary Ghanaian society where the Akan scheme is being constantly impacted by different cultural and conceptual standpoints. This suggests that the Akan traditional moral scheme does not provide a means for character formation that is as effective in the present multicultural environment as it was in the past. But why is it so? How did the worldview or narrative of this scheme enable its adherents to achieve character formation? Why is it not fully able to do that any more?

To answer these questions we need to turn to our tool, the elements of character. Basically, these elements show us the hurdles on the path of character formation and the clue to overcoming them. From the perspective of virtue ethics, in every moral decision one is involved with affections and passions and is often hampered by accidents of history. So in this section I explore how effective the Akan scheme is in making Akans aware of their capacity for intentional action. How does the traditional worldview or narrative help them to deal with their subjection to accidents of history and the influence that their passions and affections have on their moral actions? In other words, do people receive any supernatural help that enables them to become models of morality or enables them to undergo a moral transformation? I will discuss this in light of the four elements of character.

A. Capacity of Intentional Action

Undoubtedly, the Akan system fosters the notion that humans have the capacity for intentional action. The value of life presupposes that every human being has capacity for reason and creativity.519 I have shown that the saying ‘life is what you make of it’ means that personal decision and intentional action are facts that the Akan grows up with. With this capacity one learns to know about the moral rules, principles and beliefs of the community and is then able to live and act appropriately and consistently.

B. Involvement with Affections and Passions

One of the elements of character reminds us that in our moral deliberation for action we are influenced by our affections and passions. This is because although we experience feelings privately, these emotions have external objects in people, situations, symbols, or the natural world. In other words, our hatred or affection is always related to something or someone. Hence, feelings are important for revealing our attachments, obsessions, priorities and habits of engagement, inclinations and desires. So, in making moral decisions we need to be aware that these dynamics are at work. When we ignore them we will fail to detect, for instance, what our anger, sympathy, depression or lust is saying to us about the way we are relating to a person or a situation. Awareness that in all our moral deliberation we are involved with affections and passions, and that every action of ours is somehow connected to our feelings, is important to force us to examine our feelings during our moral deliberations. For instance, if you are a person who dislikes a particular sexual orientation and you have to make a moral decision that affects somebody with such

519 See; section 4.9. A.
an orientation then you should be aware that your hatred is likely to affect your
decision. Your awareness of this is helpful to guide you to take moral actions that are
consistent with your character.

It must be recognised that African kinship attachments, which worked positively in
mono-cultural rural settings, promote affections and passions that can potentially
inhibit good moral acts towards people who do not belong to particular lineages. In
the same way, historical tensions between ethnic groups promote passions that need
to be recognised in all moral deliberations and actions. This element of character
helps us to acknowledge that the Akan moral system may need some transformation
to make it useful in our globalised Ghanaian context. In the contemporary globalised
context where social, economic, and political arrangements and circumstances differ
from those of the traditional rural context with its traditional kinship arrangements,
there is a need to re-rediscover what it means to belong to a community. How is
today’s Ghanaian community constituted, what is the criterion for membership in it,
how can one be considered as belonging to it? I have already mentioned that
uncritical kinship solidarity and cronyism can lead to immoral actions. But again, the
Akan scheme does not have any means apart from human effort to control passions
and direct affections appropriately.

C. Subjection to Accidents of History

In my discussion of the elements of character I showed that in real life situations
humans are often subjected to accidents of history\textsuperscript{520} or encounter moral luck in ways

\textsuperscript{520} Jacobs, \textit{Choosing Character}, 10-11.
that can hamper their character formation.\footnote{See section 3.10.} At points, one may realise that he/she has been affected by conditions over which he/she does not have control. One may not be able to do anything about the fact that he/she had bad parental upbringing, was born into a particular group in a particular culture, has a distinct biological or social condition, or even has a particular worldview that one did not choose and does not have control over. For instance, being part of a globalised world context where interaction with people and institutions that hold different world views is unavoidable is a situation that Akans and Ghanaians generally cannot control. Yet these factors affect one’s moral pursuit in significant ways. In virtue theory this recognition is necessary for good moral decisions. This recognition is not supposed to cause a defeatist attitude but to make one conscious that moral decisions should be carefully scrutinised.

I have shown that the Akan traditional scheme is humanistic and does not have a conception that there are supernatural means to character transformation. Thus, when it comes to showing how the scheme deals with subjection to accidents of history, there is lack of evidence. The aphorisms (proverbs) and moral advice in the community offer guidelines but these are left to be accomplished by human effort alone. Indication of how the scheme deals with social, biological, psychological and other issues of the past over which people do not have control is lacking in the literature. My own experience in the communities I have lived in confirms this. Whenever somebody becomes a liar or a thief due to the influence of a bad company or bad upbringing, that person is admonished to stop the behaviour with the expectation that a change of behaviour is possible by his/her own effort alone. The
closest we can find is the laid-back attitude that whatever happens to a person derives from his/her destiny and that nothing can be done about it. In events of continuous serious moral failures some people would just accept that their condition is due to their destiny which they cannot change.

D. Capacity of the Heart

Another vital task in the pursuit of morality and character formation is the ability to define situations and to respond to the interpretations they offer us about our world and our role in it. The typical virtue approach to interpretation is by the use of reason and practical wisdom available in a particular community. However, from the perspective of theological ethics Bondi asserts that interpretation is the ‘chief liberating force in the formation of character’. As an element of character, the heart has a capacity to provide us with assurance for direction and to give us an interpretative power. It does this by relating our experiences to the story that we have believed about reality, and provides interpretations that are in accordance with that story. It has been noted that the heart is a metaphor for that part of us where interpretations of all our subjections are driven, where we find reasons for our moral acts. It is also in the heart that we find focus for our affections and power to control our passions. As an interpretative power, the assurance obtained from the heart enables us to shape other aspects of our character in the way that moves us towards embodying the truth of our grand narrative or story. By this, we are able to choose a proper way of interpreting past and present circumstances in our lives. Clearly, the right interpretations of our subjections to accidents of history and involvement with

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affections and passions can lead to right judgements, right moral actions and, ultimately, the formation of character.

The Akan traditional scheme does not seem to have the notion that a grand story can touch the heart of humans, and affect their interpretations about reality and focus their efforts on embodying the moral ideal of such a story. It does not appear that the Akan traditional religion and moral scheme offers its adherents this vital tool for moral transformation. The pursuit of morality in this scheme is based on human effort in learning the rules and emulating ancestors or living models.

Kudadjie argues rightly that the emulation of ancestors and habituation of the moral virtues alone is inadequate for any formation of a lasting moral character. His view is that because morality entails conduct and being (ontology), the moulding of moral character must be pursued through both habituation and the moulding of the inner person. Kudadjie’s observation on the role of religion in morality is very vital in this regard. According to him, any attempt to create a moral community of people of character would fail when the transforming power of religion is neglected.

Kudadjie believes that when the inner person is renewed, the power of God dwells in the individual and his/her desires change progressively. Such a person is thus empowered in their inmost being, thereby receiving strength and sturdiness in his/her moral character. This is what the capacity of the heart facilitates in our pursuit of character. But the deities of the Akan cosmos are not considered as offering any assistance to people for the inner transformation necessary for their moral

524 Kudadjie, “Moral and Social”, 220-221.
525 Kudadjie, “Moral and Social”, 221.
transformation; neither are the ancestors considered in such terms. The ancestors are regarded only as being exemplars of morality. Apart from the task of sanctioning morality, there is no direct supernatural help for moral character formation that is discernible in the Akan traditional religion. Moreover, the spirit realm of the Akan cosmos does not provide moral knowledge that is easily accessible to all humans when they need it. Clearly, this is a major problem for the Akan scheme.

While the main focus of the Christian religion as we will see in Chapter Five, is the redemption of the human soul, and its elaborate, coherent and explicit doctrines about the soul’s role in moral pursuit in this world and in the life hereafter, the Akan tradition does not have an equivalent belief. It is shown that religion controls behaviour through the application of sanctions by the supernatural powers whose job it is to ensure that proper moral conduct was maintained and rewarded, and offences punished. However, although religion plays this important role in the Akan traditional scheme, morality is not to be seen as an outcome of religion.526

Since religion in the Akan scheme is mainly about supplying needs in this world, when the earliest classical Pentecostals preached holiness, their adherents linked holiness to God’s benevolence and supply of needs, and pursued this relentlessly. When the charismatic emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to draw the supernatural into the natural to supply the needs of healing and wealth overplayed the stress on holiness, the motivation for moral character formation is diminished. The Akan religion is not seen as the means for the union of the human soul with God and

526 Gyekye, *African Cultural*, 18
this is a major area of need in this tradition.\textsuperscript{527} Therefore, in contemplating Christian morality in an African context we need to rethink the relationship between religion and morality.

4.18. Closing Remarks

In this chapter, I presented a detailed account of how morality is pursued in the Akan traditional moral scheme. Although the Akan scheme has some very good features, the description here is not meant to demonstrate that the system should be maintained and continued en-masse. The description is meant to show that there are some features of the scheme, such as the sense of community and moral responsibility which it inculcates in members, which can be transformed for our present usage in Christian morality. It has been found that, in the Akan traditional moral scheme, character serves as a pivot of the moral life. This scheme relies on the character of its members, which they are expected to form through habituation of the moral virtues derived from the beliefs and norms within their community. Also, in their pursuit for character formation, traditional Akans are expected to emulate the ancestors and living exemplars of the moral ideal. In this way, belief in the involvement of the spirit realm in human affairs is inseparably held in conjunction with a strong emphasis on moral responsibility in such a way that encourages people to pursue moral character.

However, there is lack of evidence that any transcendental (spiritual) resources are actually accessed to help members of the community to attain the moral ideal or, when they fall short, to be able to transform their character. Moreover, the basis of

\textsuperscript{527} Gyekye, \textit{African Cultural}, 16.
morality is not found in religion, because religion only sanctions what has already been accepted as moral by past and present members of the community. Viewed in light of the elements of character, I posit that, left on its own, the Akan traditional scheme does not offer a means that is sufficiently effective to deal with the moral requirements of our globalised societies. Also, when people’s interactions with other moral traditions make them think that they need adjustments in character, the Akan scheme is limited by its specificity. Therefore, in pondering morality in the GP context, we need to rethink the transforming power of religion and integrate this into Christian practice in a way that brings spirituality and morality together, the latter being an outcome of the former.
CHAPTER FIVE

CHARACTER FORMATION IN JOHN WESLEY’S MORAL THEOLOGY

5. Introduction

This chapter presents an articulation of the Christian truth by John Wesley (1703 – 1791), as the second conversation partner in this study. The moral theology of Wesley is presented here to represent the Christian truth. From this theology, I will determine whether or not in the Christian scheme, an understanding of the concept of character helps believers to pursue morality successfully, and whether they consider their success to be an outcome of their religious practice. Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification represents a model for Christian character formation that makes his theology an appropriate dialogue partner with a non-Christian moral tradition such as that of the Akan.

I argue that Wesley’s moral theology is suitable because he based it on received orthodoxy. Secondly, his interpretations were informed by the ancient virtue tradition. Thirdly, in his practical approach he showed that Christian moral character was the outcome of the Christian story (narrative) and this makes him a moral theologian rather than a social ethicist. Ultimately, Wesley’s distant relationship with the Pentecostal tradition as its theological precursor makes his moral theology a more suitable and obvious choice.

528 Cameron et al., Studying Local Churches, 25.
acknowledged that the Pentecostal tradition is a theological offspring of the holiness emphasis that was popularised by Wesley. The two groups are collaborating with each other to enhance their common holiness heritage for the twenty first century.  

5.1. Wesley’s Orthodox Doctrine of Sanctification

It is important to stress that Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification was based on orthodox Christian theology. There is no doubt that his teaching on what constitutes the character of a good Christian was founded on the inherited ancient dogma, especially the doctrines of the church up to the first four centuries of the Christian tradition and the teachings of the Church of England. Ted Campbell has shown that Wesley believed that Christian spirituality in the second up to the fourth century was a model for the personal, cultural and religious changes that he envisioned.  

Arguably, this assertion was not because Christians in those centuries had the most well articulated formulations of the Christian truth. His preference for this period meant that he perceived that the character of Christians of that era was more reflective of the character of Jesus Christ. For Wesley, any account of the Christian dogma which does not transform the character of believers into the image of God was not authentic enough. Indeed, this does not mean that he limited himself to one particular theological view of any particular era in a polemical way. Rather, he pragmatically used whatever he considered as sound doctrine from wherever he found it; within the Eastern and Western Fathers, the medieval theologians such as


Thomas Aquinas, the Church of England, the Caroline divines, the Cambridge Platonists, and the German Moravians, to address the theological necessities of his time.  

5.2. Wesley’s Theology and the Virtue Theory

I noted in Chapter Three that the virtue tradition is a reinvigorated ancient moral tradition, which focuses on the moral quality of the character of moral agents rather than on individual acts. Generally, it is believed that the concept of virtue influenced Wesley’s thought on what he believed the Christian life was all about. The ideas of the Alexandrian church Fathers, especially Clement, who appropriated the ancient Greek idea of virtue in his *Stromateis* to describe a true Christian or Gnostic, influenced Wesley’s interpretation of the Christian truth.

David Bundy asserts that both Wesley and the Alexandrian church Fathers saw the idea of virtue as reflecting the teleological process of being conformed in this life to the image of God according to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Bundy notes, however, that a direct derivation of Wesley’s thought from the Alexandrian theologian poses methodological problems.  

Apparently, apart from Wesley’s own admission that he used Clement’s idea of a true Gnostic but had rejected it, the direct influence of the Alexandrian theologian on Wesley cannot be shown though the affinity is obvious.  


533 Bundy, “Christian Virtue”, 139.

534 Wesley, *Journal*, 5th March 1767.
a Methodist and the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria in essential aspects. Geordan Hammond has shown in a recent article that Wesley actually read Clement’s works. It has been affirmed that even without a direct access to the Alexandrian fathers, the influence of the virtue tradition on Wesley is significant. Certainly, the virtue tradition was mediated through the practical mystics, such as his reading of Thomas à Kempis’s The Imitation of Christ, and Thomas Aquinas whose works influenced him.

Following the reinterpretation of Aristotelian virtue ethics by Aquinas, Wesley regarded the Christian moral life as the recovery of the image of God in humans, which was obliterated but is now restored in and through Jesus Christ in his atonement. The virtue influence is also seen in the teleological nature of Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification. His use of it in his moral theological reflection is relevant for this study as it affirms the view that the virtue framework is well suited for dealing effectively with issues concerning moral character formation. Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification demonstrates that the Christian truth (worldview) engenders moral character formation, and is also effective in enabling believers to transform their character whenever, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, they recognise that they fall short of the Christian moral ideal.

535 Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification, 159-60.
537 Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification, 160; Long, John Wesley’s, 175.
538 Long, John Wesley’s, 175-205.

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5.3. John Wesley: the Practical Moral Theologian

The way the theology of Wesley is read is very important because this study is concerned about how an understanding of the formation of character in rival moral traditions may facilitate authentic contextualisation. Lawrence Wood has argued that a contextual reading of Wesley’s teaching is needed to ground his nuances and emphases within his ultimate concerns.\textsuperscript{540}

Wesley has been regarded differently by various scholars in ways that have suited their purposes. Albert Outler has noted that he was a folk-theologian who used several sources of the Christian tradition for his theological reflection and evangelistic campaign in order to respond to the pressures and the needs of the Methodist revival.\textsuperscript{541} Similarly, both Frank Baker and Randy Maddox rightly designate him as a practical theologian.\textsuperscript{542} In fact, Baker affirms that Wesley’s theology was concerned with understanding the hazards ‘along the path of salvation’ and about exploring how the grace of God enables believers to negotiate these hazards successfully in order to grow into the image of God.\textsuperscript{543} Maddox also asserts that Wesley’s theological reflection modelled a style which can best be described as practical theology and that he should be regarded as an exemplary practical theologian.\textsuperscript{544} Evidently, Wesley’s strength was more in the sphere of practice because his writings were seen as ‘a means to a direct practical end’.\textsuperscript{545} However,

\textsuperscript{540} Lawrence W. Wood, “The Need for a Contextual Reading of John Wesley’s Sermons”, \textit{WTJ} 45: 1 (2010), 259-267.
\textsuperscript{543} Baker, “Practical Divinity”, 9.
\textsuperscript{544} Maddox, “John Wesley”, 135.
this designation does not mean that he did not consider theological reflection as necessary. On the contrary, it only means that by focussing on preaching ‘practical divinity’, he always deliberately integrated theological reflection and pastoral praxis.\textsuperscript{546} As a practical theologian, Wesley insisted that the Christian faith unavoidably requires the formation of character in believers to demonstrate the essential moral nature of God.

Due to the various involvements and spontaneous responses of Wesley to the social evils and theological issues of his day, some scholars have presented him as a social ethicist.\textsuperscript{547} Hulley has described his teachings as an ethics of ‘to-be and to do’ whatever Christ has commanded. Manfred Marquardt has also described Wesley’s moral teaching ‘as an ethics of responsibility and solidarity’ whilst Richard Heitzenrater describes him as a virtue ethicist.\textsuperscript{548} Generally, the strong social dimension in Wesley’s teachings and ministry causes many to remember him as a social ethicist.

However, Stephen Long disagrees with any suggestion that Wesley is an ethicist. He argues persuasively that strictly speaking, 	extit{ethics} is a concept that cannot properly be used to describe Wesley’s moral teaching. According to Long, ethics was an emerging discipline in the eighteenth century, which Wesley strongly opposed, mainly because it was becoming an independent discipline separated from

\textsuperscript{546} Tik-Wah Wong, 	extit{Eschatological Living in John Wesley’s Theology: A Doctrinal Analysis and Contextual Reflection"}, (PhD. Thesis: Melbourne College of Divinity, 2008), 4.

\textsuperscript{547} He was involved in activities such as poverty alleviation and anti-slavery campaign.

\textsuperscript{548} L. D. Hulley, 	extit{To Be and To Do: Exploring Wesley’s Thought on Ethical Behaviour} (Pretoria: UNISA, 1988), 21-23; Manfred Marquardt, 	extit{John Wesley’s Social Ethics: Praxis and Principle} (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Pub., repr. 2000), 121; Richard P. Heitzenrater, “The 	extit{Imitatio Christi} and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley’s Ministry with the Poor”, in Meeks, 	extit{The Portion}, 54.
theology.\textsuperscript{549} Apparently, he rejected any suggestion that morality could be founded on scientism and mathematical logic.\textsuperscript{550} Whilst the separation of ethics from God and doctrine was being sought, Wesley affirmed the inseparability of God, doctrine and morality and did not endorse any other basis for truth and morality apart from God. Also, in contrast with the Aristotelian view, Wesley did not believe that morality may be achieved in self-evident principles which human intuition and experience may provide unaided.\textsuperscript{551} Long argues further that although Wesley was in some ways attracted to Lockean empiricism, he never actually changed his ‘mediaeval and Anglican sacramental world’ for the modern world’s epistemology.\textsuperscript{552} According to Long, Wesley’s opposition to the modern discipline of ethics is the main reason why his moral theology matters today.\textsuperscript{553} He insists that accepting Wesley’s moral theology and recognising that he did not totally make the transition from a medieval sacramental to a modern epistemology, will enable us to ‘understand better the nature of his theology and its significance for us today’.\textsuperscript{554}

I think Long is right. As shown in Chapter Three, it is generally held that the claim of the modern project, usually called Enlightenment, to offer a universally accepted framework for ethical reasoning has failed, while the determination of what is good has become relativistic.\textsuperscript{555} In terms of moral reasoning, Wesley would have been irrelevant for our day if he had totally and uncritically embraced Enlightenment

\textsuperscript{549} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 30.
\textsuperscript{550} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 3-14, 203 -207.
\textsuperscript{551} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{552} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 10.
\textsuperscript{553} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, xvi.
\textsuperscript{554} Long, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 35.
\textsuperscript{555} See MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}; Jonathan R. Wilson, \textit{Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre’s After Virtue} (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997).
rationality and had based his moral teaching on it. In the same way he would not have been a good choice of a dialogue partner with the Akan moral tradition.

Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification is underpinned by theological concepts such as grace, atonement, redemption, penitence, prayer, and incarnational existence. It is unashamedly concerned with humanity and its end, and sees humans as being on a journey; it is concerned about the destination as well as the journey. Wesley’s moral theology was focused on depicting the Christian life as an expression of the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. For Wesley, the practical usefulness of the Christian truth for developing appropriate Christian character is central to any theological praxis. He rejected any grace that saves believers without transforming their character. Thus, a proper understanding of his moral theology depends on the recognition that he always regarded the actual transformed lives and moral character of believers as tangible outcomes of the Christian truth. For Wesley the Christian truth must produce character in whoever believes in it.

