THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

IN

THE METHODIST CHURCH SIERRA LEONE BETWEEN 1967 AND 2007

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Statement and Intellectual Property</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Background</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Aims</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Rationale</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Research Problems</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. Research Questions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6. Approach and Methodology</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7. Scope</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Analysis of Contextualization: Conceptual Definitions and Challenge</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Introduction</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Epistemic Worldview Status</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. Culture as Worldview Praxis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Contextual and Local Theology</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. Local Language Model</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. Translation Approach</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Hierarchy Formations</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5. Cultural Games and Stories</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6. Christ and Context</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7. Contextualization from African Perspective</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8. Conceptual Definitions of Contextualization: Challenge</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9. Conclusion</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone and Christianity: Brief Historical Background</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 54
3.2. Sierra Leone and Christianity ............................................................................... 54
  3.2.1. Sierra Leone’s Origins .................................................................................... 54
  3.2.2. Sierra Leone’s Christianity ............................................................................ 56
  3.2.3. Primary Missionary Activity ......................................................................... 60
3.3. Socio-Historical and Religious Background ....................................................... 65
  3.3.1. Primary Religious Culture ............................................................................ 65
  3.3.2. Primary Social Culture ................................................................................ 71
  3.3.3. Current Religious Context ........................................................................... 73
  3.3.4. Current Social Context ................................................................................. 78
3.4. Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 79

CHAPTER FOUR ............................................................................................................ 80
MCSL’s Growth to Autonomy: Brief Analysis .............................................................. 80
4.1. Introduction .......................................................................................................... 80
4.2. Beginnings: WMMS Influences .......................................................................... 80
  4.2.1. Factors for Growth ....................................................................................... 83
    4.2.1.1. Evangelism .............................................................................................. 83
    4.2.1.2. School Approach ................................................................................... 88
4.3. Contexts of Growth ............................................................................................. 91
  4.3.1. Methodist Creole Mission (British) .............................................................. 91
    4.3.1.1. Colony Ethnic Outreach ....................................................................... 94
  4.3.2. Methodist Mende Mission ........................................................................... 95
    4.3.2.1 Missionary Efforts .................................................................................. 96
4.4. Final Ecclesiastical Structural Emergence: Pre-Autonomy .................................. 98
  4.4.1. Appropriation of Membership ..................................................................... 100
  4.4.2. In-house Training ......................................................................................... 101
  4.4.3. Administration ............................................................................................. 103
4.5. Achievement of Autonomy ................................................................................. 105
  4.6. Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 106

CHAPTER FIVE .............................................................................................................. 110
Leadership Ethos: Organization/Government Structure ............................................ 110
5.1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 110
8.1. General Conclusion: Recommendations .......................................................... 181
8.2. Recommendations .......................................................................................... 183

Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 187

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Abbreviations

Methodist Church Sierra Leone - MCSL
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society - WMMS
Indigenous African Church - IAC
Church Missionary Society - CMS
British Methodist Church - BMC
Wesleyan Methodist Church - WMC
Methodist Training Centre - MTC
Constitutional Practice and Discipline - CPD
Standing Order - SO
General Purposes Committee - GPC
Methodist Hymn Book - MHB
Abstract

This study considers the challenge of contextualization for the Methodist Church Sierra Leone since autonomy in 1967. The missionary inaugurated church was established with British practices and liturgy. Since autonomy relatively little has changed. One part of the church, based on the Krio ethnic community in the Freetown area, is distinct from the rest of the population, owing its roots to returned freed slaves. Their historic appropriation on the English language and customs has resulted in them having a continuing disproportionate influence in the post autonomy church. After an introduction, the chapters consider contextualization in its broad sense, the background to Christianity in Sierra Leone, the pre-autonomous church followed by three chapters considering in more depth issues regarding contextualization in relation to leadership, training and worship. A final chapter offers some recommendations for the church. The argument of the dissertation is that the Methodist Church Sierra Leone has taken relatively few steps towards contextualization in the post autonomy era, and the dominance of an English focused minority, the Krio, has replaced that of the missionaries. Greater efforts at contextualization are needed.

1 See abbreviations.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of: my mother, Maama Yambasu-Njigba (deceased) whose assiduous efforts propelled me to achieve thus far in life; and late Father, Mr. George K. Njigba; my children, Mariama and Isatta; and grandchildren, Maada, Augusta and Victoria.
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background

This study considers the challenge of contextualization in the MCSL between 1967 and 2007 in Sierra Leone. Basically, contextualization is the process whereby the gospel is related to the cultural context of the society to which it is proclaimed, but without obfuscating the message or compromising biblical distinctives. When the gospel was brought by the Methodist missionaries coming out of Western civilization to Sierra Leone, they should have been aware that Sierra Leone recipients were living in a different cultural context, with diverse structures, thought forms, customs and traditions, and with different linguistic and emotional modes of expression. People, including Sierra Leoneans coming to Christ, should not need to come to a Western Christ. Neither should there be an insistence upon forms of worship conforming to cultural patterns making the people in the receptor-context feel like outsiders to the gospel.

In the 1970s and 1980s, contextual/local theologies developed in cultures and groups where the prevailing Enlightenment of Europe and North America could not respond to local needs. Thus, outside and inside the West, local and contextual theologies emerged among disenfranchised peoples using the analysis of social conditions as well as the issues raised by culture. By the 1990s important political and economic changes occurred today reshaping theologies. But technologies in communications compressed time and space in the process of globalization. Globalization has created a universal homogenization in its wake, but has, nonetheless, unleashed new particularisms of religious protest movements, nativistic re-assertions of sovereignty and various fundamentalisms. These particularisms, represent in many instances, a
new intensification of the local expressions which potentially calls for new interpretations in theology for each cultural context, recognizing that this is an on-going task.  

‘Contextualization is central to any attempt to weave the gospel to cultures together’. The context in which theology takes place shapes the form and influences the contents of the theology. God’s kingdom is a visible phenomenon. It is seen as the gospel’s incarnational ability to effect a subversive transformation of culture as it moves by the Holy Spirit through the lives of Christians into their social and cultural settings. It is this ‘participatory hermeneutic’, in attendance with the Holy Spirit, that moves Christians to see what God has done and takes them from the first century text through our contemporary culture, lifting their seeing and hearing to God’s view of the world. This is how it is possible for humanity to live out the call to the church to an acculturate Christ.

Today, even the Western Churches which had once held the theology of incompatibility between Christian faith and African religious cultures now recognize that they too face the challenge of contextualization in their cultural context. If what is applicable to other situations could be generally applicable, MCSL too, being a Western instituted Church, if reckoned with the fact that it should take into account

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4 Schreiter, The New Catholicity, p. 4.
this community with whom it is sharing the mission, could recognize the need to
confront the challenge of contextualization in the Sierra Leonean situation.⁷

Methodist work coincided with the impact of the Western missionary movement
which coincided with the expansion (and the termination) of colonialism⁸ which
partly forms the background to the tapestry of events in this study. MCSL evolved
from the Methodist Mission, one of the Protestants missions that commenced
missionary efforts in Sierra Leone, the primary Protestant Mission field in Africa.⁹
Through its collaborative effort with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society¹⁰
from 1811 (mainly in the Mendeland), the MCSL was instituted.¹¹

Purportedly, the ‘African churches established by…missionary societies, after their
independence from mission control - proved powerless to generate adherents among
their own people’.¹² Apparently, even from inception growth in general was slow in
Sierra Leone. Either the missionaries might not have been careful in presenting their
faith in ways that could have inspired appreciation of their Christian mission, or, the
people were likely to have required a discernible response to the question of identity
and mission in their society. This would have been helped by not only being clear
about the nature of the society they shared – and therefore by which it is shaped, but
by a careful presentation of Christianity in ways appealing to them in the lens of their

¹⁰ See abbreviations
cultural context. Only on such ground could MCSL have meaningfully engaged with the missionary context of the Society.

Sierra Leone was and is a religious society, accentuated by a proud socio-historical and religious background,\textsuperscript{13} even before the arrival of missionary Christianity. Yet its historic religious beliefs and practices, which form and shape its context, were denigrated by the Methodist Missionaries, who sought to change the specific indigenous beliefs and values of the Mende-hinterland, where between 1890 and 1967, they largely evangelized\textsuperscript{14} Sierra Leone. The Mende tradition, for example, ‘turned out to be stronger in its own right and to have a much greater than expected capacity for creativity and vitality’\textsuperscript{15} fundamentally providing fertile ground for Methodist growth. This role could be interpreted in terms of corporate or reciprocal employment of available local resources by the locals to transform missionary religion. The missionaries, locals and all other concerned agents might have co-operatively deployed varied forms of local resources to accomplish the missionary outcomes.\textsuperscript{16}

The locals and missionaries, their religions and the missionary Christianity each have been affected by the cultural encounter and interaction. The reciprocal nature of their interactions is discernible in mutual support, using each other’s potential.\textsuperscript{17} Such an

\textsuperscript{14} Sahr J.Yambasu,  \textit{Dialectics in Evangelism, A Critical Examination of Methodist Evangelization of the Mende People in Sierra Leone} (Ghana: Legon Theological Studies Series, 2002), pp. 1, 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Yambasu,  \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 1, 2, 12.
interactive relationship was a sign of cultural and interactive encounter not only with the gospel, but also between the missionaries and the locals.\footnote{Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 1, 2.}

The MCSL is presently struggling\footnote{MCSL, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Biennial Conference (BC3), First Extra Ordinary Conference (EOC1), ‘Reaction on way forward Document by Kailahun/Kono District (2006), pp. 1.} and cannot adequately influence Sierra Leone society despite its proliferation of social development projects. MCSL is not discernibly growing in terms of, for example, intentional outreach to potential virgin mission areas beyond colonial missionary evangelized zones. The existing mission stations particularly at the grassroots are losing members to other missions, especially young people. There are apparent impingements of Islam, the Indigenous African Churches\footnote{See abbreviations.} and the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.\footnote{Lesslie E.T. Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity in an African Province of Freedom: Sierra Leone, as a Case Study of European Influence and Culture In Church Development} (Freetown: Print Sundries, 2008), p. 222; Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, pp. 11.} Islam, like Christianity, is not tied to conventions. Muslims involve themselves in the local festivities and social customs, and as the opportunities occur, promote Islamic faith and culture in the communities as trader, farmer, preacher, priest, prophet, missionary etc.\footnote{Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, p.11.} The IACs purportedly provide genuine local (African) church activities attracted to the people. Pentecostals professedly exhibit charismatic worship/spirituality as a gift for evangelism with features allegedly traceable to the Wesleyan tradition and in tune with everyday life, traditional beliefs and practices.\footnote{Cf. Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianly}, pp. 203, 222.}

Whereas, MCSL structures, which are still cloaked in the British Missionary
scheme,²⁴ are potentially irrelevant, if not obsolete to the post-missionary context and which may demand a more dynamic gospel.

It is considered that MCSL is not contextualized enough and that its failure to sufficiently contextualize is bringing about an impotence of its missionary influence in Sierra Leone with its ‘leadership’, ‘training and ‘worship’ ethos being key issues for investigation, leading to the need for this study.

1.2. Aims

The aims of this study are:

To explore and analyse the concept of contextualization in worldviews: theology, theory, gap and challenge.

To consider Sierra Leone Christianity history and socio-historical and religious background in the African theological worldview.

To explore and analyse MCSL’s current leadership, training and worship structures and contextualization implications posed for MCSL.

To encourage MCSL to consider the renewal of its existing structures in order to increase its influence.

To draw general conclusions from the above and make recommendations.

1.3. Rationale

This study is undertaken to challenge the MCSL to consider whether or not it is contextualized enough to meet local considerations, and whether it could see the

need for a renewal of its identified mission structures and institutions in order to address itself to the challenge of relating the gospel to Sierra Leone. As there is the lack of any serious study in contextualization in MCSL, this research is undertaken to make a contribution to the understanding of contextualization and to propose possible ways of facilitating the necessary paradigm shift from the western mission scheme, by rethinking the application of its potentials for enhancing a drive to be contextual. The emphasis is on MCSL’s leadership, training/empowerment: resource and worship/language ethos, so as to motivate other Churches to be aware that they too may face contextual challenges to undergo transforming transitions in their own situations.

The ‘leadership’ style may require a radical reformation in order to be more sensitive to its indigenous leadership challenge. It is about a partial acknowledgement of sharing with those involved in the MCSL, so that in diverse ways we could come to grips with its decline and be involved in the task of full commitment to its missionary endeavours – hence, a true leader is a seeker and alert to new possibilities.

‘Training/empowerment: resources’ are required to create awareness in MCSL of its need to re-consider a new ‘training’ philosophy for leadership development, for ordained and laity, geared towards contextual mission. It is paving a way for it to perceive the essence of a harnessing of the local ‘resources’ for both training and ecclesiastical survival purposes, to rediscover its full sense of responsibility for selfhood and indigenous requirements.

For ‘worship/language’, the ‘primary purpose of the church is evangelism and growth’ but ‘the evangelistic motivation cannot be sustained indefinitely without the
heartbeat of worship’ and it must ‘reflect a range of responses to God.’ For, ‘the sense of...divine presence does not depend on any one style’, but ‘allowing freedom...within a safety net of the familiar and formal...Worship is always contextualized, so that no style should be regarded as normative as or more spiritual than another’. The MCSL may face the challenge of recognizing that its worship could require a sufficient use of cultural contextual expressions. Given that ‘Religion...exists in the vernacular’, or to adapt a biblical phrase, ‘the treasure only exists in ‘earthen vessels’.’ This suggests that MCSL would be bound to consider adequate use of ‘local language’ in order to communicate in worship services, so that Christian worship is fully understood and appreciated by members, or congregations, thus through effective translation and interaction, confirming their previous worship inclination or experience as part of mission for meaningful and sense of fulfilment. The use of English language is western missionary legacy.

1.4. Research Problems

In Sierra Leone, the MCSL is not contextualized enough as an autonomous local church, and is consequently losing its influence on society due to its failure to contextualize. Therefore, if it seeks to enhance its missionary potency, it must face this challenge of contextualization. The key problems laid out are:-

MCSL’s British designed ‘leadership style’ was useful at the point of need but is now a cause for concern because the leadership structure seemingly disempowers the majority by the exercise of restrictive controls via bureaucratic hierarchies. These are

26 Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, pp. 152-155.
either exclusive or eclipse potential leadership gifts and graces among the
congregation/members.

‘Bureaucratically’, the leadership model is vertical so that authority descends from
top to bottom. It governs through diktats enshrined in the ‘Constitutional Practice and
Discipline’ (vis-à-vis ‘Standing Orders’). Conference dictates policies and takes
ultimate decisions enforced by CPD in all matters of administration and management.

MCSL is presently in a crisis situation engulfed with mounting demands for
Constitutional review of tenures of President and Secretary of Conference, and
vehement tribal and regional skirmishes or dichotomies for the Principal Offices
(notably President and Secretary). These positions are often held by those
compatible in English language.

‘Hierarchically’, there is a seeming lack of an organic leadership and the minority
holds monopoly of offices. The Conference President, for instance, is Chairman of
all Committees, while a Minister may be Chairman of District and Superintendent in
addition to pastoral work. Appointment to offices is constitutionally sanctioned: a
few individuals are considered for leadership responsibilities in the church,

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29 See abbreviations; Cf. The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (Vol.1.)
(Peterborough, Great Britain: Methodist Publishing House, 1951), p. v. The MCSL CPD reorientation
of the British Methodism’s historical Constitutional Practice and Discipline. It is the legal framework
within which the Methodist Church is governed. The authority under which the ‘Conference’ acts is
legally given by the 1976 Methodist Church Act. The ‘Standing Orders’ are adopted by the
Conference. The existence of the CPD illustrates one aspect of Methodism’s understanding of the
curch. Each local church, especially within the MCSL, is subject to a common discipline and pattern
of government, sharing in a wider life. The authority of Conference, legally given by Act of British
Parliament, has its theological basis in this understanding of the church as a ‘connexional’ of the local
churches and circuits and districts, expressing their fellowship in the Body of Christ by their
constitutional ties. ‘The fact that most of aspects of the CPD can be amended, and that such
amendments occur…is also significant. Changes reflect not only the need for administrative
adjustment, but the conviction that the church must not stand still, but must move forward as the spirit
leads, and is always in need of freedom’. The authority to issue CPD/Standing Orders is derivative,
and it derives from the central constitutional document of the Methodist Church – ‘Deed of Union’
(The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, p. v, vii.).

30 See ‘Report from the Connexional Committee ’, MCSL, BC3, EOC1, Working Paper (WP) 6A,

apparently based on degree of status. The leadership organization is institutionalized and does not portray a discernible ‘theological/biblical leadership structure’ as a church.32

‘Training/empowerment: resource’ is a ‘primary principle in mission for equipping members to be active participants in mission’.33 Past Conferences emphatically recommended the need for ‘empowerment’ of church leaders and members in their respective positions.34 Although basic level training has been offered, the sort of ‘training’ MCSL may require meeting its local standards has yet to be provided. The previous training had focused on a selected few with academic ability. The local majority of members were either ignored or disempowered, potentially implying that there was/is an absence of vision for mass local development and/or empowerment for contextualized work. The initial training offered could not have prepared the requisite local personnel for contextual mission, especially, if such training largely focused theological education - mere ministerial formation for standard church work.

The persistent stress on ‘empowerment’ by Synods implies that training objectives were either unachieved or rather a long-term goal and therefore, a redesigning of the entire training scheme is needed as a matter of priority to enable and enhance people advancement in MCSL.35 MCSL still seems to be dependent on overseas ‘resources’ (fiscal and material) imbibed with a tenacious deployment of foreign expertise for even local personnel training and administrative and management reforms.36 The

34 MCSL, Presidential Address’, AC35, 2000, WCO Archives.
35 MCSL, AC34 W/P9, 2000, WCO Archives.
36 MCSL, AC31 W/P 19C, 1997, WCO Archives.
culture of independent self-support from overseas resources seems to be a distant prospect.\(^{37}\)

For ‘worship/language’, MCSL provides ‘worship’ activities and experiences for its members, but the liturgical aspects seem perpetually formal and/or cumbersome. Worship has yet to create sufficient freedom for not only adequate congregational participation but also the means of incorporating adequate cultural expressions of worship/spirituality. Its prayer and ritual structures seem still to be responsive and stereotyped, reducing the congregation to mere spectators rather than committed worshippers. The challenge is for MCSL to move away from its British background and to articulate a potentially ‘creative environment’ in which the ‘people personally and intimately connect with God’ at worship.\(^{38}\) In relation to ‘language’, the missionaries attempted translation into the vernacular for church worship and instruction in the Mendeland only but confined it to Mende idiom. Missionary sermons and services were chiefly delivered in English across the board in the Mende churches, translated by local interpreters.\(^{39}\) Such translations, or interpretations could be in the western thought-forms and/or faith expressions, if not potentially then distorted or misinterpreted. The emphatic advocacy for sufficient vernacular utility by Synods and Conferences\(^{40}\) evidently suggests grossly minimalized use of major contextual dialects in MCSL particularly in the hinterland where the missionaries were ubiquitous.

\(^{37}\) Rev. Kenneth A. Bear, *Report on the visit to Sierra Leone for Methodist Conference 1983 and subsequent visits to up country*, pp. 2 and 3, WCO Archives.


\(^{40}\) MCSL, *AC34 W/P10*, 2000, WCO Archives.
1.5. Research Questions

The research questions on which this study is based are:

What is contextualization in mission; in relation to worldview: theology, theory, gap and challenge, and what is the relationship between, gospel, culture and context in terms of contextualization?

What is the relationship between the historical background of Sierra Leone Christianity and socio-historical and religious backgrounds in terms of the African worldview before and after colonialism; what is from the colonial structures and what is not and what is simply Sierra Leonean?

What is the nature of the leadership, training/empowerment: resource and worship/language structures, what are culturally appropriated leadership, training and worship?

What could a successful contextualization resemble in comparison to other more contextual examples of mission, using what benchmark will MCSL’s failures and success to contextualize be judged?

What is the challenge of contextualization in MCSL today?

1.6. Approach and Methodology

The objective is to come up with a useful and impact creating outcome to MCSL in Sierra Leone. Thus the study largely draws on ‘primary sources’: MMS Archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London (England); periodicals and other holdings at former WCO in London; the MCSL Conference Minutes, Committees Synod and Circuit reports, CPD, published and unpublished materials from personalities plus the writer’s experience in the MCSL ministry.
The study also substantially draws on ‘secondary resources’: the views of scholars and the lay people in the subject of contextualization which shall be explored and analysed by means of a study of contemporary published literature.

1.7. Scope

The eight chapters of this study identify some major storm centres through which it navigates. Chapter one is introduction: background, aims and objectives, rationale, research problems, research questions, methodology and scope of the study. Chapter two presents a brief analysis of contextualization: conceptual definitions and challenge. Chapter three briefly pre-set Sierra Leone and Christianity: brief historical background. Chapter four examines MCSL’s growth to autonomy: brief analysis. Chapter five assesses MCSL’s leadership ethos: organization/government structure. Chapter six evaluates MCSL’s training/empowerment: resources. Chapter seven appraises the compass of MCSL’s worship/Spirituality: language. Chapter eight is the general conclusion and recommendations.
Chapter Two

A Brief Analysis of Contextualization: Conceptual Definitions and Challenge

2.1. Introduction

As aforementioned, MCSL has not been contextualized enough to influence Sierra Leone. Thus, it faces the contextualization challenge of seeking to increase its missionary potency in society. This chapter explores and examines relevant criteria of evaluating contextualization which calls on the church to unhesitatingly present the gospel in every cultural context, and what relevant benchmarks of contextualization may it be arbitrated.

2.2. Epistemic Worldview Status

As humans, we naturally relate to our world through socio-historical situations, although particular, - situations appear to the individual as implicit. Paul Hiebert refers to a ‘worldview as the glass we look through, as distinct from what we look at’. Worldviews change as perspectives move. Fundamental to all worldviews are belief systems which explain what is true (and therefore what is not true); how things are (or how they should be).

Worldview focuses events and information from ‘normative and descriptive’ angles. Through this dual focus one may discern the world around one by setting

44 See Hiebert, ‘Conversion and Worldview Transformation’.
one’s behaviour within larger frames of significance. ‘These frames not only ratify
our visions and our verdicts practically, morally and behaviourally, they also obscure
from our view whatever does not fit. In this way we are enclosed in webs of
signification we ourselves have spun’.47 Reality outside our heads is explained and
evaluated, reinforced and integrated in terms of existing reality inside our heads.48

Until 1900, the theological worldview of Western culture was considered to be trans-
cultural and universal, and therefore directly accessible to all cultures. Transference
of cultural influence from one person or one culture to another depended on
persuasion and if necessary, force. Western culture was superior to any other culture.
Consequently, the darkness of the ‘uncivilized’ world’s religions could be dispelled
using the blinding light of reason and science. Missionary activities were undertaken
using the Enlightenment’s logical and propositional approach plus persistence.49

Two truths were overlooked in this process:-

Firstly, all people do not perceive reality in the same way. The West perceives the
world in terms of reason, intellect; experience, practice; politics and belief. ‘Africa
sees reality in the context of relationships’.50 West Africans, especially, are human-
centred and event-oriented founded on communal interactions.51 Secondly, the
concept of prevenient grace, or missio Dei was missing. God’s sovereignty was
indelibly imprinted and visible for all to see. God was already at work in whatever

47 Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic
48 Charles Kraft, Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural
49 John Pobee, ‘Two Species in a Genre and Two Carriages of a Moving Train.’ Journal of Theology
culture people live. Every person has knowledge of God, though this does not provide a solution to human sin.

2.2.1 Culture as a praxis of Worldview

‘Cultures are dialectically and interactively produced’. They are shaped by the individuals who participate in them: though precarious and open to change, culture is a human construct. People who believe God has a hand in every event of life are continually confirmed in this concept because they understand and interpret every event in terms of the participation of God. Those who conceive of every event as the result of purely naturalistic forces, interpret the same events in such a way that their naturalistic worldview is confirmed. ‘All worldviews are profoundly theological’. Geertz asserts that religion lies at the heart of culture, giving shape to culture and meaning to data. ‘Culture has always been the solvent of religion’. But if cultural values reflect underlying religious beliefs, are all cultural beliefs harmonious with God’s kingdom? The gospel supports some cultural affirmations, fulfils some unrealised cultural aspirations, and allows for local expressions of Christian faith, whilst addressing the self-serving and demonic elements present in every culture.

In summary, a culture’s perception of the world can be true, partially true, or false. Unfortunately, regardless of accuracy or inaccuracy, cultural values and worldview

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52 Pobee, ‘Two Species in a Genre and Two Carriages of a Moving Train’, pp. 122-129.
55 The term describing the process of change is inculturation, as new principles ‘dress in local clothing’.
56 Kraft, Christianity in Culture, p. 74.
58 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p.89 – 90.
60 Gibbs and Coffey, Church Next, p. 149.
shape a person’s behaviour, so that unless one’s worldview is changed, there is no change in behaviour.  

2.3. Contextualization and Theology

By the 1990s, vital global political and economic changes occurred, reshaping today’s theologies. Globalization created a universal homogenization, - its dynamics can be described as a movement that tends to universalize a particular set of cultural activities and cultural stories. Human beings are different in perspectives, emotions, cultures, traditions, and language. The gospel presented in a particular receptor-context should be from that contextual particularisation. These particularisms represent in many ways a new intensification of the local culture that calls for new theological interpretations for each local context.

Contextual theology works beyond the surface of a culture to see the many faces of a particular local culture. A ‘shift in perspective’ in theology has developed whereby more attention is ‘being paid to how those circumstances shape the response to the gospel in local circumstances.’ This paradigm became evident in Africa and Asia in the 1950s, resulting from a growing sense that theologies passed down from the inherited churches were inappropriate to their different cultural situations.

Contextual theology commenced with the needs of people in various specific contexts before moving into faith traditions. ‘Contextualization is central to an


63 Cf. Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 94.


attempt to weave the gospel…and cultures together’.\textsuperscript{67} Thus ‘all theologies have contexts, interests, relationships of power, special concerns…Theology has often been defined as faith seeking understanding, \textit{fides quaerens intellectum}.\textsuperscript{68}

This inspired \textit{local theology} creates awareness that ‘understanding’ itself is deeply coloured by local cultural contexts. The experience of the cultural-rootedness of theology rebounds on a local community when it engages the church tradition entering into dialogues to test, affirm, and challenge its own understanding of the gospel.\textsuperscript{69} Difficulties in cultural encounter with church traditions are responded to in many ways, which include the translation of theological concepts into appropriate local terms. For example, one could require translation of the hylomorphic categories for explaining the Real Presence in the Eucharist which certain cultural contexts do not reflect. Yet, wherever the translations harmonize, who does the harmonization; what principle is at play - emphasizing each aspect and down playing others? This requires a selection principle that deals with local theology as opposed to Western doctrine.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{2.3.1. Local Language Model}

The most important expression of culture is language. There are not only many different languages and many dialects of one language, there are also many ways of talking, many ways of making use of a particular language. This colourful variety is of vibrant interest for

\textsuperscript{68} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 4, 75-76.
\textsuperscript{69} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 75-76.
\textsuperscript{70} Cf. Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 76, 77.
local theologies that attempt to take seriously the many forms and faces of a cultural context.\textsuperscript{71}

This viewpoint targets the audience and makes one more open to reception. Theology is intended for communities and their theological evolution. One way for addressees to understand theology is through appropriate communication. Local idioms impact on the understanding of the meaning of a term when it is introduced. Colonizers who left their linguistic marks on colonies, exercise power even after their departure.\textsuperscript{72} This linguistic colonization is called a ‘colonization of the mind’ because, due to traces of colonialism in languages, ‘language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds’.\textsuperscript{73} This is how implicit theologies are sublimely imported into our languages.

Words develop against the background of a local culture. The fact that concepts are found in local culture gives them a certain depth. Doing local theology embraces ‘using local language… images…concepts…distinctions’.\textsuperscript{74} Translation, for instance, of the Lord’s Prayer could be adjusted to local concepts. ‘Local theologies must be sensitive to the nuances of a local language\textsuperscript{75} - though without making theology akin to languages games or fictive undertaking, or something meant as diverting entertainment.

\textsuperscript{71} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{72} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{74} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p.83.
\textsuperscript{75} Cited in Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 83.
In summary, local theology functions within and beyond the context, and it not only ‘speaks of an infinite God’, but speaks in a local tongue - language that engages the hearts and minds of the respondents.  