5.4. Sanctification: A Central Doctrine of Wesley’s Theology

Central to Wesley’s practical moral theology is his dominant theological distinctive – entire sanctification – or Christian perfection. Christian perfection is the major doctrine which caused debates for Wesley and for which he was and is still most noted. Kevin Lowery claims that although Wesley did not produce a systematic work on moral theory as such, his doctrines of assurance of salvation and Christian perfection, which he taught consistently throughout his ministry arguably reflects the

basic nature of moral theory. Ray Dunning concurs that Wesley recognised the doctrine of sanctification as a thoroughgoing moral concept. Moreover, Allan Coppedge affirms that on this central Christian truth, Wesley was holistic, consistent and comprehensive. Clearly, a consistent flow of thought on what constitutes the Christian moral life – the goal of humanity – is observable in his teachings on Christian sanctification.

Theodore Jennings Jr. affirms that Christian sanctification (holiness) was the aim of Wesley’s life, ‘the organising centre of his thought, the spring of all [his] actions, his one abiding project’. Wesley held and thought this doctrine throughout his ministry. Even toward the end of his life, he could still state that ‘Christian perfection is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us [the Methodists] up’. Accordingly, the Methodist preachers were considered as God’s divine agency which was ordained to reform the nation, more particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land. By reform, Wesley meant a theological scheme for bringing the nation and the church back to the calm love of God and neighbour and to a ‘uniform practice of justice, mercy and truth’. That is, a scheme that engenders character formation in all believers. This vision of entire sanctification underscored his via salutis and explicitly reveals the moral emphasis of his theology.

559 Dunning, Christian Ethics, 35.
561 Theodore W. Jennings, Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 140.
562 Wesley, Letters, Viii, 238.
Ironically, Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification or perfection is the one which caused him a lot of trouble within and without the Methodist societies. A systematic delineation of what exactly he meant by this doctrine is difficult because his definitions deepened over time. Gerald Cragg opines that to make sense of Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification the doctrine must always be placed within a context, because he was responding to situations as he formulated his doctrines. Since the themes he reflected upon were always set within a context, whenever the context is missing one can easily misunderstand him.\(^{564}\)

Another significant factor about the misunderstanding and the controversy that surrounded Wesley’s doctrine of perfection was noted by Outler. He posits that in its Greek and virtue sense, to make perfect is understood teleologically as a process toward fulfilment, a dynamic progression in an ever-increasing maturity.\(^{565}\) This means Wesley’s conception of perfection was consistent with his orientation in the virtue tradition where \textit{telos} is understood as the purpose or the best dynamic quality obtainable from a thing.\(^{566}\) Accordingly, Wesley’s moral theology presupposes that the pursuit of character of a Christian at every point in time does not mean the end of the journey. However, his critics used the Greek word \textit{teliotes}, which implies an improvable attainment, to misrepresent his teaching.\(^{567}\)


\(^{566}\) Dunning, \textit{Christian Ethics}, 35, 61; MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue},

5.5. The Narrative of Wesley’s Moral Theology

Wesley couched his moral theology in the grand and authoritative narrative of the Christian truth. The first is the belief that God exists and that he is the creator of the world and humans. The second is the belief about the fall of humans from the original state in which God had created them. This is followed by God’s subsequent redemption of humans and the world through the offering of his Son Jesus Christ. The redemption restores humankind to a relationship with God and other humans, a life inspired by the Holy Spirit through sanctification for its conformation to the character of Jesus Christ in a tangible way. This grand and dynamic narrative revolves around humankind with God as the main protagonist. It implies that, for Wesley, the primary means to Christian character formation is God, and Christian character is one of the pieces of evidence of God’s existence.568

5.6. Belief in the Existence God

Essentially, Wesley’s moral theology presupposes the existence of God. He persuasively defended his conviction that the world was created by God in his Letter to a Roman Catholic. He affirmed that ‘as I am assured that there is an infinite and independent Being and that it is impossible there should be more than one, so I believe that this one God is the Father of all things, especially of angels and men’.569 He believed that God purposely created the world and humans, and provided a means for a constant relationship between God and humankind in order that the latter may fulfil God’s intentions in the world. Not only did Wesley consider God as the creator and father of all things but also he held that God was the governor, judge and

568 This point is explained further in the next section.
redeemer of the world. Therefore, for Wesley, morality starts and ends with God. ‘Nothing comes by chance’, God gives humanity all the wisdom and power they have and overrules them at his will. Through word and works, good originates from God without whom nobody can think right or do anything good. In the preface to *A Concise History of England* he wrote; ‘I have found it equally difficult to see God in all the affairs of men among the multiplicity of visible causes, still to see him that is invisible, the great cause, sitting on the circle of the heavens, and ruling all things in heaven and earth’. This means that God, rather than any cosmological entities or spirits, is the only ruler of the world.

Wesley considered God’s creation of the world as an indisputable concrete reality which confirms the existence of God and his power over all human affairs, including their moral life. For Wesley, the reality of God settles the issues about the source of truth, the origin of moral knowledge and the capacity for morality. Both the knowledge of good and bad and the capacity for humans to do good are provided by God. He explained this by the use of the metaphors of God as creator, governor and judge.

In the same way as Wesley considered the reality of God’s creation as proof of the existence of God, he also regarded Christian moral character as the evidence of the restoration of the image of God in humans. Wesley did not focus on the scepticism about the existence of God because he considered the latter a given. Therefore, he stressed the need for a proper understanding of the *nature* rather than the *existence* of

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God. Maddox asserts that Wesley was more worried about the impact a false perception of God may have on Christian formation, and that recent advocates of practical theology affirm that the subject of the character of God is more essential to actual Christian praxis than debate on God’s existence. In other words, a true Christian moral character is sufficient evidence, and an important proof that God exists and still works in the lives of humankind forming their character into his image.

Wesley considered any theological reflection on the Christian moral life as starting and ending with God the creator, governor and judge. David Rainey has noted rightly that whereas many contemporary theologians start their theology with the doctrine of humanity before they proceed to discuss Christology, as if to suggest that God becomes relevant only after the fall of humankind, Wesley started his theology with the doctrine of the triune God. Importantly, he affirmed that God created the world, and after the fall of humanity God again incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem it, and still continues his work amongst humanity through the active work of the Holy Spirit.

Clearly this shows that, though influenced by the virtue tradition, Wesley did not consider human capacity for the virtues and character in naturalistic terms like Aristotle. Instead, he believed that virtues and character are not realisable without God, and the moral character of God is not recognisable in the world without Christian character. But why did he think that morality or Christian character formation was only possible through God?

Maddox, Responsible Grace, 51.
5.7. Wesley’s Christian Anthropology: The Human Tragedy

Wesley believed that humanity was deliberately created by God (Gen. 2: 26-28) to depict God’s character. He thought that the relationship between the creator God and his created world with humans in it is elemental to any notion of knowing the truth (rational enquiry) and doing what is good. Wesley believed that the essential nature of the character of God was inbuilt into humankind when God engraved his law on the hearts of humans, in their inmost spirit by his finger. This engraving was meant to ensure that ‘… it [the law] might never be far off, never hard to be understood …and always shining with clear light, even as the sun in the midst of heaven’. The law of God is the quintessence of God’s self disclosure to humanity because, as created beings, humanity needs the law to guide its relationship with God, with each other and with the ‘lower world’. In his sermon On Working Out Our Own Salvation, Wesley showed that in some measure, God makes known to humanity both the attributes of his nature and the difference between what is good and bad, what is right and wrong. ‘He [God] has shown thee, O man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. With this truth [God] has in some measure enlightened everyone that cometh into the world’. Besides the self-disclosure of God in this manner, and the printing of his law on the human heart, God also provides his grace to help human beings to know him through his law.

Furthermore, God bequeathed his love, the dynamic principle within his law to humankind as in their original state human beings were full of love, which is the sole principle of all their thoughts, words, and actions of justice, mercy and truth. Accordingly, having a personal knowledge of God through his law was essential for

576 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 7.
577 Wesley, Works [BE], 3: 199-200.
578 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 188.
knowing and doing what was morally good according to the purpose of God. This version of the love of God precedes salvation as it is based on prevenient grace.

Wesley believed that the combination of God’s self disclosure and God’s provision of his grace for humankind means that at least human beings can appreciate the existence of God as their creator and follow his law. The law of God ‘eminently so termed is no other than the moral law’. This law is revealed in his love, justice, mercy and holiness and highlights the similarity between the essential character of God and the original state in which God created humanity. In their original state human beings apprehended everything clearly and perfectly and could make true judgement of things promptly and without any mixture of an error in their judgements. This is because they were created in the image of God (imago dei). It also means that God provides everything humans need to live a moral life: relating to God and the created world around them.

Wesley’s view on the original state in which God created humans was in agreement with the Western church Fathers. Maddox explains that the Western (Latin) theologians thought that humans were created perfectly according to what God intended them to be. Conversely, the Eastern (Greek) theologians assumed that humans were created in ‘a dynamic nature destined to develop in communion with God’. This Eastern view distinguished the image of God from the likeness of God, whereby the image denotes the general potential which humans have for life in God, whereas the likeness meant the progressive realisation of that potentiality. In other

579 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 9.
words, the likeness relates to the character of God. Wesley combined these two views in a way to explain the present human situation as humanity created perfectly but then fallen and humanity as nascently restored.\(^{582}\) This delineation of Wesley’s theological anthropology gives hope that humanity has the capacity to and can cooperate with the divine grace for the transformation of their soul for the restoration of the character of God in them, because they were originally created perfectly in the image of God.

### 5.8. Humanity as Created in the Image of God

Wesley interpreted Genesis chapter 1: 26-7 to stress that by free grace God created humanity out of the dust ‘and breathed into him [humans] a living soul and stamped on that soul the image of God’.\(^{583}\) Collins affirms that by souls Wesley meant that a human being is a ‘self-moving thinking principle’.\(^{584}\) Basically, to say that God created humans in his image means that God shared certain aspects of his character with humanity so that it can think and act justly, mercifully, lovingly and righteously as God does. Wesley believed that the virtues that humanity needed to possess for the formation of Godly character emanate from God himself and nowhere else.

His [humanity’s] internal righteousness is the image of God stamped on every power and faculty of his soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, as far as it can be imparted to a human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper: and all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.\(^{585}\)

Here, Wesley lists the theological virtues which he termed ‘tempers’ as the means of character formation. Essentially, character or the formation of the image of God in

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\(^{583}\) Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 1: 117.


humanity involves a constantly good relationship between the creator and the created in four dimensions. Decisively, it is the capacity for a constant relationship of humans to the triune God, to other human beings, to the lower world around them and to self (him/her). God’s image is, therefore, neither a physical resemblance of God nor a mere capacity for reasoning. It is the likeness to the character of God, a God-given capacity for fellowship with God and particularly with other human beings and the ‘lower world’. However, a person could only have good fellowship with other people and the lower world which humanity is supposed to rule if he/she has a quality relationship with God. Wesley considered the image of God as having in it three distinct manifestations. These are obtained from the natural image, the political image, and the moral image.

A. The Natural Image of God

The natural image of God has three endowments: immortality, understanding, freedom of will and other affections. Humanity is set apart from the creation and other animals by their having an immortal spirit and ability to transcend their physical bodily limitations, by partaking in intellectual life, by having a sense of morality and by being able to worship God. Wesley considered understanding as an endowed capacity, by which humans correctly apprehended whatever objects that were brought before them, to be able to name the objects congruently and offer good judgement concerning them. He elaborated on this point further in the sermon on

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586 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 68-69.
587 Collins, The Theology, 51.
589 Collins, The Theology, 51.
590 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 439. Oden, John Wesley’s, 135.
Equating understanding with reason, Wesley asserted that ‘it is that faculty of the human soul which exerts itself in three ways: by simple apprehension, by judgement and by discourse’. Simple apprehension is the first and most basic act of understanding because it entails just the conception of a thought in the mind. On the other hand, judgement involves the determination of the agreement or the differences between the thoughts so conceived. Further, Wesley termed the motion of progress of the mind from one judgement to the other as a discourse, and described the three operations of the human soul (understanding, judgment and discourse) as reason.

The will is another important aspect of the natural image of God in humanity. It is the ability humanity has to exert itself in various affections and passions for loving, desiring and delighting in things which are good. The will of humans is not predetermined, because it can either resist or succumb to the temptation that draws humans away from God. This means that originally all human affections were wilfully directed towards love and happiness, but this state was not fixed because human beings were later to choose an opposite way. Maddox asserts that Wesley’s use of ‘will’ differs from present usages of it as a ‘human faculty of rational self-determination’ because Wesley associated the will with the affections which he understood to be responsible for motivating the dispositions of a person. In a fashion similar to the virtue framework, Wesley considered the affections as combining the emotional and rational aspects of human life into a ‘holistic inclination toward

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592 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 590.
593 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 590.
594 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 439, Works [BE], 2: 474.
particular choices and actions’. He regarded the affections as transient, ‘the will exerting itself in various ways’ and deemed the tempers (the virtues) to be more foundational. Unlike the affections, the tempers are regarded as ‘a fixed posture in the soul’ which orientates behaviour and thus does not easily change. The tempers predispose us to behave in particular ways but the grace of God which restores freedom to the individual makes it possible for a person to act against the predisposition of the tempers. The tempers and the dispositions of the human heart form the will. This use of the term temper means something roughly equivalent to virtues in the Aristotelian sense.

The third element of the natural image is freedom of choice. Freedom of choice or liberty is the power that humanity has to choose what is good, and refuse what is not so. In other words, it is the endowed capacity to differentiate between truth and falsehood, and to choose truth over falsehood. Wesley held that without liberty of choice both human understanding and free will would have been in vain. The capacity for free choice is the advantage of a free agent. It is the freedom of choice that distinguishes humanity from other created beings and makes humanity capable of serving their creator. God does not only desire a genuine partner in whom to establish covenant relations but also people who ‘would find perfection and purpose in the holy love of God, a love that can only arise and thrive in freedom’.

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595 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 69. In Chapter Three Nancey Sherman, a virtue ethicist makes the same interpretation regarding moral decision making process in Aristotelian virtue ethics. See; section 3.3.1.
596 Collins, John Wesley’s, 147- 48.
597 Collins, John Wesley’s, 148.
598 Collins, The Theology, 52.
601 Collins, The Theology, 53.
without freedom of choice humanity would not have been capable of virtue, and hence could not choose actions that reflect the nature of God.

Thus far, it is clear that Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification presupposes that God created humanity in his image and endowed it with his essential capacity for reasoning, differentiation and judgement but they also had the freedom of choice about whether or not to follow God’s dispositions in order to fashion a Christian character.

B. The Political Image of God

The political image of God in human beings is considered by Wesley as the capacity which God gave to humankind for governance of the entire created world. Wesley quoted from Genesis 1: 28 and Psalm 8: 6-8 to stress the point that God charged human beings to have dominion over the world and all that is in it, and to rule it. He explained that the political image presents humans with their governing role over the lower world of God’s creation. Humanity is not just related to God, the governor _par excellence_, and each other, but also to the other created world to rule and exercise authority over it. In this way humanity became God’s vicegerent upon the earth, the prince, the governor and the channel or conveyance for God’s blessing on the lower world.

Theodore Weber observes that in Wesley, the political image of God implied agency and is the essence of all humanity, whereby humans take up the vocation and mission

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of acting on behalf of God to govern the world. Thus in Wesley’s theological scheme humans were created purposefully with a goal to be God’s ruling ambassadors or governors in the world. This role required humanity to have the character of God. However, without the third manifestation (which is the moral image) neither the natural image nor the political image of God could suffice with regard to relating to God and governing his creation.

C. The Moral Image

The moral image highlights the truth that God created humanity not just in any love but in holy love, implying that the essence of human life is righteousness and true holiness. Weber rightly observes that Wesley focused on the recovery of the whole image of God in its three dimensions, that is, of natural, political, and moral, but in practice, Wesley showed real interest and consistency in stressing the moral image.

Wesley considered the moral image to be the chief image of God in humanity. In other words, although the image of God is generally central to Wesley’s moral theology, he emphasised the moral image more than the others. Basically, it is the moral image that puts the other dimensions of the image of God in humans into the right perspective. Yang affirms that in Wesley’s thought, the moral image of God assumes a relational nature whereby in order to govern, humanity is expected to exercise love, mercy, justice and holiness in connection with other humans, and

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particularly in their relations to God.\textsuperscript{608} The moral image is about the love of God portrayed in justice and mercy.\textsuperscript{609} It is this moral dimension of the image that shows that, unlike other creatures, humanity is capable of relating to God and can worship him in truth and in spirit and be filled with love, according to the purpose of its creation.\textsuperscript{610}

By implication, therefore, right relationships between human beings are possible only through their relation to God their creator. Without a relationship with God humanity cannot relate to each other and the ecosystem in any meaningfully good way or at least, not in the way God intended. Humanity needs the moral image whose essence is love, in order to function properly in their estate and mission as God’s ambassadors on earth. Essentially, Wesley considered humans’ knowledge of God and their relationship with him as the primary source of morality, while their character is the expression of that morality.

He believed that although humanity was created good and perfect in order to function according to the purpose for which it was created, its ability to do this depends on its constant relationship with God. God did not leave humanity to figure out how to know him. It has already been noted that the means of knowing and relating to God is provided in God’s moral law which was imprinted in human hearts to guide them to do what is morally good and avoid what is immoral. This shows that moral character demonstrated in love, mercy and justice is the central most significant factor in achieving the purpose of the creation of humanity.

\textsuperscript{608} Yang, “The Doctrine”, 224.
\textsuperscript{609} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 188.
\textsuperscript{610} Collins, \textit{The Theology}, 55.
5.9. Sin and the Fallen State of Humanity

In accordance with traditional Christian orthodoxy, Wesley thought that the glorious state in which God created humanity was not long lived, as humankind through Adam rebelled against God by breaking his law and, consequently, effacing the glorious law of God that was imprinted in their heart. The result of this rebellion was disastrous in that the eye of human understanding was darkened ‘in the same measure as his [human’s] soul was ‘alienated from the life of God’’. By this assertion Wesley avoided any form of Pelagianism and insisted on original sin. He stated that those who did not believe in the doctrine of original sin are still heathen. By original sin Wesley meant the situation whereby humanity is corrupted in their inmost nature, in every power and every faculty of their soul, and is far gone from God’s original righteousness. It referred to a state where injustice, hatred, unkindness and irrationality replaced the glorious image in which God created humanity. Wesley thought that after the fall from the original state in which God created it, humanity was apart from grace totally depraved, in the sense that every faculty of humans was incapable of God and unable to love God or their neighbours. Instead, humanity became godless and a lover of the world. Although humanity was still free, its freedom resulted only in sin. Human beings were still social or relational beings but all their actions were corrupt because such actions are issued from selfishness, a life separated from God.

The view of Wesley on total depravity was similar to that of the Reformers. However, Wesley differed significantly from the Western Fathers such as John

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611 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 7.
612 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 7.
613 Pelegius disagreed with the Christian belief in original sin and caused a lot of controversy.
614 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 225.
615 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 82.
Calvin and St. Augustine on the extent of the depravity. On one hand he agreed with the Western view of the original state of humankind while on another hand, he differed from the Western Fathers on the issue of the extent of human depravity. For Wesley, total depravity did not mean that the image of God in humans was completely effaced. Outler has noted that, in his matured convictions on soteriology, Wesley blended the therapeutic elements in the Eastern theological perspective with the Western judicial elements in a way which adequately ‘defines his distinctive theological contribution’. 616 This contribution is seen in the way Wesley introduced prevenient grace into the logic. 617 His moral theology begins with a reflection on the need for human beings to be conscious of their depravity. Long states that by starting his reflection on Christian morality from the total depravity of humankind, Wesley places this aspect of his doctrine in the tradition of some Western church fathers, such as St. Augustine of Hippo and John Calvin. 618 The implication here is that without the infusion of God’s grace, humanity cannot on its own know and attain the character of God.

5.10. Prevenient Grace and the Return to God

Wesley’s formulation of the doctrine of prevenient grace breaks down the logical necessity which the traditional doctrine of predestination entails. 619 He held that prevenient grace was available to all human beings, albeit it was resistible. The outcome of Adam’s sin imposed a fundamental corruption on the nature of humanity, which made humans completely unable to know and do good. He claims that this fate

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618 Long, John Wesley’s, 146, 143.
has been cancelled, but only provisionally, by prevenient grace, until saving grace effects a change in the heart of humans, thereby enabling faith and love for God and neighbour.\textsuperscript{620} Crucially, the grace of God does not merely introduce believers to the original state in which God created them, but also effects a transformation that enables the believer to conform to the character (likeness) of God throughout the Christian life.

5.11. General Revelation and Moral Character

Wesley held that, providentially, God does not distance himself permanently from his creation although humans have always disobeyed him. Even after the fall God continued to reveal some measure of his truth to the whole of humanity by showing them the ‘true light which enlightens every man [human] that cometh into the world’.\textsuperscript{621} In accordance with received orthodoxy, Wesley thought that even the chosen people of God (the Israelites) could not fully comprehend the depth, breadth and length of God’s law. As such God envisaged a day when he will re-write the law in the heart of all humanity (Jer. 31:33-34).

Apparently, the general revelation could only show humans their disease, their inability to do good and shun evil, but is not able to show them the remedy while they remain too weak to overcome the numerous temptations that surround them. Hence, God chose a special revelation by which everybody can personally know God and return to him.\textsuperscript{622} This means that, after the fall, the law of God is not automatically known by humans when they are born into the world. Apparently, humanity generally remains atheists and gods to itself because it does not naturally

\textsuperscript{620} Marquardt, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 95-96.
\textsuperscript{621} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 2: 7.
\textsuperscript{622} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 2: 472.
have any more idea of God than ‘any of the beasts of the field’. It is very important to observe that demonstration of his character is so vital for God that God did not give up on humanity, even to the extent of physically disclosing himself to us in Jesus.

5.12. Special Revelation: The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

Long asserts that Wesley’s moral theology came together coherently in his thirteen discourses on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 through 7) where he exegetes the sermon as providing a schema for the Christian moral life. One can easily agree with Long when one considers Wesley’s interpretation of the fifth discourse of the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. Wesley explained the relation between the Lord Jesus Christ, the law of God and the Christian moral life. He emphasised that Jesus Christ did not abolish the law but instead he fulfils it (Matthew 5:17). Since even the chosen people who were given the law on tablets could not understand or know God through the law, God chose to send Christ, a special revelation to the world. He represents the same law that God had imprinted on the heart of humankind but which was distorted because of the wilful rebellion of humankind in Adam. Wesley regarded the contents of the moral law as the revelation of God’s mind and his image in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. With this depiction, Wesley made the moral ideal, the character of God, explicitly known to whoever wishes to attain it.

Wesley maintained that the law continues to make way for and directs humanity to the gospel, just as the gospel continually guides believers to a more faithful

623 Wesley, Works [BE], 3: 350-52.
624 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 454.
625 Yang, “The Doctrine”, 52.
fulfilment of the law.\textsuperscript{626} Although created with humankind and later written out on tablets, the law had never been fully explained until the great author himself condescended to explain it in his own words and deeds, insisting that it should ‘remain in force to the end of the world’.\textsuperscript{627} This means that not only is Christ the embodiment of the law but also he is the exemplification of it. Despite all the superficial human interpretations of the law, Jesus Christ came to establish it in its completeness: to reveal fully and clearly ‘whatsoever was dark or obscure therein’ and to declare the true and full import of every part of the law.

Wesley thought that, Christ the Son of God is not just the fulfilment of the law but also the representation of all the Godly virtues. Christ is divine virtue and wisdom assuming a visible form, ‘… the original ideas of truth and good that were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle as to appear even to human understanding’.\textsuperscript{628} It means that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of all the virtues in one, in such a shape that can be seen by all those whose eyes God has enlightened. With this explanation, Wesley rendered the mystery of Christ’s personification of all the virtues and wisdom obvious and accessible to all of humanity. Christ is a special revelation to all humanity.

\textbf{5.13. The Centrality of the Holy Spirit}

For Wesley, the Holy Spirit is the enabler of morality. He referred to the Holy Spirit variously as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of God and he considered the Holy Spirit as always working together with the grace of God. The perceptibility of the Spirit involves faith in Christ. Though our justification, new

\begin{footnotes}
\item[626] Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 554.
\item[627] Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 553.
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birth and sanctification depend on the atonement of Christ, these are communicated
to us only through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, anything we can consider as Christian
coloracter is mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is also by the spirit that believers
sense that their sins are forgiven. The entire life of the believer is conditioned on
what the Holy Spirit mediates. Everything that Christ has done for us in terms of
salvation and restoration of the capacity for moral character is channelled to us
through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. To believe or have faith was seen by
Wesley as the work of the Holy Spirit. Wesley affirmed that being born anew is a
vast inward change wrought in the soul through the operation of the Holy Spirit so
that henceforth we live in another manner than we have lived before. Being born of
the Holy Spirit brings a whole new capacity for discerning spiritual things, making
our senses sensitive to God.629 When one exercises faith and trusts in God’s
reconciling word, it is the Holy Spirit who bears assuring witness within, that one is
justified by the Son of God. Again, it is the Holy Spirit who attests inwardly to the
work of the power of grace in us.630 Sanctification is also the work of God in us by
the Holy Spirit. This means that whatever is discussed here about Christian moral
coloracter cannot be achieved without the work of the Holy Spirit, and Wesley made
that clear.

5.14. The Centrality of Faith

Since in Adam, humanity chose to rebel against God, their restoration to the intended
moral state in the image of God can only begin with repentance of sin and faith in
Jesus Christ. Justifying faith is the supernatural conviction or trust that Christ died

629 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 434.
630 Oden, John Wesley, 228.
for our sins. By implication, Christian moral character cannot be imagined without humans’ understanding of their sinful condition and a relevant wilful response to grace in faith in God the creator, governor and judge of the world. Wesley taught that the beginning of true religion is ‘poverty of spirit’ which he explains to be the humility of ‘those who know themselves, who are convinced of their sins’ and are aware of their spiritual nakedness, blindness and misery.

Poverty of spirit, a sense of sinfulness, guilt and helplessness, is thus the first step in the Christian journey towards returning to the character of God. The sense of guilt and humble repentance directs humanity to Jesus Christ the righteous one while spiritual poverty continues in humanity as a sense of humans’ total dependence on God for all good thoughts, words and actions. Therefore, in the Christian tradition as articulated by Wesley, anyone who has not believed that Jesus died for his/her sins cannot claim to have character, although this is acceptable in the virtue tradition and in the Akan moral tradition.

It needs stressing that, as far as Wesley was concerned, knowledge of God and his moral image can only be achieved through faith in the Son of God. Essentially, Wesley’s moral theology is Christocentric in nature because he could not perceive of a Christian morality or character without Christ. His focus on Christ goes beyond the divine work of Christ to stress equally the observable character that Christ demonstrated on earth.

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631 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 194.
632 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 479 - 482.
633 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 470.
Faith helps believers to conceive the nature of God and what God has done for them. By faith the individual is returned to God and restored to the image of God which is embodied in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christian character cannot be envisaged without faith in Jesus Christ the eternal and concrete embodiment and manifestation of the image of God. Also, by faith the new born life receives animation through the Spirit of God, and in response the recipient returns love, prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God. The divine seed of faith, which produces love and conquers sin, makes it possible for the individual to participate in the divine life of God. Apparently, this participation of God in the human soul is the beginning of true Christian character and morality.

Long asserts that Wesley always related faith to love just as he related justification and new birth. Just as one who is justified is also at the same time born anew (again) so also is anyone who has faith in Christ expected to live with love for God and his/her neighbour. Faith in Christ is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to an end which is love of God and one’s neighbour expressed in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The most important point here is that faith is not a one-off response by people to the awareness of their sinful nature but a continuous practice of total trust and dependence on God manifested in love. In other words, by faith a believer must develop a loving way of relating to God and other human beings through works and deeds which are based on faith.

634 Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 40, 38.
635 Long, John Wesley’s, 131.
636 Long, John Wesley’s, 135.
5.15. Repentance: The ‘Porch’ of Character

Wesley stated that the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount spells out the *ordo salutis*, the ‘… several stages of the Christian course, the steps which a Christian successively takes towards the Promised Land’ of true religion.\(^{637}\) The meaning of these Beatitudes constitutes the sum of true religion, because, for Wesley, Christianity is about being from which doing proceeds.\(^{638}\) Wesley offered three doctrines as a solution to the human predicament of total depravity. He maintained that ‘our main doctrines, which include all the rest are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third is religion itself’.\(^{639}\) This point leads us to Wesley’s major concern, which is the holiness of life, otherwise referred to by him as the religion of heart or entire sanctification. But before we discuss that, it is vital to note that Wesley considered character in teleological or progressive terms, just like the virtue tradition.

5.16. Imputation of Righteousness for Character

Wesley believed that at conversion believers experience justification, whereby they are declared righteous on the merit of the atoning work of Jesus Christ and God’s gracious pardon of their sins. Concurrently, they experience regeneration, or are ‘born again’ and made alive unto God. Then, believers are adopted as children of God and heirs together with Christ. Subsequently, a process which entails the cleansing of the thoughts, dispositions and attitudes of believers begins and continues so long as they cooperate with the Holy Spirit throughout their lives and into their glorification. This process, generally termed sanctification, evidences the character of God in believers. So, Wesley took every opportunity to oppose any teaching that


might suggest that once they have believed, the character of the believers is not essential. Outler asserted that Wesley wrote the sermon, *The Lord Our Righteousness*, deliberately to respond to Christians, especially Calvinists, who perceived the atoning death of Christ to be a *formal* rather than a *meritorious* cause for the justification of a sinner.⁶⁴⁰

There was a view of imputation of righteousness which is that, we earn our salvation by reason of the death of Christ, that is, the death of Christ is our salvation by imputation.⁶⁴¹ In this sense, some believers whose lifestyles show that they do not have the mind that was in Christ nor walked as Christ did, may appeal to the righteousness of Christ. Wesley’s fear was that some people used the phrase in an antinomian sense, absolving themselves from any expectation of obedience in the Christian life or to cover-up over their unrighteousness.⁶⁴² People who are reproved for injustice, such as extortion, may use the phrase as armour with which to defend themselves, because although they are unjust in their acts they still have the righteousness of Christ by virtue of their faith that he died for their sins.⁶⁴³ The logical conclusion of such a view is that the lifestyle and character of believers does not matter since it is the righteousness of Christ rather than their acts that matters. Considering Christ’s imputation of righteousness as a formal cause of justification stifles any motivation for the works or fruits of righteousness (love, justice, mercy and truth) which are required after justification. Conceivably, Wesley rejected such a view because of its negative implication for Christian moral pursuit and character development.

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Alternatively, Wesley held that Jesus Christ imputed his righteousness to all who have faith in him, justifying them so that in all their endeavours they may contend to represent the righteous character of Jesus.\textsuperscript{644} Wesley understood Christ’s imputed righteousness better as a ‘… meritorious cause of the justification of a sinner before God’.\textsuperscript{645} The righteousness of Christ is imputed to humanity, not because of anything that humans have done, but solely by the grace of God through faith. However, this imputed righteousness is both the means to obtaining the favour of God and the power for continuing in righteous character. For him, it is by this means ‘… we come to God at first: it is by the same we come unto him ever after; we walk in one and the same new ways until our spirits return to God’.\textsuperscript{646}

This means that not only has Jesus Christ been made an example of the divine moral character that God expects of humanity, but also God through Christ has done something for the human soul that helps them live as Christ did.\textsuperscript{647} Through the righteousness of Christ believers have been restored to the image of God, and thus are supposed to participate in the divine nature of God through Christ. In effect, the participation in the divine is not passivity but an active daily living out of the love of God in Christ in the community of the saints. In this way, Wesley’s moral theology presupposes a deliberate active effort on the part of believers to develop a particular character, the character of God as demonstrated in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

\textsuperscript{644}Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 456.  
\textsuperscript{645}Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 460.  
\textsuperscript{646}Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 455-56.  
\textsuperscript{647}Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 452-53.
5.17. Impartation of Righteousness for Character

Wesley believed that we cannot develop Christian character from our experiences gained from our interactions with each other. Rather, it is an imitation of the righteousness of Christ, a teleological process which abates only when we are glorified with Jesus in his future kingdom. In other words, developing Christian character is a learning process of becoming like Christ. It is important to note also that although Jesus is considered as a human exemplar of the ideal moral character, his righteousness that he imparts to us transcends mere human experience to embody the character of God, the source of goodness and all morality.

To show that humanity is capable of having the character of God as Christ did, Wesley differentiated justification from the new birth. At conversion, the sinner is not only merely freed from guilt and restored to the favour of God (justified), but also the believer is born anew or again to live a new life (regeneration). Accordingly, the new birth of the Christian supposes the beginning and progressive shaping of Christian character.

Wesley taught that justification and regeneration are concurrent but they are also decisively different in nature.\(^\text{648}\) Whereas justification implies only a relative change, whereby in justifying humans God does something for them, ‘the new birth [regeneration] is a real change’ whereby in justifying humans God does something in them.\(^\text{649}\) The former restores Christians to the favour of God whilst the latter restores them to the moral image of God and also effectively enables them to live according

to the character of God.\textsuperscript{650} Put another way, the restoration entails the renewal of a disposition or capacity of the human soul for living out the righteousness of Christ. According to Wesley, Christ’s righteousness, ‘… is the life of God in the soul, the mind which was in Christ Jesus’ and the image of God which was originally stamped on the heart of humankind for its likeness to God.\textsuperscript{651}

5.18. The Fruit of the Spirit as means to Attaining Character

Wesley showed that the Beatitudes of poverty of spirit, mournfulness and meekness are gifts which remove the hindrances to true religion. A hindrance such as pride is cured by poverty of the spirit, whilst other inordinate passions such as levity and selfishness are removed by spiritual sorrow. False cravings such as anger, impatience, and discontent which inordinately order human passions are removed by meekness. When these cravings are removed then the believer begins to feel hungry and thirsty for righteousness.\textsuperscript{652} Wesley showed that in the second discourse of the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, after poverty of spirit and mournfulness are cured by the participation of the divine spirit in the believer, meekness, righteousness and mercy ensue. When the abiding presence of the Spirit of God who ‘comforts the mourners’ endures forever in them, their doubts and sorrows are dispelled whilst ‘their spirit again rejoices in God’ enabling them to bear witness to his righteousness.\textsuperscript{653} In meekness humans do not desire to extinguish any of the passions which God has implanted in their nature for wise ends. Instead, they have the mastery of all; they hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in

\textsuperscript{650} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 432.
\textsuperscript{651} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 481.
\textsuperscript{652} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 495.
\textsuperscript{653} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 488.
subservience to those ends which God intended.\textsuperscript{654} Meekness produces patience in the believer and acquiescence towards God in a way that enables the believer to say ‘may God’s will be done’, and to show gentleness towards other people.\textsuperscript{655} Meekness avoids every extreme and balances the affections and passions by bringing them under due control. ‘It poises the mind aright’ and restrains to anger, sorrow and fear, maintaining the correct balance in every circumstance of life.\textsuperscript{656} In a characteristically virtue fashion, Wesley believed that the tempers (virtues) should not just remain in humans ‘but to increase in us day by day’ because there will always be occasions for exercising and thereby increasing in them until we attain a pure heart.\textsuperscript{657}

5.19. Prayer and Worship as the Key to Character

Once a person’s heart is purified he/she is able to see all things as emanating from God, and thereby honour God as the governor who holds all things in place through the power of his word. Such people see God in his providence for their souls and bodies, ordering all their lives according to God’s wisdom and mercy. Consequently, they worship and pay him tribute in the great congregations and in their closets. They rejoice to hear his words being proclaimed to them. The pure in heart see God ‘… as it were’ and ‘… talk with him as a man talking to his friend’.\textsuperscript{658} Their communication with each other is marked with truthfulness and honesty.

Such believers are not like the Pharisees who focus only on outward piety to the neglect of inward holiness – true religion. To the contrary, those who are pure in

\textsuperscript{654} Wesley, Sermon 22, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount”, \textit{Works}, 1: 490.
\textsuperscript{655} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 489.
\textsuperscript{656} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 489.
\textsuperscript{657} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 490.
\textsuperscript{658} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 514.
heart have an inward holiness which is demonstrated in their outward actions as they make peace in all situations and with all people.\textsuperscript{659} The peacemaker is one who being filled with love of God and of all humanity does not restrict the expression of love only to family members and close associates but all people as the need arise.\textsuperscript{660} Peacemaking is Christians’ outward conversation from which their inward holiness springs forth. It is appropriate to observe that in the moral theology of Wesley one can not perceive morality in isolation from the spiritual exercises of prayer, worship, listening to, reading of and meditation on the word of God (scriptures).

\textbf{5.20. Rules as a Means to Character}

Wesley also believed that rules play a part in character formation. Heitzenrater asserts correctly that although virtue is the central ethic of Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification, the ethic of obligation plays an important part in it.\textsuperscript{661} Wesley stated that in chapter six of Matthew’s gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ lays down rules that Christians need to follow as people who have the religion of heart and are peacemakers. He considered these as ‘… rules for the right intention which we are to preserve in all our outward action, unmixed with worldly desires, or anxious care for even the necessaries of life’.\textsuperscript{662} In Matthew chapter five believers are shown what they should be and in chapter six what they should do. Maddox observes quite correctly that although Wesley’s use of general rules was criticised as legalism, Wesley himself thought of the general rules as ‘character-forming disciplines which builds up Christian holiness and character’.\textsuperscript{663} Marquardt regards the connection Wesley made between good works and faith as the strength of his ethics, because

\textsuperscript{659} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 515, 517.  
\textsuperscript{660} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 517, 518.  
\textsuperscript{661} Heitzenrater, “Imitatio Christii”, 61-62.  
\textsuperscript{662} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 474-5.  
\textsuperscript{663} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 243.
although it elevates the good works, still, these are subordinated to faith as there cannot be good works without faith. In the same way good works that do not proceed from faith miss the mark of the image of God.

5.21. Character Contrasted with Good Works

Wesley did not believe that good works alone can restore humanity to the image (character) of God. In fact he contrasted religion of the heart (entire sanctification) with religion of the world or outward religion. Religion of the world requires three things. Firstly, it involves doing no harm and abstaining from outward sin (stealing, pilfering, common swearing, drunkenness etc.). Secondly, it entails doing good, relieving the poor, and being charitable. Thirdly, it accesses all ‘means of grace’ at the congregation of the saints, especially the Lord’s Supper. This is the type of religion that the Pharisees practised zealously and that is why the Lord urges Christians to have a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees.

In consonance with the orthodoxy of his time, Wesley held that neither ‘bare orthodoxy’ nor mere observance of God’s commandments nor ritual observances are sufficient for what it means to have the character of God. None of these could on its own substitute for the essence of the Christian moral life. Although Wesley believed that these resources (orthodox doctrines, laws, and commandments, and ritual observance) are necessary and indispensable for the Christian moral life, he did not consider them as adequate. In addition to these, there must be faith, hope and

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664 Marquardt, John Wesley’s, 135.
665 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 496.
666 Long, John Wesley’s, 126-27.
above all charity (love). Inarguably, love is what Wesley considered as the essence of the Christian religion, the enduring principle of Christian character and morality.\footnote{Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 3: 189.}

### 5.22. Character as Proof of Sanctification

It has been noted that entire sanctification or perfection is the central focus of Wesley’s theology. From the foregoing discussion it has been shown that the soteriology of Wesley focuses practically on sanctification. What is also strikingly clear is that Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification presupposes a distinctive Christian character as its proof. In fact, Wesley considered Christianity as a scheme or system of doctrines that describe the character of God and his people.\footnote{Lindström, \textit{Wesley and Sanctification}, 159.} Thus, character is crucial for the Christian moral pursuit that Wesley perceived as the goal of the Christian life. This implies that faith and participation in the Christian truth enable believers to cultivate the divine virtues for a character that is appropriate to the image of God.

Thus far, I have shown that Wesley is regarded as a prominent practical and moral theologian who appropriated the orthodox Christian tradition and successfully transformed the social, philosophical and theological pressures that faced the church in eighteenth-century England.\footnote{Leslie Stephen, \textit{The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century}, vol. 2 (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1896), 384-385, 409-424.} However, he did not accomplish this through eloquent debates and persuasive treatises (though he did not avoid such opportunities) but through insistence on the inner transformation of the soul leading to the demonstration of the character of God in believers. Ron Benefiel affirms that Wesley considered the idea of character as useful for recounting all that it meant to
be a true Christian. In his tract *The Character of a Methodist*, Wesley stressed that his description of the people called by others as Methodists is nothing else than the depiction of what a true Christian should look like. The way Wesley described the love that the Methodists have for others did not portray them as following some kind of strict obedience to an external command. The language of character which he used is just a natural expression of who the Methodists were, as true believers in Christ.