2.3.2. Translation Approach

The translation model introduces the gospel translation to new cultural contexts, free from its previous cultural accretions. Translation was often utilized in Christian history. The gospel translated into Greek culture ensured its universality and survival for centuries. The gospel assimilation into diverse cultures preserved it for future generation. Continuing efforts to remain faithful to biblical instruction impelled the use of translation models in new and diverse situations by various Protestant settings. Notably translation has been the ‘‘dynamic-equivalence’ method of Bible translation whereby biblical imagery is first translated into concepts, and the equivalents of which are sought in the local language. These concepts are then translated into specific imageries specific to the culture. In cultures that do not know sheep and shepherds, an attempt is made to discern the theological concepts conveyed by sheep imagery, in order to find how the same concepts might be conveyed in the new culture, albeit with different imagery. Kraft has suggested that the dynamic-equivalence approach might be extended beyond the Bible translation to become a theological procedure. These processes are what is described as ‘infinite translatableity of the gospel’, and which ‘‘principle…brings Christ to the heart of each

76 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. viii.
77 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 6-9.
79 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 6-9.
80 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 6-9.
81 Kraft, Christianity in culture, cited in Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, p.7.
culture where he finds acceptance…to the points of reference within it by which people know themselves.’ 82

‘Translations are generally the first kind of models to be used in pastoral settings, because pastoral urgency demands some kind of adaptation to local circumstances in ritual, in catechesis, ‘rendering of significant texts into languages’. 83 For this reason translation could be done by foreigners in the local setting, thereby allowing for some initial missionary adaptation to the local culture. Older methods and music in liturgy; linguistic equivalents for key theological categories (grace, salvation, sin, justification) could be sought in local languages, so that immediate and pressing pastoral need is met, whereby Christianity is permissible to incarnate in certain measure in the local context.’ 84

But a notable flaw of the translation model is that it entertains ‘a positivist understanding of culture’, which ‘assumes that patterns in a culture are quickly decoded and understood by foreigners. Thus in making decisions about translation, the missionary, the theologian, the liturgist, and the Bible translator do a cultural analysis to a given point, but thereafter it comes to an end’. 85 Cultural analysis is done not on terms of the investigated culture, but only to find parallels with patterns in previously contextualized Christianity. Questions are rarely asked whether there really are such parallels and whether such parallels have the same significance in the new culture or more significant patterns might better be drawn upon: ‘More attention

83 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 7.
84 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 7.
85 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 8.
is given to the surface patterns of a culture than its deeper meanings or to interconnections between different cultural patterns’. 86

For example, where a liturgical renewal is required, and a missionary uses drum rather than bell (considered European accretions) for beckoning people to services, they might meet resistance, since the drum is used for cultural dances in the minds of the local Christians. 87 What is pointed out is the vitality of taking the culture much more seriously than is the case in translation model. If one takes one line of analysis, Jesus Christ took staples of his culture and sanctified them. We too should do same with staples in our respective cultures. Many Protestants have followed this line…the Eucharist is the prime symbol of Christian unity, hence, the elements that make that union possible should be the same everywhere... 88

Taken that, ‘bread’ and ‘wine’ elements should be the same everywhere, how is one to decide? Who is to decide? The strength of translation is for it to remain faithful to the received tradition of Christian faith. A fundamental encounter with the receptor-culture is through its dialect, into which the gospel could be translated, so that it does not remain an alien voice within that culture.

In summary, the translation model is essential, but in the long run, a translated local theology could be only called contextual in a limited sense. 89

86 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 8-9.
87 From Researcher’s personal experience.
88 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 8-9.
89 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 8-9.
2.4. Hierarchy Formations

This approach forms part of religious identities which may be called ‘hierarchical’. By this, the ‘church leadership…tries to move the cultural and religious mixing in a certain direction’. Forming religious identities involves ‘policy of tolerance, permitting varieties of possibilities to flourish within a circumscribed space’. This produces an easy and soft pluralism with an agreement that many things should flourish amicably. While superior to outright conflict, it may lead to lack of commitment to any specific tradition. This soft pluralism was rarely followed by Western missionaries. The choice of December 25 to celebrate Christmas is an example of hierarchic encompassment of the ‘Roman Saturnalia’. Encompassment is re-contextualizing of signs and performances that make identification with Christianity for members in context, even as it transforms Christianity. New religious identities can be formed through ‘legislation’. Official church reforms by the church leadership especially, intended to foster new identities and legislation may work to make contextualization as in vernacularization.

In summary, churches, where legislation is possible, it is an impetuous for expediting contextualization. Potentially, local language, translation and hierarchy models play significant roles in contextual interpretations.

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2.5. Cultural Games and Stories

The diffuse phenomenon of culture could be analysed in the same way as the complex phenomenon of languages. ‘Eating, praying, dancing, reading, games in special locations’ (weddings, elections, worship etc.) are, firstly, examples of such cultural games. ‘Any cultural game is any type of human activity named…described and reproduced’. Local cultural games can determine the cultural context in which theology is taking place; and activities are played in accordance with a canonical set of rules; and, given this framework of rules, games should have to be reproduced, taught and played, based on, if not dictated by the requirements of the context in which, such games or activities transpire.

‘Cultural games structure our lives.’ We have to ‘count on the actions of…fellow human beings or we would utterly lose our social orientation’. This is to trust others’ belief systems and social responsibilities reflected in the cultural games of the receptor-culture. Significant features of cultural games that should not be disregarded and are played on established rules and locations include weddings, elections, and services, for which durations are marked by rituals such as worship services. A missionary coming into the receptor-context should be aware that respondents have their standardized cultural games. Accordingly, these should be respected as well as participated in.

The missionary requires knowledge and competence to meaningfully participate and, should be willing to learn the cultural rules of such games. The authority in respondents of the activities lies in the fact that they are insiders (emic). But who has

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94 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 86-94.
95 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 87.
96 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 87.
97 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 87.
the power to set the standards and to change them? Cultural games differ from
culture to culture, and, for the missionary seeking ‘development in the context of
adapting to a new culture entails being introduced to the standardized cultural
games’\textsuperscript{98} (leadership, communication, religious ceremonies etc.). These require
participation as understood and practiced in context. It is about competence rather
than mandate. Only when such understanding and competence present is it possible
for missionary to analyse that cultural game, decipher its inner structures, and then
learn to play the game efficiently. Simply, the game encompasses the ‘layer of
observable behaviour’\textsuperscript{99} wherein an outsider (etic) who requires mandate and skills
could productively play a standardized inside role.

There are \textit{cultural stories} behind many cultural games which show who has the
authority and how the undesirables are maintained especially for leading cultural
games. ‘Religions touch upon the deepest cultural layers, upon the worldviews. That
is why cultural stories are especially important within the context of doing local
theology’.\textsuperscript{100} It is to discern the cultural requirements for cultural activities in any
context: ‘We cannot understand rituals without the story behind the cultural
game’.\textsuperscript{101} Such cultural games may include rituals sacraments of, including, baptism
or the Lord’s Supper.\textsuperscript{102} Depending on the requirement, the missionary or addressee
should have had some background knowledge and understanding of the cultural story
surrounding such game in order to discern what they see and be enabled to
contextualize the games. There is scant evidence that the missionary founders of the
MCSL wanted to fully understand the cultural stories and games they encountered.

\textsuperscript{98} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{99} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{100} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{101} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{102} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, pp. 90-91.
‘There is a significant connection between the image of God and the ritualistic praxis at work…Behind our forms of worship we can trace an image of God.’

Thus local rituals reveal local knowledge (or local image) of God. The connection then between cultural games and cultural stories is evident in any religious praxis in any cultural context. Cultural stories provide the ‘background knowledge that we need in order to place a cultural game within the cultural framework, to understand the roots of game and the meaning of symbols used.’

Thus behind ceremonies, structures, wearings, songs, designs there are cultural stories: ‘Different cultures are shaped by different stories’ although some may be incompatible. Yet one could talk about the paradigm story of a culture or the founding myth of a religious community in which the influential cultural story shapes the cultural identity. Where cultures encounter, cultural stories are exchanged. When cultural stories encounter, established meanings and newly introduced ones mingle and overlap. Transformation of meanings takes place.

In summary, the confrontations between cultural stories and other stories pose as both sources of conflict and enrichment, for any such cultural encounters in contextualization. Every context has cultural games and stories.

2.6. Christ and Context

‘Doing theology is a way of following Jesus Christ’. It seeks an interactive encounter with him and communion with God. Christ’s life was a series of personal encounters. The portrait one discovers in the gospels illustrates Jesus’
confidence in and dependence on communal indispensability or human resource for mission. He challenged, encouraged and addressed the critical political, social and spiritual issues of his era. He was judged from a Christian perspective using Christian categories.\textsuperscript{110} Albert Nolan, having examined Christ’s theology before Christianity as a religion, argues that Jesus’ life if reconstructed from this perspective can reveal the ‘local categories and images’\textsuperscript{111} by which he is described.

Jesus was a citizen of his local culture and fulfilled his task of appropriating local culture. His description in the gospels indicates his relev\textit{ance} for local human existence: ‘The four small books…..we call the gospel are not biographies…and were never intended to be. Their purpose was to show how Jesus is…relevant to people outside Palestine a generation after…death’.\textsuperscript{112} We cannot jump to conclusions\textsuperscript{113} because it is contestable that these sources reveal certain perspectives authored under particular circumstances.\textsuperscript{114} Though Christ’s theology is explicit, yet the first impression one gets is that he seemed sceptical regarding theology, when reflecting on the circumstances of his ‘harsh words directed against the Pharisees’; which also indicates his grouch against the prospect of systematic, learned theology.\textsuperscript{115}

Jesus instructed at both temple and synagogues.\textsuperscript{116} ‘These were the official institutions at that time.’\textsuperscript{117} Jesus theologized in private in an informal manner.\textsuperscript{118}

This reveals Christ’s regard not only for the texts but also for intellectual skills and

\begin{footnotes}
\item Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p p.21-22.
\item Nolan, \textit{Jesus before Christianity}, p. 13.
\item Nolan, \textit{Jesus before Christianity}, p. 13.
\item Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 22.
\end{footnotes}
The entire circumstances of Christ’s life could be described as a human existence within a local culture, entrenched in his religious traditions. Gutierrez affirms, ‘Jesus was born into a little people, a nation of little importance by comparison with the great powers of the time’. This, coupled with his prophetical affirmations, describes Jesus not only as a legitimate citizen in a local tradition but publicly places him in a local cultural setting. The primary aspect of Jesus’ life is his situatedness in a particular culture. Jesus has evangelized in the local language, experiences and images. Christ ‘celebrated the local feasts and instituted the Eucharist in the context of local memory’. In all these he was using local theological resources. Similarly, one do not create the ingredients of their theological cooking themselves. The challenge is to use what is locally available.

‘It might be argued that Jesus had a home and local roots’, and that as his adolescent life and public engagement accounts are missing, implies that his personal life during that period was local or unspectacular. For: ‘Jesus was…born in Judaism…subject to the law…lived within the limits of the law. The movement he championed is rooted in the tradition of the Old Testament prophetic movement and that of John the Baptist’. He has adequately utilized important Jewish sources for

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120 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 23; Cf. Mathew 1:1-17.
123 Cf. Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 23. ‘Jesus taught with imagery taken from his culture, pointing to the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the sower and the seed, and so on, to explain the mysteries of the kingdom’ Peter Schineller, A Handbook on Inculturation (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), cited in Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 23. He used ‘soil, sand, and saliva’ to do theology. He used images, stories, expressions and thoughts people were familiar with, referred to the local scriptures and the local traditions (Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 146).
124 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 24.
his ministry. Jesus localness is a key to understanding his life of encounters and interactions. 129

Christ has valued the old traditions by reinterpreting them to serve human welfare and not as an end in themselves. 130 He emphasized legitimate but proportionate applications of the law, redefining social borders. 131 He reinterpreted the Sabbath and Pascal meal through the institution of the Eucharist. Jesus has re-affirmed local traditions in the light of change and new challenges. He received theological authorization after spiritual formation: through divine intimacy, sanctity and pneumatological ascesis. He considered himself as ‘one sent’, using this authority for universal and local servanthood. 132 Jesus is pragmatic, 133 - an attitude that permeates his pastoral sense of ministry and human interaction. His theology is inherent in parables. For instance, the Good Samaritan story wherein the persona is moved by the victim’s circumstances, then adjusts to the contextual needs. Besides compassion with reasonable care, the persona recognized his own limitations by delegating the victim’s hospitalization to a local professional. 134 This ministry is service in context 135 indicative of mission beyond boundaries - worthy of emulation in one’s own theological efforts.

This parable asserts ‘that the common understanding of orthodoxy...is not the ultimate thing’. 136 But the important principle is to permit one’s own cultural context

129 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 25.
130 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 25.
131 Nolan, Jesus before Christianity, pp. 27-36.
132 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 27.
133 Nolan, Doing Local Theology, p. 25
134 See Luke 10: 30-37. In this context it is the ‘Inn-keeper/Manager’.
135 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 28.
136 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 28. The Good Samaritan might not be a Christian but one whose faith was ‘unbelief’ by Christ’s Jewish hearers.
to aid and shape their application of theology.\textsuperscript{137} It is challenging to compromise tradition and gospel but also re-appropriating a tradition is a creative act that asks us to uncover our real concern rather than merely following its external forms. Theology should be ingrained in a community through the community. The form ministry takes is not always a theological swathe but is expressed in contextually relevant illustrations including parables, proverbs, poetry, and stories.\textsuperscript{138} A lot depends on the sources that one permit to serve as sources for doing theology.\textsuperscript{139} But would one permit local superstition and customs as a source of theological knowledge? How would one draw the line between faith and superstition?

Christ’s’ radical behaviour to his local culture and religion could be morally despicable, potentially by becoming a stumbling block to especially the Jewish leadership who tried to preserve the people’s rich tradition and religious culture that formed and shaped their prior context. His direction might have been misconstrued. However, Jesus tried to transcend and re-found the community - to rediscover differences and alternatives.\textsuperscript{140} He demonstrates universal claim, by crossing the threshold of his local culture.\textsuperscript{141} This contrasts between ordinary life within his local culture and universal mission. This raises tension between his local existence, and invitation to transcend local context.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{138} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, pp. 24, viii.
\textsuperscript{140} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{142} See Mathew 13:53-58.
In summary, one remains biblically faithful while being contextually appropriate - anchored to Christ\textsuperscript{143} - with authenticity, spirituality, intellectual honesty.

2.7. Contextualization from African Perspective

When taking contextual theology as theological practice in local cultural contexts, there are many consequential things ‘we could or ought to perceive…express through the prisms of the rich, diverse…profound African religious and cultural heritage’.\textsuperscript{144} For instance, the African insight is what Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator has analogized as ‘theology brewed in an African Pot’. His allusion is a uniquely African experience of a special drink, ‘palm-wine brewed from a sap of a palm-tree’ - brewed at three levels.\textsuperscript{145} Its primary level is emphasized when it is consumed ‘fresh, while still sweet and smooth…’is asserted ‘as theology of the people of God’.\textsuperscript{146} The African theology is called ‘palm-wine theology’ - the kind brewed to be sweet, refreshing and enjoyable: an invitation to celebrate theology in African context.\textsuperscript{147} ‘African theology’ (likened to palm-wine), Orobator asserts, - that it ‘offers neither sophisticated arguments nor complicated analysis of the different themes or contents of Christian faith. It is not even a technical recipe for doing theology’.\textsuperscript{148} Could it be that African theology is a theological suspect? How can its uniqueness or worldview be determined?

\textsuperscript{143} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{145} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, pp. 9-10. ‘Palm-wine’ is used in social events including weddings, communal feasts and a variety of ritual celebrations. During the ceremonies the palm-wine pots stood in their midst and groups of four or five men sat around with a pot in their midst. Where a protagonist transgresses a traditional religious code, the palm-wine is sacrificed on the shrine to the deity, on the chief priest’s orders for appeasement. In the Nigeria context in particular, palm-wine is casually drunk to offer hospitality and celebrate friendship in the ‘Week of Peace.
\textsuperscript{146} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{147} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, pp. 9-10.
However, while Africans might see theology as a Western discipline, they also dispute that theology is exclusively western as they have their own theology of God and religious conviction as Africans. African challenge is to adapt their faith, seeking understanding of God and his grace, and articulate their system of belief about God in the African context. The palm-wine analogy forms a very small sample as it may not sufficiently represent all African theological views. Nonetheless, it depicts African theological capabilities within their context, if one’s identity as an African Christian makes it impossible to separate theology from their practice of faith.

African theology links naturally with spirituality, praise, worship and prayer. Africans therefore derive from experience of God in the various circumstances of life and religiousness. They are not incapable of reflecting more intensely on their faith and its implications for Christian living: ‘Doing theology is not an isolated enterprise, particularly in Africa where doing theology is a community event’. As Orobator re-echoes:

> I lived part of my early life within the milieu of African religion, being familiar with gods, goddesses, divinities, deities, and ancestors of my people. I participated in many worship rituals in my family and developed a strong awareness of communion between the human and the divine in daily life…

This view of Orobator’s is personal but also implicit that the ‘…heritage and Christian faith could complement one another in a way that one could find

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meaningful, enriching and deeply satisfying’. African Christians are not wavering between two worlds. There is that identity as African and at home as an African Christian which too is an invitation to explore the compatibility of the African cultures and theology. Part of the issue confronting the MCSL is the lack of engagement between western theology and faith, and that of the local context. The palm-wine parallel clarifies the difference between African religious and westernized views, which draws attention to reflection on the meaning of Christian doctrine as seen in the light of the living traditions and the experience of African people. African recognition of God before arrival of the missions complements their capability of theologizing God. ‘By religious heritage and experience, Africans knew the nature of God, meaning of worship, mediation…creation…divine providence and retribution’. A local African without a theological training in the knowledge of their religion could only do theology within their understanding.

African theology is incomplete if it overlooks the universal significance and models of Christology. ‘Christology is a rich source of theology of the identity and significance of…Christ not only for the communities that first used…the Gospels but also for us today’ who work our answers to the Christological question. Jesus’ ultimate identity is revealed by himself. One only understands the meaning of the gospel when one situates it in context or framework of the contemporary situations. For example:

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The name Jesu Kristi is relatively new in Africa. Africans did not call upon this name of Jesus before the advent of the Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, Jesu Kristi has gained popularity on the lips of African Christians. In many parts of Africa, songs have been written, liturgies composed…humorous stories told about Jesus in local languages. This popularity embodies a profound quest, namely, the quest for the true face of Jesus. I used the words, ‘true face’ deliberately. I wish to show that the Africans’ quest for ‘who Jesus is for us’ cannot be satiated by simply adopting Christological formulas…models developed in foreign cultural contexts.  

It might be asserted that it does matter that Jesus transcends culture. Or Jesus subsumes culture. These are two different understandings. But how could one recast the alien and expatriate images of Christ in the mould of the rich and colourful African religious and cultural worldview in order to discover an authentic and meaningful African identity and personality of Jesus today? This interrogation is not academic but represents a continuous quest for Jesu Kristi who responds to questions posed by Africans themselves. The result of this quest in the African theological circle ‘is a strikingly litany of Christological titles, models…proposals, along with an extensive job description for the African Christ’ as

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\text{ancestor, diviner, traditional healer, healer, chief, guest, warrior, life giver, family member, initiator, mediator, intermediary, friend, loved one, brother, elder brother, ideal brother, universal}
\]


brother, proto-elder, kin, kinsman, chief priest, chief elder, ruler, 
king, leader, liberator, black messiah….\textsuperscript{163}

Sometimes the plethora of African Christological titles or proposals are in conflict with one another ‘though this conflict is more apparent than real’.\textsuperscript{164} One can discern certain elements of convergence among the designations, depending on the departure point. Some theologians might begin from what the Bible says about Christ and then try to find names and titles in African culture complementary to the biblical teaching and others in the reverse.\textsuperscript{165} Jesus is presented as Healer after a research in healing as Jesus’ principal activity in the Gospels ranging from ‘specific cures’ (for example, exorcisms) to ‘catechetical cures’, ‘resurrections’, ‘social integration’. The complex phenomenon of sickness and healing in Africa is examined and the conclusion attempts to create a place for Christ as Healer in Africa. Another proposal is ‘Chief-as-Chief’ commenced by identifying and describing the traditional images and symbols of the local chiefs and, then applies these images and symbols to Christ of the Gospels.\textsuperscript{166}

If there is a problem of faith in Africa that derives from the way they understand or misunderstand Christ, it is a Christological problem. Because, it has to do with how they reconcile the relatively new personality of Jesus with what they have known and lived as their way to God long before the advent of missionary Christianity.\textsuperscript{167} ‘Africans knew God, but they did not know God’s son. The only new thing the

\textsuperscript{163} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p.73.
\textsuperscript{164} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p.73.
\textsuperscript{165} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p.73.
\textsuperscript{166} Cited in Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p.73.
\textsuperscript{167} Cited in Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p.74.
missionaries brought to Africa is Jesus Christ, not God’. 168 Africans say, ‘we know God…acknowledge ancestors; but who is Jesus for us?’ 169

In summary, the theological challenge from African perspective is to articulate a clear model of theology within the framework, or ordinary and inward experience, of African Christians. The proposals which are authentically African, will speak to the African perception, acknowledging the diversity and variety within the meaning of ‘African’.

**2.8. Conceptual Definitions of Contextualization: Challenge**

To contextualize is to understand the language, longings, lifestyle patterns and worldviews of receptor-contexts, and adjust theology without compromising the gospel. The gospel challenges and confronts, and the result is penetration, not harmonization. 170 These reflected theories may help clarify relevant benchmarks of contextualization.

Darrell Whiteman says:

> Contextualization: [A]ttempts to communicate the Gospel in word…deed…to establish the church in ways that can make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain in their own culture. 171

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This suggests the gospel’s capability of being authentically embodied in a wide embrace of human societies as contexts demand. The phrase ‘allowing them to follow Christ and remain in their own culture’ distinguishes the gospel from cultural and non-Christian worldviews.\(^\text{172}\) If entering into Christianity requires surrendering one’s native culture in favour of another, how can a believer grow and witness Christ while remaining an active member of their non-Christian culture?

For Niebuhr and Newbigin,

> if the gospel is to make sense, it has to be communicated both in the language of those hearing and clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them….the gospel does not come as a disembodied message, but as the message of a community which claims to live by it and which invites others to adhere to it…It must…‘come alive’. Those to whom it is addressed can say…‘This is true for me, for my situation’...\(^\text{173}\)

Contextualization involves the ‘communication of the gospel by someone in a particular setting to someone else in a different context’,\(^\text{174}\) but to be communicated for recipients to comprehend and then respond appropriately. This invites critical contextualization. God desires that human culture reflect his nature as ‘God does not disengage from culture but works for spiritual revitalization of culture from within’.\(^\text{175}\) Christian ministry may affirm the value of culture, rather than work in


\(^{175}\) http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/14_1_PDFs/05_Van_Rheenen.pdf, 2005.
opposition to it.\footnote{http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/14_1_PDFs/05_Van_Rheenen.pdf, 2005.} ‘Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture’.\footnote{http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/14_1_PDFs/05_Van_Rheenen.pdf, 2005.} The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture.\footnote{Gospelcom.net, http://www.lausanne.org/Brix?pageID=12891, 2009.}

Dean Flemming says:

Contextualization has to do with how the gospel revealed in Scripture authentically comes to life in each new cultural, social, religious and historical setting…Every church in every particular place and time must learn to do theology in a way that makes sense to its audience while challenging it at the deepest level.\footnote{Flemming, \textit{Contextualization in the New Testament}, p. 13-14.}

Biblical application is not only a matter of truth or use but also of relevance and critical contextualization. Contextualization is more than theological cultural change. It requires an understanding of language, values, societal rhythms, and people’s worldviews.\footnote{Flemming, \textit{Contextualization in the New Testament}, pp. 13-14.} It is a passion to make disciples, guided by the missiological principles, ‘to make disciples of all nations - among all people’.\footnote{Flemming, \textit{Contextualization in the New Testament}, pp. 13-14, cf. Matthew 28: 19-20.} The principle concerns the entire biblical revelation, suggesting that the scripture is an authentic tool of contextualization. ‘God so inspired human authors that the cultural settings, languages, biblical events…the meaning of the text itself might bear the stamp of transculturality’.\footnote{David J. Hesselgrave, ‘Great Commission Contextualization,’ \textit{International Journal of Frontier Missions}, Vol. 12:3 (Sept. 1995), p. 139.} This is inclusivity in whatever way the teaching objective of Christ is interpreted. The key to local and universal theology is provided through that
principle in which the ‘gospel becomes a substance, strategy, message as well as a
method for authentic contextualization’. 183 ‘To be faithful to its calling, the church
must be contextual…relevant within a specific setting’ and ‘relates constantly and
dynamically to the gospel and contextual reality…The context itself does not define
mission, rather, culture is a necessary part in equipping the church for mission.’ 184

‘Everyone lives in a cultural setting which can help the church to translate the gospel
for the society to which it is sent.’ 185 The church lives in the context of its
surrounding culture, engages with the culture, though not to be controlled by the
culture. 186 Its nature is sufficiently defined by its function including participation in
apostolic ministry. 187 However, one better comprehends and interprets their
interactions as their cultural setting may demand.188

Lamin Sanneh has defined contextualization in terms of Bible translation into the
vernacular idioms in the post-colonial African church. The translation model is again
emphasized as central to contextualization – the vehicle for contextual
transformation. The successful penetration of Christianity into Africa has occurred
when it was assimilated into the local dialects. 189 ‘The Gospel is…of many pieces of
good news - to understand them, people have to hear in their own language.’ 190
Although translations must undergo a rational process191 because

it is not what the translator or the recipient says that makes what the

183 Hesselgrave, ‘Great Commission Contextualization,’ p. 139.
184 Darrell L. Guder, Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America
185 Guder, Missional Church, p. 113-114.
186 Guder, Missional Church, p. 113-114.
187 Kirk, What is Mission?, p. 35.
188 Guder, Missional Church, p. 113-114.
189 Lamin Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West (Grand Rapids, MI:
190 Kirk, What is Mission? p. 75.
191 Sanneh, Encountering the West, pp. 16-17.
Bible is, or what it is not, but what both of them hear or do not hear in
the bible gives the gospel message its power and status…the translated
form will continue to speak authoritatively to…the missionaries
(…transmitters) and the local people (…receivers or adaptors) alike. 192

The challenge is being faithful to both text and context. The understanding is
subjective, so there may not be dogmatism about what it must mean in a certain
context. If the gospel is seen through different sets of lenses provided by their
contexts, it could be seen differently depending upon which lenses are worn. If
biblical revelation could be allowed to judge any and every context, the context must
determine what one chooses to say or not to say from out of the gospel. 193 The text
and context are united in faithfulness to God’s revelation in Christ. 194 Christ as a real
human engages the respondents in the concrete realities of their lives and by
understanding their contexts. 195 But to relativize the text is to lose its transcendent
dimension; to absolutize it is to make it irrelevant. 196

Contextualization integrates hermeneutics (interpretation of truth) and authority
(criteria to be adopted) which encompasses the whole theological enterprise. 197 One
can understand the insights of context and mission in the context that mission in terms
of contextualization could be seen as a necessity for one to be a true disciple in one’s
own situation; though this questions the missionary’s genuineness in other contexts
espoused by propaganda of Christianity being a Western business. 198

192 Sanneh, Encountering the West pp. 16-17.
193 Sanneh, Encountering the West, pp. 16-17.
196 Hesselgrave and Rommen, Contextualization, pp. 201, 129.
197 Samuel Vinay cited in Chris Sugden, Gospel, Culture and Transformation: A Reprint with a New
198 Sugden, Gospel, Culture and Transformation, p. 2.
Samuel Vinay proposes:

We go into a context with the text. The text...is Scriptures...Bible...Texts include written resources and mythologies. Clothes and attitudes are also text....The text is placed in context which is the contemporary reality that the text must address...engagement in the context with the text...shapes...fashions, human beings ...human environment...how one takes the text which may contain theories, beliefs...affirmations, and get involved...how that involvement shapes you and the context as well.\(^{199}\)

Mutual interaction is what the text bearer and receptor-context accomplish together. Each not only accomplishes for themself what the other attempts to accomplish but a sort of benefit may be derivable from what is exchanged during their interactions, encouraging a fresh way of being a church with an adaptable gospel to cultural contexts without losing biblical vision.\(^{200}\) The challenge of contextualization cannot be overemphasized here. How to be faithful to Christian life and relevant to local culture suggests slippery edges of contextualization: ‘false and authentic’. False contextualization yields to uncritical accommodation, a form of culture faith. Authentic contextualization is prophetic, arising from a genuine encounter between God’s Word and world, and moves towards the purpose of challenging and changing the situation through rootedness in and commitment to historical moments.\(^{201}\)


Contextualization can narrow one’s perception and experience\textsuperscript{202} and more. However, what plausible structure a church espouses, if contextualized remains debatable.

2.9. Conclusion

Culture is the way we live and the framework within which we live as social beings. Contextualization relates the gospel to a cultural context in a way that the insiders could understand and participate in mission, from their perspectives, languages and cultures and systems. Contextual/local theology interprets the Christian faith which is conscious of the import of the context and connection for shaping the theology. Relevant benchmarks contextualization may be judged to include: hierarchy, education, language and translation and worship models. The past and particularly the present reality of the MCSL will be considered from an understanding of contextualization to ascertain to what extent the local context helped to shape the faith and practice of the church. Whether translation of the western words and practices into Krio or Mende was contextualization will be considered and the resultant contemporary MCSL challenged.

\textsuperscript{202} Schineller, \textit{Handbook on Incultration}, p. 72.
Chapter Three

Sierra Leone and Christianity: Brief Historical Background

3.1. Introduction

The hypothesis is that MCSL needs to face the challenge of contextualization to increase its missionary potency in Sierra Leone. For MCSL to be contextual it is required to engage with culture. Every context has a cultural story. This chapter considers the socio-historical and religious setting of Sierra Leone; and what the contextualization challenges might be.

3.2. Sierra Leone and Christianity

3.2.1. Sierra Leone’s Origins

Sierra Leone has a proud historical, religious and cultural background, like any West African nation. Sierra Leone has a tropical climate and is rich in natural resources, although underdeveloped. Farming and mining are the major occupations of the people. Sierra Leone’s present approximated population is 5.2 million and is a Republic. Sierra Leone was among the first West African countries to be contacted by Europeans in the 1400s when western explorers commenced infiltrating the region. In 1652, when the slave trade commenced in North America, the first slaves were transported to there from Sierra Leone. Throughout the 1700s Sierra Leoneans were continuously exported to the Americas to work in plantations.

203 Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 1-8.
By 1787 Sierra Leone was under British control, to which 1000 or more laves, freed mostly from Nova Scotia, had returned. Most of these freed slaves were Christians. They relatively westernized their homeland, including the practice of western style of Christianity. This made them very different to the indigenous non-slave population in the inland area. This explains why Freetown - so shaped by western zone influence, is part of the reasons that the MCSL failed to contextualize, because many African members, who had come from North America/Nova Scotia, were actually very western, in their culture.\(^{206}\) This influence is still relevant today.