As far as Wesley was concerned character is an empirical and the most enduring evidence of the claim to be Christian. In *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity* he sought to use character language as an apologetic device to refute the claims of the deist, Dr. Conyers Middleton, that the miracles of the Christian message ceased with the Apostolic Age. Wesley considered character as the miracle of Christian living, ‘... the really essential miraculous power which has subsisted in the church in all ages and is still present and active in the Christian community’.

Moreover, he implied that unlike the power of Christian truth, ‘calm reason’ cannot conceive of ‘either a more amiable or a more desirable character’. Wesley stated that being a Methodist does not mean having an ideology, or dressing in particular ways. Neither is it in name only, but also in the heart and is demonstrated in character. He asserted that being called Christians does not necessarily change the heart and life of believers.

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Again, being a true Christian does not lie with the holding of particular presuppositions or views, or in a way of speaking, actions, customs, ‘usages of indifferent nature’, abstinence, clothing, or emphasis on any particular aspect of religion, either on doing no harm, doing good, or using the ordinances of God. He claimed that ‘we know by experience that a man may labour many years [in doing good deeds], and at the end have no true religion at all, no more than he had at the beginning.’\(^{675}\) Thus, for Wesley, being a Christian means having had an inner and outward transformation of thought and action whereby some level of consistency and predictability is observable in one’s character.\(^{676}\)

Hauerwas asserts that Wesley’s insistence on the empirical character of Christian convictions, rather than abstract philosophising and theorising, does not mean that he was avoiding questions about the truth of Christianity. Rather, Wesley was concerned with establishing the right context for the question about the truth of the Christian faith.\(^{677}\) He further states that Wesley’s assertion that Christian character is proof of the truth about Christian convictions is necessary for our present world of religious pluralism and relativism, and must be the heart of the Christian faith.\(^{678}\) In his time, Wesley gathered several testimonies from believers, and reviewed them over long periods of time to show that people who believed the Christian truth and cooperated with the Holy Spirit truly had changed lives that conformed to the character of Christ, and that this is evidential of the Christian truth. Accordingly, the character of the Christian becomes the visible expression of God’s new creation,

\(^{675}\) Wesley, *Works* [BE], 9: 33-35  
\(^{676}\) Wesley, *Works* [BE], 9: 41.  
\(^{678}\) Hauerwas, “Characterizing Perfection, 251.
manifesting the image and the kingdom of God in their everyday lives in this world.\textsuperscript{679} This expression takes place in a process of habituation that is accomplished progressively as believers consistently imitate Christ. To imitate Christ ‘we love by purifying ourselves even as he is pure, and to obey him whom we love and in whom we believe both in thoughts and words and works’.\textsuperscript{680}

5.23. Character as Practising Sanctified Life

Wesley thought that although both the virtues of faith and love are gifts from God, they must be cultivated. While a Christian cannot acquire these virtues by his/her own efforts alone the believer must collaborate with the divine grace through faith in order to keep the virtues and grow in them, otherwise they might lose them. However, Wesley did not consider the possession of the ‘tempers’ as resulting solely from human effort as is held in the virtue tradition. He thought that to shape their Christian character, people must make efforts to cultivate the tempers in obedience to God. The view that Christian character emerges from the habituation of the life of Christ reveals the strong similarity between Wesley and the virtue tradition. However, unlike the virtue ethics where such habituation occurs solely by rational considerations and the choices of humans, Wesley regarded the efforts of believers as their obedience to a work of grace by the Holy Spirit and not simply their own efforts.

5.24. Character and the Virtue of Love in Wesley’s Sanctification

In Wesley’s view, in the perfectly sanctified state, the love of the believer directs his/her soul and eliminates any mixture of the negative affections and passions that

\textsuperscript{679} Benefiel, “Christian Holiness”, 125.

\textsuperscript{680} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 544.
come in the way of moral decisions. Love becomes as natural as devotion for such a person. Thus, love is seen as the ultimate principle for Wesley’s moral theology. Long claims that Wesley’s doctrine of love is similar to that of Aquinas, which was that the law of God directs human acts to its virtuous end, to love that is both natural and supernatural. Love is natural in the sense that human effort is involved, and it is also supernatural in the sense that it entails the participation of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer. Love is a feature of the triune God infused as a virtue in the soul of believers. Love of our neighbour, of Christ and of God requires tolerance and perseverance towards all people, even to the feeding of our enemies when they are hungry and offering them drink when they are thirsty.

According to Wesley, all human virtues need to be perfected by the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. When love fills the believer with Christian moral virtues all negative character traits are expelled from the believer’s soul, or at least they do not rule the believer’s life. He preached love above all topics. ‘I want, I value, I preach the love of God and man. These are my favourite tenets both in preaching and writing than any other subjects that ever were in the world.’ The important thing to note about this beautiful picture of love is that it must always be demonstrated in actions which are inspired by faith. Wesley argued that we cannot love our neighbours as ourselves unless we first love God and we cannot love God unless we first believe in Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit testifying that the believer is a son of God.

681 Wesley, Works [BE], 11: 374, 384.
682 Long, John Wesley’s, 127, 129.
683 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 499.
684 Wesley, Letters, II: 49.
685 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 662.
5.25. The Necessity of Faith for Moral Action

Wesley taught that the action of believers must assume a pattern which is coherent, consistent and discernible as being in conformity with the image of God. In other words, demonstration of love must necessarily become the character for the entirely sanctified believer who is inspired by faith. He believed that faith is crucial in determining truth and choosing good acts.\(^{686}\) He thought that the present character of believers is determined by their expectation of the eschatological reality of the Christian truth\(^{687}\) because ‘they do not dwell but only sojourn here; not looking upon earth as their home, but only travelling through Immanuel’s ground, to fairer worlds on high’.\(^{688}\) How does this hope impact the present determination of truth, choice and moral action? In what way can we make moral decisions for action based on hope for the coming kingdom?

5.26. Reason as a Handmaid of Character

It has been noted that the main content of biblical morality is love. However, many moral dilemmas of our contemporary situation can hardly be answered with clear biblical injunctions. Therefore, there is always a need to determine what the scriptural position on a matter is. This determination is often seen as a rational reflection on love and scripture as a guide for good acts. It is apt to note that Wesley was however cautious about this use of reason in theological matters because of the status that empiricists have granted it. A. Skevington Wood states that in seeking to keep a proper balance between reason and revelation, John Locke, one the greatest minds of the time, defined reason as ‘… natural revelation, whereby the eternal father of light the foundation of knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion

\(^{686}\) Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 4: 54.
\(^{688}\) Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 4: 54.
of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties’. Locke considered revelation as ‘natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God’.\footnote{A. Skevington Wood, \textit{Revelation and Reason: Wesleyan Responses to Eighteenth Century Rationalism} (Nuneaton: The Wesley Fellowship, 1992), 8.} The empiricism of Wesley’s day elevated reason to be our ‘last judge’ and guide in everything. Consequently, the authority of the church, of Christian experience and of biblical revelation was subjected to the test of humanity’s rational faculties and thus setting reason up as arbiter of truth, belief and morals.\footnote{Wood, \textit{Revelation and Reason}, 8.}

To the contrary, Wesley held that reason alone cannot lead a person to the truth and to the knowledge of what is morally good, because there is a gulf between revelation and reason that only faith which comes by the grace of God can cross. Also, reason cannot give faith, hope or love and thus cannot on its own lead to the inculcation of true virtue.\footnote{Wood, \textit{Revelation and Reason}, 24.} Oden asserts that, on this subject, Wesley fought two battles. On one hand he fought against unreasonable charismatic enthusiasm and over-emphasised emotive spirituality. On the other hand, he fought against extreme rationalists who impose ‘… hyper-sceptical criterion on inquiry into Christian truth’.\footnote{Oden, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 72.} Indeed, he impugned any tendency of over-valuing or under-valuing reason and argued that reason should be valued and applied in its proper sphere. As far as he was concerned, the issue about faith and reason was not an ‘either or’ affair. Both are necessary because they are both given by God and should never be pitted against each other. He held that growing faith must necessarily search for the best reason.\footnote{Oden, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 73.}
Consequently, Wesley did not advocate opposition of the Christian faith to reason. Rather, he insisted on the rational component of biblical Christianity as he could not perceive Christianity without reason.\textsuperscript{694}

Wesley claimed that whenever a person departs from genuine reason the person has departed from Christianity. While allowing for freedom to adapt biblical truth to present needs without recourse to moral patterns of a historic setting, rational reflection maintains the basis of Christian morality.\textsuperscript{695} It is through rational reflection that the scriptures and the love of God are made relevant to Christian conduct. Marquardt affirms that ‘by incorporating reason to religious knowledge and deriving from it principles of ethical obligation, Wesley gained great inner mobility and freedom to meet the social challenges appropriately and insightfully’.\textsuperscript{696} Thus, while the basis of Christian morality is maintained by scriptural injunctions, reason becomes a tool for applying the biblical truth to present concerns and needs. This rational exercise, aided by grace of the Holy Spirit, nurtures the virtues and helps believers to act in conformity to the essence of the image of God, and to do so coherently and consistently. Applying reason to love of God and one’s neighbour in this way facilitates the habituation of the character of Christ until the sanctified believer actually embodies the character of God fully.

\section*{5.27. Universal Access to Character Formation}

As far as Wesley was concerned, the character of God is accessible universally to all people at all places and in all times. Since he believed that the whole of humanity was created perfectly in the image of God, he rejected the view that after the fall of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[694] Marquardt, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 117.
\item[695] Marquardt, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 136.
\item[696] Marquardt, \textit{John Wesley’s}, 118.
\end{footnotes}
humanity and subsequent incarnation of Christ, some humans could still not be restored to their original state.\textsuperscript{697} In Wesley’s interpretation, the doctrine of predestination makes preaching unnecessary for those who are elected, since with or without preaching they will infallibly be saved anyway. Also, preaching is useless for those who are infallibly damned since they cannot possibly be saved. Therefore, Wesley concluded that the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it tends to “… destroy the holiness that is the end of all the ordinances of God”.\textsuperscript{698} According to Wesley, predestination tends to destroy meekness, good works, happiness and assurance of the spirit, and thus overthrows the whole Christian revelation and Christian holiness generally.\textsuperscript{699} Moreover, by its hindering of personal motivation for good works, the doctrine of predestination stands in the way of Christian morality as well as destroying essential aspects of Christian character formation.

**5.28. John Wesley and Character Formation**

Having presented an account of the Christian truth according to Wesley in suitable detail, I will now relate it to the elements of character, as I did with the Akan scheme, to answer the question of how the concept of character in the moral theology of John Wesley is expected to help Christians to pursue morality successfully as an intrinsic outcome of religious life. In other words, how does the Christian truth enable believers to form moral character or transform their character in accordance with the Christian ideal?


\textsuperscript{698} Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 3: 547-48. In Calvin, predestination takes a slightly different turn. We preach because of predestination.

\textsuperscript{699} Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 3: 548-552.
It should be remembered that according to Bondi’s elements of character, in all decision making and moral actions that lead to character formation, humans are considered as having the capacity for intentional action, are influenced by affections and passions, are subjected to accidents of history and have capacity of the heart. So, I will discuss how the Wesley’s Christian truth deals with these elements effectively to help believers in the formation of their character.

A. The Capacity for Intentional Action

Wesley’s Christian anthropology shows clearly that everybody has the capacity for intentional action. Firstly, it is shown that God created humanity purposefully to fulfil the task of being his ambassador in his created world and to govern it. So, he created us in accordance with his character (image), which is expressed in his natural, political and moral endowments in us. We are naturally endowed with the capacity for understanding and for reason. God does not only make known to humanity both God’s nature and his attributes, but God also provides his law by which we are able to differentiate between what is good and bad, and what is right and wrong. In addition, we have freedom to make choices. With this freedom we have the power for choosing what is good and rejecting what is not. We have the capacity to differentiate between truth and falsehood and to choose truth over falsehood.  


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B. Involvement with Affections and Passions

The virtue theory holds that although humans have capacity for intentional action, this is curtailed significantly by the influences our affections and passions have on our moral decisions. Our ability to co-operate with the Holy Spirit to control our passions and to direct our affections appropriately is essential for moral character formation. According to Wesley, the Christian truth provides the means for this dual necessity. Through repentance, justification, regeneration and sanctification a believer participates in the divine by the Holy Spirit. When the abiding presence of the Spirit of God continues in the believer he/she has the mastery of all passions and affections. By the Holy Spirit, believers have the capacity to be conscious of their pride, prejudice, craving for honour or self-esteem, hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge and enmity against other people. Believers are able to hold their passions and affections in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to the right intentions. A virtue such as meekness helps them avoid every extreme and balances the affections and passions by bringing them under due control. Meekness also ‘poises the mind aright’ and restrains anger, sorrow and fear by maintaining the correct balance in every circumstance of life. Pride is cured, whilst levity and selfishness are removed by spiritual sorrow. Anger, impatience and discontent, which inordinately order human passions, are also removed by meekness. Although the Holy Spirit enables this capacity, unless believers continue in faith and in obedience to God, they will not be able to handle their affections and passions appropriately in moral decision making and action, a situation that would hamper character formation.

701 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 475, 477-78.
702 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 490.
703 Wesley, Works [BE], 1: 489.
C. Subjections to Accidents of History

Another important hurdle on the way towards character formation or morality relates to issues that we do not have control over. Where we were born, the cultures we have been part of, the worldview we hold, and the biological, social and psychological conditions we have grown up with, are just a few of what is known as accidents of history. This is so termed because we do not have control over them, though they influence our morality. According to Wesley how does the Christian truth deal with accidents of history?

To begin with, it needs mentioning that according to Wesley, Christian moral character cannot be imagined without humans recognising that they are subjected to accidents of history, the first one being the fall (original sin). Wesley insisted that it is important for humans to know their condition. The Christian narrative presupposes and recognises that we have experiences which might hamper our moral judgements and actions. But Wesley taught that these can be addressed by our relevant wilful response to the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He explained the present human situation as humanity created perfectly but fallen and humanity as nascently restored. This delineation of the Christian truth gives hope that humans still have the capacity to co-operate with the divine grace for the transformation of their souls and for the restoration of the character of God in them. It also means that the grace of God effects a transformation that enables the believer to conform to the character (likeness) of God.

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In this way, Wesley’s account reveals explicitly that a believer can be transformed from the fallen state to reflect the very character of God. Wesley gathered several testimonies from believers, and reviewed them over long periods of time to prove that people who believed the Christian truth and cooperated with the Holy Spirit actually had changed lives that conformed to the character of God in Jesus Christ and that this is evidential of the Christian truth.⁷⁰⁶ Therefore, essentially, the success of any believers who live according to the Christian moral ideal is regarded as an outcome of religion. There is no ambiguity about whether Christian morality is something that the supernatural enables in whoever believes. From this Wesleyan perspective of the Christian truth, morality is seen as an outcome of religion because only those who believe are restored to the image of God and are able to live accordingly. Through faith in Christ both past and present experiences are resolved when we are restored to reflect the character of God. The Wesleyan account of the Christian truth presents a narrative within which we can properly understand our past and present experiences through the interpretative power of our hearts. By faith, the hearing, reading and meditation upon the Christian story, (the word of God) can help us to recognise our present state and also offers us hope toward what we can become in the hereafter. Wesley insisted that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that we can understand our condition and receive a restoration of our senses by the works of grace that God does in us. Without these supernatural graces we cannot overcome the accidents of history that we are subjected to.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Wesley, “A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity”.
⁷⁰⁷ Wesley, Works [BE], 4: 297-312.
D. The Capacity of the Heart

The theological metaphor of the heart refers to that part of us where our intellect and feeling meet at the deepest level. The heart is the centre where the other elements of character coalesce. It is the seat of our deepest memories, of our imaginative exploration of other lives and times, of our yearning for union both of the self and with other people, ideals, and possible ways of life. The heart is also the place where interpretations of all our subjections are driven, where we find reasons for our actions, focus for our affections and power to control our passions. It is with the heart that we believe (Rom. 10: 10). Moreover, Wesley made it clear that in justifying believers God does something in them that enables them to interpret their experiences in light of the Christian truth. This is the most important factor that places the Christian truth in a category that is different from the Akan tradition. The notion that something supernaturally happens in the human being when he/she is justified means that in a very deep way, ‘the light of the person’s soul is turned on’ as it were, while that person’s interpretative scheme receives fine tuning in a way that is not available from any other source apart from God through faith in Jesus.

Also, the Christian truth allows that whilst on the moral journey, if at any point believers find themselves falling short of the moral ideal, there is always hope for transformation through repentance and confession.

5.29. Closing Remarks

I have shown in this chapter that influenced by the virtue tradition, Wesley built on Christian orthodoxy stressing that belief in the Triune God: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit is crucial for the Christian moral life. Therefore, humans should seek God as

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709 See Section, 5.16.
710 See Section, 5.16.
this quest leads and guides the seeker through repentance, faith, justification, regeneration and righteousness until the person becomes a peacemaker and is entirely sanctified (loving God and neighbour purely). This model for the formation of a distinctive Christian moral character has affinity with the virtue framework. The main difference is that whereas the virtue tradition, like the Akan tradition, tends to be primarily naturalistic (humanistic), the Christian truth combines the acts of the supernatural and the obedient response of humanity. This is a kind of synergy involving the supernatural grace of God and the wilful response of humanity. Ultimately, the Christian truth provides a possibility of the character of God to be moulded in all humanity, in those who believe. Although Wesley thought that justification, regeneration and sanctification are the work of God wrought in the believer through the Holy Spirit, he also considered that human obedience and cooperation with divine grace are crucial for the formation of the character of God. He was unambiguous about the fact that the Christian story is able to supply the supernatural means that enables human beings to live according to the moral ideal of their God.
CHAPTER SIX

RELATING AKAN AND CHRISTIAN MORAL SCHEMES

6. Introduction

In Chapters Four and Five I offered descriptions of how the worldviews or narratives of the Akan traditional system and the Christian tradition help their adherents in their pursuit of morality. Allowing the traditions to speak through their respective narratives, I described how each performs in relation to the four elements of character. In this chapter, I bring their responses in dialogue with each other. I will show that the lack of an appropriate theological view of humanity in the Akan scheme partly accounts for the separation of morality and spirituality in GP. It will be argued that for DT and GP to be transformed, the Akan view of humanity must be reinterpreted in a way that opens the scheme up for integration with the Christian truth. As stated earlier, the correlation method views theological reflection as taking place through the process of a conversation between the revealed Christian truth and its host culture, in this case, the Akan traditional scheme. By this process, practical Christian wisdom is understood as coming out of the synthesis between Christian tradition and a host culture.

6.1. Akan and Christian Traditions in Dialogue

In the following sections I compare the way the worldview of the Akan tradition helps Akans to pursue morality with the way that Christian tradition does this. As shown in Chapter Three, the virtue theory focuses on the character of moral agents rather than on individual acts. In the virtue tradition, certain elements of character are
vital for the pursuit of morality. The human capacity for intentional action, the awareness that our moral decisions are involved with affections and passions, our subjection to past and present situations that we cannot control, and the capacity of our heart to use the narrative of our tradition to provide interpretations of our moral situations, are elements that are considered as indispensable to moral decisions and acts and for character formation.

A. Capacity for Intentional Action

In Akan traditional thought, human nature is considered as fundamentally good. A person is perceived as having an innate capacity for virtue that will help them to perform morally right actions, and thus are treated as morally responsible agents.\textsuperscript{711} The biblical notion of human depravity as a result of an original sin that was committed by a distant ancestor is totally alien in this scheme.

The Akan tradition does not acknowledge the inherent weakness of humans for knowing and doing what is good and right. Somehow, like in the virtue theory, humanity is believed to be capable on its own to know and do good just by habituating the virtues that are in accordance with the moral beliefs and norms of the Akan community. The maxim \textit{obra ne w’ara w’abo} (life is what you make of it) underscores the belief in the Akan traditional scheme that, in spite of any limitations, humans have the capacity for reasoning and acting morally without any inhibiting factors.

\textsuperscript{711} Gyekye, “Person and Community”, 109.
In contrast, the Christian truth teaches that God created human beings for his own purpose and gave them the capacity for understanding by which they can reason and act voluntarily. It is through this capacity that they may fulfil God’s intention for their being his ambassadors on earth.\(^{712}\) Thus, believers are expected to consider this capacity, which Wesley regarded as the *natural image* of God in humans, as something they have been given, not learned or earned. But unlike the Akan scheme the Western/Christian truth teaches that humans are inherently susceptible to act against the acceptable moral ideal of God because of the *original sin* and their *fall*. With this belief the Christian anthropology is essentially different from the anthropology of the Akan traditional scheme, since the former requires that humans are healed from the condition brought about by the fall. Thus, the Christian tradition offers a more comprehensive account of why humans fail to do the good that they intend to do. The fact is, whether it is acknowledged or not, Akans are not always able to live as morally as they intend.

**B. Involvement with Affections and Passions**

The view that in every moral decision we make we are involved with affections and passions is essential for the virtue theory and, indeed, for morality. It is held that being aware that our feelings influence our moral decisions is vital for making right moral choices. However, in the Akan traditional scheme there is lack of clarity as to how human affections and passions are directed effectively for ensuring that good moral decisions are always arrived at. The communalistic nature of the Akan traditional community supposes general affection for kinsfolk, a feeling of belonging. However, it is not clear how the passions that result in different types of

rivalry in the extended family, tribe and community are recognised and dealt with in moral decision making.

On the other hand, the Christian truth acknowledges that due to the fall, although believers have been nascently restored in justification, they continue to have some inbred tendency to inordinate self-regard, which could rule them if they remain disobedient to God. For instance, Wesley showed how human co-operation with the grace of God and submission to the Holy Spirit deals with their inordinate self-regard by replacing it with virtues that help the believer to control passions and to direct affections appropriately, resulting in the fruit of the Spirit being embodied by the believer. Success in this area of one’s life is seen as a sign of religious maturity. But this maturity is not understood as resulting from a person’s own efforts alone but by the grace given by God through faith in Jesus Christ. The sense that one’s ability to control passions and direct affections appropriately derives from God, and that one cannot do so effectively in isolation from God, shows that in the Christian truth morality is considered as an outcome of religious experience and practice. This makes spirituality and morality inseparable. However, such direct inference cannot be made from the Akan traditional scheme because morality is not based on religion.

C. Subjection to Accidents of History

Since the Akan scheme regards human beings as essentially good and capable of following the moral beliefs and norms of their community, there are no explanations as to whether or not this subjection is relevant in moral decision-making and how it may be addressed. The traditional Akan assumes that by living according to the

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values of the community and being morally responsible to its members, the moral agent is able to control any past experiences. However, this research has shown that this is rarely the case. Despite the efforts they make, people fail to meet the moral expectations and are often subjected to the retribution of spiritual entities.

Conversely, Wesley’s theology clearly presupposes the vulnerability of believers to sin and all its ramifications, attributing this to the fall. In this Wesleyan scheme, biological and social factors that one cannot control, can all be explained as originating in the fallen nature as repercussions of sin. However, this Christian truth does not leave humans discouraged. It offers hope that these subjections can be effectively addressed by the new life in Christ Jesus. That is, after their restoration into the image of God believers can have confidence that they are no more under those subjections, because the power of God through the Holy Spirit empowers them in their new identity as children of God. Whether they had a bad parental upbringing or had been a member of a criminal gang in the past becomes immaterial. This is because once they are yielded to the Holy Spirit, after justification, their tendencies are being progressively transformed to be in accordance with God’s character.

**D. The Capacity of the Heart**

As a metaphor, the capacity of the heart explains how a story or narrative we have believed with our heart is capable of offering us power to interpret reality in view of that narrative. It indicates that pondering the Christian narrative in the heart can lead a believer to correct interpretations of moral situations for good moral acts. Wesley’s account of the Christian truth is comprehensive in teaching that God adequately

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714 See Section 5.10.
provides the means by which humans can live and do good in accordance with the
classic of God. Wesley believed that in justification, God does something in the
heart of believers, regenerating their interpretative category and making it possible
for them to live in obedience to the Holy Spirit for the transformation of their
character into the character of God. This belief provides hope that there is always a
possibility for character transformation that does not depend on human effort alone
but also, on divine assistance.

On the contrary, the Akan scheme has no conception of a transpersonal or
supernatural means by which a person’s perception of reality may be transformed in
a way that influences his/her morality. It is believed that because the creator is
wholly good no human is born with a ‘bad head’ or bad character. However, this
conception does not in any way explain or teach how one accesses the goodness of
the Supreme Being (creator) for moral actions. This is because in this scheme, only
the religious specialists and the fetish priests are repositories of the truth or special
knowledge from the divinities. So, Akans do not expect their devotion to the
deities and ancestors to provide them with any supernatural means by which their
character can be transformed. I have shown in Chapter Four that the power to form
moral character is not part of the requests Akans make to their deities. Therefore, the
capacity of the heart, a very important criterion in theological ethics, is not an idea in
the Akan scheme. On the other hand, the Christian truth offers a more comprehensive
explanation of the human moral condition. It also gives an assurance that those who
believe and live by it will receive the power of the Holy Spirit by which they can
successfully transform their character to conform to that of Jesus. This suggests that

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715 See Section 5.18.
716 Idowu, Oludumare, 167–168.
the Christian truth can enhance the Akan scheme and therefore there is need for integrating the two traditions.

6.2. Moving Towards Integration

From the discussion thus far, it has been shown that the understanding of morality in the Akan scheme lacks the essential theological view of humanity that is needed for the pursuit of Christian morality. This situation partly accounts for GPs’ separation of spirituality from morality as exemplified in the DT. Thus, the DT needs to be transformed by a coherent theological understanding of humanity that enables GPs to pursue morality meaningfully as an outcome of Christian praxis.

Since the DT is an appropriation of the Akan religiosity, it is necessary to reinterpret Akan anthropology in a way that makes it open for integration with the Christian truth to transform the DT. For new religious movements such as GP to succeed, they need to maintain some cultural continuity with the conventional beliefs of the societies in which they emerge, in order to minimise tensions with the culture.\footnote{William S. Bainbridge, \textit{The Sociology of Religious Movements} (New York: Routledge, 1997), 411.} Moreover, reinterpreting Akan anthropology and integrating it with the Christian truth allows the knowledge and wisdom of Akans, which on their own may not suffice to grasp the full reality of God’s truth, to be supplemented by the Christian truth for the good of humanity.

6.3. The Need for Integration: Philosophical Views

The need to augment African traditional schemes to make them more effective for contemporary socio-political, economical and moral challenges has been highlighted
in cultural revivalist and anti-revivalist philosophical debates.\textsuperscript{718} The anti-revivalists argue that the African cultural past has nothing good to offer in terms of contributing to Africa’s present socio-economic and political developments. On the contrary, the revivalists argue that Africa’s religio-cultural past must be revived for contemporary developments to be shaped according to the cultural values and beliefs of the past.\textsuperscript{719} However, the middle and more desirable way taken by Gyekye, is that not everything about the African traditional system is good and adequate for today, and not everything is bad and irrelevant for present usage.\textsuperscript{720} Since cultures are both unique and complementary, every culture may borrow and learn from another culture and still remain unique in some sense. Cultures are always in dialogue, one having some unique contribution to make to another. Every culture also has something from which it needs to be liberated. For instance, MacIntyre has shown that individualism is the cause of many moral challenges in the West. This situation can be addressed by a tradition that is communalistic.\textsuperscript{721} Thus, from a philosophical standpoint, integration of Akan traditional scheme and Christian truth is necessary.

6.4. The Need for Integration: Theological Views

The need for a proper integration of the Christian truth with the Akan traditional scheme has been emphasised by theologians as well. It has always been the aim of African theology to integrate the Christian faith with the African religious heritage to ensure the integrity of African Christian identity. Mainly, African theologians have

\textsuperscript{718} Gyekye, \textit{ Tradition and Modernity}, chapter eight.
\textsuperscript{721} MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}, 36-62.
considered the African religio-cultural heritage as a preparation for the gospel (\textit{praeparatio evangelica}) that has been a crucial factor for the rapid spread of Christianity among Africans.\textsuperscript{722}

For Kwame Bediako, one of the main voices for African theology, Christ has become the integrating truth and power linking the old and the new in the African experience.\textsuperscript{723} By old and new, he meant the African traditional religious heritage and the Christian truth respectively. African theologians hold that for the gospel to make sense to Africans, it must be transmitted in accordance with the African understanding of humanity and the cosmos.\textsuperscript{724} On the other hand, the mystery of the gospel must be presented in ways that show that all things, humanity and the universe, can only be made complete in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{725} So, it is expected that the African religious past be synthesised with the Christian truth for an authentic African Christian theology to emerge.\textsuperscript{726}

But African theologians have not yet developed an integration of the African and Christian moral traditions in a significant way that provides a coherent understanding that spirituality and morality are inseparable. With regard to this study, I posit that the Akan idea of humanity is the central factor that must be brought into fulfilment in Jesus Christ for Ghanaian Christians to perceive morality as an intrinsic part of

\textsuperscript{724} Stinton, “Africa East and West”, 118.
\textsuperscript{725} Stinton, “Africa East and West”, 118.
\textsuperscript{726} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 67.
spirituality. So, I will reinterpret and integrate the Akan conception of humanity with the Christian truth. But first of all, I need to highlight the main points on which the DT fails to make social morality an evidential element of Christian spirituality, to show that the Akan view of humanity is a major contributing factor to the moral dilemma of GPs.

6.5. Points of Failure

The main issues with the DT as shown in Chapters One and Two is that it fails to offer a coherent and consistent account of the moral responsibility that Ghanaians have for the socio-political and economic issues that confront Ghana. This issue is caused by two distinct, yet related factors. Firstly, GPs appropriate aspects of the Akan traditional worldview without an adequate understanding of the moral order that governs the Akan community. Secondly, the Akan scheme does not have the necessary theological view of humanity that is crucial for Christian morality. This means that even if GPs understood the Akan scheme well, although the nature of their Christian moral practice would have been different from what it is now, it would have still fallen short of the Christian ideal. So, the DT’s failure to provide GPs with a vision for personal moral responsibility can be attributed to these two factors.

It is not wrong for GPs to appropriate their religio-cultural heritage into Christian practice. Usually, people who understand themselves as members of a particular tradition or followers of a certain religion who have inherited the worldview of their predecessors try to make sense of it by using it to respond to practical moral

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727 See chapter two.
questions. Thus, GPs are right to appropriate their religio-cultural heritage for Christian praxis. But the problem is that using Christian doctrines to respond to Akan traditional religious needs without a deeper understanding of the schemes, means that two incompatible conceptions were brought together without their subjection to a rational enquiry.

While the growth of GP shows that many contemporary Ghanaians see the DT as a religious framework that is better than the traditional religious approaches, the moral practice of many GPs, falls short of Christian morality. Due to the lack of understanding, many GPs focus on the activities of the evil spirits in human affairs without any consideration of the moral order governing the relationships between the spirit beings and humans. For example, on becoming Christians, GPs consider all the African spirits beings as demonic. Unlike in the Akan scheme, in the DT, morality is not regarded as an imperative means to the munificence of the divinities. As Christians, it is the love, the grace and the powers of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit that matters to most GPs.

On the other hand, as shown in Chapter Two, traditional Akans believe that people who have good character and live in accordance with the moral beliefs and norms of the community endear themselves to both spirits beings and humans to the extent that even witchery and sorcery may not overcome them. This is why in the Akan scheme, the misfortunes, sicknesses and deaths (impediments to life) that people are anxious about, are mostly believed to be caused by their own immoral handling of

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728 Lutz, Tradition, 3.
729 See chapter one, pages 62-69.
730 See chapter two, 83-86.
731 See chapter two, pages 83-93.
other people or spirit beings in their community. The fact that the DT blames evil spirits for all the misfortunes that happens in the human domain shows that mainly, GPs misunderstand the moral order of the Akan scheme. Subsequently, the DT’s failure to promote personal moral responsibility in ways that can discourage GPs from blaming socio-political and economic corruptions on evil spirits is caused by the misunderstanding of the Akan moral order.

6.6. Human Finitude: A Moral and Hermeneutical Challenge

The second problem, which is more challenging for Christian morality in GP, is the Akan scheme’s lack of a suitable theological view of humanity. This lack is demonstrated in the Akan sense of finitude. Before I discuss this problem it is important to acknowledge that, however vaguely, the Akan scheme manifests some truth about humanity which needs to be brought to fulfilment in Christ. Schweiker posits that moral integrity and virtue go beyond the boundaries of the Church. He notes, for instance, that there was admiration for Socrates among the Church Fathers, the New Testament acknowledges Cornelius as the virtuous Roman soldier, and many in our day esteem Gandhi for his moral integrity. As such, Schweiker holds that Christians have never doubted that moral goodness is open to other peoples outside the church, and that the moral resources of other conceptual schemes might be useful for thinking deeply and clearly about the Christian moral life. This is generally true of the Akan scheme too, because moral character formation is a life-long goal in the scheme.

732 See chapter two, pages 94-97.
733 See chapter one, pages 64-69.
734 Graham, Walton and Ward, Theological Reflections, 268.
However, the Akan view of humanity offers little prospect for moral transformation. Traditional Akans view the human being as tripartite: *sunsum, okra* and *mogya* (spirit, soul and body). It is held that humans have a life force (*okra*) which derives from the Supreme Being and a *sunsum* (spirit) from their father. The *sunsum*, which is believed to derive ultimately from the creator but is received through the mediation of a river deity, is regarded as an intrinsic activating principle responsible for shaping the personality and dispositions of a person. But because humanity is regarded as wholly good and able to live morally, there is no conception of a supernatural means to moral transformation. Also, there is no reliable explanation for the moral ineptitude of humans. So, traditional Akans struggle on their own to live good moral lives in order to enjoy the benevolence of the divinities and other humans and to escape retributions from the divinities. But as the discussion of the Akan scheme thus far has revealed, human beings are not quite as good as they are believed to be. On the contrary, humans have an inexorable sense of vulnerability that engenders relentless anxiety in them, a weakness they cannot overcome by themselves in the Akan scheme.

Therefore, belief that there is a transcendent succour available to aid humanity in its moral pursuit is needed to offer the Akan scheme a theological perspective on morality. This is because humans have an innately precarious nature that is fuelled by factors of folly and self-interest, which often conflict with the interests of others and sabotage the institutional programs in society. It implies that we can not rely on human effort alone to attain the moral ideal, especially when people encounter

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moral systems that are different from those they grew up with. Therefore, there is need for motive power. Motive or driving power is essential for moral pursuit for religious people. But, despite that the idea of reward and retribution in the African traditional schemes is a motivation for morality, it does not bring about any enabling power, such as God’s grace or the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that the Christian system offers. Therefore, as Wiredu has asserted, in this important respect the Akan moral tradition is less ideal (no human culture is perfect), and requires the introduction of new elements which could be alien in it, but which will enhance it.\textsuperscript{738}

The inability of the DT to enhance the view of humanity that it appropriated from the Akan scheme means that, the DT too, promotes the sense of finitude as the Akan scheme. It is believed that when left on their own to provide for the spiritual, physical and psycho-social resources that they need for mastering their environment, individuals are found to be limited and inadequate.\textsuperscript{739} Therefore, mutual inter-dependence, conviviality and morality are used as crucial means for maintaining community and ensuring human well-being. In fact, this sense of human finitude is the rationale behind the communitarian life of Akans.

Ironically, the Akan sense of finitude is the most disempowering impediment to the pursuit of morality in the Akan scheme. On one hand, it causes people to want to belong to other people and deities while at the same time, the nature of the relationships that ensue absolves people from moral responsibility. John Pobee, an Akan theologian, has noted that the Akan sense of finitude unduly promotes a feeling of vulnerability with regard to the evil spirit beings, and encourages obsessive fear of

\textsuperscript{738} Wiredu, \textit{Philosophy}, 59.
\textsuperscript{739} Gyekye, \textit{An Essay}, 154-158.
misfortune and death.\textsuperscript{740} This shows that the obsession of Africans for the power to overcome evil spirits and to live successful lives is caused and encouraged by their sense of finitude. The tradition regards human beings as good, and at the time as inadequate when left on their own to manage their lives. Hence, they see a constant need for spiritual succour to help them overcome the impediments in their lives. Although it is believed in both the traditional scheme and in the DT that misfortunes in life are caused by evil spirits, different reasons are advanced for these alleged spiritual acts. Whereas the traditional scheme mostly regards them as retributions occasioned by moral impropriety of humans, the DT presents them as sheer malevolence of evil spirits being. So, while the traditional scheme stresses moral responsibility, albeit unattainable with human efforts alone, the DT often absolves humans from moral responsibility by blaming evil spirits.

Another fundamental problem with the Akan system is that it assumes that knowledge of what is good is sufficient power for individuals to act in accordance with the acceptable moral norms and beliefs of the community. In spite of having a religious outlook, the scheme over-depends on human effort for moral aptness. I have noted that the Akan scheme is essentially humanistic in that all religious practices and beliefs are aimed at serving the interests of humans. Although religion sanctions morality, it does not provide any effective spiritual means for moral character formation. With regard to morality, the Akan tradition operates in a similar way to the Old Testament laws or Torah, which prescribes moral codes and punishments for their violation without any spiritual help that enabled the Israelites to form their moral character. The difference though is that, the Old Testament moral

\textsuperscript{740} Pobee, \textit{African Theology}, 55.
codes are believed to be given directly by God whereas the moral codes of the Akan scheme are not.

The main reason for the sense of human finitude and the resultant anxieties it causes is that, on their own, humans are relentlessly weak in their morality. Knowing that the spirit entities unleash retribution for moral failures, adherents of this scheme are caught in a spiral of fear of evil spirits. Hence, they are obsessed with spiritual power to protect them. Since the system does not have a way of helping humans to cure their innate moral weakness, they resort to external powers to help them fight the consequences of their moral lapses. In deed, if people had a good grasp of their humanity in the first place, it would have been unnecessary for the spirits beings to enforce morality.\(^{741}\)

Clearly, the Akan scheme lacks a coherent theological account of the nature of humans by which it can explain the moral condition of humanity in terms of its separation from God. Although the evils that humans fear are a result of their own moral ineptitude, the system offers them no efficient help for improving their innate inability for living in accordance with the moral ideal. My thesis is addressing this issues because questions concerning how humans and the spirits relate, and about the ways in which the spirits unleash their negative attacks on humans beings, cannot be avoided in any serious reflection on Christian morality within GP Christianity. However, these points of failure have not been addressed in the past.

When the earliest Christian emissaries in Ghana tried to resolve the issue of the fear of evil spirits, they claimed that the concept of evil spirits is mere superstition. In that way, they also dismissed the belief that retribution follows moral failures. As seen from the lamentation of Amu that was discussed in Chapter Two, after dispelling the fear of retribution of evil spirits, no provision was made to address the apprehension about the crises that Akans believe are caused by the evil spirits. In that way, an opportunity to contextualise Christian anthropology within the Akan scheme was missed.

Afterwards, in trying to offer an answer to the Akan sense of finitude, GPs translated the devil into the enemy and introduced Jesus Christ as the mighty warrior who conquers the devil and the evil spirits to secure health, wealth and liberation from all forms of ‘oppressions and possessions’ for Christians. This hermeneutics is easily used because without knowing it, GPs appropriate the traditional view of humanity but fail to explore the reason for this human vulnerability. Following the Akan scheme, GPs consider human limitedness in particular ways as impediments that are caused by evil spirits. The dominant view in the DT is that human subjection to ‘oppressive and possessive’ evil spirits is an enduring and urgent issue for Christians. Consequently, it makes Christ’s mission to destroy the works of Satan more prominent in the psyche of GPs as they search for solutions to their struggles in the hostile African environment. This is why their warfare is always taken externally to the evil spirits without them taking full responsibility of their moral conduct.

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742 See chapter one, pages 50-51. Also, see Meyer, Translating the Devil.
Although, GPs believe and preach the Christian doctrine of original sin, in the DT, they mainly relate sin empirically to things that people do, which become doorways for demonic ‘possession or oppressions’ in their lives. Also, GPs believe in the core Christian doctrines of repentance, justification, regeneration, sanctification and glorification. However, their emphasis in these processes has mainly been on the power that Jesus and the Holy Spirit provide to liberate believers from the diabolic works of evil spirits. Following the Akan view of humanity, the DT fails to make the moral weakness in the human soul the central problem of humanity that is responsible for most of the situations we have in the world. Since they call sinners to faith in Christ means that GPs know that sin is a problem that only Jesus can solve. But again, because DT appropriated a patchy view of humanity from the Akan scheme, it fosters inescapable anxiety in believers in the same way as the sense of human finitude in the Akan traditional scheme does. Consequently, GPs emphasise a view of Christ and the Holy Spirit that they think meets the needs of the African world.\textsuperscript{743} The next section will show that because of their particular Christological and pneumatological perspectives, the Pentecostals have also neglected an opportunity to reinterpret the Akan scheme for authentic Christian morality.