The return to Africa of the freed slaves significantly marked the establishment of the ‘first modern Church of tropical Africa with a continuous history to the present day.’\(^{207}\) It discredited the notion that the modern church of Africa commenced by missionary agency - it in fact arrived ‘a ready-made African church’.\(^{208}\) The religious fervour and revivalist-style of worship of the vibrant black settler community not only impressed external observers, but also augured well for a Christian experiment making Sierra Leone ‘the beacon of light to Africa, the springboard of missionary enterprise’.\(^{209}\) This ‘gave a decisive shape not only in West Africa, but to Christian history’.\(^{210}\)

In 1808, Sierra Leone became a British Crown colony with its geo-political boundary fixed in 1896.\(^{211}\) Later the country was structured into Provinces with each province subdivided into districts and chiefdoms. The key geo-political divisions are: Western

\(^{206}\) Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, p.15.  
\(^{209}\) Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission*, p. 7. The ‘black settler community’ is a vital iconic element of this work and so it would be substantially discussed at relevant points as the study progresses.  
Area; Southern, Eastern and Northern Provinces. Freetown is the capital city and was the educational centre of British West Africa in the 1900s. The key provincial headquarters are Bo, Kenema and Makeni. In 1955 a constitution was drafted providing a framework for independence. In 1961 Sierra Leone achieved Independence. Post-independence saw corruption take hold, and the eruption of revolts - from 1970s to 1990s, from 1991 to 2002 violence and civil war became endemic leaving a legacy of social, economic and political challenges for state and church. Both the nation and the MCSL have been shaped by the historical context.

3.2.2. Sierra Leone’s Christianity

Sierra Leone Christianity developed with the colonial universal missions. The early church’s text was kingdom of heaven apologetic while the medieval church used a forceful reading of ‘compel them to come in’. The Church extended its influence through aggressive acts of war, both understood as justified and necessary. Since it was inconceivable for a European monarch to reign over pagans, baptism into the church was enforced as a consequence of conquest. A new religious order was instituted to enforce the church’s monopoly over personal and state affairs. The church truncated the gospel. The text was restricted to the European culture, not the receptor-cultures. God’s kingdom was moved from a contemporary, spiritual, social and personal reality to a distant realm of heaven, entrance to which was also mediated by the church. This was not universalization but totalizing theology,

213 Fyfe, A Short history, pp. 1-4.
215 The word ‘mission’ was not used in the New Testament. It first appeared in the sixteenth century by Ignatius of Loyola and is historically linked to the colonial era.
216 Matthew 4: 17.
suppression of difference and a claim to sole voice.\textsuperscript{219} The general purpose of mission was mitigated, and contextualization not actively considered.

The 1300s saw European navigators embark on an extension of their influence through exploration and discovery.\textsuperscript{220} Christians developed the conviction of having an exceptional role to play in the expansion of God’s kingdom through the missionary enterprise.\textsuperscript{221} The Pope provided the moral authority for exploration and exploitation whereby pagans and infidels, especially, could be enslaved according to the conquerors’ fancy. This intentionally disrespected other nations’ cultures including their religions. The colonial world power was manifested by brute force or by threat.\textsuperscript{222}

Paganism was considered as absence of ‘civilization’; and ‘civilization meant European culture’ .\textsuperscript{223} As Bosch commented, ‘Christians believed that their culture was superior to those of [other] nations, yet they did not isolate cultural uplift as a goal of mission. It was simply assumed that people would live a better life once God’s rule was established over their respective societies’.\textsuperscript{224} However, outstanding Christian philanthropists confronted the commercial policies. The situation changed to ‘benevolent colonialism’ authorizing the colonial powers to take responsibility for their colonies in the 1800s. This virtually resulted in allowing for missionaries to operate with considerable freedom, helped create the nation of Sierra Leone.

The missionaries were normally allies and under the authority of the colonial structures. They saw colonial control helpful to their own enterprise. But was the

\textsuperscript{220} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, pp. 298-301.
\textsuperscript{221} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, pp. 298-299.
\textsuperscript{222} Pobee, ‘Two Species in a Genre and Two Carriages of a Moving Train’, pp. 122-129
\textsuperscript{223} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{224} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, p. 260.
missionary endeavour truly a mask for Western imperialism? Though the missionary values differed from colonial interests, there were similarities. The missionaries were convinced of the superiority of the Western culture. Concepts like natural selection and evolution were transferred to social endurance, which philosophy resulted in Euro-centric and patronizing understanding that people from non-European cultures were not seen as ‘different’ but as inferior.

The close association of the gospel and self-image of the propagators perpetrated colonial abuses, resulting in collusion that changed the gospel or at least its perception. Jurgen Moltmann indicated that the ‘kingdom of freedom’ of God’s sovereignty for humanity peculiarly reserved privilege to the white Christian male. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, mission was assumed not so much as God’s gospel imperative but the response of the Church’s obedience to the ‘Great Commission’.

Wilbert Shenk contends that, the Protestant post-Reformation until early 1800s, was a church without a mission. The church’s calling to reconcile the world and God was hijacked by theologians who conceived their task as concerned with just intellectual questions within western academia and ecclesia. Calvin’s doctrine of predestination and Luther’s ‘justification through faith by grace’ meant that salvation

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227 From the ‘Social Darwinism’ theory, though Social Darwinism itself does not necessarily engender a view of racial superiority but it ‘argues for views such as the inevitability of progress, or the potential degeneration of humanity’. wikipedia.org 103 cited in Crowhurst, *Investigating the Model of Jesus*, p.160.
231 See Mathew 28: 18-20.
was in God’s hands alone, not humanity’s. Therefore God in Christ brings those to be His regardless of missionary endeavour. 233 This was a pessimistic view of humanity’s future, as well as passivity. God has revealed Himself to everyone through nature and the early apostles. Thus everybody’s destiny was predetermined. This had the capacity to virtually paralyze the missionary effort. Mission enterprises were assumed within the framework of colonial expansionism. Issues of soteriology and ecclesiology dominated the Reformation. The nature of the true church was understood in Word and Sacrament but not in Mission until the 18th and 19th centuries. 234

The West created a gospel that profoundly reflected their cultural dimensions. Mission was not presented to the receptor-cultures in order to discover Christian belief in and based on biblical teachings. Neither was their approach historical. Mission was not presented in a way that had taken into consideration receptor-cultures’ historical development. However, the colonial attitudes lead into dimensions of knowing. What appears as incapacity challenges us to return to the same place but with fresh perspectives. When the text is read with foreigners, we see new ways of seeing, understanding and rediscovering how the Bible speaks in community.

In summary, the challenge is suspending personal, cultural and religious ideas and practices to explore experiences and meanings of others on their own terms.

incarnating in the world of others.\textsuperscript{235} The Western Church legacies pose new challenges for their established churches.

\textit{3.2.3. Primary Missionary Activity}

Sierra Leone mission progressed with the European missionary drive overseas by the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries headed by the Portuguese during their voyages of discovery. The work initially commenced with Freetown\textsuperscript{236} though the missions mainly concentrated in the hinterland between 1600 and 1900.\textsuperscript{237} Besides its central role in West African Christianity, Sierra Leone was established as a settlement in 1772; named ‘Freetown’ for the settlement of Nova Scotian ex-slaves and for the Christian experiment in 1787. The Portuguese identification was followed by the slave trade.\textsuperscript{238} After abolition of slavery, Sierra Leone was identified as an idyllic settlement for British philanthropic interests and later became a British colony in 1808. The Philanthropists of the settlement for the liberated African slaves ‘conceived their task to be one of making amends for the evils of the slave trade by introducing the Africans to a culture which has Christianity at its heart.’\textsuperscript{239} The West understood and considered other destinations to be pagan areas that required both the gospel and ‘the benefits of western civilization’.\textsuperscript{240} Their civilizing ministry subverted the African race and culture, reflected even in the Protestant missionary encounter with Sierra Leone.

\textsuperscript{236} T.S Johnson, \textit{The Story of a Mission: Early Attempts in Establishing Christian Missions in West Africa}, (London: SPCK, 1953) p. 11. T.S. Johnson played a distinguished role as an African Priest and Bishop in the church’s growth in Sierra Leone. He was a Creole and hailed from Sierra Leone.
\textsuperscript{237} Hanciles, \textit{Euthanasia of a Mission}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{238} Johnson, \textit{The Story of a Mission}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{239} Johnson, \textit{The Story of a Mission}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{240} Cf. Guder, \textit{Missional church}, p. 6.
The economic, social and political links between the locals and Europeans transformed into missionary enterprise, laying the foundation for the early Protestant missions in Africa, commencing with Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{241} The Protestant churches arrived in Africa with an imposing urgency to evangelize the non-Christians, stressed the biblical text\textsuperscript{242} to justify their elective concept as well as the necessity of foreign mission.\textsuperscript{243} They claimed that the gospel was universalized, and therefore applicable to particular nations and individuals.\textsuperscript{244} Thus ‘Non-Christians were…dismissed as the ones who had rejected the light of the revealed truth’.\textsuperscript{245} This sought to impose their understanding of Christianity on others.

Christianization of other cultures like Africa was their westernization, depriving them of their own past.\textsuperscript{246} However, the Evangelical Revival which influenced the Protestants gave them a new direction. Their gospel stressed ‘individual responsibility’ for accepting salvation through Christ,\textsuperscript{247} not implying that response to it is personal by imposition. The resettlement of the freed slaves on the West African coast created the opportunity for these Evangelicals to demonstrate their faith by useful philanthropic services albeit in a British society image.\textsuperscript{248} The CMS was the first Protestant missionary emissary in the African missions with Sierra Leone as inaugural field in 1804.\textsuperscript{249} It was established in 1799 in England for mission to Africa and the East with aims to teach various useful branches of European culture, so as to promote British-Christian civilization among Africans. Their

\textsuperscript{241} Hanciles, \textit{Euthanasia of a Mission}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{242} Cf. Romans 8: 20-23.
\textsuperscript{243} Crowhurst, \textit{Investigating the Model of Jesus}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{244} See Romans 10:18.
\textsuperscript{246} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 4, 75-76.
\textsuperscript{247} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{248} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{249} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 15.
educational system initially flourished, but also proved defective because it was too academically-oriented.\textsuperscript{250}

CMS mission was principally centred in Freetown until the 1860s. But since there was little mission in the hinterland until 1876,\textsuperscript{251} it shifted its mission to the Northern Province which also coincided with the wake of the financial problems initially encountered in the Freetown mission.\textsuperscript{252} CMS being a dominant agent of education and evangelization in the north-western hinterland\textsuperscript{253} erected local schools and a church on the request of the chiefs in Rio Pongas. The converted chief purportedly recited the \textit{Te Duem} ‘with great solemnity and accuracy’.\textsuperscript{254} Yet the chief having been sent to England by missionaries for further education, on return lapsed into his former faith.\textsuperscript{255} Could it be that the nature of education offered here by Christianity might not have met their deep spiritual needs, and may have not been culturally relevant?

The northern work aborted at some point since the missionary assignment was to institute mainly commercial business especially among the Susu group (north-east) ‘under an oath to evangelize’ them to Christianity, including the locals already entrenched in Islam. The CMS suffered fierce resistance from the Moslems and hostility from the slave merchants’ who felt threatened by the missionary presence. The missionaries, re-deployed to these communities, merchandized the locals rather than converting them.\textsuperscript{256} The particularities of this community, including mission and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{250} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, p.169. \\
\textsuperscript{251} Hanciles, \textit{Euthanasia of a Mission}, pp. 6-7. \\
\textsuperscript{252} See Fyfe, \textit{A short history of Sierra Leone}, pp.51-52. \\
\textsuperscript{253} Alie, \textit{A New History of Sierra Leone}, p. 102. \\
\textsuperscript{254} Hanciles, \textit{Euthanasia of a Mission}, p. 13. \\
\textsuperscript{255} Johnson, \textit{The Story of a Mission}, p.26. \\
\textsuperscript{256} Fyfe, \textit{A Short History of Sierra Leone}, pp. 51-52.
\end{flushleft}
social responsibility, required new theological interpretation.\textsuperscript{257} It required a dialogue model, rather than confrontation, in order to demonstrate flexibility and the gospel’s integrating power in the community. The challenge was providing a discernible response to questions of identity and mission in context.\textsuperscript{258}

With the northern failure, CMS effort was decisively diverted to Freetown to concentrate on evangelism. In Freetown the freed slaves’ African worship styles were considered idolatrous and uncouth by CMS. They were identified as in need of western education by CMS and the colonial administration.\textsuperscript{259} English was enforced as official as well as the Christian idiom of communication in Church and Government. The Recaptives succumbed to western Christianity and European culture for \textit{status quo}.\textsuperscript{260} However, locals considered western education, including English language, as subversive to social and religious tradition. They had their cultural beliefs, idioms, and institutions whereby people were trained in communal life and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{261} The Western education was resisted initially, but the local population saw the benefit of ‘at least knowledge of basic English, and, in order to thrive successfully in the colony’, they began sending their children to missionary schools for education. Contextualized African worship styles gave way to European styles. This is part of the legacy that still impacts the division within the MCSL.

The Freetown ministry also sustained the institution of community schools, churches, and a higher institution, as a reciprocal public service delivery between the CMS and the colonial administration. Their teachers’ mandate re-echoes:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{257} Cf. Schreiter, \textit{The New Catholicity}, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{258} Cf. Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, pp. 7, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{259} Johnson, \textit{The Story of a mission}, pp. 27-28.
\item \textsuperscript{260} Fyfe, \textit{A short history of Sierra Leone}, p. 52.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Olson, \textit{Church growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 34.
\end{itemize}
…While your time and labour are chiefly engaged in the instruction of children in matters of common education, and in opening their minds by constant catechizing, and thus endeavouring to lead them to the knowledge of themselves and of God, you may through them, do much for their parents, and for their all adult persons…We are not backward to confess that our main hopes of being instruments of God in Africa are founded on the rising generation. The state of the Native Mind, and the habit in which the people have long indulged, are most unfavourable to their moral and religious improvement.262

Sierra Leoneans were deemed uncivilized Africans, corrupt, and depraved, and so needing to be educated and converted. The children were malleable for change, if detached from the corrupt influence of the community. This shifted the focus from epistemology, the questions of how to discover reality, to hermeneutics, the questions of what assumptions to bring to the pursuit of reality into Sierra Leonean culture.

CMS was organized by ‘Articles of Arrangement’ articulated in London, and approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The local constitution drawn by the Society and Sierra Leone Bishop placed active pastors and their congregations under the Bishop, assisted by a council and church committee vested with administrative powers.263 The local work operated under the native pastorate structure incorporated by an Ordinance of the Legislative Council; and that the ‘Native Pastorate Auxilary

262 Olson, Church growth in Sierra Leone, p. 32.
263 Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity, pp. 88-89.
Association’ provided funds to support native pastors.\textsuperscript{264} The constitution was pragmatic. But this leadership model was not contextual because it was not developed within the Sierra Leone cultural context and was British-oriented model placed onto Sierra Leone.

Church structures and educational institutions with religious education were introduced in parishes. African priests were been trained and ordained. Each parish had a local church committee comprising laymen, lay helpers, licensed Catechists, and itinerated clergy. The local congregation assumed self-support. These were all to strengthen the local ministry. The contextualization challenge is that the local capability started to be explored. They appreciated the Church was gradually going to be independently African, and the work would be handled by Sierra Leoneans for their own location rather than by outsiders.

In summary, like Catholicism, the Protestant mission failed to emulate the Christian church in all its cultural expressions. The CMS’s gospel and mission structures did not develop from Sierra Leone’s cultural perspective.

3.3. Socio-Historical and Religious Background

Sierra Leone’s social and religious values have shaped its cultural context before and after colonialism; what contextual challenges could this have posed?

3.3.1. Primary Religious Culture

The primary religion of Sierra Leoneans was a form of ‘animism’ or African Traditional Religion, which like any African belief, was perceived and expressed through the prism of the rich African religious and cultural heritage. When people

\textsuperscript{264} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 90-91.
embraced Christianity, they did so as African Christians equally as a path way to God and their way to live in seeking understanding, love and hope.\textsuperscript{265}

Animism was practiced largely among the ethnic communities, especially the Mende, that is the major cultural community with various local dialects, social customs and traditions typical to Sierra Leone traditions and culture.\textsuperscript{266} This tribe converted to Christianity under missionary Methodism. In seeking understanding, love and hope, the unique place for this to happen is within a community of believers. That is, a community of \textit{praying, worshipping, and praising believers}.\textsuperscript{267}

Animism also provided this culture. ‘Animistic Spirituality’ was ‘personal, familial…communal for specific occasions’, unlike the regular worship practice.\textsuperscript{268} This fills out the picture of theology as a sustainer of life of prayer, praise, and worship, and these in turn feed theology. This further expands theology’s definition as not only ‘faith seeking understanding, love, hope’, but also ‘prayer, praise, and worship’.\textsuperscript{269} These prayers form part of the way of worshipping as well as theologizing from the perspective of Sierra Leoneans.

Sierra Leoneans naturally related to their own world through their social and religious history, it is fundamental to all belief system.\textsuperscript{270} The Mende religious universal rationalization, for instance, was different from missionary rationalizations. Their social, kinship and productive arrangements have entailed taxonomy of ‘beings, forces, cults, things, actions…space and time, in a worldview’.\textsuperscript{271} These

\textsuperscript{266} Kenneth L. Little, ‘The Role of the Secret Society in Cultural Specialization’ \textit{American anthropologists Vol. 51}, (1951) 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (1967), p. 28.
\textsuperscript{267} Orobator,\textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{268} K .L Little, \textit{The Mende of Sierra Leone} (1951), cited in Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{269} Orobator, \textit{Theology Brewed in an African Pot}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{271} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 45, 60.
were not only acknowledged but worshipped as ‘Supreme God, nature spirits, ancestral spirits, mischievous spirits, spirits of secret societies…impersonal power’ mediated by local priests, priestesses, and diviners whom God purportedly communicated with.\(^{273}\)

This experience of God as a Supreme Being is a shared feature across African cultures. The above experience offers a way of worshipping God as Spirit. In Sierra Leone, Christian religion might be strange to Africa, but spirituality was not foreign. In Sierra Leone, as in much of Africa, it was not the missionaries who brought spirituality. Long before, the missionaries came, Sierra Leoneans had developed their own way of perceiving, expressing and celebrating their experience of God. This practice embedded priests, priestesses, prayers, worship forms, shrines/sacred places, sacrifices, taboos and respect for ancestors.\(^{274}\) The missionaries largely ignored what they found, and rather than contextualize Christianity, they attempted to replace the indigenous practices with their foreign version.

But worldview changes as perspectives move.\(^{275}\) It looks at events and information from normative and descriptive angles.\(^{276}\) Through this dual focus, one could discern the world around them by setting ones behaviour within larger frames of significance. These frames ratify ones visions or judgments practically, morally and behaviourally, though they also obscure from ones view whatever does not fit.\(^{277}\)

Animism ranged from the belief in spiritual forces to the supreme/ultimate God, to familial ancestors, through to the spirits of the founders of the local communities to

\(^{272}\) Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone* (1951), cited in Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 42.
\(^{273}\) Alie, *A New History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 22-23.
\(^{276}\) Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 182.
\(^{277}\) Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 93.
the nature spirits. The beliefs were organized around a worldview that the power behind creation was the supreme God and nature spirits capable of affecting both personal material and social circumstances: whether good or evil. Sierra Leoneans could not have lived as Africans without the supreme God. In Orobator’s words, they did ‘believe in God, who manifestly communicated the divine being to them in the life, death, and resurrection (the paschal mystery) of Jesus Christ’. For Sierra Leoneans, God exists and is. Or, in West African pidgin, ‘God dey’. Although this in no way precludes their sincere desire and genuine effort to come to a better understanding of God in whom they put their faith and trust as Christians.

This traditional belief system was both monotheistic and polytheistic with veneration of God and spirits likened to Christian Trinitarianism. These beliefs were expressed through intermediaries and symbols (including ancestors, trees, stones, etc.) thought to possess divine mystical powers. God’s intrinsic attributes including providence, sin, death, resurrection, judgement were being celebrated. God was professed as sensitive to social, physical and spiritual phenomena. God’s sovereignty was indelibly imprinted and visible for all to see in attributes or nature. God was at work in all culture contexts. Though transcendent, God had not left Himself without a witness community. Sierra Leoneans had the knowledge of God as could be understood.

The channels for God’s communication in traditional belief systems are local priests, priestesses, diviners or ancestors. This act of communication, among other things,

283 Acts 14: 17.
contains both means and message. Hebrews 1:1 talks about God communicating with our ‘ancestors’ at various times in history through various ways, means, and people. Theologically, this experience of God communicating and manifesting the very being of God to humans is revelation. This implies God entering into a relationship with our ancestors and us tells what God does in human life including life itself, mercy, truth, light, love, and freedom. The traditional Sierra Leone belief could be incarnational, and needed to be taken more seriously by missionary Christianity.

This knowledge of divine revelation was articulated or enacted in various sacred ‘rituals’ whereby God and other spirits were believed to be communication lines between humans and things. These rituals were the Halei, ‘medicine’ bestowed and derived from God. What anthropologists called medicine, fetishes, secret societies (sodalities). They were largely performed by sodalities, but also had taken various others forms, Poro (for male), Sande/Bundu (for female) and Humui (neutral). These served as traditional educational and social institutions, especially in the Mende context, purposely to develop youngsters for responsible adulthood within the frame work of communal law, custom, tradition, and for socio-economic productivity in society, after a suitable instruction. Basically, these social institutions replicated training/empowerment models because they had shaped and equipped the community members for socio-economic and leadership roles in response to their cultural requirements. A culturally relevant Methodist Church is therefore required to engage with these contextual expressions for Christianity to be an indigenous

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289 Wright, *Behind the lion Mountains*, p. 28.
religion.

The humui structure as baptism incorporates into Christianity, could be likened to church - assemblage of the faithful. It controlled both religious and ethical laws with ostracism as punishment for some violations. In other contexts, it also ended ostracism (death) and began new life (rebirth) for an offender, just as in church situations when in baptism Christians die to sin (death) and are born to newness of life (rebirth) in Christ.\textsuperscript{290} Sodality is likened to national institutions that perform diverse functions, including educational, recreational, religious, and medical functions.\textsuperscript{291} However, the national and church institutions had developed much more structured systems than the traditional institutions could provide, thus creating lucrative job possibilities, and opportunities for any trained within these systems than the indigenous cultural institutions. In spite of initially rejecting western education, the simple fact remained that the locals had preferred western (missionary) education even for their children, in order to benefit from them. The dominance of those versed in western culture is still a factor for the MCSL.

The missionaries had denounced traditional belief as paganism and that God detested worship of other gods, images and symbols.\textsuperscript{292} This might also imply that cultural veneration of God, and other spirits through emblems, was superstitious. Parrinder reminds us of the diversity with the traditional concepts of God, but that common traits still can be discerned.\textsuperscript{293} The cultural veneration of God and spirits through symbolism is equally a unique way of culturally theologizing God and his creative work in human situations. In rejecting traditional belief the missionaries rejected

\textsuperscript{292} See Deuteronomy 5: 7-8.
local culture.

In summary, today, the traditional religious convictions in seeking understanding, love and hope are the context for relevant Christian elements to be considered through traditional faith elements.

3.3.2. Primary Social Culture

The social structure is drawn from the rich resources of cultural belief, and ethical values. The society was organized into ‘family web units’ tailored to an extended family system. This structure was the backbone of decision-making with most decisions ratified by household units. This was headed by elderly members who also performed social and priestly roles; tied in reciprocal relationships to the household membership, established on common economic and social concerns, as well as largely religious and lineage interests that provided the ethos for activity.

The households, extended family and kindredship, constitute the compound unit, administered by household heads and compound leaders. The males remained the head in the domestic situation. The traditional matrimonial deal was a polygamous household. The missionary challenged the apparent barbarism of polygamy from their western point of view, but did not know the implications, especially in Mende culture. Polygamy procured not only independence and positive networking relationships, but also formed the base of the political hierarchy and for socio-

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294 A large-sized household may consist of one or two older men and their wives, some or all of the children, husbands and wives of their sons, and a number of grandchildren. Such households may also contain additional members, including more distant relatives (either from the husbands’ or wives’ side) as well as one or more dependants of the head of the household unrelated to the rest of the group. A small-sized may consist of only a man and his wife or wives and their children, one or two relatives, such as his mother or sister. If a stranger, either of the same tribe or of another, wishes to live in a town, he is lodged as the guest of one of the households and as long as he/she stays there, he/she is considered as a member of the household (see Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 51).

295 Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, pp. 51-52.
economic productivity. The entire family system is relatively fluid as it provides or allows for corporate roles hemmed with enhanced cultural kindredship ties within the cohesive society. It demonstrates the theology of understanding the nature of the socio-cultural institutionalism, but discovered, in and based on, collective participation, co-responsibility, education, solidarity, and authority. That said, polygamy cannot be romanticized, in a naïve way, especially considering possible implication for vulnerable women and children.

One constituent of the cultural ties, especially in the Mende society, is local language. People express themselves better in local idiom. Jesus used local language, experiences and images in mission. We are challenged with the relevance and adequate use of local idioms for identification and full engagement with the cultural context. ‘The expression of culture is language’. Local language is a dynamic cultural element by which people are identified, related and communicated with. The missionaries failed to learn the indigenous languages in Sierra Leone, on the pretext that they could not cope with the linguistic multiplicity. English triumphed in the Colony, due to the western orientation of the freed slaves, making knowledge of the vernacular unnecessary. But inland, it did not triumph. The few English literate locals served as missionary interpreters of the vernacular. This enabled the missionaries to avoid having to learn the local dialects, and ‘definitely hindered the acceptance of the gospel and prevented identification of the Good News with the tribal way of life’. Theology is intended for communities and their theological evolution. And one way for the addressees to have understood theology is by appropriate communication.

296 Cf. Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, pp. 61-73.
297 Wright, Behind the Lion Mountains, pp. 5, 6; Magbaily Fyle, The History of Sierra Leone, p. 3.
298 See Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 23.
299 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 81-82.
300 Olson, Chruch growth in Sierra Leone, p. 39.
301 Olson, Chruch growth in Sierra Leone, p. 39.
Local idioms propel the understanding of the meaning of a term when introduced. The failure to express faith in local idiom contributed to the failure to contextualize

In summary, the traditional religion demonstrated a deep-seated knowledge of divine transcendence and immanence, thus promoting an ultimate deity culturally, as collectively and individually understood to control existence. The social institution perpetrated paternal hegemony, and was submissive to masculinity. The family organization provided an understandable example of local hierarchical leadership. The Missionary input to mission growth is to be acknowledged but, nevertheless, much of the western ethos was culturally neutral.

3.3.3. Current Religious context

Religion is still an important part of Sierra Leone culture, the key religions being Islam (about 60%) and Christianity (about 30%), with the Traditional Indigenous Religions- being about 10%. In Sierra Leone, the major Christian associations are the Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship. The major Muslim associations are the National Council of Imams, the Supreme Islamic Council, the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress and the Federation of Muslim Women of Sierra Leone. These organizations are mostly concerned about promoting the interest of their respective communities. These key religions have, in their agendas, issues and activities related to peace building and development. The most prominent new organization is the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, instituted in 1997 as a chapter of the World Conference on Religion

302 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 81-82.
303 Alie, A New History of Sierra Leone, pp. 22-23.
And Peace. Its mission is to ensure co-operation among Islam and Christianity in Sierra Leone to promote peaceful co-existence.  

There is no ‘National’ religion, although Church-and-State relationships are cordial, in spite of the Church sometimes being misunderstood in its challenges pointing to civil justice and peace issues in the national interest. Sierra Leone is multi-religious. Such religious diversity calls for mission structures that can create unity among the faith communities. Post-missionary dynamics have developed religious expressions in ways different to missionary religion. African Spiritual Churches provide practical and emotional forms of worship relevant to the cultural experience and expression of belief.

By 1970 60 to 70 new Christian denominations had emerged, such as, the African Spiritual Church which has mushroomed since its inauguration in 1940. The African Spiritual Church has been tolerant to the polygamy issue for ordinary church members though not for priests and church leaders and their membership has soared since Independence. Unlike the missionaries who dismissed polygamy, they are flexible with social issues. There is a contrast in cultural relevance between the African Spiritual Church contrasts with that of Methodism.

Crucially, many adherents of this spiritual church have dual membership: ‘one in a mainline church and one in a Spiritual…Church. These members primarily desire to enjoy the revival services of the African …Spiritual Churches while alive, and wish to have a grand funeral at the mainline churches at death’. This suggests dual religious identity. The mainline church members are involved in the African church

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309 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, pp. 18-19.
310 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, pp. 16-18, 204.
311 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, pp. 16-18, 204.
for spirituality, and belong to the mainline church for social advantage.\textsuperscript{312}

A significant feature of these African Churches is the use of drums, dancing and African music in their services. It is arguable that this practice is to reshape the faith practices, experiences and understanding of Christianity in Sierra Leonean but vitally as African Christians. But, also, this depicts aspects of ‘sycraticism’ i.e. borrowing from and mixing together of the African spiritual and Christian elements of worship. The issue of syncretism continues to be contentious as the Christian church has emphasized ‘keeping the gospel message pure and unadulterated’.\textsuperscript{313} Thus the westernized Krio have frowned at cultural music in churches because they were directed by missionaries, that ‘in order to be a Christian, one ought to abandon one’s African Culture and Heritage.’\textsuperscript{314} Yet Christianity encountered cultural settings with the phenomenon of peoples in cultures borrowing from Christian elements and incorporating them into their own religious systems. Many indigenous churches in Africa sprang up with an emphasis on healing, ecstatic behaviour, and exorcism (embodiments in Christ’s model), and there was little that established churches could do about it,\textsuperscript{315} as the British background could not fully understand the reasoning behind these issues.