6.7. African Christology and Pneumatology

The influence of the Akan sense of finitude on Ghanaian Christians affects their Christology and pneumatology. Bediako has noted that African Christians have the assurance that the Christian religion does not introduce them to a new God who is different and unrelated to the Supreme Being of their traditional schemes. They accept the Christian God as one who brings fulfilment to all the religious aspirations

\textsuperscript{743} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 22.
of the African heritage.\textsuperscript{744} So, it is the African and particularly, GP understanding of Christ and the Holy Spirit that is relevant here.

Basically, Africans believe that Christ is the deliverer who saves them from all inhumane situations and places them in a safer environment where they can enjoy life in full.\textsuperscript{745} Appiah-Kubi states that, to many African Christians, the life of Jesus means having life and having it more abundantly. So, when Africans see suffering, poverty, oppression, strife, envy and war all around them they question the authenticity of the important Christian claim that Jesus gives abundant life.\textsuperscript{746} Without considering that humanity is ultimately responsible for these issues, GPs attribute all those undesirable conditions of suffering to Satan and evil spirits. Accordingly, these Christians regard Jesus Christ as the supreme spirit-power over all spiritual rulers and authorities. Bediako argues persuasively that, for Africans, Jesus qualifies as a powerful protector because he has overcome Satan and the evil spirits.\textsuperscript{747} Jesus is able to do all things, save humans from all situations, protect them against all of their enemies, and is ever ready to respond to the call of those who believe in him.\textsuperscript{748} Essentially, Jesus is considered as belonging to the most powerful realm of divinity, the realm of spirit power. ‘He is truly our high priest who meets our needs to the full. He is supreme above all deities and spirit beings, summing up in himself all their powers and cancelling any terrorising influence they might be assumed to have upon us’.\textsuperscript{749}

\textsuperscript{744} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 21.
\textsuperscript{745} Oduyoye, \textit{Hearing and Knowing}, 40-42.
\textsuperscript{747} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 22.
\textsuperscript{748} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 22.
\textsuperscript{749} Bediako, \textit{Jesus in Africa}, 26 - 27.
Furthermore, Clifton Clark researched the understanding of Christology in some GP churches, and affirms that they declare Jesus as king, conqueror, protector and supplier of the things that enable humans to live effectively. Jesus is also regarded as a deliverer and keeper of the individual and the community from practical enemies of life.\textsuperscript{750} Both Tennent and Stinton support the affirmations that Jesus is mostly regarded in African Christianity as a healer \textit{par excellence} and deliverer.\textsuperscript{751}

The Holy Spirit is also regarded as a means of healing and protection. Anderson asserts rightly that people flock to the Pentecostal churches only when the prophet-leaders constantly demonstrate spiritual power to meet their existential needs, such as healing and liberation from other spiritual disturbances.\textsuperscript{752} Essentially, the Holy Spirit is understood as the source of God’s power which is given so that personal needs and all other forms of powerlessness can be addressed.\textsuperscript{753} Thus, the power of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in Africa churches today by healings and deliverances from evil affliction and oppression.\textsuperscript{754} It is held that the Holy Spirit liberates humanity from the oppression of both the spirit world and Western ‘colonial’ forms of Christianity.\textsuperscript{755} These Christians hope that by using the power of the Holy Spirit to confront traditional beliefs in witchcraft, a substitute for the African deities has been offered to help believers deepen their Christian commitment.\textsuperscript{756}

\textsuperscript{750} Clark, \textit{African Christology: Jesus in Post-Missionary African Christology} (Eugene: Pickwick Pub., 2011), 159.
\textsuperscript{753} Anderson, “African Initiated”, 181-182.
\textsuperscript{754} Anderson, “African Initiated”, 183.
\textsuperscript{756} Anderson, “African Initiated”, 181.
From the foregoing, it is apparent that mainly, the thought of conquering the devil and his emissaries, the demons, is prominent not only in the Christology but also in the pneumatology of many African Christians. The works of Jesus, what he does about the existential issues that Africans struggle with, is more important for many Pentecostal Christians than what he does about their innate weakness to live in accordance with the image of God in them. Anderson affirms rightly that focus on this outward influence sometimes eclipses the inner graces of the Holy Spirit.\footnote{Anderson, “African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology”, Word and World, 23: 2 (2003), 180. My emphasis. Anderson argues that “but this problem exists in churches all over the world”.
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Stress on the inner graces for righteousness and character was the preoccupation of the earliest classical Pentecostals when the missionaries, such as Pastor McKeown of the CoP, were in charge of shaping their theology. For most GP leaders today, this has not changed. For instance, when the current chairman of the CoP, Apostle Opoku Onyinah was elected into office in 2008, he envisioned to whet the memory of CoP members to the truth that God is their loving father who cares for them.\footnote{The Church of Pentecost, Vision 2013.} In 2009, when he chose the theme ‘The living God is the God of today’ (Mk. 12: 27) to guide the church’s mission in the year, the enthusiasm in preaching, bible studies and prayers was immense. Throughout that year different preachers recounted the miracles that God performed in the scriptures to assure their members that the same God is at work today to deliver them mainly from their spiritual enemies and every untoward situation. But when the theme, ‘Being transformed into the image of Christ in a changing world’ (2Cor. 3: 18) was chosen for 2010, it did not receive the same enthusiasm probably because it does not deal directly with the enemy spirits. Clark is right that, for African Christians, unless the Christian practice is able to help them to
emerge victorious in the battle against the African world, it fails to bring the sort of salvation they require and will appreciate.\footnote{Clark, \textit{African Christology}, 83.} Although in the traditional scheme healing implies restoration of ‘… the equilibrium in the otherwise strained relationship between man, his fellowmen, environment, ecology and God …’ these Ghanaian Christians normally see healing as a war against evil spirits.\footnote{Appiah-Kubi, \textit{Man Cures}, 12; Also see; Clark, \textit{African Christology}, 123.} This shows that the traditional scheme of Ghanaian Christians shape the expectations they bring to scripture, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, a situation that ultimately and affects their Christian morality.\footnote{Personal pastoral observation and discussion with other leaders of the church in the United Kingdom, Ghana and other places confirm this view.}

Undeniably, this emphasis is caused by the uncritical manner in which they have provided a Christian response to the Akan sense of finitude. Seeking for liberation is not entirely wrong. However, as Pobee has stated, ‘the test of any cultural construct of the gospel is whether it enables growth, change and transformation in and into the image and likeness of God through Christ’.\footnote{Quoted in Stinton, \textit{Jesus of Africa}, 250.} Although it is undeniable that some forms of personal transformation take place in many members of these churches, basically, these changes have been aimed at self-enhancement that does not always translate into social morality. We have seen that among GPs, the persons and works of Jesus and the Holy Spirit is pitched against the powers of darkness, as if the assumed victory over evil spirits is the most important goal of salvation and the Christian life. But it is not. It is a situation caused by the particular Akan view of humanity.
There is another worrying moral issue associated with the sense of finitude. The obsession with spiritual power that this view causes extends also to general longing for human power in every sphere of life. It fosters a tendency in people to seek alliances with other human personalities who are seen as having more economic, political, spiritual and other forms of power. While powerful people need patronisers to feel and remain powerful, subordinates also need the powerful people to become powerful. Consequentially, cronyism, questionable solidarity and nepotism are prevalent and account for many of the socio-political and economic issues in Africa. By being connected to people of power, one’s achievements in life do not always depend on the enhancement of skills and talents and hard work but largely, on the power of the people one is connected with. For instance, although one may not have the requisite skills, talents and gifts in comparison to other competitors in a job search or appointment to a political or Christian leadership role, he/she could be given a job by virtue of knowing and being connected to a person of power (a big man). These are daily moral issues of humanity in general. However, in Ghana, the sense of finitude in the traditional scheme encourages and supports these practices in a way that prevents people from realising that it is immoral.

Consequently, I argue that only a reinterpretation of the traditional Akan view of humanity and its integration with Christian truth can enhance the Akan scheme and transform the DT. This means that the sense of human finitude in the Akan scheme can be a conceptual bridge over which Christian theology can connect seamlessly to the Akan thought to provide the needed transformation to the DT and Christian morality in Ghana.

763 This is known in Ghana as Connections.
6.8. The Process of Integration

Whenever another worldview encounters the Christian truth, reinterpretation of aspects of that worldview is required to allow the Christian truth to incarnate in that tradition. Paul Hiebert, the renowned missiological anthropologist, outlined approaches through which an understanding of worldviews can be obtained and bridges be found for the contextualisation of the Christian gospel. Among the various methods he examined, he considered that philosophical studies of deep beliefs that give insights into the worldview of a people are vital. Hiebert claimed that although it is not easy to compare cultural or worldview themes, a dialogue between worldviews at the philosophical level can help by offering a bridge for understanding and comparing worldviews. He argued that when people who hold other worldviews convert to Christianity without converting (reinterpreting) their previous worldviews, such worldviews can distort the explicit message of the gospel and later on, turn Christianity into Christo-paganism. In such situations the underlying assumptions, categories and logic of the belief of the people and their behaviour do not conform to the Christian truth. Acts of the Apostles chapter eight is an example he cited of such a scenario. In that passage, Simeon accepted the miracles that the Apostles Peter and John performed, but he understood or interpreted the acts of the Holy Spirit in terms of his pagan beliefs. Consequently, he asked Peter and John to give him some of the power for money.

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765 Hiebert, Transforming, 103-104.

766 Hiebert, Transforming, 267.
In GP Christianity similar situations occur inadvertently. Sometimes the Christian truth is treated mainly as a means of power for overcoming evil spirits and for provision of needs, in the same way as religion is treated in the Akan traditional scheme. In this study, it has become obvious that the DT is unable to offer coherent and consistent answers to the contemporary moral situation in Ghanaian society and that it needs an urgent transformation.

Hiebert asserted that when a worldview can no longer resolve questions just by improving its problem-solving skills or by getting more information, and fails to deal with contradictions and dilemmas in life, it goes through changes that can either be normal or radical. A normal worldview change occurs when through interaction with other cultures over time, conscious beliefs and practices infiltrate a traditional worldview to bring about some changes. Brian Jennings’s insightful study of the interactions between the Methodist and Akan moral traditions, which reveal that some contextualisation of Methodist ethics has taken place in the area of leadership among some Akan chiefs, is an extant example of an account of normal worldview change. Generally, it can be said that there have been some normal changes to the Akan worldview as Christian beliefs have penetrated the long-held African traditional beliefs. The DT is also a form of contextualisation that has already taken place in Ghanaian Christianity. However, this study shows that only a deeper understanding of the Akan scheme deriving from both theological and philosophical insights can facilitate a congenial and useful integration of it with the Christian truth, in a way that makes spirituality and morality inseparable.

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767 Hiebert, *Transforming*, 316.
768 Hiebert, *Transforming*, 319.
769 Jennings, “Christian Virtue”.
Moreover, the conflict between the moral values and visions of an African traditional moral scheme and the moral values and visions of Western Christian ethics is apparent. Whereas Christianity is monotheistic and regards God as the source of moral knowledge, the African traditional system does not necessarily teach or demonstrate that the deities and ancestral spirits are sources of moral knowledge. Also, whilst the Christian truth holds that God enables believers in their moral pursuits, like virtue ethics, the Akan scheme is naturalistic (humanistic) in this regard. Holding these divergent views has hindered the practice of social morality in GP. It indicates that the normal worldview changes that have occurred are not sufficient to deal with the issue of the separation of morality from spirituality because they are not deep enough. Undoubtedly, a more radical transformation that is pursued by the integration of the two schemes is preferable. This type of theological and moral transformation is obtainable when the virtue theory is used heuristically as a guide.

6.9. Virtue Theory and the Resolution of Moral Conflicts

Virtue ethics and the concept of character have been outlined in Chapter Three of this study. I have shown how the elements of character help us to assess the effectiveness of moral traditions. By that analysis it has been shown that the capacity of the heart (the interpretative role of religious belief) in moral character formation is lacking in the Akan scheme, and that this is due to the Akan view of humanity. Apart from helping us to evaluate the efficiency of moral traditions, virtue theory can also help us to integrate two moral traditions. It has been stated that by locating virtues and practices in tradition, MacIntyre provides a guide for integrating two rival
traditions. Traditions may be primarily religious or moral (for example Catholicism or humanism).\textsuperscript{770}

As far as this study is concerned, MacIntyre’s treatment of how two traditions may be integrated, offers an erudite diagnosis and useful remedies to the problem of rival moral traditions that can enhance existing anthropological models of theological contextualisation generally. MacIntyre asserts that traditions provide the starting point for moral enquiry, because our rationality is largely shaped by our tradition at the very outset of our moral enquiry. By rationality, he means the resources that a person or a community uses to determine the truth or falsity of a philosophical claim. Following Aquinas, MacIntyre holds that tradition is analogous to a craft (skill) which is acquired and is improved upon over time by the generations that adhere to it.\textsuperscript{771} He would regard this study as being essential for the enhancement of the Akan and GP traditions.

Similar to Hiebert, MacIntyre affirms that a tradition may get to a point in its development where it fails to meet the moral demands of its adherents adequately. Whenever a tradition fails to make progress in its moral enquiry and cannot offer answers to important moral questions or when certain key questions cannot be settled any more within the tradition, an epistemological crisis is said to have occurred.\textsuperscript{772} At that point, members of the tradition would recognise the incoherencies and inconsistencies of the ideas of their tradition and also the lack of resources within it.

\textsuperscript{770} Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, \textit{Liberals and Communitarians} 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1992), 90.

\textsuperscript{771} MacIntyre, \textit{Three Rival}, 127; Lutz, \textit{Tradition}, 3.

\textsuperscript{772} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 362.
to deal with crucial moral questions.\textsuperscript{773} Further, MacIntyre asserts that when this happens there is a need for the invention of new theory or a discovery of new ideas which must meet three criteria. First, the new conceptions should be able to solve the intractable moral dilemma. Second, the new conceptions should be able to explain why the tradition became insufficient in its resources to provide answers to its moral issues. Third, they should possess essential continuity with the shared beliefs which had kept the tradition until the present time.\textsuperscript{774} Even when a tradition undergoes mass conversion and adopts the central conceptions of another tradition, such as that which has happened to African cultural traditions, some central beliefs must survive every rupture.\textsuperscript{775} He delineates that different moral traditions may be brought together by linguistic translation, conversion or dialectic synthesis but he favours dialectic synthesis as the best approach.

A. Untranslatability of Traditions

MacIntyre posits that when considered in terms of linguistic translation we can say that certain aspects of a tradition may not be translatable.\textsuperscript{776} In spite of this, differences in moral conceptions are not to be overcome through any appeal to universal rational principles, because people’s understanding of what it means to do good arise in their own various historical experiences. Since there is diversity of rival traditions, with each having modes of rational justification that are characteristic to it, no one tradition is entitled to elevate itself above others, thereby denying legitimacy to its rivals.\textsuperscript{777}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{773} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 362.
\item \textsuperscript{774} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 362.
\item \textsuperscript{775} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 356.
\item \textsuperscript{776} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 372-375.
\item \textsuperscript{777} MacIntyre, \textit{Whose Justice?}, 352.
\end{itemize}
In spite of this difficulty in translation, a person who understands the conceptual schemes of two different traditions is able to recognise and characterise their incompatibility. On the basis of the person’s understanding of the two conceptual schemes (languages), he/she is able to discover and acknowledge the barriers that the schemes present to each other. Thus, for MacIntyre, specific differences between particular traditions are rather to be overcome through mutual understanding and critical reassessment of the conflicting elements in the narratives that provide the reasons for moral rules and norms.

B. Conversion of Traditions

Another approach MacIntyre describes is termed as conversion. He asserts that a tradition goes through three stages. The first stage is where beliefs, utterances, texts and persons who are taken to be authoritative are not questioned. The second stage is where new situations may bring new questions and challenges. This could be the coming together of two previously separated traditions through migration or conquest or colonialism. Such a situation may open up more new and alternative possibilities than the existing tradition is able to handle. It may also reveal the lack of resources the tradition has to provide answers to the new questions. A tradition so encountered will identify inadequacies in itself, realising that it lacks resources to deal with the new challenges on its own. At the third stage, the tradition will respond to those inadequacies by reformulations and revaluations of its conceptions in an attempt to redress the inadequacies and limitations. Therefore, whenever a community finds its moral resources flawed or inadequate, they can pursue moral enquiry for the transformation of the tradition by supplementing it with resources.

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from other traditions which meet its needs.\footnote{Lutz, Tradition, 3.} This means that traditions may, and indeed do, borrow ideas from other traditions and integrate what they need to strengthen themselves. This is done purely on the basis of need and for no other consideration.

C. Dialectic Synthesis of Traditions

MacIntyre argues that instead of regarding rival traditions as being mutually exclusive and incompatible ways of perceiving the world, we should regard them as providing perspectives which are very different but complementary for understanding reality.\footnote{MacIntyre, Whose Justice?, 352.} He considers the dialectical process through which Thomas Aquinas synthesised Aristotelian virtue ethics with Augustinian theology as the most viable solution to the problem of rival moral traditions.\footnote{MacIntyre, Whose Justice?, 363.}

Aquinas wrote out of at least two traditions, extending each as part of his task of integrating them into a systematic mode of thought.\footnote{MacIntyre, Whose Justice?, 164. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, vol. I section 2.} In his articulation of the Aristotelian virtue ethics, Aquinas revealed that the Augustinian view of sin as perverted (will) whereby humans have ‘… a rooted tendency to disobedience in the will and distraction by passion…’ that obscures reason and sometimes causes systematic cultural deformation, upsets the Aristotelian moral framework.\footnote{MacIntyre, Three Rival, 140.} As shown in Chapter Three, Aristotle’s view was that when fully trained, the human intellect is capable of obtaining both theoretical and practical truth, which then orders a person’s acts towards a good moral life. Aristotle did not have a notion of the will and had no explanation for the inherent defect of human capacity for knowing and
doing good. MacIntyre thinks that this was an error in the Aristotelian scheme for which it needed another scheme, and I think he is right.\footnote{MacIntyre, \textit{Three Rival}, 111.}

On the other hand, Aquinas understood the Augustinian view to mean that no amount of training or exercising of the virtues can help people to advance towards the ultimate good, due to the perversion of their will by sin. Aquinas saw in this wilful evil the possibility of humans achieving their moral goal. For Aquinas, the revelation of God in Augustinian theology complemented the Aristotelian view to provide a more adequate description of practical reason, and for providing a means to achieve this ultimate goal.\footnote{Bretherton, \textit{Hospitality}, 22.} Aquinas thought that the revelation of God introduces free grace from which faith, hope and charity (love) ensue, and MacIntyre believes that the position Aquinas held did not derail the Augustinian view of perverted will. It rather complemented it by making the Augustinian view of the human condition a bit more encouraging. In the same way, it also strengthened Aristotle’s framework, because although it upheld that humanity has capacity for knowing the truth and doing good, it also accepted the limitation of humanity to singlehandedly know and be able to do what is good. It is in this regard that Aquinas is regarded as the father of the method of correlation, which has been alluded to and used widely in practical theological reflections and in this study.\footnote{Graham, Walton and Ward, \textit{Theological Reflection}, 269-75.} Christopher Lutz asserts, and I agree, that through this tradition-based virtue theory we are able to resolve some of the conceptual rivalries that different moral traditions present.\footnote{Lutz, \textit{Tradition}, 58.}
From the foregoing, it is clear that acknowledging the differences between the Akan and Christian moral traditions does not mean that their incompatibility cannot be rationally resolved. This study has shown that a proper characterisation of rival viewpoints yields an understanding that makes it possible for the rival traditions to work together and to benefit from each other’s strengths. Having subjected the Akan scheme to a dialectical testing, I have pointed out the inconsistency and incoherency in the way the tradition rationalises the human capacity for moral action.  

I have also shown that the DT has carried on some of the inconsistencies of the Akan scheme into Christian praxis, a situation that has resulted in their particular Christological and pneumatological view and moral dilemmas. Therefore, to transform the DT, it is imperative to undertake a dialectic synthesis (integration) of the Akan and Christian schemes.