Many African Christians believe aspects addressed by the African Spiritual Churches such as fetishes, witchcraft, and sorcery. The mainline churches may not be satisfying the deep spiritual needs, compared to African Spiritual Churches that stress the pneumatological role in the believers’ life, and claim to ‘interpret

\textsuperscript{312} Schrieter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 144, 147-149.
\textsuperscript{313} Schrieter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{314} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{315} Schrieter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 350, 144-145.
dreams…visions, exorcise, stress fasting, prayer, and offer sacrifices’ for members, justifying these aspects not on African, but scriptural ground. They combined fasting and prayer purportedly providing successful ventures for members. The challenge of dual religiosity and syncretism in the national religious fabric today cannot be overemphasized, particularly with the rapid growth of such denominations. For instance, the Church of the Lord (‘Aladura’): Adejorbi, originating from Nigeria in 1947, is prominent among the spiritual churches with an expression of African spirituality very different from missionary churches.

The Church of the Lord (‘Aladura’): Adejorbi was inaugurated in Sierra Leone in 1952. During its inception service in Freetown, an epileptic patient was reportedly, miraculously healed. Purportedly, their worship is culturally-oriented, as it is expressed in ‘local…natural cultural way of drumming, clapping, dancing…exciting, so giving…expressions of joy in worship in a congregation that experiences the…grace in creation, redemption… salvation in miracles.’ The church provides ‘faith healing’ services and seminary discipleship development. The healing aspect has attracted missionary church members. Unlike the colonial missions, the IAC model is practical. They use blended Christian and Traditional religious elements discernible as Sierra Leone cultural particularities to a degree that western missionary Christianity is unable to match.

In recent years the IACs have expanded and established many provincial branches. This has created an overwhelming impact, not just on evangelization, but by way of contribution to indigenous leadership formation and church development. The

316 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, pp. 16-18.
318 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, pp. 16-18, 222-234.
President of the MCSL, Rt. Arnold C. Temple, for example, had initially undergone the ‘Aladura’ discipling training scheme. IAC is under local leadership.\footnote{Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 225-229.} One noticeable local Spiritualist leader, Prophet and Primate E. J. Fofanah, founded the \textit{Church of Salvation} ministry in 1946\footnote{Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 224, 230-231.} replicating ‘Adejorbi’. His spiritual authorization was purportedly through a divine revelation. Since 1972 the church, commencing, initially, as a domiciliary Prayer group grew to an established local church principally up-country and with a Temple (Cathedral) in Freetown. Other aspects of missions were not ignored as the Church with educational institutions up-country\footnote{See, Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, p.231.} greatly influenced the growth of local (African) ministry.\footnote{Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 202-221, 233-235.}

Traditional church denominations, including the Anglicans, are gradually moving away from foreign influences discernible by localized liturgies being developed for their services.\footnote{Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 18-19.} The situation about the African spiritual churches may seem apologetic, or romanticizing, but they are historical as they are shaped for African culture by taking into consideration the other historical religious traditions, they are working on a reverse course from the colonial African missionary prejudices. The prevalence of local allegiance to syncretism and dual religiosity cannot be overemphasized. They use the framework of Christianity for their communities. Thus, as a result, that the Bible is subject to re-interpretation.

In summary, the Spiritual churches, re-interpret the gospel through the lens of local cultural expressions, very different to mainstream Western background Christianity.
3.3.4. Current Social Context

Despite colonial effects, indigenous cultural institutions, as highlighted above, preserve Sierra Leone’s cultural life and stability. Sodality and family web systems provide the context for civic mediation and interactions.\(^{326}\) Sodalities sustain local and national authorization for adjudicating disputes, enforcement of custom and tradition.\(^{327}\) Both models basically display the cultural hierarchy of leadership. They bring cultural challenges for church structures and institutions.

Creativity is part of the Sierra Leonean culture. This context reflects itself in the people’s talented and creative arts, music, dancing, production folklore, songs, riddles, and proverbs.\(^{328}\) The creative model is a challenge to making sense from the perspective of the Christian affirmation that, in God, we live and move and have our being. Sierra Leoneans articulate stories, songs, proverbs and different forms of speech as to how they came to be where they are. The stories also form the basis of their creation-faith. Creation theology is native to Sierra Leone as is true of Africa.\(^{329}\) The religious culture is multi-religious though this could not obscure their monotheistic belief in God who holds sway over all creation. Both models demonstrate transcendence and immanence.

Sierra Leone is multi-cultural and multi-lingual. Immigration brought ethnic and cultural diversity. There are currently 20 different African ethnic groups, as well as Europeans and Asians. This diversity brings the challenges of the creation of cohesive unity among the different people. There are 18 existing tribal languages and

\(^{328}\) Alie, *The New History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 262-265.
\(^{329}\) Cf. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, p. 44.
groups with Mende and Temne as key idioms.\textsuperscript{330} Krio (linga franca) is extensively spoken, and English remains as official.\textsuperscript{331} This raises issues of the effects of the local language differences on mutual cultural communication. The language diversity poses a need for greater balance between the interlocutors. The greater familiarity the interlocutors have with the cultures involved, the better the communication may be.

In summary, the contextualization task for others is capturing the elements of traditional and Christian religions which could best give expression to the religious experience of the community.

3.4. Conclusion

Sierra Leone has potential for contextualization in terms of local resources. The IAC is a local manifestation of Christianity, as it combines local cultural and Christian elements. The traditional institutions do provide a context of perception and coping with Sierra Leonean religious and social capabilities which played a dynamic role in the missionary encounter and interactions in accomplishing intended outcomes. Against this background the development and level of contextualization of the MCSL will be considered.

\textsuperscript{330} \url{http://www.sierraleone-foundation.org/}, 2009; \url{http://geography.about.com/od/sierraleonemaps/a/sierraleonegeography.html}, 2012.

\textsuperscript{331} Alie, \textit{A New History of Sierra Leone}, p. 79; \url{http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/249/general_information/Africa/Sierra Leone}, 2009.
Chapter Four

MCSL’s Growth to Autonomy: Brief Analysis

4.1. Introduction

MCCL faces the task of contextualization in order to increase its missionary potency in Sierra Leone. Contextualization is appropriating the gospel to a people’s cultural context from their perspectives, translating the gospel message and appropriating relevant ways of being a church. The chapter examines MCSL’s identity, growth and weak level of contextualization achieved.

4.2. Beginnings: WMMS Influences

MCCL is a British influenced institution from the primary missionary work of WMMS in Sierra Leone. It originally emerged as the Sierra Leone District under the jurisdiction of the British Methodist Conference. The WMMS’s involvement in Sierra Leone work is traced back to the arrival of the freed slaves in 1792, who were largely from Nova Scotia that had moved there from America, and Maroons who had returned from Jamaica sometime later. These returned former slaves were relatively westernized and so.

MCCL budded from a western perspective, but then developed within the local circumstances of Sierra Leone. This provides the premises for challenges in contextualization, derivable from Sierra Leone’s contribution to the establishment of Christianity which, through the freed slaves had an international interest.

Consequently:

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333 See abbreviations.
Christianity is primarily the child of ex-slaves, who arrived in…Freetown ‘singing hymns of praise to Jesus’, who had delivered them from the terrible burden of slavery, into the gentle care of several Western Missionaries, for example, the Church Missionary Society…Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society…

Between 1790 and 1792 the settlement received 1,031 Nova Scotian, returnees besides the 550 Maroons who had arrived since 1780. The Wesleyan Nova Scotians and Maroons, altogether 100 members, organized themselves into ‘a weekly, payment of a penny, class meeting’ without a ‘regular pastor’, - The class meeting was styled, ‘The Methodist Big Meeting’. Their elders acted as local preachers and class leaders. Their organization not only depicted Methodism’s identity but their familiarity with the Methodist pattern of conducting themselves indicated a sense of ability to organize locally without missionary supervision.

Nevertheless: ‘Their local leadership sought to keep the flock together, but did scarcely anything in the way of aggressive mission…the class groups conscious of their own defeats, made requests for external ministrations.’

This band enthusiastically requested the services of a ‘missionary’ to ‘discharge the office of Christian minister’ The WMMS sent the Rev. George Warren who arrived in Freetown in 1811. His demise as a result of ill-health in 1812 was followed by a succession of other missionaries in 1814 who also died due to various invalidities.

The first local Methodist workers, assigned to the Yoruba Community were Edwin Birckerseth and Charles Marke. Later, Marke became a General Superintendent of

334 Cf. Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, p. 16.
338 Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, p. 75.
the Wesleyan Church. Joseph Wright succeeded him in 1826 after his ordination with Charles Knight, who laboured till 1855.\textsuperscript{339} The appointment of these local missionaries demonstrated that local people could evangelize their own local people once they had received the needed empowerment.

In the 1840s, the Recaptives’ ecclesiastical dichotomy resulted in the formation of independent Recaptive churches in Freetown.\textsuperscript{340} At this stage the WMMS actually consisted mainly of Freetown congregations. When other missions were extending to the surrounding areas of Freetown or beyond, their missionaries resided in Freetown with executive control roles from the centre of the Colony:\textsuperscript{341} ‘a Methodist missionary appointed by the Methodist Church in Britain was the highest person in authority in the Sierra Leone...’\textsuperscript{342} But worship services and classes\textsuperscript{343} were already established and managed by the African Returnees.\textsuperscript{344} The above approach firstly suggests that the missionaries retained the authoritative right to govern MCSL. This was not a contextual approach as their authority ethic was British-oriented, and it was derived not from the MCSL’s context but from that of the British Conference.

The returnees, though of African descent, were western-Christian coverts, influenced by European culture, and so were not contextualized to the rest of Sierra Leone leadership system based on Sierra Leone cultural circumstances just as satisfactorily as missionaries had done to accomplish their intended mission outcome.

In summary, the brand of Methodism installed by the British (Western) Christianity,

\textsuperscript{339} Marke, \textit{Origin of Wesleyan Methodism in Sierra Leone}, pp. 3, 11. The Reverends Charles Knight, and Joseph Wright were Nigerians and repatriates to Sierra Leone.
\textsuperscript{341} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 75-77.
\textsuperscript{342} Cf. Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{344} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, pp. 88-89.
supported MCSL’s development, but it was the locals themselves who initiated its successful growth.\textsuperscript{345}

\textbf{4.2.1. Factors for Growth}

WMMS’s work began with the Krio (Recaptives), in Freetown and their efforts in the Mendeland from 1840 to 1900 enhanced the establishment of MCSL,\textsuperscript{346} dependent on evangelism and education.\textsuperscript{347}

\textbf{4.2.1.1. Evangelism} \textsuperscript{348}

The missionaries began by proclaiming a commitment to a pattern of life, which they believed, they embodied themselves. Their gospel influenced conversions to Christianity and holistic evangelization – to reconstruct minds, conduct, and space.\textsuperscript{349} That the acceptance of Christ’s Lordship was understood to require submission to his authority, which they considered, reposed in the gospel and its hearers were what their ‘evangelism’ was based upon.\textsuperscript{350} The Mende, for example, were asked by the missionaries to replace their traditional social and religious practices by Christianity. That is, to abandon sacrifices and ancestral spirits and take up missionary religion. A traditional priest challenged them with a question, ‘How…can I follow this new teaching while the old still works?’\textsuperscript{351} The belief and practice of the Mende, converts were, therefore far from what missionaries expected of them. The above scenarios do not suggest a contextual approach, because Christ’s Lordship, although significant, was adjudicated only through the missionary cultural lens not the local cultural lens.

\textsuperscript{345} Johnson, \textit{The Story of a Mission}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{346} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 310.
\textsuperscript{347} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{348} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, pp. 130-131.
\textsuperscript{349} See Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp.26, 85.
\textsuperscript{350} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, p. 86.
Taken, therefore, that every culture has cultural stories and games, the WMMS misunderstood these values in Sierra Leonean social and belief history, in what looked like, coercion or forcing, their western religious culture on to the locals. This was tantamount to repeating the ‘civilizing’ mission’s which colonial missions, such as CMS, had followed during the northern tribal missionary era, without sensitivity to the fact that missionary culture is different from the local culture.

Also, requiring the local natives to abandon their traditional sacrifices and ancestral spirits or portrays their ignorance of local belief system and social responsibilities. The missionaries needed to be aware that Sierra Leoneans had their own cultural activities, which could have been respected and engaged with rather than rejected. Jesus transcended and re-found the community, but whilst rediscovering differences and alternatives, we could remain biblically faithful while contextually appropriately, being anchored to Christ.

Mission methods adopted to achieve their goal included:

…preaching of the whole gospel with all its implications…adopting the policy of…long period of teaching and probation before acceptance into Church membership; requiring potential members of the Church to learn by heart the Lords’ prayer…Apostles Creed…Ten Commandments…facts of Jesus’ life and teaching …to have ability to read; the building up of strong Christian character in schools to enable Mende girls and boys to stand out courageously for their Christian ideals against opposition, Circuit rallies, Local Preachers’ and catechists’ conventions, refresher courses for catechists and Local

352 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 86-94.
353 Cf. Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 25, 86-94.
Preachers; evangelical revivals...to ‘deepen the spiritual of life of...existing membership; and ‘redeem them from their past evil ways and strengthen them to pure Christian lives...\(^{354}\)

This approach does not suggest a contextual model. It is a dogmatic approach, applying theological philosophies not taking into consideration Sierra Leonean particularity. The expression, ‘redeem them from their past evil ways and strengthen them to pure Christian lives’\(^{355}\) suggestively underscored the social and religious values, placing missionary Christianity over and against the indigenous belief as the missionaries overlooked the historical heritage that shaped the local cultural context.

This phenomenally evangelistic approach could have aided the people’s spiritual and social nurture in Methodism, but it was practically ecclesiastical-oriented rather than missionary focused. If the New Testament had been written to a gospel community (including church and society), the context to understand it must be in full engagement with the people’s circumstances. The gospel that was preached or demonstrated in services focused on the ability to influence and meet the receptors’ requirements\(^{356}\) at the expense of the Sierra Leoneans.

The Mendeland missionaries viewed it an imperative to sound the evangelical note which proclaimed the only hope to be centered on Christ, by aggressive evangelism. They aimed at producing quality protectorate Christians, a positive teaching to replace the teaching offered in the traditional social institutions was attempted.\(^{357}\)

The attempt at eschatological gospel is a contextualization attitude, as the locals

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\(^{354}\) Cf. Yambasu, *Dialectics in Evangelization*, p. 131; Pratt, *The Methodist Church Sierra Leone*, p. 11.

\(^{355}\) Cf. Yambasu, *Dialectics in Evangelization*, p. 13; Pratt, *The Methodist Church Sierra Leone*, p. 11.


\(^{357}\) Yambasu, *Dialectics in Evangelization*, p. 131.
could have been encouraged to give a witnessing response that redefines how they function and hope as Christians. But to have redefined their cultural values, could be viewed as a destabilization of their social system.

The use of traditional language is a contextual move. Mende was used for instructions by missionaries in Mende services. This could enhance understandable communication lines between the natives and missionaries. The use of local agency in the production of the requisite scriptures, and translation of the Bible in Mende is acknowledged.\textsuperscript{358} That Mende hymnals produced by missionaries like W.T. Balmer\textsuperscript{359} was a contextual attempt. But if such translations were single-handedly undertaken by the missionary, translated hymns were still very western. Local agents as interpreters had a very secondary role. A contextual challenge is to develop translation (including local translators) of local cultural relevance. Local concepts can give out certain in-depth understanding of words or symbols\textsuperscript{360} provided the parallels with patterns of previously contextualized form of words are found.\textsuperscript{361}

The Missionaries/ministers in the Mende mission were predominantly British, with Krio as their counterparts. These missionaries were confined to pastoral work among the existing members rather than larger community evangelization,\textsuperscript{362} except for a few local catechists and lay pastors, who bore greater responsibilities for aggressive outreach to the numerous societies and class meetings not itinerated by missionaries. The 1843 London Committee report affirmed that: ‘Each lay pastor visited all the

\textsuperscript{359} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{360} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{361} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{362} Pratt, \textit{The Methodist Church Sierra Leone}, p. 11.
villages around his station until churches were planted’. 363 Their ministry was restricted by missionary institutionalism. 364 As affirmed:

We…tended to become institutionalized, the ordained Minister is often a European, the administrative problem is very real; pastoral work is often left to untrained or inadequately trained Catechists, who although they are often good pastors must inevitably have a restricted ministry, since ordination is denied them, and so they are unable to fulfil vital functions when trying to minister to the spiritual needs of their own people. 365

The local church workers were potential contextual missionaries’ materials, if empowered, but their gifts and graces were subverted or eclipsed by conventional structures. Missionary staff, predominantly British, lorded it over them 366 by reserving executive roles, delegating duties, and living ostentatiously. 367 Leadership is a contextual model and has to be tailored to missionary leadership culture. But no less than for Jesus, this above anomaly requires that MCSL should take a particular form, shaped according to the cultural and historical context in which it lives. 368

The Local Preachers and Agents that developed among the natives and other rural churches demonstrated charismatic values. For instance, ‘In a way unprecedented in a Tikonko Circuit…prayer and the laying on of hands by Christians…healed a sick Christian lady whose illness was believed…to be caused by evils spirits’. 369 The gospel permits local expressions of Christian faith, and addresses demonic elements

363 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 89.
364 Wright, Beyond the Lion Mountains, p. 11.
365 Wright, Beyond the Lion Mountains, p. 11.
367 Wright, Beyond the Lion Mountains, p. 11.
368 Cf. Schreiter, The New Catholicity, pp. 78.
369 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p.149. ‘Tikonko Circuit’ is in the South.
in every culture. This was something that came naturally to the local converts, but was more alien to the missionaries.\footnote{Gibbs and Coffey, \textit{Church Next}, p. 149.} Crucially, even when the mission progressed, the African being Ministers, catechists, and teachers were been recruited from Freetown to serve in the provincial circuits.\footnote{Pratt, \textit{The Methodist Church Sierra Leone}, pp. 8, 9, 15.} As such they were from a different context to the indigenous locals.

As far as the evangelisation of the Provinces was concerned…Christian lay men and women…played an effective part during their stay in the provinces as traders, civil servants, commercial clerks and teachers to build up the work in the different provincial circuits.\footnote{Pratt, \textit{The Methodist Church Sierra Leone}, pp. 8, 9, 15.}

Sierra Leoneans of virtually all walks of life had actively participated in evangelism. However, that these human resources were deployed from Freetown to resource the provincial work means that the provincial local manpower was disempowered, or underutilized for meaningful mission. The work was not contextualized enough among the local majority considering the cultural skirmishes between them and the missionaries in the preceding discussions. The Freetown Krio, with a similar westernized background to the missionaries, was not able to contextualize the faith for rural Sierra Leone.

In summary, though the missionaries endeavoured evangelistic breakthrough, there were contextual challenges of translation, leadership re-appropriation and cultural orientation.
4.2.1.2. School Approach

The ‘school approach’ applied especially in the Mende mission was based on the strategic development plan presented to London headquarters for integration of formal education and manual labour for the indigenous children. This called for close attention to be paid to the adaptation of formal education to parallels and exigencies in local tradition. In the terms of missionary discretion, by 1932, mission schools and other institutions were constructed across the connexion with a corresponding increase of missionary personnel. Such educational institutions established included ten boarding/day schools, one Central Boarding School for Boys and one catechist training Institute. These were potential evangelistic tools. These institutions were to fulfil the missionary criteria of Christian capacity-building: character nurturing and creation of Christian workers in the light of the 1920 initial justification for the school approach, including,

…to make…provision for raising up and training of an indigenous ministry as distinguished from the Creole ministry…to establish boarding schools for training of the children who will come from heathen homes…

From these schools, it was hoped that a number of suitable boys will…be trained as evangelists, preaching the gospel in their mother tongue…to serve both practical proofs of truth of Christianity as a transformer of

373 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, pp. 116-122.
374 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, pp. 96-97.
375 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, pp. 96-97.
376 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p. 97.
people’s lives for the better…and as instruments for socializing and reshaping…life patterns into what missionaries believed was Christian.377

It was contextual in ensuring that every activity in the justification dimensions/outcomes was translated into a language and forms of behaviour that should be understood by and identified with the local communities’ demands. Upon the above expectations, the Mende decisively romanticized Christianity’s prospects over other religious influences. They offered themselves for voluntary mission as vernacular and English teachers, preachers, evangelists, nurses, and ministers. They supported their own children’s education in mission schools largely independent on missionary assistance. The reciprocal use of local and missionary resources cannot be overemphasized. Yet the schools delinked from the local churches, while the educated children and elites delinked from the communal tradition as many of them migrated to urban areas for white-collar jobs.378 This could have developed the indigenous children for useful local community services. However, it was not contextualized enough but was conditioned by a civilizing approach - education cloaked in European cultural nuances that served only missionary interests rather than the local cultural contextual needs. It decontextualized their children instead, and so was rejected, creating a subculture more attuned to westernized Freetown, and colonial jobs. A few locals offered themselves for training or work as paid and volunteer catechists. The Mende concentrated on their farming which was judged to

provide them a better financial means than the missionary education could initially offer.\textsuperscript{379}

The challenge of indigenous personnel development cannot be overstated. Missionary retrenchment still meant that a missionary could not properly supervise the local work single-handedly. The catechist training institute was set up to engage suitable Mende to serve as teachers/catechists in a role that was crucial to the missionary success.\textsuperscript{380} By 1920, when missionaries extended frontiers to evangelize the Mende, many of them were received into membership but only three Mende Ministers were ordained from the eastern province.\textsuperscript{381} This degree of attention given to indigenous (Mende) development seemed scanty and could not have adequately enhanced them for effective contextual work.

In summary, the school scheme revealed a significant element of missionary success by colonizing Sierra Leonean consciousness through western education.

4.3. Contexts of Growth

This section presents two main contexts of MCSL’s growth: Krio and Mende ministry.

4.3.1. Methodist Creole Mission (British)\textsuperscript{382}

In 1843, the Wesleyan Educational and Theological Institution that had been established aimed at training Methodist members for ecclesiastical vocation. This became a ‘Native Training Institution’ in 1850 and described as ‘a powerful auxiliary

\textsuperscript{379} Cf. Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 97, 132-133.
\textsuperscript{380} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 97, 116, 132-133.
\textsuperscript{381} Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{382} All information for this section is from the ‘Synod Minutes of the Methodist Church - Sierra Leone’ unless otherwise noted. The Synod Minutes are in the manuscript form in the MMS/SOAS Archives.
in the spread of the evangelical faith’ throughout the colony and beyond.\textsuperscript{383} The challenge was to provide an education that would develop locals for ministry in their own cultural situations. But as commented by Olson, it ‘was an excellent education’ only for ‘the Creoles who desired to become Europeanized’, and ‘it did not equip them to evangelize’ the ‘regions beyond’ as anticipated.\textsuperscript{384} The training culture was based on the European-cultural education. This institution provided courses in terms of western academia.

The 1850 District Synod affirmed mission concentration in Freetown.\textsuperscript{385} The missionary success in this context was incomplete without the local Krio efforts. Krio work within this period produced three Circuits, using their own local resources (human and fiscal).\textsuperscript{386} Pastoral care and oversight of class meetings were assigned to their local class leaders whereas the missionary superintendent had only itinerated quarterly supervision. ‘No other language than English was used’ in this mission.\textsuperscript{387} This shows that the locals (Krio and Natives) had the capabilities to practice Christianity in their own way in parallel to the missionary executive work. The imposition of English language suggests missionary reluctance to recognize the importance of the local languages to the success of the mission in Sierra Leone.

The 1855, the District report indicated ‘heavy dependence of the Methodist Church on funds from England.’\textsuperscript{388} The Conference Committee in England, facing financial difficulties, instructed the District to reduce, or keep their expenditures within the annual grant-in-aid budget. This resulted in rigid structural adjustments affecting the

\textsuperscript{383} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{384} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{385} ‘Synod Minutes 1850’, MMS/SOAS Archives.
\textsuperscript{386} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, pp. 89-90.
\textsuperscript{387} ‘Synod Minutes 1845’, MMS/SOAS Archives.
\textsuperscript{388} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 91.
institutions, as well as teachers and students in the Native Training Institution. The missionaries could only continue appealing ‘to their home board…for financial help’ to assist the Returnees in the Colony. By 1854, 6,828 members were distributed among 34 chapels in four circuits.\textsuperscript{389}

One problem faced by the missionaries in 1855 was the members’ ‘ideal that their church…should look like those in England’\textsuperscript{390} and in contrast to other churches in Freetown. This pride had been observed by various denominations and church leaders in Sierra Leone as being more concerned about the prestige of edifices than the cultivation of sustainable spiritual growth in their churches. The dependency syndrome has been difficult to eradicate, with other churches still depending on overseas support\textsuperscript{391} not least the MCSL. We are challenged against foreign buildings in which to institutionalize Christian community. We must recognize such features of Jesus’ model of theologizing as an invitation to mission that is vulnerable, and as a response to cultural questions and needs.\textsuperscript{392}

By 1857 the missionaries declared the entire Colony church as healthy, thinking that the London Committee could ‘afford the means of extending the Mission into the interior’ with confidence so that the ‘course should be pursued.’\textsuperscript{393} Ironically, by 1860, ‘only the English-speaking’ towns within the Colony were evangelized but then by local Africans.\textsuperscript{394} The standard of the work, especially in the colony, cannot be justified with reference to only missionary factors, but local African factors as well. In 1866 the London Committee requested that the Sierra Leone District be
transformed to a native Church as an initial thrust towards self-support, self-reliance and self-propagating mission, since Britain’s financial support was phasing out. Yet in 1867, when the District was placed under native administration, the Chairman and General Superintendent remained a European appointed by the British Conference.\(^{395}\) A European missionary as chair of the native administration would not be a valid arrangement, because the native capabilities could be degraded, or their right to their own local affairs would be usurped by missionary institutionalism.

**4.3.1.1. Colony Ethnic Outreach**

This outreach claimed a conversion of around 9,000 members including some Muslims. This challenge influenced the establishment of the Freetown City (ethnic) Mission Circuit in 1920. But by 1922, with an ‘awesome congestion of ministerial activity…in…the Peninsula’, as reported, ‘Little was done to reach them.’\(^{396}\) The reason being that the Krio, like the missionary, refused to learn the local idiom of and interact with the inland local natives. Instead, evangelism was confined to the minority Krio and literate/English-speaking communities. The Krio who should have evangelized ‘on their own ground and through the medium of their mother-tongue…did little or nothing to commend the new faith to their neighbours.’\(^{397}\) This created a dichotomy developing into hostilities between the Krio and others.\(^{398}\) Their cultural context was not approached responsibly. Jesus ministered as if people of all categories matter. Taking part in his mission challenges us to address our own people unconditionally.\(^{399}\)

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\(^{395}\) Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 93.  
\(^{396}\) Annual Letter of the London Committee of the District Synod (1922), MMS/SOAS Archives.  
\(^{397}\) ‘Wesleyan Missionary Society’ Vol. 1922: 4:81, MMS/SOAS Archives.  
\(^{398}\) Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, pp. 98-99.  
\(^{399}\) Cf. Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p.33.
However, the Krio work in their cultural locale (colony) was productive, as ‘there was a curious sense of commitment to the Christian Faith…the work among them continued to grow…largely supported by themselves…it is true to say, that for a long time…since the creation of the District circuits…churches in the Freetown area subsisted on local support’.\textsuperscript{402}

In summary, the Krio’s strong sense of self-hood and self-support not only resulted in the construction of Chapels\textsuperscript{403} but contributed immensely to the growth of Freetown Circuits. However, this success by the western focused Krio continues to perpetuate a difference between Freetown and inland Methodism.

\textbf{4.3.2. Methodist Mende Mission}

Mende mission commenced in 1883. This society was people-centred and event-oriented founded on communal interactions.\textsuperscript{404} Work started in the 1890s in the Tikonko-Bumpeh area in the south, and through Rev. Robert Gush in Bandajuma Sowa in 1901, Methodist work steadily progressed in the Mendeland, and the mission was undertaken because the inhabitants were considered largely heathen and less Islamised. They were marked by the missionary as deserving beneficiaries of

\textsuperscript{400} ‘Wesleyan Missionary Society’ Vol. 1922: 4:81, MMS/SOAS Archives.
\textsuperscript{401} ‘Wesleyan Missionary Society’ Vol. 1922: 4:81, MMS/SOAS Archives.
\textsuperscript{402} Charles, \textit{The Methodist Church in Sierra Leone}, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{403} Anderson, \textit{Outline}, p.2.
\textsuperscript{404} Cf. Pobee, ‘Two Species in a Genre and Two Carriages of a Moving Train’, pp. 122-129.
human, material and religious resources of the WMC.\textsuperscript{405} The missionary motivation suggests a civilizing mindset of the missionaries towards the Mende society. The very notion that they were heathen means that they already had their own belief system\textsuperscript{406} which throws a challenge of weaving together the gospel to their culture. The missionary concentration on the Mende evangelization resulted in the establishment in three key missions: Sumbuya and Tikonko (Lower Mende - south); and Segbwema-Bandajuma (Upper Mende - east).\textsuperscript{407} Methodism had made the transition from western focused Freetown into Rural Sierra Leone.

\textbf{4.3.2.1. Missionary Efforts}

Gush worked for eight years before returning to England due to ill-health. His catechist ceased to work, also because of invalidity. Thus climatic incompatibility was a contextual challenge especially to the Europeans when coming to Sierra Leone. However, undauntedly, this work was continued in 1903 by Rev. James Watson, who entered it with high optimism and outlook full of promise. Before then the mission that could otherwise have collapsed, was sustained by the voluntary leadership of a Medical Doctor, Dr. Scotland and others, upholding the English services and day school that Gush had established.\textsuperscript{408} This replacement missionary continued with the missionary tradition in response to the circumstantial needs, -a procedural commitment. The challenge was how to respond to this muddle of missionary tradition and local needs.

In one area, a \textit{barri} (Africa local court hut) church was erected by the missionaries and was used for worship activities. Supplementary services were conducted in

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 26, 28-29, 34.}
\footnote{Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 31; Cf. Mathew 18:15-18.}
\footnote{Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, p. 11.}
\footnote{Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, p. 310.}
\end{footnotes}
Mende, using local cultural songs, and accompaniments. This yielded an overwhelming attendance of both locals and local dignitaries. This portended a pleasant feature of vernacular services resulting in expanding congregational growth.  

This missionary effort progressed, and a new Mission centre was established at Jimmi Bagbo through to Mofoi (Sumbuya zone) (south). In this circumstance, the natives in these areas voluntarily built a Manse for the mission, with a further promise of constructing a new school chapel. An example of not making paternalistic decisions about what is best for local capabilities resulting in a positive local contribution as above.

Contextualization commences with people’s contextual needs before moving into their faith traditions. Doing local work begins with listening to their culture. Missionaries glossed over the Mende culture, and translated the larger church tradition into their local circumstance. A socio-political rift developed between the Krio (missionary counterparts) and local authorities in which the Krio were executed for alleged insubordination to the local authorities, and derogative interference with the local traditions and customs. There was a binary cultural antagonism at work, suggesting that these collectivities were not in solidarity.

Accordingly, it cannot be surprising that the Mende mission proceeded ‘without using Krio man-power’ until later. The London Committee considered it necessary to avoid further usage of or dependence on the Krio clergy, if the tribal work was to succeed. It was decided that only white ‘missionaries be sent out to strike out on their

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410 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, p.39.
411 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp.1, 13, 39.
413 Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity, pp. 281-283, 311.
414 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 106.
own’ as ‘all the circuits, except Bandajuma area was predominantly Krio.’\textsuperscript{415} The missionaries and Krio clergy needed potential local assistants, as they could struggle to cope with the local cultural challenges in this mission.

Bible translation was instigated in the Mende language. This is a vital contextualization model. Because the ‘Mende people think in Mende…A Mende man prays best in his own tongue’.\textsuperscript{416} This required missionaries to face the indigenous dialectical challenges peculiar to the Mende culture. These were favourable forces for missionaries to explore to advantage - Mende ministers, preachers, teachers, and institutions.\textsuperscript{417} Mende vernacular, culture, Bible translation, and other literatures were a significant help for local evangelization.\textsuperscript{418}

In summary, the Mende work witnessed a rapid expansion by 1960. There was Methodist presence in the entire Eastern region. Such was the nature of the expansion into new areas, and consolidation of old areas through local contributions, that it was clearly not achievable without collusion. Our mode of evangelization and church development is one of finding Christ in the context rather than concentrating on bringing Christ into it.\textsuperscript{419} Where this happened, the church normally grew.

\textbf{4.4. Final Ecclesiastical Structural Emergence: Pre-Autonomy}

Along with other West African Methodist districts, there was a drive for autonomy in the 1950s and 1960s. This was vitally formalized under the Union of the Methodist Churches in West Africa.\textsuperscript{420}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{415} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 98. Then ‘Bandajuma area’ was the only ‘circuit’ in the Mendeland.
\item \textsuperscript{416} Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, pp. 8, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{417} Wright, \textit{Behind the Lion Mountains}, pp. 8, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{418} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 38, 145.
\item \textsuperscript{419} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, p.39.
\item \textsuperscript{420} See Preface, MCSL CPD, Part One.
\end{itemize}
…the Missionary Societies of the Primitive Methodist, the United Methodist and the Wesleyan Methodist Churches in Britain…rooted in the Evangelical Revival and united in 1932 to form the Methodist Church…and organized as one community to fulfil the original Methodist vocation.421

The pattern of this union spilled over to Sierra Leone by which the Wesleyan and United Free Churches merged to form the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone…all…Methodist Circuits, Missions, Societies…Institutions, which before autonomy were under the jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone District of the Methodist Conference in Britain, remained.422

This transitional administrative construct helped to form and shape MCSL’s development. But also religion lies at the heart of culture, giving shape to culture and meaning to data.423 By this the church leadership tries to move the cultural and religious mixing in balance424 to form the desired religious identity.425 But this church leadership autonomy was only contextualized in the British context. The missionary context did not feature.

‘Methodism was raised to spread scriptural holiness through the world by the proclamation of evangelical faith’426 A Church comes into being immediately the gospel is proclaimed and respondents repent and believe, accepting Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. This sanctions MCSL’s evangelical mission, – to take a

421 MCSL CPD, Part One, pp. 1- 5.  
422 MCSL CPD, Part One, Clauses 1 (line 2), 2; Charles, The Methodist Church Sierra Leone, p. 7.  
423 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p.89 – 90.  
424 See Schreiter, The New Catholicity, pp. 78.  
426 MCSL CPD, Part One, Clauses 1 (line 2), 2.
cue in the gospel propagation locally, nationally, as well as internationally.
Missionaries possibly assumed that the kind of structures suited to their own setting was what all other people required. What MCSL leads or does, including pastoral duty, worship, and social action are all but cultural responses in the gospel. But is the gospel supra-cultural? A contextual challenge is to explore Sierra Leonean (African) experience of church leadership as they perceive it through the lens of their cultural context. It is not surprising that many African Churches changed their organizational structure after Autonomy.

4.4.1. Appropriation of Membership

The prospective member first became an ‘inquirer’ or regular churchgoer, and put on six months observation before consideration before being given a ‘Catechumenate’ and an enrolment for baptismal instructions. Baptism to membership is part of discipling-making process. It is of divine appointment and perpetual obligation…a sign of entry into visible Community of the Christ’s Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the Commandment to his disciples to Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This appends ‘baptism’ as a vital Sacrament for nurturing members in the MCSL. The baptismal candidate would be assessed on vernacular catechism and general doctrine courses for a period of two years. After a successful completion, the candidate was cultivated into full membership. However, if any lapses of infidelity or

428 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, pp. 9, 122, 128.
429 Olson, Church in Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 129.
430 MCSL CPD, Part One, Clause 4 (lines 1, 3).
breach of Church polity occurred the baptismal process could be derailed until satisfactory conduct was ascertained and the requirements fulfilled.

This process was even much more rigid when the missionary/minister had to approve a convert’s eligibility for baptism to full membership. This procedure is restrictive and discourages adherents and seekers when ‘every effort should be made to nurture the new converts for mission while the fires of their new loyalties were burning brightly’. The nature and long duration of the process would have caused loss of potential members who would have been local missionary resources. This module is pragmatic but it did not adapt church baptism enough for local understanding or appreciation because it was/is expressed from a different cultural perspective.

The traditional religious culture, too, conducted initiation ceremonies, likened to baptismal training, for communal integration through the sodalities. The training took a prescribed period, covering instructions in social and religious issues which determine eligibility for adulthood roles. As baptismal training, the sodalities significantly regulated local cultural life. A closer awareness of this would have helped MCSL better contextualize its baptism procedures.

4.4.2. In-house Training

The school approach evolved into higher institutions. For ministry to the women, a Girls’ Boarding School and Women’s Training Centre were established, aimed at addressing the needs of native (Mende) women. These same institutions were primarily places where girls’ and women’s character would be shaped by Christian

431 Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 125.
standards of moral and religious life. In this context, both institutions could cater for both formal and informal education for the women. Emphasis was on the teaching of home-craft in which women and girls were trained and empowered to mould them into responsible Christian mothers, housewives, catechists, and teachers. This could create opportunity for the native women to participate in communal outreach as they could be of a strong support to their husbands in ministry. The reasons for introducing the female education could be for a contextualization ministry. Yet in reality the education offered to them was Eurocentric. The Sande (female) institution, whose educational value was locally sanctioned, was seen as bereft of moral standards by missionaries. The Sande institution has been used as a means of inculcating European education – with courses given in anatomy, physiology, nursing, sanitation, first-aid, domestic science, handicrafts, an example of using a contextually relevant institution.

The Catechist’s Training Institution trained the Mende to serve as teacher/catechists, in turn to evangelize their society, but this also operated from the western perspective. This period witnessed the missionary stress on the need of studying, understanding, where possible, adapting to the religious and social ideas and practices to Christianity. Through this institution, including similar ones elsewhere, missionaries could have accessed and learned more about social institutions including religious cults, and customs that could have aided their gradual adaptation to the local culture. The missionary was in a better position to understand the local cultural implications for them as etic.

433 Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, pp.97, 145, 147.
435 Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, p. 72.
The Wesleyan Theological College for higher theological education was instituted in 1843. The West African Methodist Districts including Sierra Leone trained candidates for the Native Ministry in this institution. In Sierra Leone the few Africans privileged to study in the College were predominantly Krio who succeeded in a western focused institution but were not challenged to better contextualize their faith.

4.4.3. Administration

The historical process of growth fitted into administrative machinery by copying the state trajectories in government with the whole organizational and leadership scheme following the British cultural pattern of administration. Doing local theology begins with popular needs in their context, before it moves to the faith traditions. The missionary breached this principle by not basing MCSL administration patterns upon the socio-political needs in context.

The Sierra Leone District was governed by a Chairman and General Superintendent who presided over the Synod and was accountable to the British Conference. The District was a ‘mission’ church and the Protectorate circuits were administered by the ‘Missionary Committee’ in Britain, which also administered the missionary affairs overseas. There was little or no meaningful or proportionate representation of the Africans on the Missionary Committee. With a few exceptions, the ministerial staff in the Protectorate was predominantly British missionaries. The Mende were excluded from formal decision-making. Only a few indigenous Methodists had real

438 Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 106.
441 Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, p. 106.
church leadership training and experience. A few were trained and employed as agents of missionaries rather than co-leaders with them. Even where the locals had the authority to carry out certain duties, they were not allowed to, and this rendered them incapable of dealing with leadership matters. The administration suppressed the African.

The ‘London Committee,’ controlled the Sierra Leone District through the Chair/General Superintendent appointed in England. ‘The London Committee was the executive committee of the MMS’ through which it administered ‘its many overseas missions, including Sierra Leone…the Sierra Leone District, being both church and mission, was amenable to both the English Conference and the London Committee, with the English Conference having the final authority’.

The Chair was remote, and the government and organization of missionary administration was Eurocentric and bureaucratically hierarchical, the nature of which cannot be explained simply in terms of spiritual responsiveness of the Sierra Leone people among whom they worked. The organization could not discernibly portray a biblical image of leadership, virtually robbing Christian leadership of its theological heritage.

The entire leadership system as above was Eurocentric, not established on the local socio-political context, wherein all institutions and departments of life, as aforementioned, were inter-related, making it responsive and adaptive. The whole administration was not contextualized.

443 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p. 232.
444 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 91. The Methodist Missionary Society…is the missionary organization of the Methodist Church in Britain and is amenable to the Conference. The British Conference refers to the annual business of the Methodist Church in Britain. The Conference Committee was the executive committee of Conference members which met between annual sessions of the Conference and was amenable to it.
4.5. Achievement of Autonomy

The MCSL was a District of the British Conference with its ministers and lay representatives meeting annually at Synod. The District Committee was the executive committee of Synod which met between annual sessions of Synod, and was the original Methodist Church structure in Sierra Leone before achieving Conference status in 1967 with two main Districts: Western and Provincial.\textsuperscript{445} The Colony Church decision-making power had both horizontal and vertical dimensions involving laypeople and grassroots courts to influence decisions. The ordinary members had no formal means by which they could make their views known and influence the decisions which affected them.\textsuperscript{446} The Mende had no real formal say in the decision-making processes until after mid-1950; no direct representation at Synod nor participation in the Synod Committee.\textsuperscript{447} Missionaries were in absolute control over their African flock:

- Being the final authorities at ‘Circuit’ level, missionary superintendent ministers had power to admit or expel from membership, to appoint or to discharge from a position of leadership, to preside over all official meetings. The annual Missionaries’ Meeting, the respective Synods and the Committees of Missionary Societies and the Conferences in England had the sole right to make decisions.\textsuperscript{448}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[445] Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 91.
\item[446] Minutes of Mende Committee (December 1937), MMS/ SOAS Archives.
\item[448] Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, p. 214.
\end{footnotes}
With such absolute totalitarianism by the British Conference, the Synod requested for the appointment of an African acting Chairman/Minister in the District to ensure a plausible representation in the missionary executive. Conference’s reply reads:

The present time or situation is not opportune for the making of this arrangement…At the present time it will be difficult for one who is not a missionary sent out by the Committee to act in the double capacity of financial agent of the Committee and Chairman of the District. 449

The popular franchise to share in the leadership scheme was marginalized or dismissed. The District’s demand for an Acting Chairman was overruled. This decision suggests that the local assistants and African ministers were not missionaries. Because they were not posted from England by the London Committee, they were illegitimate, ineligible not just for the position requested but for the entire leadership. The District’s response to the WMMS reads:

It is a matter of regret, though not for complaint, that present conditions do not allow African representatives at Conference dealing with problems of Church and State affecting Africa and the Africans. 450

Clearly, the Sierra Leone District was not represented in London Conferences. The Krio leadership clashed with the then missionary Chairman. Subsequently, the Synod requested his withdrawal. The London Committee declined to do so and consequently

449 Annual letter of the ‘London Committee’ on February 1, 1927, MMS/SOAS Archives.
450 ‘Sierra Leone District Synod’ letter on January 27, 1931, MMS/ SOAS Archives.
discontinued the post of Assistant General Superintendent created categorically to be occupied by a Krio.\textsuperscript{451} This Committee’s objection reads:

(1) Regarding the decision not to recall the missionary, the highest court of the Methodist Church says so, and it cannot be questioned. (2) Regarding the discontinuing of the post of Assistant General Superintendent, the appointment was not ripe and serving the purpose for which it was intended and no man of suitable gifts and graces was available. (3) The church is not ready and united. As a result, the District Synod feels that the London Committee and the Conference have but little, if any, sympathy with the aspirations of the African towards self-expression and self-determination.\textsuperscript{452}

The missionary application of the ‘rules’, gives an impression of the ‘Lords of the gentiles, Lording it over them’\textsuperscript{453} rather than a gospel-centred approach, with a correspondingly flexible attitude to ‘rules’. The British Conference exerted a dogmatic lead. The whole Church was disunited. Missionaries were posted to the Mendeland Mission; the Krio church governed itself. The Chairman and General Superintendent remained European, resident in Freetown for the administrative oversight. The Krio and the missionaries clashed in personality. Regional consciousness developed in the Synod resulting in English and Mende district dichotomy.\textsuperscript{454}

Political problems developed between the Krio and Mende in 1937. The Mende Mission Committee conducted its annual meeting separate from the Synod, free from

\textsuperscript{451} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{452} ‘Synod Minutes (1936: 100)’, MMS/SOAS Archives.
\textsuperscript{454} Olson, \textit{Church Growth in Sierra Leone}, p. 100.
Krio domination. By 1945 the two groups continued holding meetings in isolation. The District Synod objected to the discord because it needed the Mende Committee integrated into the Synod. The Mende Committee refused because their representation in the Synod would be disproportionate and would have meant absolute subjugation to Krio control. 455

In 1955, the Mende Convention was held, geared towards an institution of Mende Area Council. While this process was pursued, the Rev. W.E.A. Pratt (Krio) was nominated as the Acting Chairman during the furlough of the substantive Missionary Chairman. In 1960 Rev. Pratt became Chairman and General Superintendent. Although the office was annually nominated in Synod, the position was ratified by the British Conference. In 1966 the missionaries and the Mende ministers of the Mende Circuits were integrated into the Synod. In 1967, Sierra Leone District achieved Autonomy from the British Conference with the Rev. Pratt elected as the inaugural President of the autonomous Conference of MCSL. 456

In summary, the missionary policy of making themselves super-ordinates in every sphere of the work through to autonomy was not only contrary to the principle of contextualizing this church; it helped create a dependent and immature church. The Krio and missionaries struggled to create an avenue of power for themselves at the expense of others.

4.6. Conclusion

MCSL’s developmental history has potential contextualization challenges. The Methodist missionaries were concerned with preserving the image of the BMC more

455 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 100.
456 Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 100.
than its local cultural needs. The Krio clergy held fairly similar views in contrast to the rest of the Church. The incongruity about this is that there was already contextual theological quest within the Christian mission circles about indigenizing Church organization, administration and ministry structures, by which to govern itself including autonomy to appropriate its work in a Sierra Leonean context.
Chapter Five

Leadership Ethos: Organization/Government Structure

5.1. Introduction

That the MCSL was a British Conference District under the MMS’ jurisdiction cannot be overemphasized. Hence, its leadership style was conjured in the western (British) cultural context. This chapter examines whether the shortcomings of MCSL’s leadership style are due to it being too alien and institutionalized, and how MCSL’s leadership could be faithful both to the gospel and to the local society.

5.2. Leadership Construct: Purpose and Latitude

The basis of the MCSL’s present leadership style, which is very similar to Britain’s, is understandable as the missionaries could not have accomplished their intended outcome without primarily using an administrative system familiar to them, although this challenges an African missionary ministering in an overseas cultural context as well. This leadership style, although pragmatic, is not contextualized, because it is still cloaked in the ‘British Church Order’ constituting the ‘Deed of Foundation’ upon which MCSL operates still today, containing:

(a)…such provisions relating to the organisation and government of the Methodist Church Sierra Leone as the Foundation Conference shall think fit and …provide for the following among other matters:

(i)…Constitution of…annual Conference consisting of…Representative Session and… Ministerial Session which shall be

457 Gershon F. H. Anderson (Ex-President of Conference), Methodist Church Sierra Leone: Handbook of Useful information (Freetown: MEF Enterprise, 1991), p.3, WCO Archives.
the supreme authority of the Methodist Church Sierra Leone.

(ii)…appointment of such Committees, Departments…Local Bodies
as...desirable (iii)…appointment of such officers of the Church…to be
appointed by the Conference. (iv)…making by the Conference of
Standing Orders the regulation…of any matters…desirable that the
Conference should have power to regulate... 458

This ‘deed’ defines MCSL in terms of its hermeneutical task and role in the society
which itself suggests the need for a much more flexible or adaptable leadership
system.459 Thus to govern itself in context, it requires autonomy to decide how to re-
contextualize its leadership elements to be more relevant.460 The current leadership
construct has been in use since autonomy with little or no consideration that the
missionary had used the same structures as ‘means’ and ‘methods’ (synonymous with
‘rules, ‘resources’ and ‘policy’ (codified/uncodified)461 to administrate the Sierra
Leone District before autonomy. It is acknowledged that this leadership construct was
initially useful and that MCSL required autonomy to be free to develop its own
contextual understanding.462

This administrative construct fundamentally forms MCSL’s religious identity which
may be called ‘hierarchical’. By a ‘policy of tolerance’, it may permit variety of
potentials to flourish within a defined space.463 By its ‘hierarchic encompassment’, it
may move to incorporate external elements.464 Through its legislation, Christian or

458 The Methodist Church Sierra Leone: Deed of Foundation, MCSL CPD, p. ix, clause 5 (a-d).
459 Cf. MCSL, Deed of Church Order, paragraph ‘a’, sub-paragraph ‘iv’.
462 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 111.
463 Following Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, ‘Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism’ in
464 See Schreiter, The New Catholicity, pp. 78.
political leadership may foster new identities.\textsuperscript{465} Recognizing that in contextualization local cultural contextual particularities including social and political structures and customs, must be taken into account, MCSL leadership construct may be measured in local categories. Thus the Conference structures/institutions may be analogous to the local traditional leadership structures and institutions, as both are policy bodies having decision-making powers in respective contexts.

\textbf{5.3. Conference: Institutionalism}\textsuperscript{466}

Sierra Leone was originally divided into a Colony (Freetown) and Protectorate. When the ‘Colony’ was re-organized into the ‘Western Area’, and the Protectorate to ‘Provinces’, the MCSL at autonomy (1967) retitled its then Colony and Protectorate circuits, Western and Provincial Districts, respectively.\textsuperscript{467} The Provincial Districts were later divided into two Districts: Bo/Kenema and Kailahun/Kono, each district comprising churches/societies and preaching stations which formed the different Circuits.\textsuperscript{468} This geo-political pattern directs local leadership identity.

Methodism’s organization and government owe its pedigree to John Wesley’s preference for central and autocratic control. While, his so-called ‘benevolent autocracy’ had sustained challenges it never lost ‘its principle of connexionalism - a coordination of effort and centralization of control and direction through a series of courts culminating in, and subsumed under, the supreme authority of the

\textsuperscript{465} See Schreiter, \textit{The New Catholicity}, pp. 78.
\textsuperscript{466} MCSL CPD, Part Two, Section One, SOs 1-26, pp. 6-18.
\textsuperscript{467} Anderson, \textit{The Methodist Church Sierra Leone}, p.3.
\textsuperscript{468} Anderson, \textit{The Methodist Church Sierra Leone}, p.3.
These courts took the same form in Sierra Leone as they did in Britain.

The autonomous ‘Conference’ of the MCSL is formed by a constitution of Societies, Circuits and Districts which constitute the ‘Annual Conference Meeting’. Like the British Conference, MCSL Conference is the ‘supreme authority’ structure and the highest and final court with functions regulated by SOs (vis-à-vis CPD):

The governing body of…Methodist Church in Sierra Leone is the Conference… government…discipline of the Methodist Church…management…administration of its affairs shall be vested in the Conference…Conference shall exercise all the powers necessary for government, discipline, management, and administration.

The Conference has continued as a central administration though it operates with ‘lower level structures’ (Districts, Circuits and Societies). It ‘exercises…all…powers and power…to define the powers…duties…determine the number of members…for…Committees.’ This suggests an executive role. Its jurisdiction reaches down to the lower structures and defines how they must operate. Conference technically holds a vertical authority. Although it has limited powers to

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469 Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelism*, p. 208.
470 MCSL CPD, pp.vii-xii.
471 Anderson, *The Methodist Church Sierra Leone*, p. 3.
472 MCSL CPD, p. ix, clause 5 (a-d).
473 MCSL CPD, SO 25 clause 1 (i).
474 MCSL CPD, SO 25 clauses 1-2.
476 MCSL CPD, SO 16, Cf. CPD, SO 61 clause 1: *The Conference shall have power from time to time, and subject to such regulations as it shall prescribe, to make, revoke, and vary Rules and Regulations, not conflicting or inconsistent with the Constitution, for its own procedure for appointment to particular offices, for the raising, management, and distribution of funds under its control, and for the management of its Institutions or Departments, and for or relating to, the membership, discipline, and general organization of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone...*
affect local situations except through the CPD which intentionally provides a strong control on Methodism. 477

Conference is analogous to the Chiefdom Council (or Tribal Authority) (formerly Council of Elders). Like Conference Sessions, the council holds annual sessions to deliberate chiefdom matters, and to consider and enact legislation on local customs and practices, and is responsible for revenue generation and election of the chief. Unlike the Conference, the council is under the Native administration system, an assembly of Chiefdom officials, rather indefinite in size and composition. 478 Unlike the Conference machinery, the local leadership is scrutinized and controlled by both the native administration, and Poro which in the local Mende context is considered as God-given practices rather than strict constitutional laws. 479

‘Oversight requires presence and stewardship as much as theological leadership.’ 480

The Conference’s jurisdiction is a re-orientation of the ‘London Committee’ which administered the then Sierra Leone District remotely from England. The Chair is still remote. 481 ‘The orientation of theology toward a community determines the social significance of theology.’ 482 If MC SL is to serve the society, its leadership philosophy ‘has to be socially significant, and therefore needs to be close to the

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477 Craske & Marsh, Methodism and the Future, p. 79.
479 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelism, pp. 50-5; See also McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, p.30. The Poro has apparently never had any centralized organization, but operates locally through independent ‘lodges’ with similar rules all over especially Mendeland. This institution also has series of grades or hierarchies, representing specific attainments and experience, is generally recognized, advancement being opened to those who deserve it. It co-ordinates production, as well as supplies the ‘mystical’ quality apparently lacking in Mende chieftainship. Poro helps to preserve the dignity of secular rule by decreeing that disputes/matters affecting important members of the community be heard and settled in the enclosure by a secret tribunal consisting of men chosen from the upper grades. To some extent it functioned as an arbitrator in inter-chiefdom disputes, enforcing its decisions by sending a band of its officials to the party which ignored its ruling (McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, p.30).
482 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 98.
people’. 483 Like the Chiefdom Council, Conference as a strategic body may need to be more accessible in order for people to understand and appreciate its mechanisms.

The Conference operates through the legislations within the CPD. The political reforms of MCSL by the missionaries intended to foster new identity at autonomy, was established on the CPD, an intentional missionary ‘policy of tolerance’, for an integrative administrative and unified work. The local legislation follows the customary laws. For example, Kinship heads settled disputes alone. The Paramount Chief’s court and local court officials, though Government legislated, addressed Chiefdom disputes. 484 The formal CPD is not contextualized as it is a British cultural legislation, and may not carry local cultural identity and meaning.

Both the Conference and local leadership are relatively centralized. However, while the Conference administration is centralized, the chiefdom administration is connected to villages through to the countryside, and each structure comprising chief and their sub-leaders, section and town chiefs, compound heads, household leaders 485 and appointed deputies. 486 The cultural difference is that the presence of the local leader was mandatorily indicating communal solidarity 487 unlike the Conference Chair, who is remote.

483 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 98.
487 Cf. Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelism, p. 50, 52.
5.3.1. Bureaucratic: CPD as arbiter

The Conference machinery is ‘bureaucratic’. Its function is not only procedural but too institutionalized. Its chief Sessions are: ‘Representative’ and ‘Ministerial’ (or ‘Sessions of Conference’). The Conference Representative Session constitutes a proportionate

…number of Ministers and Lay persons…competent to transact
Conference business…pertaining to the government…management
of Church, except…as reserved for the decision of the Ministerial
Session.

The clergy and lay encounter is acknowledgeable. It may not be a contextual approach when the Ministerial Session is restrictive if not exclusive. The Representative Sessions (of Conference or Synod) are restricted to matters only meant for Ministerial Session, believed to be an ideal forum for specific ministerial issues. The ministerial documents are kept separate at Conference or Synod and are not shared with the lay representatives, whereas the Representative Session documents are shared by both Ministers and laity. These dichotomies may limit collective leadership and accountability. Both sessions reserve authoritative powers: ‘In all matters…specifically appointed for the consideration of each Session, the decisions of that Session’ are ‘the decisions of Conference’.

488 See MCSL CPD, SO 2.
489 Wright, Behind the Lion Mountains, p. 11.
490 See MCSL CPD, SO 2.
491 MCSL CPD, SO 3 clause 3, SO 6.
492 Pratt, The Methodist Church Sierra Leone, p.25; Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 6.
493 MCSL CPD, SO 4 (i-iii).
The Conference *Ministerial Session*\(^{494}\) administrates: ‘Acceptance and Training of candidates for…Ministry…Character…Discipline…Fidelity of Ministers.’\(^{495}\) Discipline, is not only traditional in the church but spiritual and ethical principles are also crucial leadership rudiments.\(^{496}\) Yet a minister who is charged is summarily suspended\(^{497}\) before a verdict is reached.\(^{498}\) Such a nature of discipline could make people hesitate before committing themselves to seeking church membership. This does not reject moral values because exemplary disciplines can be demonstrated by regular evaluation of performance, to enhance greater faithfulness to mission rather than rigid disciplines. The local natives appreciate laws because they have them enshrined in Sierra Leone customs. ‘The Mende people know that Christ’s demands are absolute, and they…take the lead maintaining church discipline among their own people.’\(^{499}\) This means in fact that they have the laws in their own tribal culture. This context calls for a need for relevant Christian and customary codes of ethics and discipline that may integrate cultural and Christian understanding of appropriate behaviour in church and society.

It may not be a contextual approach when the minister dominates the ‘Ministerial and Pastoral subject’ in ‘the Church’,\(^{500}\) because it could seem that the gospel obligations laid on them is to preach or occupy dominant powers. Could a clerical monopoly holding onto ministration encourage missionary productivity? It makes no difference to the missionary that imposed themselves as mission think-tanks over the locals. Jesus reposed confidence in and depended on other people’s capabilities. His church

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\(^{494}\) MCSL CPD, SO 3.
\(^{495}\) MCSL CPD, SO 4 (i-iii), SO 34 (a-p).
\(^{496}\) Robinson and Smith, *Invading a Secular Space*, pp. 117 -118.
\(^{497}\) MCSL CPD, SO 42.
\(^{498}\) MCSL CPD, SO 41 Clauses 1-4.
\(^{499}\) Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 10-11.
\(^{500}\) MCSL CPD, SO 4 (i-iii).
(community) is encompassing and empowering but challenges excesses, to reclaim differences and values.\(^{501}\)

MCSL leadership is not contextualized to a traditional leadership system since its current authority structures are entrenched in, or controlled by, CPD; religious obligations, and by defined institutional bureaucracy rooted in the British scheme. Sierra Leone is governed on both customary and constitutional laws. The CPD is not contextualized as it is not tailored to local standards. Customary law forbade the local leaderships certain acts, insisting on the consultation of the Council\(^{502}\) or ‘Tribal Authority’\(^{503}\) which is like Conference or Synod Sessions. It is a constituted body of representatives across the local community including principal elders; and is both an advisory and chief-maker council.\(^{504}\) Both are strategic policy structures, but MCSL’s sessions is in western organizational style, and may need to be adapted to the local leadership style.

In summary, the ‘improvement of any organisation revolves around its leadership.’\(^{505}\) And ‘Qualities of leadership must be nurtured among the grass roots’.\(^{506}\) The Conference works within the social and religious structure and its institutional framework is part of its reality of theologizing. It must do so in response to the local community and local church.\(^{507}\)

\(^{501}\) Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 25, 21-22.
\(^{503}\) McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, p. 17.
\(^{504}\) McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, pp. 16, 17.
\(^{507}\) Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 73, 97.
5.3.1.1. Districts: Synods.

A number of Circuits constitute a District. Representatives from each Circuit assemble at annual Synod under the Chairman. Synod deals with all matters of the circuits, with questions about ministerial training and upkeep of ministers and lay workers. The District structure coordinates Conference tasks through Synod\textsuperscript{508} by working with the lower level structures to provide a ‘close pastoral oversight’ – an administration of local activities\textsuperscript{509} as well as a communication line between the grassroots and Conference, for downward implementations of Conference policy.