6.10. Reinterpreting the Ntoro Lineage for Christian Usage

In appropriating the Akan scheme for Christian praxis, it is crucial that the union of humanity with God be held as the only viable means of strength for living according to the moral ideal of God. The Akan scheme believes that a human being has spirit which one receives from his/her father, and that this constitutes the personality and character of that person. But because the ntoro spirit is not considered as perceptible in human decisions, it is not clear how it helps people to form their moral character. The concept is not developed to a level that is useful for explaining the human moral weakness and how humanity could overcome it by transcending itself and becoming united with God. This is a major distinguishing factor between biblical anthropology

790 See; Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 22 on dialectic correlation.
and Akan anthropology that needs addressing but the DT has not been successful in solving this issue.

Viewed in the light of the MacIntyrean virtue approach, the DT cannot be regarded as a dependable integration of the Christian and the Akan schemes for the reasons given below. In the virtue approach, whenever new ideas are offered as better alternatives to and replacements for previous concepts, the new ideas must be able to: explain why the previous system failed, solve the problem which caused the previous scheme to fail, and maintain some continuity with the previous scheme. Of these three requirements, DT passes only on maintaining some continuity with the Akan traditional religious heritage, albeit an important effort.

Therefore, in order to transform the DT and Christian morality in GP, it is essential to explain the central reason for DT’s ineffectiveness for offering answers to contemporary moral dilemmas in Ghana. To explain this situation, I reinterpret the Akan view of humanity that the DT appropriated in the way Apostle Paul interpreted ‘the unknown Gods’ of the Athenians in his Areopagus speech (Acts 17: 22-31). Paul astounded the Athenians by his announcement that he was not introducing a new deity as they supposed and that he was only making known, the God whom they honour but did not know (v.23). Similarly, the Akans’ Supreme Being

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791 See Section 6.2.5.
(Onyankopong), the creator of all things is the same as the Almighty God of the Christian truth (v. 24-25).

So, the explanation to the predicament of the Akan scheme is that, although it makes people very religious, they honour different spirit beings instead of relating directly to the Supreme Being and deriving the creator’s power for the morality that ensures their well-being. Since the spirits beings are not always trustworthy, like the Athenians, traditional Akans relentlessly look for more prevailing spiritual powers to deal with their existential issues. The Akan traditional view is that, the misfortunes, sickness and general needs that humans seek to address through superior spiritual powers are caused by human moral failure although the cause of this human condition is unknown and unaddressed.

Although the creator is not far from humanity as it is assumed (v. 26-27), since their spiritual lineage (ntoro relation with God) is broken, they can not access the knowledge and power of the creator for their moral pursuit and well-being. Since the Akan spirit beings are not helpful in this regard people are drifted further from the Supreme Being by replacing God with images and human relations (v. 29). According to Paul, the solution to this problem lies with God’s gracious love. Since all humans everywhere are offspring of the creator and ‘it is in him that we live and move and have our being’ (v. 28), the creator has forgiven our ignorance in the past. But now he is calling all humans to repent because of the impending judgement of the world through Jesus Christ, whom the creator has appointed (v.30-31). Since the river deities, the aegis of the ntoro lineage has largely failed the Akans, God has sent

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793 See Sawyerr, Creative Evangelism; Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology; Dickson, Theology in Africa; Bediako, “Biblical Christologies”.

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a deity called Jesus and appointed him to bring all people back to the creator. Just as certain character traits and surnames are identified with the ntoro group, so also, Jesus whom the creator has appointed has a name above all names and a character that all members of his group must embody.\textsuperscript{794} The appointment of Jesus Christ means that it is only through Jesus that anyone could know the character of God, which is the standard by which Jesus will judge all humans. This is the very point on which the DT is found wanting.

GPs believe in Jesus Christ and thus should be considered as having responded to his gracious offer of salvation and to have reunited with God. But the DT makes Christians still over-conscious of their vulnerability to evil spirits and obsessed with spiritual power to address issues that should properly be regarded as resulting from their inappropriate response to their persistent anxieties. This means that they have failed to make the embodiment of the character of Jesus their central focus. The major problem with the DT is that it overemphasizes power to deal with external issues at the expense of power to habituate the character of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the necessary sense of moral responsibility for one’s community that Christians should have is stifled. This explanation renders the Akan scheme open for help from a transcendent power beyond humanity and challenges GPs to be more Christ-centric in the Christian practice.

I propose that integrating a Wesleyan account of the Christian truth into this scheme will transform the DT. It will become obvious to GPs that humans do not fail in their moral pursuit just because they are finite, insecure or weak but because they fail to

\textsuperscript{794} See Sections 4.4-4.5.
focus on the need to embody the character of Christ.\textsuperscript{795} It is thus reasonable to explain that humans have inexorably sense of finitude because they are so anxious about the reality of their finiteness that they try to secure themselves through ‘… inordinate self-regard and will-to-power …’ at the expense of their union with God and moral behaviour.\textsuperscript{796} Niebuhr asserts that human beings feel so insecure and anxious about their natural contingencies that they seek to overcome this by ‘… a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness’.\textsuperscript{797}

Equating the Akan sense of finitude and its resultant anxieties with the cause of sin is not to play down the profound meaning of original sin. Instead, it is to render that same conception in a way that makes sense to other traditions such as the Akan. Moreover, regarding relentless anxiety as the result of sin makes it possible to place the responsibility for the outcomes of all moral lapses in the world on humanity. In this way, the overemphasis of GPs and, for that matter, any Christian, on spiritual deliverance for the achievement of existential needs without an equivalent highlighting of the need to embody the character of Christ can be regarded as a conspicuous sign of continuity in sin.\textsuperscript{798}

Understood in this way, GPs will strive to eliminate the human factor of self-regard and relentless anxiety that is the cause of all social and personal immorality. When the self-centredness and folly that work against the institutional programmes in the Ghanaian society are eliminated by the quintessence of true Christian character that

\textsuperscript{795} See Wesley’s sermon on Christian Perfection; Phil. 3 12-13. Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 2: 97-124.
\textsuperscript{796} Browning, \textit{A Fundamental}, 145.
\textsuperscript{798} See Wesley’s discourse on Sin in Believers. Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 314-34.
is demonstrated in the public domain, the spiritual forces of the African cosmos will be made redundant, or their works will be largely ignored.

Also, when GPs recognise that most problems in their society derive from humanity rather than evil spirits, the effort they expend on the spiritual exercises of bible reading and meditation, prayers and fasting and witnessing will be carried out with the aim of transforming their character into conformity with that of Christ. In this way, the Christian life can be seen as a pneumatological characterology, rather than a constant war against evil spirits for achievement of human progress. Moreover, the reinterpretation of the Akan view of humanity that I present in this chapter will help GPs to see Christ-likeness or conformation to the character of Jesus as the primary goal of salvation. In the following sections I will discuss what the Christian moral life would look like in GP Christianity with my proposal.

6.11. Integrating the Christian and Akan Schemes

I have shown that the failure of the ntoro spirit in shaping people’s character in the Akan scheme can be changed by the introduction of Jesus, the appointed deity of God. In the Christian truth, the creation of human beings in the image of God presupposes that when they were created, humans already had a sense of and capacity for morality. However, with Christian anthropology, humanity is limited in at least two ways. Firstly, humanity is limited by sin. This includes personal disobedience or turning away from God, and corporate sin caused by corrupted social structures, institutions and other social relationships. In turning away from God,

\[\text{799} \quad \text{I am not using the word here in the same sense that it is used by psychoanalysts as the study of the structure of human character. I use the term here to mean a process whereby Christians form their moral character in accordance with the character of God in Jesus Christ.} \]

\[\text{800} \quad \text{Kotva Jnr., The Christian Case, 90.}\]
humanity is locked up in self-centredness and obsessed with personal security and existential needs. This imprisonment of the self is caused by original sin. For instance, Wesley made it clear that sin affects the totality of human emotions, passions, reason, and intellect. He believed that although our natural senses, passions and emotions have been affected or inflamed by self-regard, these have a place in Christian morality. According to Wesley, we use them because we have not completely lost these natural tendencies/senses. But they place limitations on our capacity to reason and act according to God’s intention because they have been distorted.\footnote{Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 2: 170-185.}

The second limitation is that humanity is not totally free in its decisions and actions. In our freedom we have the capacity to contradict the purpose of God for us. This condition corrupts our practical reason and frustrates God’s intention for us. God’s intention is that humanity enjoys ‘… mutuality in intimate affairs, brotherhood and sisterhood in public affairs and fellowship with the divine.’\footnote{Browning, \textit{A Fundamental}, 146.} These relationships are possible because humans are essentially a dialectic of spirit and body. According to the Christian truth, the spirit element in humanity, that is indiscernible in the Akan view, is the capacity of humanity to transcend its finitude imaginatively and to relate reflexively to itself and also to God.\footnote{Browning, \textit{A Fundamental}, 144.} The human spirit signifies that although we are finite, we are also transcendent beings. But again, human separation from God means that this capacity is also reduced drastically. However, unlike the Akan scheme, the possibility that human beings can transcend their natural limitations and be able to relate to self and God in order to have the power to live their moral life is kept open in the Christian scheme.
The Christian tradition unambiguously attributes the innate weakness and limitations of humanity to its turning away from God. It teaches that the only way of resolving the problem is by returning humanity to God for fellowship. This return must be a personal decision that starts with repentance. In this way, the Christian truth places the responsibility of the moral ineptitude of humans on humanity but not on any external spirit forces. Wesley taught that although the resolution of this issue was initiated by God, it is up to individuals to co-operate with the divine grace and devote themselves to a constant relationship with God, their neighbours and the natural creation in which they live.⁸⁰⁴

One of the strengths of Wesleyan Christian anthropology is that it neither regards humanity as completely free nor totally determined. Also, modern Christian orthodoxy cannot accept the view that the bad moral behaviour in humans is caused by external spiritual forces whose acts are beyond human control. This is because the Christian truth does not leave humanity in the middle way between determinism and voluntarism. It teaches that the true freedom that humanity has is realised only in its relationship with God. Freedom is a God-given capacity for fellowship with God and others, because the quality of the fellowship a person has with other people and the lower world which humans are supposed to rule is determined by the quality of the fellowship that person has with God. So, integrating this idea into the Akan scheme will change the view whereby external forces rather than humans are held responsible for issues that happen to humans.

⁸⁰⁴ Wesley, Works [BE], 2: 156; Maddox, 141-43.
The difference my proposal makes to GP understanding of the Christian life is that it will cause believers to regard character formation or a constant effort to habituate or embody the character of Christ as being the primary goal of the Christian life. Crucially, this approach would make GPs emphasise growth in character in the same way as they highlight growth in charisma. By so doing, they will understand Christology and pneumatology to be God’s means for transforming humanity into God’s character as seen in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

6.12. Character as the Outcome of Religious Practice

I have shown earlier that to have character is to be directed by a worldview to live consistently according to its moral ideal. This means that to have Christian character is to have one’s worldview directed primarily by the Christian truth. Essentially, it is to have one’s whole life adjusted and focussed by the claims that the world and humanity was created by God, although fallen yet redeemed by Jesus Christ, and united to God by the Holy Spirit. This understanding is predicated on the Christian view of humanity, whereby even in their fallen state, God’s act of grace enables them to return to God and be restored to their true humanity. Any departure from this view is bound to result in some form of bifurcation between morality and spirituality.

From a Christian perspective, knowing and doing what is truly good is only possible when humans connect themselves to the knowledge of the law of God, which is only intelligible through faith in Jesus Christ. Meilaender is right when he asserts that it is not possible to put sight into blind eyes. This analogy means that for the human soul to know and to do good acts it needs conversion, a turning around, before it can

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806 Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice*, 60.
see who God really is and what Jesus has done for humanity. In this enterprise it is the Holy Spirit that invites believers to participate in the life and character of God. The Holy Spirit does this by drawing believers to the life of Jesus Christ through the virtues (fruits) which the Spirit shares with believers.\textsuperscript{807} Since a diseased soul cannot develop true virtues until the soul is healed, every virtue that comes out from it remains a vice.\textsuperscript{808} Wesley implied by quoting an inscription on the temple of Apollo, ‘know thyself’, that to know your cure you first have to know your condition.\textsuperscript{809}

Understating the Christian life as I have stated above will focus GP spirituality on addressing the weakness of the self in relation to the character of God. This is not just about conversion. It is more about the discipleship that goes on after conversion. It means that after conversion, believers need to work hard in obedience to God, realising and maintaining that the true essence of the divine-human relationship is the restoration of humanity into the character of God in Jesus Christ. For this to happen, Christian ethics must be constantly and directly related to a systematic articulation of the Christian truth (systematic theology). This is because how we understand humanity, the nature of God, and the person and works of Christ and the Holy Spirit makes a huge difference in the way we live our Christian moral life.\textsuperscript{810}

When the innate limitedness of human capacity for relationship with God and its negative impact on moral reasoning and inter-dependent relations is taken to be the main issue for GP Christianity, then the character of Jesus and the role the Holy Spirit plays in helping believers to embody that character becomes central to

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\textsuperscript{808} Meilaender, \textit{Practice of Virtue}, 60.

\textsuperscript{809} See Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 4: 299 - 301.

\textsuperscript{810} Hauerwas, \textit{Character}, 230.

\end{footnotes}
Pentecostal praxis. In this way, both Christology and pneumatology are vital for realising that moral character formation is the central goal of the Christian life. In fact, there should not be any divergence between the two or overemphasis on either of them. They work together to demonstrate that there is tremendous succour for Christians through the triune God for their transformation into God’s character.

6.13. Towards Pneumatological Characterology

It must be highlighted that when the integration of the Christian and Akan view of humanity that I have proposed is taken seriously then GPs can understand the Christian life as pneumatological characterology. Pneumatological characterology means a process of being formed according to the character of Jesus Christ by the active work of the Holy Spirit. It is a process of character formation that is enabled, informed and directed by the Holy Spirit but is only possible through faith in Jesus.

However, faith in Jesus Christ is not to be understood simply as means to his power, by which believers become free from all inhibitions, to access health, wealth and wellbeing. In the African Christology already discussed, the humanity and atoning work of Jesus remain in the background while the Lord is seen as a powerful divinity above the realms of spiritual powers. Instead, faith in Jesus should be understood as a means to obtain pardon for sins, liberation from our innate moral ineptitude, and freedom to form our character according to God’s as we see it in the life of Jesus. It does not mean that we can not accept Jesus Christ as deliverer, healer and saviour. Alternatively, it means that all these manifestations in Jesus’ ministry should be

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understood as signs (indicators) to us that Jesus is an exemplar of God’s character and that we can embody the character of God by habituating the life of Jesus.

6.14. Jesus as Exemplar of Character

In Wesley’s scheme, Jesus Christ is the paradigm, or model, of character for all those who believe in him. Wesley’s view of sanctification highlights the indispensability of character in any claim to being a Christian.\textsuperscript{812} He did not consider Christ only as the enabler of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (the charismata) or the tempers/virtues for the Christian moral life, but he also presented Christ as an exemplar of Christian character. For Wesley, the journey towards God or Christ-likeness begins in repentance and progresses through justification, regeneration and entire sanctification. Wesley did not define the Christian life primarily by the performance of certain activities. Instead, he insisted on Christians becoming a certain kind of people, by their imitation of Christ and their walking as Christ walked.\textsuperscript{813} Hammond has shown that Wesley considered the imitation of God as a consistent result of the happiness that comes from a restored relationship with God. For Wesley, learning to be like Jesus or imitating God is a ‘logical expression of the fact that God created humanity in his image’. Therefore, he taught that the imitation of God must be the ‘desire of those whose corrupted human nature has been restored to God’s image’.\textsuperscript{814} As shown in Chapter Five, this Wesleyan view of sanctification is informed by the virtue tradition and thus is teleological. So, when we are justified, born-again and sanctified, the Holy Spirit enables us to participate in the image of God that is restored to us.


\textsuperscript{813} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 454-62.

\textsuperscript{814} Hammond, “John Wesley and ‘Imitating’ Christ”, \textit{WTJ} 45: 2 (2010), 205-206.
As shown in this study, Character formation refers to the way we are oriented to moral excellence and good.\footnote{Donahue, “Use of Virtues and Character in Applied Ethics”, \textit{Horizons} 17: 2 (1990), 231.} As far as the Christian truth is concerned, ‘The moral life has its origin in our creation in the image of God and its end in our restoration and return into that image. Jesus Christ is the image of God from whom, through whom, and toward whom creation exists. To be restored into God’s image is to be restored into the image that Christ is’.\footnote{Long, “Moral Theology”, 460.} From this quote it is clear that the ultimate goal of the Christian life is formation into the character of Jesus. With this understanding, it is more appropriate to consider the designation of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man as meaning that Jesus is a paradigmatic human being who brings about a new community of people whose character is formed by the example of his character.\footnote{Robert L. Brawley, \textit{Character Ethics and the New Testament} (London: West Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 212.} It also means that the Christian confession of Jesus as Lord, healer and conqueror, must not be validated to outsiders only by the healings, wealth and liberations that we obtain through him. Instead, and more crucially, our confession must be validated by credible and good conduct that reflects the love of Christ.\footnote{Eduard Lohse, \textit{Theological Ethics of the New Testament} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 2.}

Being the embodiment of the law of God, Jesus Christ demonstrates the kind of person a believer is to become, the kind of humanity they are to embody.\footnote{Kotva Jnr., \textit{The Christian Case}, 88.} Certainly, suffering, poverty, and the wars that are pervasive in Africa could be resolved more effectively by African Christians whose lives are transformed according to the character of Jesus. Such Christians will be morally responsible for acting as catalysts for changing corrupt institutions, just as Jesus did with the
Pharisaic tradition.\textsuperscript{820} Ghanaian philosophers, such as Gyekye and Kudadjie, are unequivocal about this view. In their studies that have already been referred to in this study, they stress that the most effective means to African development is moral regeneration.\textsuperscript{821}

Furthermore, it is in Jesus Christ that we see the appropriate ways of acting, the right duties to perform and the good ways to follow rules.\textsuperscript{822} Jesus’ character signifies a distinct moral identity and the distinctive way particular virtues are ordered within the self or the community. The Christian life should not merely be about securing power to heal and to resolve problems, when in fact those needs and situations arise as a result of the inordinate self-regard and folly of individuals. As I have shown with the Akan scheme, that most misfortunes and sickness are a result of the punitive outcome of human moral failure, a transformed DT will eliminate the wars that GPs fight daily against the evil spirits. When we regard Jesus as a paradigmatic divine/human figure, we can see all of his miraculous works as being signs that lead us to the embodiment of his character.\textsuperscript{823} Therefore, in a transformed DT understanding of the Christian life and morality, the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus will be emphasised equally. It is because the DT focuses too much on the assumed diabolic activities of the spirits that GPs focus on the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ ministry more than the transforming power of his character for Christian morality. When it is understood that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of the character of God then GPs can

\textsuperscript{820} Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 572 - 589.
\textsuperscript{821} See Chapter 4 especially section 4.4.5.
\textsuperscript{822} Wesley uses the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount to show how Jesus used the Pharisees as an example of an inappropriate way to follow the law of God. Wesley, \textit{Works [BE]}, 1: 572 - 589.
see both the divine/pneumatological characteristics of Jesus’ earthly ministry as an example and a central focus for Christian moral formation.

6.15. The Holy Spirit and Character Formation

As we have seen in Chapter Three, having character means that one has a measure of control over whatever he/she does in a consistent and coherent manner. Since character is formed over time it cannot be easily deviated from, because each act reinforces or weakens the habitual orientation of the actor. This implies that we choose who we want to become or that we choose our character. But how does this relate to the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation? The shaping of our character involves our inmost dispositions and beliefs, as well as our outward behaviour. It also involves our general dispositions as well as our particular acts. From the virtue perspective, what we do proceeds directly from the kind of persons we are, and what we are determines what we are actually capable of doing.

The most important factor in the whole process of character formation is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit that the Christian story and examples ‘… insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul…’, what Bondi calls the heart, and make it possible for believers to know what is good and be able to do it.824 The Holy Spirit engenders an inner affinity for what is good in believers. It is the Holy Spirit who invites humanity to participate in the life and character of God. The Holy Spirit is God coming to humanity in an inward way, to enlighten and strengthen it to enable it to return to God and to remain in him. He makes us realise our kinship with God by revealing God to us. At this invitation those who repent and have faith in

824 Meilaender, *Practice of Virtue*, 54-55.
Jesus, are justified and regenerated. That is, they have the light of their inner soul turned on, as it were, to perceive the character of God.\(^{825}\) This means that the Christian moral character or good relationship with God and fellow humans starts with the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does this by drawing humanity to the life of Jesus Christ by the virtues (fruit) which the spirit shares with believers.\(^ {826}\) The lifelong teleological process of character formation that ensues is known as sanctification.