The Synod is a strategic monitoring and evaluation wing. It receives progress reports on the local outreach activities for onward recommendation through the Chair for ratification by Conference. The duties of Synod and Conference overlap.\textsuperscript{510}

Uniquely, the Synod’s duties lie in its direct grassroots’ influence.\textsuperscript{511} The District comprises Representative and Ministerial Sessions. This context has a geo-political leadership implication, because the district structure is also parallel to the regional administrative structure within the national government system. It is, however, a context of MCSL because its ‘synod’ element is a western tradition that may need adaptation.

The Synod Representative Session, comprising laity and ministers ‘…reviews the state of the work of God in each circuit in the light of…the annual report submitted by the Circuit…to make recommendations to and advise…Conference on the needs of the area…’\textsuperscript{512} The report of synod largely reflects congregational worship life\textsuperscript{513}

\textsuperscript{508} MCSL CPD, SOs 114 – 128, Part one, Clause 7 (iii).
\textsuperscript{509} MCSL CPD, SO 20.
\textsuperscript{510} MCSL CPD, SO 114.
\textsuperscript{511} MCSL CPD, Section Two, SO 115 clauses 1 (a-b), 2.
\textsuperscript{512} MCSL CPD, SO 117 clauses 1-31.
\textsuperscript{513} MCSL AC34 W/Ps9, 10, 2000, 2001.
stressing evangelism. This follows the British norm with the agenda unchanged since before autonomy.

**The Synod Ministerial Session**\(^{514}\) co-ordinates: ‘Recommendation of candidates for the Ministry…Conduct of Worship, and Sacraments…Pastoral conversations on the work of God … make suggestions to Conference.’\(^ {515}\) The Synod ministerial session overlaps with the Conference. Synod is a court that deals with the ‘Pastoral Fidelity and Efficiency’ of ministers and other matters referred to it.\(^ {516}\) The ministerial court of Synod could be likened to the judiciary role of the Town Section-chiefs whereby they dealt with local disputes, kept law and order in their own districts and had powers to execute justice established on customary laws.\(^ {517}\) These approaches become much more meaningful in context if identified with the traditional law enforcement institutions. The *Poro* sustained both religious and political authority and has been called the ‘religious counterpart in government’\(^ {518}\) emphasizing a functional differentiation in context.

In summary, the District leadership style was useful, but it might have only facilitated the missionary administration in making intentional bureaucratic regional decisions, and therefore may require contextual adjustment to reflect the needs of Sierra Leone and mission.

**5.3.1.2. Circuits: Societies**

A Circuit comprises Societies in a given area, governed by a Circuit Quarterly Meeting. It is a court that deals with the Leaders’ Meeting issues, administers

\(^{514}\) MCSL CPD, SO 116.  
\(^{515}\) MCSL CPD, SO 118 clauses 1 (a-m), 2 (Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 120).  
\(^{516}\) MCSL CPD, SO 118 clauses 1 (a-m), 2 (Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 120).  
Conference institutions within its jurisdiction, together with the discipline of its members and ensures that all its resources are harnessed and deployed appropriately. Its Chair is normally the Circuit Superintendent Minister. The grassroots work is largely carried out by the ‘Circuit’ which provides a close pastoral oversight of the societies.\textsuperscript{519} These structures signify both social and relational paradigms. The context likened it to the relational networking roles of foregoing local leadership institutions/structures. These structures function corporately but in diverse capacities as the local culture demands. Thus, even after colonialism there have been cohesive local leadership networks the context of which challenges to use theology as of a community enterprise.\textsuperscript{520}

The Circuit in Sierra Leone is identical to that found in Britain. Such a structure takes its role to be part of mission in sharing the life of Methodism with the people on a regular and systematic basis. ‘Methodism…is a network of circuits’.\textsuperscript{521} The circuit system was originally a mission model that allowed a robust mission church to influence a wider area by outreach to more people.\textsuperscript{522} The greatest factor for MCSL’s development in Sierra Leone was people movement, when Christianity was adapted to family web relationships within villages\textsuperscript{523} encompassing social institutions and structures, though a caution needs to be exercised to measure spiritual not biological impacts. The circuit system may need to be reconstructed and re-appropriated to the local needs, so that its work is executed within a concrete local social structure that provides rich resources for local identity.\textsuperscript{524}

\textsuperscript{519} MCSL CPD, SOs 129-189; CPD, SO 129 clause 1.
\textsuperscript{520} Cf. Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{521} Craske and Marsh, Methodism and the Future, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{522} Robinson and Smith, Invading the Secular Space, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{523} Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{524} Cf. Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, pp. 96, 99.
The MCSL has espoused the British society design\textsuperscript{525} of ‘local organisation…meeting as one congregation for public worship…organized into classes under the supervision of one Leaders’ Meeting.’\textsuperscript{526} Each society together with its individual classes, comprising twelve or more members is allocated to one or two class leaders.\textsuperscript{527} This model replicates the tradition of Methodism’s emphasis on the strength of the local congregation and lay participation in church and leadership.\textsuperscript{528} The class structure is likened to the traditional kinship, or household with their family and extended family members under the jurisdiction of respective elders for nurturing in community life and values.\textsuperscript{529} This is a context that challenges MCSL to re-appropriate the class system to the advantage of the indigenous local people. The society is likened to the towns and villages whose members or people provide the shaping/influential forces required for networking relations. This is the context for taking diversities seriously, their particularity and lives, stories and their hopes\textsuperscript{530} on which the work may be based. The society is a social structure that may prepare the ground for local theology focused on the local community’s ministry. For Sierra Leone, it is relatively appropriate, but could be less bureaucratic and more mission-focused.

A ‘circuit’ is overseen by structured meetings.\textsuperscript{531} The \textit{Circuit Quarterly Meeting} structure is functionally the ‘Chief Administrative Body of the Circuit’ embedded with judicial responsibility as described above.\textsuperscript{532} The context of chief administrator depicts an executive control and unlike the traditional leadership style, where overall

\textsuperscript{525} Pratt, \textit{The MCSL from Mission to Autonomous Conference}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{526} MCSL CPD, Section Four 190-226 (Cf. MCSLCPD, Part one, Clause 3 SO 190 clauses 1-3).
\textsuperscript{527} MCSL CPD, Section Four 190-226, Cf. MCSLCPD, Part one, Clause 3 SO 190 clauses 1-3.
\textsuperscript{528} Craske and Marsh, \textit{Methodism and the Future}, p.165.
\textsuperscript{529} McCulloch, \textit{Ethnographic Survey of Africa}, pp. 13, 18.
\textsuperscript{530} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{531} MCSL CPD, SO 133.
\textsuperscript{532} MCSL CPD, SO 135.
powers were regulated by the social and religious institutions, including the poro male sodality. It is recognized, however, that the ‘Quarterly Meeting’ interweaves the leadership framework of the Conference, Districts, and Societies. Yet this is instituted on the missionary criterion of policy and polity building. This context may need to be re-appropriated to local advantage for creation of political unity rather than political conflict.

The Leaders Meeting, through which the Quarterly Meeting operates at the grassroots, as the lowest court, makes decisions on all matters relating to the Society (local Church). This structure is a body of elected lay leaders with the duty ‘to assist the Minister in…the pastoral oversight of the Society’ and to ‘…advise him on…matters concerning it.’ This structure is comparable to the sub-chief/section-chief meeting style which comprised the sectional representatives as society leaders, who are local church representatives. The sub-chief meeting of the senior elders is a localized one on community matters. The Leaders’ Meeting is tailored to western leadership style and is similarly bureaucratic.

In summary, the Leaders’ Meeting provides a shared structure for orderly management of the congregation or local church by offering a common purpose and identity but from a western perspective. The challenge of translating this structure into a contextual reality is still to be met.

533 MCSL CPD, SO 135.
534 MCSL CPD, Part One, clause 1.
535 MCSL CPD, SO 204.
536 MCSL CPD, Part Two, SO 203.
537 McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, p. 17.
5.3.2. Hierarchical: Minister as core

The principal officials include ‘President…Vice President…Secretary’ ‘elected’, with the President and Vice President elected by balloting. The Secretary of Conference is ‘appointed’ by the Conference on the GPC’s recommendation. This structure is likened to the official traditional leadership hierarchy - from Paramount chief to Kinship heads. MCSL’s principal official structure is a collection of selected persons who made a commitment to participate through which they bear responsibility to contribute to the whole, but having constitutional membership rights. The ascendancy to the traditional leadership such as Chieftaincy is hereditary though in all cases an election process is followed. Methodism’s officials/office titles use western terminology, and so are not contextualized to the traditional official leadership style. ‘The church as a theological organisation would be betraying its principles if it pandered to secular styles of leadership;’ but if MCSL was open improvement, its entire leadership processes could be different. Its chief executives, as above, are but secular titles and so questions MCSL’s efficacy as a theological organization. The challenge is that if MCSL does not retain secular leadership titles what appropriate designations can it adopt, or introduce to make its leadership style theologically/biblically perceptible? There is more at work, here in trying to shape its leadership structure, than just sharing biblical commitments and a common history. Shared social features powerfully galvanize its identity and cohesion in context. Therefore, MCSL is challenged to respect the dynamics of the local cultural situation.

538 MCSL CPD, SOs 9 (a), (b), 2(a), 3(a, g).
539 MCSL CPD, SO 9 clause 3 (b).
540 Craske and Marsh, Methodism and the Future, p. 80.
The 2010 CPD amendment allows the President to ‘ten consecutive years’ tenure, Vice President ‘five years’, and Secretary ‘ten years’.

While clearly open to leadership change, MCSL is following the western bureaucratic norms/laws of the tenure of offices. Jesus has challenged us to a different look at reality, emphasizing that norms or laws must be locally appropriate, they are instituted for human growth. The officials’ tenures are not contextualized, as they are articulated western political cultural contextual structures.

In addition to ‘pastoral and spiritual oversight’, the President chairs ‘all’ committees and holds prerogative/proxy authority which is an administrative reality. This may narrow the opportunity for others called to share in the leadership roles. More so: ‘In all cases wherein there may be doubts to which the Session of Conference a matter belongs, the President shall decide.’ The President may use such powers to manipulate/support wrong decisions for personal interest or political security. And the president’s absence may delay or prevent implementation of crucial issues. This is a contextual challenge. It breaches Jesus’s empowerment criterion: he did not monopolize powers. The proxy/prerogative rule by president is not contextualized to the traditional leadership style; where the chief operates directly under the poro’s regulatory authority and/or under the Chiefdom Council’s scrutiny - all ensuring that the chief was not autocratic.

The Presidential official tenure is defined, while the Chiefship is inherited and may be life-long. This procedure preserves the tradition but it prevents a competent...
person from becoming a chief who does not belong to a traditional ruling dynasty. MCSL is challenged to articulate a realistic leadership theology that challenges this sort of local and national culture of leadership, as good theology can challenge the local cultures.⁵⁴⁷

The Secretary is always a Minister appointed by the GPC but supervised by the President. The Secretary directs the daily administrative affairs of Conference,⁵⁴⁸ embedding ministerial personnel and conference secretariat management.⁵⁴⁹ A process to ensure that a professional efficacy of the Secretary⁵⁵⁰ has been drawn necessary, ensuring that the office of the Secretary of Conference be held by a professionally qualified Methodist. The appointment to this position to be by advertising rather than by an election, and that this office be contracted.⁵⁵¹ The choice of a chief or headpersons is based on personal ability and devotion to work for community wellbeing; even the inheritor must demonstrate a discernible prowess.⁵⁵² Where such ‘appointment to leadership is done by ‘names’’, it insinuates that appointment to church office in MCSL is sentimental and/or tribal biased.⁵⁵³ This is not contextualized to the local traditional leadership style. Mende leadership culture, for instance, perpetuates corporate and mutual dependence by which both the ruler and ruled define and improve on their identity. Their communal homogeneousness and differentiation do not promote segregation or individualism.

⁵⁴⁷ Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 39.
⁵⁴⁸ MCSL CPD, Part One, SO 9 clause 3 (d).
⁵⁴⁹ MCSL, CPD, Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 9 clauses 3(e, d).
⁵⁵⁰ MCSL CPD, SO 9 clause 3(e), affirmed by MCSL, BC3 EOC1 W/P 6A, 2007/2008, p. 4.
⁵⁵² Cf. Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p. 52.
The *Vice President* is a lay executive.\textsuperscript{554} The traditional leadership has deputies but this official style is not contextualized because the clergy are differentiated from laypeople, whereas within the traditional leadership, the household leader is both head and priest/priestess. This challenges MCSL to ‘seek’ a ‘good match between lay and pastoral leadership’.\textsuperscript{555} That: ‘The whole Church is a holy priesthood…’\textsuperscript{556} provides a context for mixed satisfaction of balanced ordained and lay authority and gift diversity. The minister alone cannot provide the leadership context without local participation irrespective of their individual potentials. One of the inner dynamisms that perpetrated change in the Mende society was functional differentiation, a fitting basis for encouraging competition, specialization, power delegation and flexibility.

The office of ‘Vice President’ is largely passive, or cerimonial. The vice president cannot make any arbitrary decisions on church matters without due reference to the President or Secretary, or make any official connexional visits without dispensation.\textsuperscript{557} Theology at local context takes the diversity of particular contexts seriously.\textsuperscript{558} This office is not contextualized as the individual’s particularity is not recognized in a way that allows him/her to appreciate and relate to their local context.

The *District Chairman*’s authority is unlike that of the President of Conference. They have limited powers to take decisions independent from the President or Synod Standing Committee, the key Committee that acts between synods like the GPC.\textsuperscript{559}

\textsuperscript{554} MCSL CPD, Part One, SO 9 clause 2.
\textsuperscript{555} Cf. MCSL CPD, SOs 9 (a), 3(a).
\textsuperscript{556} Cf. MCSL CPD, Part One, clauses 1, 2; CPD, SO 59 clause 3.
\textsuperscript{557} MCSL CPD, SO 9 (j), (g).
\textsuperscript{558} Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{559} Craske and Marsh, *Methodism and the Future*, p. 79.
The district chair therefore works in close cooperation with the President ‘for the observance within the District of Methodist Church order and discipline…’ The chair’s liaison role may be likened to the *poro*’s meditational and adjudicating role in local cultural context. Unlike the *poro* the District Chair is superseded by executive controls which either limits their powers or obstructs their networking role.

The ‘Synod Secretary’ is the secretary for each committee, assisted by lay or ministerial Secretaries. These‘…gather from the circuit the material for transmission to…Conference Committees and prepare from it the necessary reports…’, ensuring that local activities receive Conference’s action. Synod Secretaryship may be analogous to the ‘Chiefdom Clerk’s’ role as a repertoire within the ‘Native Administration’ institution, an assembly of chiefdom officials under which the Chiefdom Council operated.

The circuit as a district relational structure is supervised by the *Ministerial Staff*: The minister whose name stands immediately after the name of Circuit in the list of stations is the ‘Superintendent’.

His colleagues…share with him in pastoral work…confer together on…matters affecting…the Circuit, but ultimate responsibility for action shall rest with him in all matters affecting the interest of the Circuit. He shall be responsible for the proper maintenance of discipline in the Circuit…Each minister shall be given pastoral charge of…societies in the Circuit…Pastoral duty

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560 MCSLCPD, Part Two, SOs 21, 114, 20.
562 MCSL CPD, Part Two, SO 122.
of a minister…shall include…visitation of members…and
societies... 564

The Circuit Superintendent is the circuit administrative officer. The Circuit Minister
and the lay officers assist the superintendent but the ultimate authority for official
actions rests with the Superintendent.565 The ministers ‘nominate leaders for
appointment’ to society offices amongst the congregation/members.566 The
Superintendent has the prerogative to ‘nominate without previous notice’.567 This
leadership style is not contextualized, because it replicates the missionary
institutionalism where the missionary Superintendent/Minister retained executive
administrative control. MCSL should be limited to the strengths and weaknesses of
the ministers, and is therefore contextually challenged.

The ministerial staff/Order is likened to the Order of local diviners, healers, priests
and priestesses in terms of living spiritual relationships. Dissimilar to the traditional
religious order, MCSL’s ministerium is a defined theological institution. Unlike
MCSL, the household elder was sanctioned to perform the priestly rites for their
dependants. Missionary subversion of this tradition had resorted to cultural
clashes.568

Lay officers ‘assist the Minister in…the society and…advise him on…matters
concerning it.’569 This leadership style helps in the distribution of the church’s
offices so that no individual person has a hold on leadership though it may be crucial
to predetermine a person’s competence before appointment. This context challenges

564 MCSL CPD, Part Two, SO 132 Clauses 1, 2, 6, 9.
565 MCSL CPD, Part Two, SO 132, Clause 1.
566 MCSL CPD, SO 206 Clause 2.
567 MCSL CPD, SO 205 Clause 3.
568 Cf. Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, pp. 72-73, 53, 64-65.
569 Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 203 Clause 1 (a-d); Clause 1 (i) (i-viii).
us regarding the delegation of leadership roles to members at all levels, so they may recognize or identify themselves as a significant part of the leadership. The local sub-chiefs in the grassroots administration who regulated household affairs and oversaw the kinsfolks’ welfare may be likened to lay office duties. The lay office is a more defined western leadership style, and therefore not contextualized to a traditional leadership style which is less defined in context.

In summary, in terms of relational network, both the traditional and missionary leadership approach to the grassroots was in the right direction. Unlike the traditional religious order, the ministerial staff is not only British-culturally styled but is more bureaucratic.

5.4. Leadership Structure: Adjustment

The MCSL’s governance style was retrospectively useful, but it may no longer be relevant in the post-colonial context, given the fact of the growing need for reforms:

We have indeed created divisions and barriers in our church that makes the movement of the Holy Spirit difficult. MCSL has lost its way and…needs to make a new recovery of itself and its nature. To accomplish this we need to take a proper look at the church with the eye to reviewing our long-standing structures and systems. No one person can do it alone, but it has to be collective…

The context of the leadership style is chaotic and schismatic\(^{573}\) consequently the MCSL leadership structures need to be contextualized.\(^{574}\) In contextualization, we must identify the ‘existing structures…custom…political and religious’ on which to construct our local theologies.\(^{575}\) Thus in MCSL, the leadership formation by missionaries might not have embraced the existing leadership traditions/structures, the people’s formative ideas, giving direction to their religious notions and practices.\(^{576}\) The Mende social organization, for example, typical of Sierra Leoneans, has the largest cultural collectivity and diverse structures.\(^{577}\) The missionaries enforced/implanted the western missionary leadership scheme which was incompatible to the traditional leadership style. This needs to be addressed now.

The missionary preference of the Krio with their British-orientation, in terms of education and leadership roles, over and against the Mende, triggered the socio-political rifts between the two collectivities, and consequently, crisis has permeated the leadership fabrics since autonomy. The 1990s saw the ideological demands for a grade ‘A’ Minister, for a grade ‘A’ Circuit, a system replicating the missionaries’ circuit-categorization strategy affecting the economic capacity of Mende Circuits. This erupted into a situation wherein certain Provincial Ministers were out rightly rejected by Freetown (‘grade A’) Circuits when they were stationed there by the Conference.\(^{578}\) This approach is likened to the Chieftaincy ascendency process, when the candidature process was being measured by the branches of the ‘Royal house’. The contextual challenge is that the contestants were not prejudiced but allowed to

\(^{574}\) Cf. MCSL, Presidential Address, AC 34, 2001.  
\(^{576}\) Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 73.  
\(^{577}\) McCulloch, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, p. 1; Little, The Role of the Secret Society, p.28.  
prove their mettle. Hierarchies were accepted by Christ where suitable, but he did not promote strict hierarchies within the discipleship structure. He challenged the leadership mode which measured the church in categories. The contextual challenge for MCSL is inspiring and empowering integrative work, as Jesus accepted the specificity of situations and measured each situation objectively, rather than by applying ready-made standards to situation.

During the years 1999 to 2007, there was a revolution within the MCSL, by a strong agitation and petitioning from the Western District Synod demanding a radical Constitutional review of leadership ascendancy; and for proportionate representation at Conference to be backed up by financial capability. The Krio circuits wanted an increased representation to outnumber the Provincial (Mende) representation at Conference, because they claimed they made more financial inputs into the running of Conference than the Mende circuits. They demanded constitutional amendment to the tenure of the major offices of - President, Vice President and Secretary, in order to limit the access or prolonged hold to these key offices by the locals. This situation is unlike the traditional governing institutions, whereby tenure to chiefdom structures - officialdom and society, were cohesively connected – socio-politically and religiously. MCSL’s leadership style is externalized and therefore may need to be contextualized to the local cultural leadership context.

The above situations may have inspired the reflection on or re-adjustment, of the entire leadership spectrum in the MCSL. This suggests that the institution of rotational presidency; deputations in administrative and management duties; and the

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devolution of power to the District Synods that might be amenable to both collectivities - Krio and Mende\textsuperscript{584} could be succinctly defined as follows:

…the office of President…be rotational…the district nominates for the approval of Conference, if the President is from the Western district, the Vice President should come from different Districts…in the absence of the President of Conference, the Secretary…should deputize for the President in Administrative and Management functions…the President appoints one to deputize for him in Ministerial…and Lay functions…authority be devolved from the Conference to the…Synods…that representation at Conference…be proportional to the numerical strength of the districts rather than numerical strength backed up with ability to pay…\textsuperscript{585}

The framework of this re-adjustment structure is still a prototype of the British (Western) administration structures. The offices/officials are secular rather than theological/biblical in structure. Given therefore that theology is intended for church and society, the question of the local audience may need to determine the leadership development, and the criteria for judging its relevance in the post-missionary context.\textsuperscript{586}

Contemporarily, elsewhere in West Africa, Methodism has moved since autonomy to change its leadership titles and structure. Nigerian Methodism, over the last ten years, has moved from a very similar British background structure to replace Chair of the District with Bishop of Diocese, create Archbishops and to re-designate its

\textsuperscript{584} MCSL, \textit{Connexional Committee: On the Crisis in the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone}, 2009/2010, p.

\textsuperscript{585} MCSL, \textit{BC3 EOC1 W/P 6A}, 2007/2008, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{586} Cf. Schreiter, \textit{Constructing local Theology}, p. 36.
senior leadership as a ‘Prelate’. This has been accompanied by the development of substantial bishop’s houses, cathedral, clothing and all the attributes of a more stratified system. Nigerian Methodism is a large church, and to some extent can afford the considerable financial costs of such a move. A much smaller Methodist Church in the Gambia has moved since autonomy in 2008 from a Chair of a District to a Bishop, to a Presiding Bishop. In both cases the structures has changed a little but not dramatically, as the circuits and societies remain, with districts renamed as dioceses. Within Nigeria there has been a creation of an additional layer of bureaucracy in the archdiocese. The main reason for these changes has been to find titles that are recognizably religious. President and Chair are secular titles inherited from the British. Both Nigeria and the Gambia have chosen to change to distinctly religious titles. In Nigeria the creation of the bishop with quite an elaborate level structure including secretariat, cathedral, chaplain and substantial salary is justified as a contextual move towards a chief type role, where the authority of a local chief was linked to their possessions.

There is similar development in the IACs, where leading clergy have titles such as Bishop, Overseer, and Evangelist. This is linked to prestige and authority and owes much to the role of tribal elder and chiefdom. The very neutral title of ‘Methodist Chair of District’, inherited from the British, does not resonate as religious in a religious society such as Sierra Leone. There is further link to the prosperity gospel, particularly prominent in Nigeria, but becoming more influential in in Sierra Leone in recent years. A strong title for a Christian leader that seems to carry authority might be expected of somebody whose prosperity marks them out as someone of importance. This is a challenge to the MCSL that, so far has seemingly resisted the move, although the President of Conference is the only minister to carry the title of
‘Right Reverend’. However, part of the contemporary challenge for the MCSL is that the inland Mende and other members may be willing to move in the direction of the Nigerian and Gambian Churches, but the more British focused Krio are less inclined, part of the reason for the present divisions in the church. What is contextual for one community is somewhat foreign for another.

The further challenge is remaining faithful to the gospel. There is the temptation to let the society influence the church to the extent that the church becomes a reflection of the society rather than a reflection of the gospel and its values. This can be seen in the Nigerian Methodist Church, for instance, where the move to create very powerful bishops that may be contextually relevant risks the same mistakes that centralized and wealthy church leaderships have made down through the centuries.

In summary, the leadership re-adjustment proposal and definitions challenge that MCSL requires to be contextualized to the local traditional leadership context within which resource framework (for instance, Mende human, material and non-material) especially the Methodist missionaries were operating to institute MCSL.

5.5. Conclusion

MCSL’s current leadership style is too westernized, and therefore, not contextualized to the local cultural leadership style. It is bureaucratic hierarchical, and institutionalized with secular rather than astute biblical/theological structures. The British focus led the Krio to have undue influence, and so create a divide in the church. British procedures that were appropriate for British-oriented Krio did not work contextually for the rest of Sierra Leone. The challenge is that the structure needs to be framed for the local (African) Christians by the biblical perspective of the covenantal community of God’s people sharing in the inherent unity. The scheme
of local traditional leadership style has potential elements that MCSL may need to adopt in order to contextualize its current leadership ethos, thus incarnating its own stance to itself in the Sierra Leonean cultural context.
Chapter Six

Training/Empowerment: Resources

6.1. Introduction

For MCSL’s current leadership style to be contextually relevant, it may require the ability to empower/train its members determined by its existing ‘structures of significance and social ground.’ This chapter considers whether MCSL’s training/empowerment style lacks discernible structures for local independency. This is examined under the present member-conscription; personal development: how training is structured, resourced, and external agencies utilized; and what challenges may be posed.

6.2. Member-Conscription: Mobilization

MCSL’s membership mobilization process is premised on this declaration:

All persons are welcomed into membership in the Methodist Church in West Africa who sincerely desire to be saved from their sins through faith in Jesus Christ and demonstrate the same in their life and conduct and who seek to have fellowship with Christ…and His people…and take up the duty of membership… All members are expected to engage in evangelism and other forms of Christian service…to contribute to the funds of the church in proportion to their means... The Methodist Church

587 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theology, p. 56.
588 Cf. MCSL, BC3, EOCI, ‘Pastoral Letter from the President’s Desk’ (2005), p. 3.
people share with the Universal Church the Apostolic belief that the Church is one…

This declaration is all-embracive and its framework provides a context of shared structure for orderly work, offering a common doctrine and identity. Sierra Leone’s established social and religious patterns of life are the context for MCSL to consider a fresh approach. There are traditional ‘initiation and graduation’ institutions that provided training/empowerment for community orientation and leadership roles. The Poro, Sande and Humui institutions, especially, championed the cultural aspect.

‘Refusing to take note of the local context could have little appeal to members, or lose them to other groups.’ MCSL could change a small part of its membership training. Currently, this usually happens on a weekly basis over a period of time, usually months. The poro groups do their membership training in short concentrated period of a few days at a time of the year when those involved in farming, for instance, have less pressure on time. A simple switch, away from a British background system to one that is more relevant to the context of rural life, in Sierra Leone, may help address the fall out rate, of those who start Methodist membership classes, but fail to keep to the weekly pattern. The member-conscription declaration may raise a psychological issue in terms of what is expected to be offered to those participating in the work. The ability to respond to some extent could be based on what doctrines Methodism professes and requires.

‘…Methodism was raised up to spread Scriptural Holiness through the land by the proclamation of Evangelical Faith…The Methodist Church acknowledges this

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589 MCSL CPD, Part one, Clauses 1-6.
591 Evelyn Montiero, Church and Culture: Communion of Pluralism (Delhi: ISCPK, 2004), p. 42.
revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice…’ Methodism’s identity is linked to enabling the fulfilment of the ‘catholic’ vocation in relation to humanity. Though confessional boundaries remain unidentified in Methodism, it is connected to its historical emergence as a ‘mission enterprise’ within the universal church and its claim of continuity with the universal ‘apostolic tradition’. Members are pledged to this catholic evangelical doctrine as in Wesley’s traditional teachings and homilies. This is not a formal or speculative theological system, but proposes Methodism’s belief or values which secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the gospel, ensuring continual witnessing of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation. ‘Evangelicalism is of major importance to the future, of global Christianity’ since ‘evangelicalism plays a vital role in the church’s future if this leads to the church taking a proactive role within and alongside society in evangelism.’ MCSL is both evangelical and apostolic and this challenges the church to develop its own members in a way that they can understand and participate in its beliefs and practices, proactively.

The expression ‘evangelical’ derives from the Greek euangelion meaning ‘good news’. ‘All Christians are…evangelical’ if they ‘are all people of the gospel’ which also implies a paradigm of mutuality and cooperativeness in mission: ‘mission is not just the west to the rest but it is a two way street…mission is about giving and receiving…’ though ‘we learn more than we ever offer or give…’

592 MCSL CPD, p. xii.
594 Craske and Marsh, Methodism and the Future, pp. 19, 22.
597 Ross, ‘Educating for Contextual Mission’, p. 2; See Romans 1:11-12.
In summary, the challenge is not to surrender totally to the traditional induction process but to articulate an appropriated member-conscription process that can develop members for contextual work.

6.2.1. Enlistment Procedures

This initial recruitment is to sensitize members on what MCSL’s membership entails. The context of enlistment commences with ‘Infant Baptism’ where the baptized child or infant is cultivated to be a ‘Junior Member’. They become eligible for Full-Membership training when they can responsibly make a ‘conscious and definite response to Christ in personal faith and commitment’. Procedurally:

Training for full membership…lasts for not less than six months…instruction…and include…Stories from the Gospels…the Apostles’ Creed…and preparation for Holy Communion…where one of the parents of a child presented for baptism shall be a Full Member, or Member-On-Trial, of the Methodist Church and…who shall accept responsibility for training…the child in the duties, privileges and doctrines of the Christian religion…The Leaders’ Meeting is responsible for ensuring…nurture…with suitable instruction as the child is able to receive…When they are old enough they are encouraged to become a Full Member…

598 MCSL CPD, SO 193 clause 1: ‘Junior Members’ are those…baptized in infancy or childhood and…continue within the fellowship of the Methodist Church…
599 MCSL CPD, SO 193 clause 3.
600 MCSL CPD, SO 192 clause 1.
That a Junior Member must ‘recite the Apostles’ Creed…Lord’s Prayer and narrate some stories of the Gospel’ makes it conditional upon him/her to master the prescribed courses in order to determine acceptability or admission to the church. The procedure is the same for ‘Catechumens’ for which, in addition to receiving a public recognition, candidates are subjected to instruction on catechisms, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Within Sierra Leone, the *humui*, had performed traditional baptismal (or cleansing) rituals for communal restoration. Both conscription approaches groomed the people for intentional roles, and for sense of belonging to the respective society. The *poro* initiates, for instance, are given instruction in social customs and religious discipline. Unlike the traditional initiation style, *poro* is not a centralized organization but operates locally through independent lodges, whereas MCSL’s inception scheme is defined, formal and western-oriented, and therefore may require to be re-appropriated to the local cultural situations. The MCSL stress on the ability to read and write and understand abstract Western concepts is unhelpful in rural Sierra Leone. The standardized Western approach works well with the more Western oriented Krio, but is to the disadvantage of others. The connexial Methodist finds it difficult to allow several local approaches to develop. Unlike the *poro*, one approach only is mandatory for all and this does not meet the needs of the diverse culture of Sierra Leone.

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601 MCSL CPD, 193 Clause 2.
602 MCSL CPD, SO 194: ‘Catechumens’ are inquirers from other faiths who seek to enter the Christian Church. They are given public recognition after being enrolled and then put into classes for instruction in Christian faith and their names recorded in a separate class-book. ‘Adherents’ whether baptized or not are those who are attached to the Society and seek fellowship and nurture of the Church, but are unable, for one reason or another, to accept the full code of discipline of members. A separate record is kept of their names and the Leaders’ Meeting takes special responsibility for their pastoral care. They are not members of the Methodist Church as defined in SO 190 (2), but the church welcomes them to fellowship, and accepts responsibility for their Spiritual nurture.
603 MCSL CPD, SO 194 clause 3: (Cf. MCSL CPD, SO 197).
604 Cf. Monteirio, Church and Culture, p. 42.
Crucially:

Catechumens…for Baptism shall be carefully examined by a Minister as to the sincerity of their renunciation of idolatrous and superstitious practices, their determination to go forward to full membership, and their willingness to submit themselves to the discipline of the Methodist Church.  

The context of this process seeks to develop and equip the majority for ministry and to make meaningful contributions to the work each according to their God given gift/ability. The preparation also encourages those ‘On-Trial’ to prove their genuine desire to progress from catechumenate to full membership. The contextual challenge is that both enlistment and traditional initiation styles intentionally empower the initiates for or indoctrinate them into responsible community life and service. The traditional beliefs and practices are those that shaped Sierra Leone’s cultural context. This affects not only the relating of MCSL’s membership drive to its various structural components, it also affects what we think theologically, what becomes of the important elements, including images that express MCSL’s reality. Jesus’ empowerment for ministry was at work in all the situations of his healing ministry. The concept of empowerment that he used to describe the responsibility of the respondents is images (including fishers of men, light of the world, salt of the earth). The renunciation of the traditional religious elements is inappropriate, so the conscription context above is not related to the local religious structures. The IACs are growing and they are much more comfortable using structures and concepts of the traditional religions.

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606 MCSL CPD, SO 195.  
607 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 38-39.  
608 Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 38.
MCSL procedures are westernized and bureaucratic. They result in a dichotomy between westernized faith and a local culture.

Further, before qualifying for ‘Membership-on-Trial’, modules in ecclesiastical practices must have been successfully completed by the candidate, including oral examinations before advancement to ‘Adult Baptism’.

This context embeds a basic level doctrinal and biblical/theological knowledge. Though intentionally aimed at securing or deepening their Christian faith, this approach is tantamount to the earlier missionary training based on established but unsatisfactory western standards, by which this aspect of grooming of members is premised on a missionary perception of member-cultivation that is not contextualized. The courses lack relevant local literature/subject materials. MCSL has some learning resources, including the Mende Bible, lay training programmes, and related non-Christian materials (health education), agriculture in Mende that may need to be adequately utilized. And then besides Mende, English or Krio, there are multi-indigenous languages that are vital elements in the total process of popular mobilization in MCSL.

A Member-on-Trial is not recommended for reception into Full Membership, until further ‘examined by the Minister and…considered by the Leaders’ Meeting’, which must be ‘satisfied that the candidate has sincerely accepted Christ’s call to be His disciple…and given evidence of his response to the call in their life and conduct…’

This approach is rigid when inception training and trainee’s gift or calling are

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609 MCSL CPD, SOs 196 & 197.
610 Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 13.
611 Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 11, 13.
612 MCSL CPD, SO 197.
prejudiced by executives. The traditional initiates participate fully in any initiation rite anywhere\textsuperscript{613} as they graduate on their personal merit.

Full Members and Members-on-Trial, shall be required to pay Church dues…Catechumens shall be instructed in the need for contributing to the support of the Church…when they have understood this obligation.\textsuperscript{614}

This approach nurtures, and encourages members into giving and stewardship. This is vital to Christian commitment and piety, pointing towards growth and creating awareness of the duality of the church’s role as being both ‘social and spiritual’.\textsuperscript{615} MCSL is a social community and functions in Sierra Leonean society as carrier and translator of culture,\textsuperscript{616} as do the other social institutions. The power to influence conversion, and subsequent acceptance of Christ, towards which the conscription is geared, rests with the gospel and its bearers. The phrase \textit{when they have understood the obligation} suggests that MCSL may/ought to have understood the contextual implications of autonomy. As Pratt rightly proposes:

\begin{quote}
Autonomy, self-support and self-reliance demand that we must learn to depend less on others and more on ourselves…this can only be done when…we realize that our financial support to the Church must be substantially improved…and we do not only support
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[614] MCSL CPD, 199 SO clauses 1-4.
\item[615] Guder, \textit{Missional Church}, p. 70 (italics is mine).
\item[616] Cf. Guder, \textit{Missional Church}, p. 70.
\end{footnotes}
ourselves fully, but also embark on missionary activity at our own expense.\textsuperscript{617}

This hypothesis challenges MCSL to translate its enlistment empowerment into context, by integration of local structures, that may cultivate members, bringing them, including the new recruits fully on board not only to meet their personal spiritual needs, but also to influence many more lives in society to positive responding, by their individual calling. It is therefore to teach the members to understand selfhood, valuing and using their own local means and methods for their respective roles in church.

In summary, this inception method must be that of translating the gospel into language that is understandable and demonstrative of its authority.

\textbf{6.3. Personal Development}

The criterion for good theology is the criterion of productivity. This fruit is seen by Christ coming from modest beginnings such as in the conscription training.\textsuperscript{618} This is the context of MCSL’s personal formation scheme, endeavouring to further the provision of the raising up, and the empowering of indigenous personnel distinguishable from Krio personnel. This formative training modality is not only to justify the need for Christian character building and the production of church personnel, but vitally to train local evangelists that may contextualize the work.\textsuperscript{619} This is to shift from the western missionary culture, so that MCSL may rethink its mission beyond the colonial missionary paradigms. This scheme of developing the

\textsuperscript{617} Pratt, \textit{The MCSL From Mission to Autonomous Conference}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{618} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p.35.
\textsuperscript{619} Cf. Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, p. 97.
indigenous personnel implies an understanding of this vision – targeting both the
ordained and laity.

6.3.1. Lay Training/Empowerment

The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the Priesthood of all
believers and consequently believes…no priesthood exists which
belongs exclusively to a particular order or class but in the exercise
of corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge
of special duties are required... 620

The ‘priesthood of all believers’ doctrine promulgates every-member’s participation,
recognizing that there are special ministries that everyone has to offer. These
ministries, gifts and graces, are endowed by the Holy Spirit to each according to their
ability, include: ‘Catechists, Evangelists, Deaconesses…Women Workers, Local
Preachers, Class Leaders…Sunday School Teachers…’ 621 However, the training
structures and programmes reflect a British orientation that is largely appropriate for
the Krio community, but less so for the rest of the church. As with other areas, this
demonstrates a lack of contextualization and discriminates against one section of the
church over another.

By ‘empowerment’ is meant the ‘training and equipping lay people for high
performance within their corporate calling.’ 622 ‘Itinerant lay preachers…are
examined…tested…approved before…being authorized to minister holy things.’ 623

This challenges MCSL to enable lay ministry competency, in which their natural gifts

620 MCSL CPD, Clause 2, paragraph 8, p. xii.
621 MCSL CPD, Part two, SOs 36-60. This list continues.
622 Robinson and Smith, Invading the Secular Space, p. 175.
623 MCSL CPD, Part Clause 9, p. xiii.
are recognizable. It is not all about lay involvement but about getting MCSL fully engaged in lay enhancement.\textsuperscript{624} The above context could be likened to traditional social organization, whereby households, compounds, towns and villages, chiefdoms, districts etc., worked as a single group with everyone empowered to corporately, and productively be involved in communal services based on ability and unlike MCSL’s approach which is too academic or complex. The challenge is to re-appropriate the lay empowerment style to the local context.

**6.3.1.1 Local Recruitment Pressures: Literacy/Translation: Endeavours**

For the work to be sustainable it has to have appropriate structure. The missionaries used western standards to assess local initiatives, while Jesus exemplarily applied sustainability, appropriateness and empowerment criteria.\textsuperscript{625} The contextual challenge for MCSL is to engage with the local knowledge, culture and initiatives. It is because of this background that Jesus’s criteria may be fruitful for these contexts of local theology.

*Local recruitment pressures:* The Mende, for instance, played a vital reciprocal role with the missionaries to enable and enhance their local ministry. They fully and actively participated in the development of Methodism offering their time, talents and local resources, undertaking their leadership roles in evangelization, including preaching and pedagogical.\textsuperscript{626} They took bold initiatives, to not only dictate the terms of a continued subscription to missionary Christianity, but also in their demand for educational institutions to be established on their land.\textsuperscript{627}

\textsuperscript{625} Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, pp. 36-41.
\textsuperscript{626} Cf. Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{627} Cf. Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, p. 96.
Some members’ inability to read meant that Christian instructions may struggle. The new converts, required assisted instruction to empower them to be meaningfully involved in a church and worship context, using the local idioms,\(^{628}\) vital in nurturing the membership for mission-orientation in terms of effective communication.\(^{629}\)

*Literacy/translation endeavours:* Growth in local membership may not be possible without literacy and translation tactics that help sustainable lay empowerment and work. These endeavours develop from the marketing constraints of the appropriated literature materials thus demanding a huge subsidy in order to make it available to the extensive indigenous congregation who then could be cultivated into potential prospective contextual missionaries.

However, progress made through the national literacy campaign within the hinterland, and the Christian Church (as pioneers) inspired a mass production of Sierra Leone-oriented literatures from selected books in the Bible – and long made available.\(^{630}\) The New Testament in Mende was published in 1956, followed in 1959 by the full Bible. MCSL has produced the Mende Catechism, Book of Offices, Sermon Outlines, Lectionary and related literatures. The MCSL missed an opportunity to deepen contextualization as the literature materials were established on western materials and literary translation. A local catechist of Tikonko (Mendeland), Alpha Gbekpa, largely taught himself to read the Mende Bible and through this to write intelligible Mende literature.\(^{631}\) However, translation remained in mission control and little has been attempted since autonomy. Literacy/endeavours challenge

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\(^{628}\) Bear, Report on *Visit To Sierra Leone*, pp. 1-2.

\(^{629}\) MCSL, *AC34 W/P 10*, 2000.

\(^{630}\) Cf. Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 20-21.

\(^{631}\) Wright, *Behind the Lion Mountains*, pp. 20-21.
that ‘the language of a people is the shrine of’ their ‘soul.’ Every expression and understanding of reality is influenced by their language culture.  

6.3.1.2. Institutional Scheme: Methodist Training Centre

The MTC was instituted in a similar way to the initiatives that other similar churches undertook in lay training. MTC was an integrated institution of the former vernacular Catechist training and related institutions, established (between 1946 and 1948) in the Mende Mission, for developing and training prospective local (Mende) personnel to serve as teacher/catechists. The emphasis was placed on practical theology and scriptural holiness, and helped to empower initial ‘Circuit Rallies and Local Preacher’s Conventions’. People were trained in this centre until its devastation in 1990; and it has yet to be revived. The centre was an affiliate of the International Lay Training Centres in Africa. It was ‘the resource power of Mission and Evangelism…for the Provincial Districts…the backbone of the Christianisation task and grass root workers’.

The centre ‘had an atmosphere of grace generated…by their service’ as commented by Kenneth Bear. While it was ‘highly valued…for its strategic role in vernacular work’, it was dependent on Britain, as its training was British Methodist funded, and, as a consequence, the training accomplishment was short-lived because of lack of sustainability. The MTC structure was missionary initiated, and although

632 Clarke [MS] (n.d) – Series of talks on the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service as Methodist Missionary in 1927.
633 Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, p.171.
634 See Abbreviations.
636 Interview with Kugba-Nyande.
637 Interview with Kugba-Nyande.
638 Bear, Visit to Sierra Leone for Conference, p. 6.
639 MCSL, AC34 W/P 10, 2000.
geared towards local work, it operated on their terms, with initial courses tailored to
the missionary standards in order to achieve their intended mission outcomes.

Courses were conducted on functional Literacy, Catechist’s and Local Preachers’
training; in which relevant literatures, including, Lectionary pamphlets, Sermon
Outlines, Commentaries, and Leadership Guides were produced.\textsuperscript{640} The missionary
intention for institutions, such as MTC, was primarily to develop local Christians and
Christian workers to serve as role models of civilization and progress.\textsuperscript{641} But they
could have done better by: ‘Suspending…personal, cultural…religious ideas and
practices, to listen to the experiences and meanings of others’.\textsuperscript{642} Consequently, they
sustained a strong resistance from the Mende Methodists during the process of
autonomy. Some of their socio-cultural, moral, religious demands made on locals
were rejected.\textsuperscript{643} Collaborative working is vital: ‘As we read the text with foreigners
and strangers, our eyes are opened to new ways of seeing and understanding. We
rediscover how the bible speaks in community.’\textsuperscript{644}

The lay training/empowerment was established on western definitions, so may need
to be contextualized to the traditional context, and be enabled to be self-sustainable.
The missionary education secured a good standing in the society, but their training
frameworks strengthened much of their own positions of power and authority. Again,
an opportunity of deeper contextualization was lost. A redeveloped MTC, funded and
staffed locally, would offer more possibility to help MCSL deepen its
contextualization.

\textsuperscript{640} Interview with Kugba-Nyande.
\textsuperscript{641} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{643} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{644} Ross, ‘Educating for Contextual Mission’, p. 3.
6.4. Ministerial Formation

The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament is entrusted to whom Christ calls and endows with gifts and graces for this work, and whom the church recognizes as so called and endowed, and these have a special responsibility for pastoral care and discipline of the flock of Christ. They are ordained to the office and work of a Christian Minister and pastor …

Those called to minister are challenged to a sanctified role of moving the church into a mission engagement. The contextual challenge is that the ministry is to be translated into every activity of the Sierra Leonian life, - language, and forms of behaviour they could understand and identify with. The Minister is a channel to influence the people to experience and share in Christ’s reality, the presence of God’s sovereignty, in their context. The sodality structure, as aforementioned, plays a religious role conducted by a senior hierarchy of elders, who like MCSL’s religious order, must have achieved a traditional ordination status. For instance, ‘a sande leader has the advantage of her secret knowledge’ as the poro head though the sande leadership is on a rather more personal basis than of the poro and there are other officials within their hierarchies. The traditional religious head may be likened to the ordained office of an MCSL Minister. The ministerial formation process considers the following identities:

645 MCSL CPD, Part One, p. 2 Clause 4.
647 McCulloch, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, p. 34.
6.4.1. Candidating for Ministry

To be a minister of the MCSL requires an individual to be called by God, recognized by the church, and is already a Local preacher. Their eligibility for the work, and their fidelity to the church’s discipline, are determined by a Superintendent who, if ‘satisfied that’ the candidate ‘has suitable gifts and graces’ makes recommendations, to the Quarterly and Synod Meetings for their endorsement. The successful candidates with their examination results is re-presented to the Conference Examinations’ Secretary who would arrange further examination tests at Conference level, similar to the preliminary processes conducted by the circuit and synod, after an additional test on the ‘Methodist Catechism’. After further examination each recommended candidate whose offer has received the final endorsement at that Conference, goes to train.

To candidate for ordination in MCSL, one first becomes a local preacher. Currently, to be a qualified Local Preacher requires following a prescribed course that focuses at academic abilities. Procedurally, the content of candidating for the MCSL’s ministry is academic. This approach means that those who have strong, western style education are likely to be successful, so perpetuating the Krio influence. It further makes contextualization difficult as those accepted for ministry have demonstrated an approach distinct from their local idiom.

In summary, the ministerial candidature training though pragmatic, seems cloaked in the traditional scheme as originally conceived by the missionaries, and therefore may need to be appropriated to the local situation.

648 MCSL CPD, SO 36, Clauses 1, 2, 3.
649 MCSL CPD, SO 36, Clauses 1, 2, 3.
650 MCSL CPD, SO 36 Clauses 12-16.
6.4.2. Ministerial Training/Empowerment

The time has come when we should encourage specialized ministers in the church. Gone are the days when ministry was only meant to be preaching in the pulpit and making classroom books. Sector ministries should be encouraged so that ministers could become qualified counsellors, carpenters etc. Sector ministries will help people to understand that ministers also have the intellectual ability to qualify into other sectors. Much talk about professionalism, as if ministers are not professionals, is misleading. Ministers can become professional theologians. We need a new turn around for a better ministry. 651

In this context, the spectrum of this training/empowerment style is largely ecclesiastically-focused rather than the combination of theological and professional education. 652 Ministers with tertiary or professional education achieved it either before entering into the MCSL’s ministry or by their own efforts. 653

Furthermore: ‘Every accepted candidate should become a Minister-on-Trial…and shall serve for six years before admission to full connexion and ordination, and the first three years shall be spent in a Theological College…’ 654 This process is strategic and fundamental to the ministry needs, and puts into the spotlight the need to develop an efficient ordained role, though in the Methodist tradition, yet fashioned in the British (Western) style. It appears that, a premium, placed on proficiency-ministry is

653 From the writer’s personal experience.
654 MCSL CPD, SO 37 Clauses 2, 3.
achievable through academic and theological education. Ministerial training is still in a western academic model, with missionary lecturers still prominent.

This is a contextual situation for which MCSL needs to consider an appropriate training alternative in a ‘new light’, for those who cannot meet the academic/theological criteria. The church is challenged to explore the advantage of empowering the diverse gifts/abilities among the local population, by which the future of theological education in context could be based on relevance, not accessibility. The challenge is in keeping scriptural holiness values in balance with academia. This same spirit endows every member with diverse gifts and graces for mission.

Proposals to the 2010 Conference buttressed the request for a diversified ministry training structure for both the ordained and laity in context. This vision for diversification had coincided with the external training arrangements for the qualified candidates both locally and internationally. Locally, students were sent to the ‘Sierra Leone Theological Hall and Church Training Centre’ for pastoral training for the Ordained Ministry. Highly qualified students were sent overseas for advanced theological educational studies - some to West African Sub-Regions or Europe. The approved candidates having successfully completed the theological education would be stationed in a Circuit under supervision as a Minister-on-trial and as a

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656 Cf. Ephesians 4: 3-7, 11-12, with 1Corithians 12: 4-31 as core principles.
658 This college was established since 1975 as an ecumenical institute till its affiliation with the University of Sierra Leone in 2007.
660 Rt. Rev. Francis S. Nabieu is acknowledged for this information - former Principal of SLTH&CTC and President of Conference (1999-2010).
probationer, and follow a series of probationer courses, including church doctrine, polity, administration, homiletic, and biblical/theological studies.\textsuperscript{662}

Teaching the gospel is not only about intellectual capability but attuning it into local context of understanding.\textsuperscript{663} If MCSL’s leadership seeks contextualization, it may need to restructure its training style across the board; basic theological education alone may not adequately meet the above criteria.

When all requirements…have been fully met, those ministers on trial who have completed…probation shall be received into full connexion with the Conference in its Representative Session… thereafter be Ordained with prayer and by laying on of hands at the specially conducted service.…\textsuperscript{664}

This circumstance is crucial because although complex changes and compromises might have been later made of the form that the Ordination might take, Methodism, never lost its principle of ‘Connexionalism’ which is maintained by MCSL. The contextual challenge is to bring the minister into a ‘full connexion’ - an engagement into an activity of relationships and interdependency far beyond local church commitments. MCSL’s ordination process is formal and western styled, unlike the traditional religious style which is informally based on specific attainments and experience and is hereditary for chief priest and priestess.\textsuperscript{665}

In summary, the ministerial empowerment largely caters for general ecclesiastical roles, and so is not contextualized to the traditional empowerment of the local-
culturally-centred-style. It still produces western style ministers who then struggle to be contextually relevant.

6.5. Training Resources

The MCSL has local resource challenges. ‘Resources’ are ‘human, material and non-material capabilities.’\textsuperscript{666} Local theology is for the community, and to appropriate same to a given situation, is to use local resources. Jesus utilized the local theological resources to build his community, which suggests that mission resources are at hand.\textsuperscript{667}

The local catechist resource contributed towards the establishment of MCSL. The catechists and chiefs worked together to establish local congregations. Literature and literacy work, and the establishment of the vernacular Bible School, the Women’s training Centre and other missionary educational and health institutions being were also important factors. The missionary in Mende society could have learnt not only to speak and write Mende, but adopted Mende rules (social and professional conduct) of ‘being’ and communicating. This in turn would have added to their authority in their work. This did not happen, so another opportunity to contextualize was lost.

The challenge remains for MCSL to integrate relevant local resources amenable to its training. British (Western) training resource schemes have not only been espoused but, for indigenous personnel development, MCSL depended on \textit{external financial resources}, largely from the BMC coffers.

\textsuperscript{667} Sedmak, \textit{Doing Local Theology}, p.30.
Our work is financed through the Methodist Church Overseas Division (MCOD) grant, for our medical work, agriculture, teaching members useful ways to raise their subsistence level etc. To extend the work of the mission, we started teaching carpentry as a trade, to help young boys to be on their own for life.  

This dependency syndrome is a problem that perpetuates a western style of training. Conference 1997 reported external visits by the Conference executives to lobby foreign experts for Conference staff training and restructuring of the administrative office. The Conference managerial framework is still Western rather than indigenous. Conference 2007 reported international support subventions embedding: WCO Grant, Cliff College Support, Christian Aid Donations and Global Fund. Between 2002 and 2004, and then 2013, the Cliff College distant learning effort for Local Preachers’ and Ministerial empowerment was reported.

However, these approaches may subvert local training ideals, lacking recognition of local capabilities, a mindset, which dominates foreign concepts and learning resources. It may weaken the essence of MCSL’s autonomy, and thereby, its encouragement to initiate its own training scheme based on the local context, because the training structures would tend to be largely Western (foreign) tailored or resourced. Nonetheless, Conference 2007 reported a receipt of some locally provided resources from the ‘Sababu Project of Kailahun District’, and MCSL’s Circuit Assessments, Property Rents, Financial Investments and other miscellaneous

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669 MCSL, *AC34 W/Ps 19 and 7c*, 1997.  
670 The Ex-President (Emeritus), Rt. Rev. Francis S. Nabieu is acknowledged for this information.
resources, and some proportion of these resources was allocated for Lay and Ministerial training.\footnote{MCSL, \textit{BC3 EOC1\textasciicircum i\textasciicircum W/P11}, 2007/2008, pp.1–2, 4.}

In summary, training/empowerment resources have not been independent from Western interventions, as they are a re-orientation of the features of the western style of deploying rationalization of resources even if it seems that it is drawing on the local examples. Until there is a moratorium on western finance, this lack of contextual education will be likely to continue. There has been little change since autonomy.

6.6. Conclusion

The training/empowerment system may require a realistic integration of both western and traditional styles, as well as a diversified curriculum that is able to develop candidates for both the church and society. MCSL is challenged to re-appropriate its training/empowerment: resource ethos to formulas determined by its context rather than western influence. In its training processes for lay people and ministers the missionary procedures still continue, with a significant level of western finance. This perpetuates the lack of contextualization and allows the Krio to have a marked intellectual dominance over the Mende and others.
Chapter Seven

Compass of Worship/Spirituality: Language

7.1. Introduction

The church’s calling is undertaken and fulfilled not just in leadership and training but also in worship. This chapter considers whether MCSL’s worship style has sufficient cultural expressions for it to be understood and relevant in the local context.

7.2. Basic Definition of Worship

‘Religion touches upon the deepest cultural layers, upon the worldviews.’ Therefore, it may be helpful to consider the local underlying worldview concept so that one may determine whether MCSL's worship style is amenable to the local context of worship/liturgy. For one to be invited effectively into the Divine presence, worship must feature a sense of nearness, knowledge and interaction. There is a significant connection between God’s image and ritualistic praxis of work. For Methodists, worship is both relating to God and to those around you. It is both evangelistic and liturgical.

7.3. Public Worship Service: Content

In worship, one can trace an image of God. The flagellation of humui ritual ‘washing’ ceremony whereby ‘the tongue is scratched with…a needle or razor to

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672 Sedmak, Doing local Theology, p. 90.
674 Sedmak, Doing local Theology, p. 90.
676 Sedmak, Doing local Theology, p. 90.
clear away the impurity\(^{677}\) of sin, depicts an image of God (Leve/Ngewo\(^{678}\))

demanding sacrifice, whereby grace is considered something that can be earned.

God’s image expressed in this flagellation ritual is rooted in the cultural religiosity especially of the Mende. This ritual is officiated by an elder or priest/priestess. Such a cultural ritual reveals the local knowledge (local image) or mystery of God.\(^{679}\) The church is a mystery, meaning there is something hidden and obscure. The Church, in Christ, is a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of humanity\(^{680}\) to link better with the life affirming aspect of this ritual.

Wesley’s view of worship ‘as a means of grace’ emphasizes the transforming effect of general participation and sacraments in particular.\(^{681}\) The humui washing may be likened to MCSL’s sacrament of ‘baptism’ whereby the ritual cleanses from sin to rebirth for membership\(^{682}\) as humui’s cleansing restores one to community life. MCSL’s baptismal style may need to be locally appropriated.

MCSL is **congregational**. It is a seeker-sensitive and inclusive, providing spiritual, pastoral and social care for worshippers. Pastoral visitations, and Holy Communion (The Lord’s Supper), prayer meetings and Bible study in church and homes are normal, in which members are challenged to social, pastoral and spiritual stewardships.\(^{683}\)

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\(^{678}\) God’s name in Mende.

\(^{679}\) Sedmak, *Doing local Theology*, p 90.


\(^{682}\) MCSL CPD, Part 1, SO 1 Clauses 2, 4 (lines 1, 4).

The church’s worship services are largely characterized with Western hymns, anthems or canticles and accompaniments drawn on British Methodism’s traditional Methodist Hymn Book. As Africans, the people believe that it is in the ordinary experiences of their lives that they encounter God. In African spirituality, worship and prayer are believed to be transformed through song, rhythm and dance into a profound and enriching encounter with the divine. Similarly, the local cultural worship or spirituality is not only a joyful declaration, but also a celebration of great things that God has done for us. In the local traditional context, one way of expressing lively spirituality and faith is through joyful song, dance, and rhythmic gestures, as it is believed that worship is never complete without singing and dancing. The missionary understanding of joyful expression in African worship represented a distortion not only the meaning of praise and worship in Christianity, but also of local cultural worship or spirituality. Acknowledged that vernacularization of the MHB was endeavoured, yet the vernacular version is only in Mende. The MHB which is in English cannot sufficiently permit local cultural heartfelt expressions of Christian faith and worship, more so, since the MHB has not been changed since autonomy. The Mende translation is still in Western thought-forms rather than in indigenous faith experience and expression with almost all hymns being literal translations of western hymns. The Mende hymn book is superficially contextual, but needs further development.

685 See abbreviations.
686 Orobator, Theology brewed in an African Pot, p. 149.
687 Luke 1: 49.
Traditional worship is personal, familial and communal for specific occasions, though unlike a weekly worship practice.688 This may be linked to MCSL congregationalism. Traditionally, the people congregate in worship focused with prayers, God and community ancestors. Offerings are made at the graveside or some other praying-place.689 As ancestor veneration is authentically African, Jesus can be expressed as ‘brother-ancestor, because to Jesus belongs the role of mediating between people and God, as well as modelling good and proper conduct’.690 Like Christ’s role, the ancestors mediate or intercede on behalf of the living family members. In church and traditional contexts a ‘sacred communication’ is maintained with Christ/ancestor that is not broken by reality of demise. But to accomplish an ancestral status, like Christ, one must have demonstrated an exemplary life and service in the community.691 Christ as ancestor is essentially upheld in MCSL but could better be recognized, addressing aspects that agree with Wesleyan theology and those that do not.

Communion may be likened to the pouring of libation.692 This traditional ceremony is preceded by traditional ‘wake keeping’ (in Krio tradition, Awujoh).693 Though criticized as a ceremony that encourages drunkenness, it demonstrates sustained indigenous religious identity by cultural expressions of prayers, drumming and singing, especially to comfort a currently bereaved family.694 Neglecting to stay with the bereaved home for at least two weeks is deemed as absence of love for the

dead. A communal meal that follows, local traditional context, is called ‘red rice’ (mixture of cooked rice and red palm-oil). This is shared among the congregated family and is conducted by an elder or priest/priestess. ‘In this conception a spiritual ‘power’ has been channelled for purposes of social expression’. The Holy Communion depicts the remembrance of Christ, even though dead physically, who is spiritually always alive. In both situations ‘the dead is part of the living’. Communion with God is shared with the corporate body of Christ. Accordingly:

Every member is called to testify the gospel of the grace of God, to point the penitent to the Saviour, Jesus Christ…to join in the offering of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which is the Church’s…service.