The crux of the matter about sanctification is that it comes from God and is different from human reforms. According to Apostle Paul, ‘God himself sanctifies you through and through’ (1 Thessalonians 5: 23). The goal of sanctification is the likeness of humans to Christ. It was God’s intention to conform us to the likeness of Christ, not in his physical likeness but in his character.\(^ {827}\) Therefore, sanctification can be understood as the actual transformation of the human condition and restoration into the character of God. Since Christ is the embodiment of that image, our sanctification becomes a process whereby our moral condition is brought into conformity with the character of God as seen in Christ. Although it seems that the Holy Spirit does everything in us, we are not to remain passive because we are expected ‘to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose’ (Phil. 2: 12-13).\(^ {828}\) From the foregoing, the most crucial understanding that my proposal brings to the DT is that, embodying the character of Christ involves a constant and conscientious practicing (habituation) of the fruit and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

\(^{826}\) Long, “Moral Theology”, 460.
\(^{827}\) Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2\(^{nd}\) Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 889-891.
In the Christian life, both the fruit and the gifts of the Spirits are instrumental, but mainly for the same purpose of restoring the image of God in believers, which subsequently effects social transformation in communities where the believers live. Apostle Paul’s presentation of a list of virtues that he termed fruit refers to the essential aspects of character of God. It is for the benefit of the corporate life of the community rather than the individual (Galatians 5: 22-23). The fruit depends on the divine empowerment the Holy Spirit produces in the believer. Inculcating the fruit for morality is not to be the same as simply imparting knowledge, such as rules and principles for moral behaviour. Teaching Christian virtue is the telling of the Christian story in a way that transmits images and examples and, at the same time, power for morality. It is through the Christian story that love, joy, peace, faith, kindness, longsuffering, self-control etc. are activated in anyone who believes. In the same way, the gifts of the Holy Spirit: speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, discerning of spirits, etc. (1 Corinthians 12: 8-12) are to be understood as the way to embodying the character of God as seen in Jesus Christ.

When sanctification is understood as the actual formation of our character in conformity with the character of Christ, then we can better understand and expect observable transparency in the moral conduct of Christians. This will transforms our societies. This is because if we must change at all in any fundamental way, it must be to change our character. Hauerwas affirms that Christian character is about how we form our affections and act in agreement with the deep beliefs of the Christian

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Character determines the most important orientation and direction which we embody through our beliefs and actions.

Therefore, the division of morality and spirituality breaks down when we make character formation central to Christian salvation. Atkinson and Field state that the acquisition of Christian character is by practising the Christian life through prayer, meditation, fasting and performing acts. The spiritual disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and giving/tithing are essential ways of developing and practising the Christian virtues. It needs emphasising that morality and spirituality are two sides of the same coin - the Christian life - and must always be seen together. Accordingly, the integration of the Akan and Christian schemes that I present in this study offers a better theological framework that is Christian in content, African in expression and robust enough to deal with contemporary moral questions in Ghana.

6.16. My Proposal and Akan Character

The Akan notion and pursuit of character, which I described in Chapter Four and what I am proposing here is different. The most important difference is that while character in the Akan sense is considered in naturalistic/humanistic terms as an outcome of human effort, character is the Christian sense is considered as imitation of Jesus and is driven by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives actual divine abilities by the word of God to believers to do what they would otherwise be unable to do. But with the Akan scheme, people get frustrated by their constant moral weakness and consequentially obsessed with power to avert the issues that result from their acts. The ntoro spirit that is supposedly responsible for character

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831 Hauerwas, Character, 203.
832 Atkinson and Field, New Dictionary, 70.
833 Atkinson and Field, New Dictionary, 66.
formation does not provide any transpersonal means to moral transformation. On the other hand the Holy Spirit is the divine means by which believers shape their character. Secondly, whereas in the Akan view character is formed just by following the moral rules and norms of the community and the moral examples of ancestors, Christian character is determined and formed by the Christian story: the gospel of Jesus Christ. This occurs in two ways, namely as a response to the grace of God and as imitation of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. That is, Christian character is not just shaped by theories of human behaviour. Neither is it only about stories or paradigms of human exemplars as is generally held in African, and particularly in Akan, moral thought. The pursuit of Christian character is a response to the living word of the living and present God.\textsuperscript{834} In this way, Christian character differs significantly from the character as it is understood in the Akan scheme.

Another important difference is that Christian morality is distinct from the social good. With the Akan moral tradition the social good is what members of the community strive to live by, but in Christian morality the social good is defined and related to the good of the God of creation as it was exemplified in Jesus Christ. So, although Akans pursue character, theirs is based on the social good. That is, whatever the community considers as good at any particular time. Conversely, Christian character is modelled after Jesus, the embodiment of God to challenge the norms of the world which work against the intention of God.

\textsuperscript{834} Atkinson and Field, \textit{New Dictionary}, 69 - 70.
6.17. Meeting the MacIntyrean Virtue Criteria

From the foregoing, I can say that my proposal meets the three criteria of the MacIntyrean virtue theory. Firstly, this approach has been able to show that DT is unable to offer a consistent and coherent account of Christian morality that is able to answer contemporary moral questions, because of its uncritical appropriation of the Akan religio-cultural heritage. Secondly, I have demonstrated that when Christian anthropology is integrated with the Akan anthropology, a view of the spiritual aspect of humanity is provided. This view is positive and gives confidence that a personal relationship with God, which is imperative for both the knowledge of and the power for doing of good, is attainable. I have also shown that approached in this way, the DT will focus the effort of believers on the formation of their Christian character, and regard their success in this to be an outcome of their relationship with God (spirituality). Furthermore, they will make efforts to ensure that their personal transformation is demonstrated in the social and ecological domain. This will solve the moral problems that the DT is currently failing to handle.

Thirdly, in addition to improving the understanding of the human condition and its resolution in Jesus, the relational community aspect of humanity that the Akan tradition stresses, and which forms the basis of all its kinship relationships is enhanced as a continuation of the scheme in Christian praxis. All believers become members of the Christian community because they have all been born by the same ntoro spirit. They become the church and the kingdom of God. Since they have a mission to the world they are not to be exclusive but ecumenical, reaching out to others, even those whom they may not know in distant contexts, just because we all belong and are under the aegis of the great creator whose spirit is our ntoro. This
approach to the human moral condition transforms a previously inadequate conception, and shows why the previous idea failed. Also, it has resolved the problem and still maintains some continuity with some central conceptions of the previous scheme. Therefore, my approach meets the virtue criteria and thus can be trusted.

If perhaps, anyone wonders whether my use of this method of integration is an imposition of a Western viewpoint, the views of some African philosophers on the issue show the contrary. This method is not entirely incompatible with African thought. Akan philosophers such as Wiredu and Gyekye affirm that throughout human history there have been cultural borrowings when one tradition finds something in another which it believes is useful. This may be termed as voluntary acceptance of cultural and moral ideas and is different from the imposition of Western ideas that took place during the colonisation of Africa. Gyekye asserts that the imposition of cultural ideas, and moral concepts of one tradition upon another deny the indigenous tradition the opportunity of assessing and selecting such ideas that its people would consider as useful for them.835 In Gyekye’s view, the most essential factor in determining whether certain beliefs or values are relevant for contemporary use is the functionality of such beliefs. In other words, it is based on how they provide answers for contemporary moral questions within the tradition.836 These views are essentially not dissimilar from the virtue theory of MacIntyre.

6.18. Character and Responsibility

All that has been said about Christian morality in an African Pentecostal context and the transformation proposed cannot be complete without a word on responsibility. Responsibility must be emphasised adequately in GP Christianity to make spirituality inseparable from morality. As far as Wesley was concerned the grace of God and human responsibility must always be held in creative tension. Wesley held that anything we are able to do is by the grace of God that works in us. Not that the grace does everything for us. Alternatively, the grace empowers us to respond to God. Since the grace only prompts and enables us to respond to faith and does not act for us, we always need to be responsible for our Christian growth. It is the gracious act of God in the human soul that enables anybody to say ‘The life I now live, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me’. Wesley taught that God does not take away human understanding but enlightens and strengthens it. Neither does God destroy our affections but instead they are spirit-led than before. God does not take away our liberty or our power of choosing good or evil or force us against our will. Instead, by being prompted and assisted by his grace we are able to make good choices that are according to God’s character. For Wesley, the gifts of God only become ours when we respond appropriately to his grace that is at work in us. Accordingly, it is clear that human responsibility is a very crucial factor in Christian growth and character formation as we saw in Chapter Three. If character is the engine of morality, responsibility is the lubricant that keeps it running. Just as an engine ceases when the oil runs out so also, social morality disappears whenever we fail to take responsibility.

Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 104.
Wesley, *Works [BE]*, 2: 489
From the virtue perspective too, the notion of character places huge responsibility on moral agents. Responsibility in the virtue sense is different from merely accepting blame for what has gone wrong. For instance, if someone was involved in something which went wrong that person would usually become accountable for that outcome. That is not the sense in which I am using responsibility here. Taking responsibility in this virtue sense means ‘… to accept that it is up to me. I should not leave it to others to solve the problem’.\(^{840}\) The whole process of exercising the virtues and developing character is determined by the sense of responsibility that the moral agent has. But it is not supposed to stop there. The agent has to take responsibility for every situation by asking what God might be doing in a particular situation and context.

Therefore, with the transformed DT that I envisage in this study, GPs are expected to take responsibility for the moral issues that bedevil Ghanaian society by demonstrating the acts of God through the Holy Spirit. In other words GPs must become salt and light by standing up to all social evil as Jesus did. Being responsible in this way is also being consistent and coherent in our continuous communication of the Christian story.

6.19. Closing Remarks

In this chapter, I have attempted an integration of the Akan moral tradition and the Christian tradition. Through correlating the Akan scheme and the Christian truth I revealed that the Akan view of humanity lacks essential theological category by which the Akan sense of finitude may be explained. It was also shown that this Akan view is the cause of the relentless anxiety of GP Christians, and responsible for the

focusing of Christology and pneumatology almost entirely on the power for protection, provision and healing. I reinterpreted this Akan view in light of Apostle Paul’s Areopagus address in Acts 17: 23-33. I have also demonstrated that introducing Christian anthropology as a catalyst for transforming the Akan view opens up a whole new understanding of the Christian life as a process of pneumatological characterology. This is because not only does it help Christians to know their disease but also, it offers a resolution of the condition while still leaving responsibility to humanity. Finally, I have shown that understood in this way, Jesus becomes not just a conqueror, healer and liberator but more importantly, a paradigmatic figure, a model through whom believers embody the character of God. Moreover, both the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit become beneficial only in their power to draw believers into embodying the image of God in Jesus Christ. In this process, the spiritual exercises of bible reading, meditation, prayer, exorcism, giving/tithing and witnessing become a way of personifying the character of God as we see it in Jesus Christ. Crucially, this proposal cannot allow any separation between spirituality and morality for they are essential outcomes of our religious practice. Therefore, all GPs are called to take moral responsibility for everything that happens in their domain rather than blaming evil spirits.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research has been concerned with a paradox in African societies where social injustices and different types of corruption exist alongside a general enthusiastic Christian spirituality. In much of African Christianity, spirituality and morality have been considered as being separated from each other and are infrequently seen together in the social domain. My research focused on Pentecostals in Ghana whose appropriation of the African worldview into Christian praxis has generally been considered as a positive response to African religiosity. My assumption was that a scrutiny of their appropriation of the African worldview might help to explain why they tend to separate spirituality from social morality. Largely, this has proven to be the case. My proposal was that in spite of this situation the virtue theory can offer a tool for the analysis of morality in a way that gives us the explanation for the situation and guides an integration of the two moral schemes, that is, the solution to the situation.

Using a practical theological method of correlation, I identified the ‘Deliverance Theology’ (an appropriation of the African worldview into Christian praxis) of GPs to be a situation that can be construed to explain the lack of social morality among Ghanaian Christians. The description and interpretation of the DT in Chapter One and Two respectively, provided a deeper understanding of moral issues, social perceptions and of the role of religion in the pursuit of morality. It was shown that the DT lacks adequate answers for the moral dilemmas that confront GPs. This is because GP understanding of religion as shown in the DT departs significantly from the perception that the Akan traditional scheme has of religion and the role that view
plays in moral pursuit. In the Akan traditional scheme, the pursuit of moral character is considered as a vital goal of human existence. But it is not regarded as an outcome of religious practice because morality is not based on religion. This means that in spite of the religious outlook of the Akan traditional scheme, in it, morality is not seen as being founded on religion. The traditional religion serves only like a policeman working to ensure that people follow what humans have already accepted as moral norms and beliefs. Apart from them enforcing morality, the deities and ancestors do not provide any supernatural enablement for traditional Akans for their actual moral pursuit, that is, in their endeavour to live morally.

By the use of practical theological method of correlation, I have resolved the conflict between the naturalistic and super-naturalistic perspectives of the Akan scheme that jeopardises efforts to contextualise Christian morality in the Akan cultural context.\textsuperscript{841} I did not do this by imposing the supernatural on the natural but by using the virtue theory to assess the effectiveness of each tradition in helping people to form good moral character. This means that the integration of the Akan view of humanity with the Christian view is not an imposition of one tradition upon the other. It is a type of voluntary acceptance by the Akan tradition based on its own terms. On its own account, it shows inadequacy in its ability to offer answers to the moral dilemma of its adherents. The Christian truth only supplied what is lacking in the Akan scheme.

Meanwhile, the traditional values for personhood and life entail some pressure on traditional Akans to strive to succeed in life so as to gain the title of \textit{nana} in life and become an ancestor after death. In life, wealth, good health, felicity and peace are

believed to be facilitated by the spiritual realm but the supply of these is largely
determined by how well (moral) individuals live in amity with other people and the
spirit entities. The lack of morality always results in retribution from the spiritual
realm in the form of sicknesses, misfortunes and general lack or stagnation in life.
Therefore, humans endeavour to live morally in order to have a good life. However,
the more they try the more they realise their finitude as there is no supernatural help
for moral character formation in the scheme.

Consequently, the scheme promotes craving for more spiritual power to overcome
the evil spirits so that in spite of the human moral condition people can progress in
life and enjoy their successes. Although, traditional Akans link the acquisition of
physical possessions, health and good fortune to religious practice and expect the
spirit realm to facilitate their attainment of these things, they do not in the same way
expect the spirit entities to help them to live in accordance with the moral ideal of
their tradition. Religion is regarded mainly as the means for the supply of needs and
not a way for the transformation or formation of moral character.

The problem I identified is, in appropriating the Akan scheme, GPs, following their
Western forerunners in Christian mission, dispelled the African traditional fear for
the evil consequences of moral lapses in this earthly life. Subsequently, GPs now
regard any hindrance to progress in life; misfortunes, sickness and poverty, which the
traditional scheme mainly consider as retributions for human moral failure, as attacks
by evil and enemy spirits. So, they fight these spirits to defeat them by the power of
the name of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Hence, unconsciously, many Ghanaian
Christians understand the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit mostly in terms of
power or spiritual succour for overcoming the evil spirits in order to obtain their existential needs rather than power to transform their character in conformity to Christ’s. In this process GPs maintain the Akan traditional belief that good health, wealth and general success in life is obtainable through the deities, which GPs understand to be the God of the Bible. This is why it is possible for GPs to alternate between the conceptual frameworks of Christian truth and Akan tradition depending on what dilemma they are faced with without having to integrate them.

The fact that traditional Akans do not consider morality as an outcome of religious practice suffices to explain why morality and spirituality is separated in the Christian praxis of many GP Christians. However, practical theological reflections do not stop with explanations. A practical theological method always aims to offer pastoral and theological suggestions on any situation it deals with.

My introduction of the virtue framework, as a heuristic tool for the analysis, has been very beneficial in facilitating the integration of the two traditions. I adopted four elements from the concept of character, the central motif of virtue theory to assess how successful or otherwise the Akan and the Wesleyan account of the Christian moral traditions are in helping their adherents to pursue morality. The use of the four elements of character in Chapters Four and Five respectively, and the correlation of the answers in Chapter Six, led to the identification of Akan view of humanity as an aspect of the scheme where transformation is crucially needed.

It was realised that the Akan scheme considers human beings as essentially good and capable of knowing and doing what is good. But the sense of finitude that it
promotes, coupled with experiences of moral failure that result in retributions, show that humans are not as good as it is thought. Secondly, because in the Akan traditional scheme morality is not based on religion, the scheme does not have any idea of the availability of a supernatural help in the human soul for the transformation of moral character. Thus, the Akan scheme was found to be inadequate in providing its adherents the assurance they need. It has no supernatural means by which people can know and do what is good according to God’s standards. Akan anthropology that GPs appropriated fails to offer any explanation about how the *ntoro* spirit a person inherits through a father works in helping that person in his/her moral pursuit. So, it is similar to the naturalistic ethos of the virtue theory.

In contrast, a Wesleyan account of the Christian anthropology considers that by the grace of God humanity can reunite with God through the acts of the Holy Spirit in effecting repentance, justification, regeneration and sanctification that ultimately enables humans to embody the character of God as it was revealed in the character of Jesus Christ. I demonstrated that to overcome the challenges in moral decision making, the human heart has the capacity for using a person’s religious belief to offer accurate interpretation of moral situations presented to that person. By this means it guides people’s passions and affections appropriately in all moral deliberations for good acts.

An integration of this truth with a reinterpreted Akan view of humanity ultimately transforms the way African religiosity is appropriated into Christian praxis and helps GPs to understand the Christian life as a pneumatological characterology. Understanding the person and work of Jesus in this way not only solves the problem of the innate moral weakness, but it also maintains continuity with the Akan scheme.
Also, the communalistic idea of Akan system can correct the individualism that has become a feature of Western culture and has impacted on Christian praxis. By understanding the Holy Spirit as the *ntoro* by which the deity dwells in all humans, and for which reason all humans must live in amity with God and their neighbours, the sense of community that God intended for Christians can be restored. The *ntoro* resonates with an ecumenical Christian view that all believers are the children of God because irrespective of their denominational affiliations all the children of God have the same spirit of adoption or sonship.

In this way, the life of Jesus Christ the son of God on earth become an actual resource for morality whereby all believers look up to Jesus, as an exemplar who demonstrates what a good moral character really looks like. Finally, a particularly Wesleyan view of sanctification that places more weight on Christian character formation has been presented to transform the DT so that GPs can practise the Christian life as a pneumatological characterology. This will make GP Christians more responsible for the moral situations in their society. They will stand in response to the grace of God that is at work in them to demonstrate the character of Jesus in the social domain.

**Limitations and Implications of this Research**

This research is limited to analysing morality, that is, the actual practice of morals rather than ethics. As such it does not describe nor discuss what is good, right, bad or wrong. Also, extant empirical fieldwork for verifications would have strengthened the conclusions. But this does not in any way affect the conclusions and contributions that have been made.
My research has implications for religious studies, politics, theology, missiology and discipleship. For example, it has shown that the social and moral responsibility required in the Akan traditional scheme is not suited to deal with the modern nation state because it was not meant for it. I have shown in Chapter Four that the mutual responsibilities entailed in normal traditional kinship ties can be construed in the modern nation state as uncritical solidarity, nepotism and misapplication of resources. These are the main moral issues that trouble many political systems in Africa today.

Missiologically, the research challenges all mission activities to make the practicing of the character of God central to mission and to consider mission as a call to be witnesses rather than to do witnessing. In theological terms, African Christology and pneumatology need to be revised to reflect the central purpose of the incarnation of Jesus, which is the demonstration and restoration of the character of God.

The research also has global implications. Although it focuses on a contextual issue in an African milieu, there is no intention to suggest that lack of social morality is an issue only for African Christianity. Although this issue may be more pronounced in some contexts than in others, it is certainly a global concern for Christianity. It is less pronounced in some societies only because there are legal institutions that are more effective in checking corruption in the public domain in some societies than others.

Whilst other works have focused on analysing GP for its religious, economic and cultural impact, this research has offered an analysis of it in terms of Christian morality. Also, offering an understanding of how the appropriation of a worldview
into Christian praxis might be responsible for the lack of social morality means that this research has a wider global implication for the study of Christian morality in any culture, especially in majority world cultures. It also shows that studying Christian ethics must always involve the study of other traditions within which the Christian message is transplanted. Moreover, the use of the virtue theory has demonstrated that philosophical frameworks are very useful to supplement anthropological models of contextualisation.

This is the first time it has been demonstrated that the limited role of moral enforcement that religion plays in the Akan traditional moral scheme is a major contributing factor responsible for the inadvertent bifurcation of morality from spirituality in Ghanaian Christianity.
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