In MCSL public worship, the sermon is a central element, as it ministers to hearts, handling the gospel in a way that speaks to the congregation at worship. In traditional worship, God is spoken to through the ancestral spirits and/or religious emblems that are believed to mediate or intercede between the community and deity. It is a time of sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God and/or ancestor, expressed in incantations, veneration, on behalf of the community as well as individuals for abominable offences and for goodwill requests. This model may be likened to a homily because it too, addresses communal conscience by vocally appeasing, reminding and teaching all present of their corporate and individual obligations to God and/or ancestors. MCSL is challenged to translate its homily to meet local

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697 MMS: Marke to Boyce 14 December 1870 cited in Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity, p. 59.
698 Orobator, Theology Brewed in an Africa Pot, p. 85.
699 MCSL CPD, Part 1 Clause 3 (line 2b).
demands both in language and style. The formal missionary sermon style is used in both Mende and English worship but is an inadequate way to communicate, based as it is on a formal argument to convince passive listeners.

Unlike Christianity, the traditional religion did not have a sacred text. In the Mendeland, some traditional belief and practices were used by missionaries. Sermons used the belief in ancestral spirits, the Mende distinction between right and wrong, the belief in God that opened the way to missionary teaching on the Communion of Saints, and the Resurrection, Sin, and God the Creator. The *Humui* practice of ‘washing’ purifying the farming bush and dedicating it to God through the ancestors, was adopted by some missionaries in the form of conducting a service in every village church, alongside the Mende ceremony. All such ideas which had only been handed down through oral tradition were preserved in written form. The principle is to permit one’s cultural context to aid and shape their understanding of the Word. It is challenging to compromise the tradition and the gospel, but re-appropriating a tradition is a creative act of responding to its challenges. MCSL may be challenged to provide a dependable alternative for appreciation of fresh, rich, spiritual treasure of the Scriptures. Since some missionaries had the courage to incorporate local elements, a practice that needs to be further developed.

In traditional context, prayers are less structured, which implies that their prayers naturally flow from the heartfelt faith experience or conviction. Prayers are offered for the ancestors to warm their abode and help them in their spiritual journey to

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everlasting life. And prayer is offered for the community because it is believed that we are connected not only in life, but in death and in our hope of new life. Money or/and animals are sacrificed on the shrine to ancestors to assist them on their continuing journey and the offerings are normally shared as a community. The traditional prayers appear invocative, if not superstitious, whereby concrete offerings are made to conjure the spirits to grant requests.

In MCSL’s worship style, prayers are stereotyped, more defined and tailored to historic Methodism’s rituals, prayers and hymns, allowing little or no room for expressing personal-hearty-extempore prayer.

In MCSL, in addition to regular Sunday worship, there are also occasional services in which spiritual and social experiences are shared by the worshippers whereby one may experience the rhythm of God’s presence in elements of their life in relation to creation. We briefly examine the ‘Love Feast’ and ‘Covenant’ services inherited from British Methodism.

The tradition of the Love Feast service depicts a socio-spiritual activity in which ‘water’ and ‘bread’ elements are shared by worshippers during the service. In this service a table is laid out, on which a tray of bread slices and water are placed. The Minister consecrates the elements, and a lay leader, appointed as Chair of ceremony, together with the Minister conduct the feast. The offertory raised is used to support the weaker societies/churches.

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In a similarly way a Feast forms an integral part of the traditional celebration whereby the table of food and water is set aside for the dead. The difference to MCSL’s is that the food is left overnight for the recent dead, and consumed as a communal meal by the living in the morning. The Love Feast in MCSL is directed as required, whereas the local traditional one was practiced at important family engagements.\textsuperscript{712}

The ‘Covenant Service’ which MCSL holds annually, is a unique Methodist tradition, for the rededication of members to the service of God, whereby they are ‘committed anew to God…’\textsuperscript{713} It is about a commitment of loyalty to the Divine that shapes social and spiritual interactions of members, making them to understand what is compatible and incompatible with God’s will.\textsuperscript{714} Keeping the covenant alive is both a personal and corporate responsibility. The Covenant may depict the Mende legend of creation, for example. They believed that God, before finally departing from the earth, ‘made an agreement’ with his people not ‘to have a bad heart (bear malice) towards one another’\textsuperscript{715} to which they positively responded. Their covenant ties were flexible enough to incorporate outsiders\textsuperscript{716} unlike MCSL’s which seems confined to the membership. The Mende believed that the Covenant indicates evidence of being under God’s authority, in the past and the present - a phenomenon which reinforces the identities and the difference present in God and human relationships.

Tradition gives one identity, and contributes to one’s growth. It is a communication system providing cohesion and resource for incorporating innovative aspects into both MCSL and indigenous communities. Occasional service traditions provide

\textsuperscript{712} See Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, pp. 59, 60.
\textsuperscript{713} \textit{The Methodist Service Book}, D1-D11 and paragraph 1, D1.
\textsuperscript{714} \textit{The Methodist Service Book}, D1-D11 and paragraph 1, D1.
\textsuperscript{715} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 60-62.
\textsuperscript{716} Yambasu, \textit{Dialectics of Evangelization}, pp. 60-62.
harmonious patterns of relationship between collectivities, so that the need for an appropriate structure expressing both services in an understandable context may need to be designed.

MCSL’s public worship creates an enabling environment for both human and divine encounter, whereby its congregation may experience Divine encounter but it is western in content and style, and may have de-contextualized the local worship experience and expression of communal spirituality.

In summary, Methodist worship may not fully respond to the deeper needs of the people, so further contextualization is needed, carrying from initial steps taken by some missionaries.

7.4. Liturgical Structure

Liturgical worship is not merely speaking corporately, but speaking to, and hearing from, God, creatively contemporizing prayer through well-crafted messages. By implication, Methodism’s worship follows an order of service that enables the congregation to appreciate one another and God by participation in worship, guided by a worship leader.

MCSL’s ‘Liturgical services…follow the form prescribed by Conference’ with ‘portions of the Holy Scripture…read in every service of public worship’ as authorized by the 1932 Methodist Conference. The Service Book retains distinctly Western liturgy. This structure, (and the public worship services), allows some

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719 MCSL CPD, SO 226, Clause 5.
creativity and freedom of worship, but does not sufficiently suggest flexibility, or creativity and cultural worship expressions.

The liturgy, or simply the *Order of Service*, provides a structured system of shared worship, interactively acquiescing in the personal and corporate life and needs of the Christian Body. It constitutes Bible reading, followed by a sermon, prayers, hymn-singing and accompaniments, and the Holy Communion as required. It is the same structure used for public and occasional services. These liturgical elements provide the framework for general worship services, and seasonal festivities of the MCSL Lectionary Calendar. In MCSL, the Wesleyan liturgy of worship is extensively used but: ‘many services tend to be too formal…worship tended to be on the pattern of old fashioned High Church Wesleyanism with the use of prayer book and canticles’ MCSL’s liturgy is stereotyped and bureaucratic and remains unchanged since autonomy, thus making the services monotonous. While this is supported in the English language-focused congregations in Freetown, the structure works less well in the rural areas.

The Traditional religious worship, too, may be liturgical, although it could be less defined than MCSL’s. The Mende liturgy, for example, ‘had no images in the form of idols, nor did they have temples’, because they believed in divine immanence. Unlike MCSL’s liturgy which seems complex, the local traditional liturgy, is fluid. Like MCSL’s, the traditional worship liturgy features prayers and music, as the missionaries did. Historically, Freetown (Methodist) churches still reject indigenous

725 Bear, *Visit to Sierra Leone*, pp. 1-2.
727 Cf. Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity*, p. 18;
music, when, in fact, the local music is a unique African cultural expression of spirituality.\textsuperscript{729} The challenge is that local drums, balangie, shegburah may replace ‘pipe/electric organ’\textsuperscript{730} which are still used especially by Freetown and some provincial churches today. The western accompaniment was useful at the point of need, but as well as being sophisticated, was also likely to be expensive and unsuited to rural churches accustomed to local worship expressions. The missionaries failed to understand these basic concepts. What worked in Freetown among western focused congregations has been treated as the norm for the rest of Sierra Leone by both missionaries and the autonomous church. New forms of Christianity are either more relevant western instrument such as drums, or indigenous instruments.

The ‘Faith and Order Committee of Conference has recommended changes to, or re-appropriation of vestments.\textsuperscript{731} This points to their awareness of the issues, although still being challenged to contextualize its entire liturgical style, including vestments, hymnody, and accompaniments to meet local demands.

**Spirituality/Worship:** As understood, so far, worship is motivating when it is appealing to worshippers and transforms their spiritual experience. *Spirituality* relates to every aspect of life, lived daily in a sustained discipleship,\textsuperscript{732} with worship as a pivotal element in the total process of coming to faith.\textsuperscript{733} In Methodism, ‘Congregational gatherings, heirs of the class meetings…are the contexts within which the constant challenge of commitment has to be made.’\textsuperscript{734} MCSL is challenged

\textsuperscript{729} Oroborator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, p. 148
\textsuperscript{730} MCSL CPD, SO 179.
\textsuperscript{731} MCSL, A/C 34/35 Minutes, 1990 -1996.
\textsuperscript{732} Cf. Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{733} Cf. Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, p. 180.
to develop its members in a way that could deepen their commitment. This may be considered in the following ways:

**Small Group:** This structure replicates Methodism’s tradition of class meeting, which has given intentional pastoral, spiritual and social care and nurturing of members being allotted into groups. This model laid obligations on members to discuss their stewardship, and personal spiritual and social experiences, thus making accountability a key ingredient for participatory work.

Formerly, a class meeting was held in church premises, but rotational domiciliary and church-based classes, aimed at enabling more effective pastoral interaction of both class members and leaders are reported. This move could be acknowledged as a contextualization endeavour. However, ‘Class Meetings have become a problem in many circuits with some contemplating alternative means to address the problem’.\textsuperscript{735} MCSL may need to contextualize the small/class group system in a way that could enrich both group leaders, and members, with a broader diet of learning, in order for them to sense a deep-seated belief.

The class/small group structure may be likened to the local cultural institutions which too are significant structures that lay obligation on members without dissociating themselves from their communal activities and sanctions. Just as membership commitment is undertaken in the class, so it is for every community member to commit themselves to the obligations of sodalities or kindredship units, for example. Such are powerful social structures which exercise vital control over the entire community life. Like the small/class group structure, the traditional social units are training grounds for a responsible communal life.

\textsuperscript{735} MCSL, *BC3 EOC1/W/P8B*, 2007/2008, p. 3.
In summary, while a class/small group structure is a useful missionary tool,\textsuperscript{736} the local social institutions, also, may be potential tools for discipleship. The contextual challenge is to integrate the relevant elements of both structures, finding what is essential to Christian expression, and what is helpful from the local culture.

7.5. Language in Worship

Overlooking the Sierra Leone people’s languages is tantamount to ignoring their cultural particularities. Where, the Bible, hymns and liturgies are central to Christianity, as expressed in MCSL’s worship practice, are important embodiments in propagating the gospel in the receptor-context. MCSL is challenged to better use the local languages which so providing the means of expressing perceptions, that cope with the customary beliefs and social systems, thus giving shape to understanding.\textsuperscript{737} That said, English is increasingly a world language, and cannot just be dismissed as foreign language

In MCSL: ‘All services shall be conducted in the language or languages most likely to secure the maximum understanding and participation by the congregation.’\textsuperscript{738} This authorizes and challenges that MCSL must firstly recognize that the local culture in which it lives, is enshrined in the mother-tongue, waiting to be utilized. Secondly, ‘effective, and impacting evangelism, and better understanding’ is achieved by using the ‘language of communication’.\textsuperscript{739} Sierra Leone has many local languages in addition to English and Krio. The missionaries efforts and initiatives established the vernacular Bible training institution, embedding the MTC (Lay Training package),

\textsuperscript{736} Phil Potter, \textit{The Challenge of cell Church: Getting to grips with cell Church values}, (Bible Fellowship, 2001), pp. 13-15.
\textsuperscript{737} Cf. Kraft, \textit{Christianity and Culture}, p. 297.
\textsuperscript{738} MCSL CPD, SO 226, Clauses 6.
\textsuperscript{739} Shyllon, \textit{Two Centuries of Christianity}, p.247.
vitaly, developed and empowered the local workers not only to evangelize their own people, but for them to become missionary translators. This model was in the right direction, initially, otherwise, it would have been unlikely the missionaries would have been able to penetrate the local (Mende) society with the gospel.

However, the Methodist missionary largely used only the Mende idiom for both instructions in church and for literacy work/literature translation projects in the Mende Mission. This model omitted the other national dialects other than Krio and English. Hence, ‘Ministers urged more effective Pastoral visitation’ emphasizing the need for use of adequate ‘local languages’ in outreach and services to the local population. This suggests that MCSL failed to contextualize worship expressions to the local languages of Sierra Leone. This may also support the view that the MCSL’s mission outreach is faltering because of linguistic barriers. The local work under the Krio clergy largely failed because they refused to address themselves to the linguistic needs of the others, as well as to other socio-cultural differences.

Jesus evangelized through local language, experiences and images. MCSL is challenged to emulate Christ’s linguistic contextualization. The Sierra Leonean people have their own dialectical identity, and might not need a foreign language to express MCSL’s worship. Africans do not have to lose their national languages, even if it costs them their customs, to be Christianized. The most successful penetration of Christianity into Africa occurred when it was assimilated in their cultural dialects. Hence, ‘The Gospel is like a jigsaw, of many pieces of good news, - to

741 Cf. See Sedmak, Doing Local Theology, p. 23.
742 Johnson, The Relation of Mission Work to Native Customs, p. 2.
743 Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity?, p. 18.
understand them, people have to hear in their own language.\textsuperscript{744} Likewise for the Sierra Leoneans, every endeavour and expression to communicate their understanding of gospel reality could be influenced by their inherited and/or learned languages. The challenge is vernacularization of worship expressions. The usage of English and Krio expression and communication at worship, like in the training situation, may fall short of the above principles in that worship may be only more meaningful to the minority English and Krio congregants.\textsuperscript{745}

No language can be anything but elliptical, requiring a leap of imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience…Nothing is meaningful until it is related to the hearer’s own experience.\textsuperscript{746}

Communication requires that the hearers supply their imaginative link from their fund of experience to the words the conductor uses.\textsuperscript{747} MCSL’s liturgy may be comprehensible, if only expressed in a medium that appeals to its members’ religious experience. The challenge of appropriate understanding and communication is necessary for effective participatory worship: by using the national and local languages at worship, the people worship without dialectical hassles.

However, the linguistic authority cannot be overstressed today. Though English is largely used in the MCSL administration, the dominant community language (Mende or Krio) continues to be used for the grassroots functions.\textsuperscript{748} English is official because the ‘hallmark of a civilized African is believed to be the ability to speak

\textsuperscript{744} Kirk, \textit{What is Mission?}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{745} MCSL, AC34 WP9, 2000.
Whereas Krio is seldom used for public and religious functions, it is
considered inelegant for classroom and pulpit.\(^{750}\)

In the current socio-religious development, none of the key languages, such as
Mende and Temne, are nationally or globally accepted as lingua franca, except Krio,
because, Krio is ‘the language of domestic life…easily acquired by more
natives,…forming a convenient bridge from their dialect to the English Language.’\(^{751}\)
Krio ‘songs’ are widely utilized for devotional purposes, class meetings, and
services, as it aids meditation. This is because of being expressed in this vernacular,
where Krio songs ‘bear the principal ingredients of…biblical realism and theological
understanding of God, sufficient to spiritually uplift a simple mind.’\(^{752}\)
Expressed in another way, ‘Krio apparently brings down worship a little close to the locals’, but
only for the minority speakers, because worship is not contextualized adequately in
MCSL worship expressions.

In summary, the languages of the majority have been, and are, grossly underused
during and since colonialism. By imposing English, the missionaries counted on the
superiority of their cultural language, forgetting that Sierra Leone is not ‘England’.
This has been markedly to the advantage of the Freetown congregation, who thus
have been able to dominate the MCSL.

### 7.6. Dialectical Authority in Worship

The MCSL believes in the centrality of scripture, Holy Communion, homily, hymns
and liturgies at worship. These are embodied in languages, symbols, concepts etc.

\(^{750}\) Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity, p.247.
\(^{751}\) Edward Blyden, Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, (London; W.B Willingham, 1888 (Reprint
\(^{752}\) Harry A.E. Sawyerr’s …circular: ‘Is the Sierra Leone vernacular a language, and is it to become
obsolete?’(19 December, 1885).
which the locals need to read and understand, with direct access to them, for consequential meaningful participation in worship. MCSL is challenged to have all such features translated into local languages: Using ‘local language...images...concepts...distinctions’ is a significant local theological approach.\(^753\) The successful penetration of Christianity into Africa occurred by assimilation in the local dialects. Hence, Bible translation into the vernacular idioms is essential for the post-colonial African church.\(^754\)

The biblical languages and features have equivalents in the local religious tradition. For instance, the Mende word for ‘God’ is *Leve/Ngewo* (supreme creator God). They believed in an ideal society, ruled, sustained and invigorated by *leve*. In John 15: 25, the Mende words mean, ‘They committed *sin*, they have hated me’. The Revised Standard Version puts it this way: ‘It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law’, ‘They hated me without a cause’.\(^755\) ‘Sin’ in Mende is *jumbui*; spirit *ngefei*; life *ndevu*; praying-place *nema*; God’s emblem *nomoli*; Communion/element *lewehini/nbagboi*; church assembly *humui* etc.\(^756\) Mende words for the Biblical book are *Hinda Yangilingo Wovei* (OT) and *Hinda Yangilingo Ninei* (NT); and those native to biblical language before Christian use include, *Yesu, Christi, susii, Krucsi, baptaisi, Messiah, Genesis, Eksodus*, etc.\(^757\) All these express in a striking way the continuity of Christian and religious culture across the borders of society and language, seeking understanding, love and faith, peculiar to the African theological circle. The result of this quest ‘is a...litany of Christological titles,

\(^753\) Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p. 83.
\(^754\) Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?* p.18.
\(^755\) Yambasu, *Dialectics of Evangelization*, p. 181.
\(^757\) MMS to Synod in MMS/ SOAS Archives.
models…proposals along with a job description for the African Christ’. These include:

- ancestor, diviner, traditional healer, healer, chief, guest, warrior,
- life giver, family member, initiator, mediator, intermediary,
- friend, loved one, brother, elder brother, ideal brother, universal brother, proto-elder, kin, kinsman, chief priest, chief elder, ruler,
- king, leader, liberator, black messiah…. 

Some similar matching Christological titles, models, categories or proposals that can be proposed in the Sierra Leonean context embed, chief (mahei/ndomahei), warrior chief (maada/kugba-nyande), kin/kinsman (ndeihun/ndeihublaa), brother/sister (ndewe), healer (halemoi), elder/society head (kpakui/sowa), ancestor (mbondei), priest/priestess (hewemoi) etc. The adequacy of this Mende translation can be questioned, because the translation might have been done better by equipped African locals. Nevertheless, translations must undergo a rational process. As, ‘to relativize the text is to lose its transcendent dimension; to absolutize it is to make it irrelevant’. Hence:

The Gospel must be translated into actual fact…sacrifice and service…Much more of this work of interpretation and proof is required

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761 Sanneh, *Encountering the West*, pp. 16-17.
762 Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization*, pp. 201, 129.
in a land where the spoken gospel falls on the ear as a strange…and

Contextualizing Christianity for the African churches, using their traditional expressions to reflect their worldview is a means of helping them to regain their identity and affirm their creation in God’s image long before the missionaries. Christianity in its biblical representation is African despite the Western influence to believe the religious traditions of worshiping as heathen.\footnote{Tutu, \textit{The Worshipping Church in Africa}, p. 1.}

In Sierra Leone:

Regarding vernacular literature, importance was first placed on the translation of the Bible into the principal languages, then translation of the collection of hymns, songs, Methodist ritual…and information booklets on agriculture and health education.\footnote{Pratt, \textit{The MCSL from Mission to Autonomous Conference}, p. 23.}

This seeks to reclaim the lost grandeur of the indigenous idioms in mission in MCSL. The perpetual use of English may discourage non-English speaking seekers who may desire to participate meaningfully in the worship. If the missionaries cannot be blamed for not encouraging ethnic languages, how long had their attempts at mission been baffled, whilst they forced their own language as worthy of cultivation? How could instruction be anything else, but through the medium of that which is known. Although acknowledged that evangelism entered a new phase, yet only the Mende
language has been used in services and for instructions. \footnote{Charles, The Methodist Church of Sierra Leone, pp.5, 6.} The dialectal challenge for MCSL is real because:

At the beginning of the 20th century, the work in Sierra Leone received a new impetus. The mother-tongue of the local people became the vehicle of instruction as well as the language of worship. Gradually, it became fashionable to hear songs…in Mende, Limba and Susu…other languages of the local tribes…\footnote{Charles, The Methodist Church of Sierra Leone, p.7.}

The MCSL had the potential to contextualize its worship expressions. But the challenge is not only choosing one or more of the key indigenous languages or Krio, but also is the challenge of English, which is the entrenched official language in the country - the primary index of national education. Yet, English is a Western idiom, and so makes it unequivocally not even a local language, though its use is expedient. The use of English is complex. Its use in Sierra Leone is growing, and so is understanding of it, but the heart language of faith appears to remain in local languages. Translating English words and concepts into local languages is not enough. A complete orientation is needed.

In summary, MCSL’s worship ethos is not contextualized, even after endeavours by the missionaries to accommodate some relevant elements of the traditional liturgy. The resulting dominance of English has allowed the Freetown focused congregation to control the MCSL, leading to a liturgically divided church. This totally unsatisfactory situation needs to be recognized and addressed.
7.7. Conclusion

For the MCSL to be more relevant and to grow requires a greater identification with the various peoples of Sierra Leone. Translation of British hymns and worship practices into local idiom is superficial. What is needed is to understand Christian faith from a Sierra Leonean perspective, articulating the meaning and practices in ways that are indigenous and authentic. Western styles of education are increasingly valued in Sierra Leone but tend to separate those educated from others. Ministerial training in a western style continues to produce a clergy who perpetuate the missionary developed church and structures and practice. It may be that the ministerial training is the most crucial aspect in contextualization. If such training is more indigenous and no longer favours those with a background of western education, ministers will be produced who are not separated from their own context. Secondly, the prominence of the Krio clergy, with a more British-oriented background, will lessen. Perhaps this is the prime area for MCSL to address, if it wishes to be more contextual throughout.
Chapter Eight

8.1. General Conclusion: Recommendation

This study has examined the challenge of contextualization, discussing three key issues, *leadership ethos, training/empowerment: resources* and *worship/spirituality: language* structures in the MCSL in the light of the hypothesis, that, these vital areas are not contextualized enough, and, due to MCSL’s failure to contextualize adequately, it is losing its missionary potency. This work challenges MCSL to consider, whether it recognizes the need for a renewal of current key structures in order to increase its missionary potency in Sierra Leone. There follows attempting conclusions and recommendations based on the preceding findings, information and evidences.

In contextualization, one authentically relates the gospel to the respondent’s local context from their own perspectives, including culture, structure, language, belief and practice, for Christianity to be understood and appreciated, and, as a consequence for the respondents to participate in church activities meaningfully and productively. The Sierra Leonean people have their own social and traditional religious culture, structures, customs, and languages which the British Methodist missionaries tended to dismiss or subvert. The MCSL has been established with little encouragement with their indigenous aspects. Thus for the MCSL to be sufficiently contextualized, it must be culturally appropriate, in the sense that its structures, still wedged in the British (western) paradigms, should be re-appropriated to meet the demands of its local cultural context.
MCSL’s *leadership* scheme has not progressed to engage with local cultural and religious practices, allowing for a variety of possibilities that can produce a flexible and compatible pluralism in which many elements may flourish in harmony with the gospel and the context. The hierarchic encompassment largely incorporates British ideas and practices, bogged down in hierarchical bureaucracy enforced by sanctions (vis-à-vis CPD), rather than simply hierarchies based on and assimilated in, local transformative ideas and practices. The rigidity of CPD’s complex bureaucracy does not create flexibility for natural gifts to develop, especially among the grass root congregations aspiring to participate fully in leadership roles. The *training/empowerment: resources* scheme is largely tailored to the British Methodist training culture which has not adequately developed and equipped MCSL’s local personnel to take up contextual church work. Training has not been diversified to give consideration to individual callings. Local training resources are dependent on foreign finance and to some extent personnel. The *worship/language* is communicated in Western liturgies, rather than in an African worship style. MCSL’s liturgical rites/rituals are stereotyped and not adequately translated/established in the local languages, with English and Krio being the dominant media of communication, making it potentially difficult for the majority to experience the feel of spirituality. Those in Mende are usually literal translations. The *class/small group* structure is not contextualized enough in a way that relate to their social system, taking note that MCSL’s historical growth has occurred through assimilation of traditional family-web relationships.

MCSL followed the missionary empirical approach to Sierra Leone’s local social and religious processes, thinking that the religious worldview could be reformed by inculcating in it the linguistic, ritual and organizational forms of European culture,
but, little did they understand that the indigenous people knew God before the missionary encounter, in which they had their indigenous own belief values and structures. MCSL has failed to contextualize both the work and structures in relation to its socio-historical and religious realities. There is need for MCSL structural adjustments, due to its current difficult situation. The need is expressed for MCSL to ‘grow outwards, towards its own people’768 socially and spiritually. MCSL cannot perpetually be complacent with the BMC scheme, and so needs to reclaim its autonomy, whether differently and variously expressed from the British context, and by so doing, contribute to local understanding of mission. This may demand more dynamic contextualized leadership, training and worship structures, to make identification with MCSL work easier for the locals, even as it brings changes into its ministry. Autonomy has brought little progress towards contextualization.

The conclusions drawn on the various aspects of MCSL’s activities and endeavours being discussed in the context of Sierra Leone are that the structures highlighted are no longer relevant to the post-missionary context. They are not contextualized enough to meet the local cultural challenges. The challenge is to adequately contextualize in ways that could meet the deepest needs of the Sierra Leoneans in the post-colonial context and future, in order to restore MCSL’s missionary potency.

8.2. Recommendation

The recommendations suggested are:

That MCSL considers possibilities of authentic contextualization utilizing indigenous concepts and thought-forms in the expression of the faith of the MCSL.

768 The Paramount Chief Jimmy Jajua’s speech at a Valedictory reception for the outgoing Medical Superintendent of the Nixon Memorial Methodist Church (MCSL), (1971).
That the leadership elements of MCSL and indigenous leadership systems be assimilated to form an amenable leadership scheme. The ‘Conference’ structure could be moulded on the Chiefdom or Elders’ ‘Council’ model which is the executive/umbrella body of the local administration as the structure stipulated by Conference could be incorporated to form a participatory leadership, that may help minimize structural and institutional maintenance and thus maximize mission. As a church, a realistic move towards ‘Episcopacy’ may give MCSL a biblical/theological image in alignment with the ecumenical episcopacy developments in other African Methodist Churches.\(^\text{769}\) It is not only for global honour and recognition, but for all to share their conviction about biblical and ecclesiastical structure.\(^\text{770}\) This may also put the local and Christian leadership traditions in balance - for instance, both traditions share certain categories of Christological titles that may accommodate cultural rulership values, since Christianity and traditional religion are both culturally-rooted.

That relevant aspects of the local and MCSL worship liturgies could be assimilated to give a liturgical structure, incorporating locally creative African Christian expressions of worship, interpreted through African perspectives, including drumming, ancestral veneration, healing, and sacrifices being biblically attested.\(^\text{771}\) The necessary elements of local social and small group/class systems could be incorporated, as it unmistakingly enhances membership growth, provides the context for apostolicity, whereby ministry diversities could be developed and, interpreted through the traditional training for communal integration. The appropriate dialectical elements of local and English may be incorporated through accurate translations. The deployment of the local idioms, plus Krio, essentially bridges indigenous and English dialects.

Local language, especially, is a vehicle through which to reach the locals with the gospel which also, may enhance mutual enrichment and understanding for both locals and the missionaries, but only if such a translation is mutually undertaken by both ethnic and foreign translators, so that ‘the totality of meaning of a given language in another’ could be comprehended by the translator as well as the receptor.

That the relevant aspects of both the local and MCSL training may be incorporated into another form that could contextualize the culture of empowerment in the church. In both internal and external training, the curricula may assimilate pertinent local traditional and Western courses or structures, which may develop and equip contextualized personnel, even if in terms of diversified sector ministry, established on individual gifts and experiences - spiritual or social. This calls for an integrative utility of local and overseas human, material and non-material resources, including using competent local and foreign personnel for contextual training as well as mission support, so the dependency syndrome may be minimized, and independence maximized.

Deep contextualization is a complex phenomenon as applicable to its association to religion (Traditional or Christianity, for example) where, in each of the systems it could become problematic when Christians try to remain faithful both to Christianity and to their national identity. Potentially, in the Sierra Leone context, the local African Christians and conservative Western Methodist Christians in MCSL, for instance, may not support contextualization of the local and Christian religious values, because from findings, the Krio church in Freetown already rejects the local

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772 Blyden Christianity, Islam and Negro Race, pp. 212-213.
774 Warren, The Purpose of Driven Church, p. 375.
775 Schreiter, The New Catholicity, p. 75.
African styles of spirituality, as did the western missionaries when they had challenged the entire African cultural religion.

If full contextualization could be acceptable in MCSL, then complex as Methodism’s structures are, it could require radical transformation in its whole mission structures and institutions in order to be assimilated in the traditional religious scheme. Notably, MCSL not only need to ensure sensitivity to the indigenous population as a whole but, potentially require contextual trainers and trainees who must be adequately sensitized to understand the reasons for introducing contextualization and how to implement it. The above recommendations are offered as a contribution to the challenge of contextualization of Methodist Church Sierra Leone in Sierra Leone.


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