

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL
RELIGIONS IN GHANA AND LESOTHO**

by

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Dedicated to my late father and mother.

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Andrew K. Opong
Maseru
November 2002

DECLARATION

I declare that 'A Comparative study of the concept of the divine in African Traditional Religions in Ghana and Lesotho' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis finds out how the concepts of the divine in African Traditional Religions are similar or different, particularly in Ghana and Lesotho and in other parts of Africa in general. In doing so, the researcher combines literature review of eminent scholars who have studied the religious and socio-cultural life of the people of Ghana and Lesotho in particular and Africa in general, with personal field study through dissemination of questionnaires, interviews and personal observations.

Through this approach he finds out the various religious phenomena that reveal the concept of the divine in the two countries concerned and in other African countries through comparison of their worships and socio-cultural activities in order to come out with the differences and the similarities that may call for synthesis of the concept in Africa.

He also finds out how the concept of the divine in Africa has been influenced by foreign religions and culture particularly Christianity, Islam, Western culture and Education. And how their services and disservices have affected the concept of the divine in Africa.

The researcher also looks at the issue of monotheism as against polytheism in African religious perspective to find out whether the African Traditional Religions are polytheistic, monotheistic or monolatry.

The study reveals that the concept of the divine, in the two countries under study, ends up in one Supreme deity-God- but that the approach to the concept is not always the same. There are some differences and similarities, which also prevail in other African Traditional Religions and in Christianity.

There is also a look into whether the term 'African Traditional Religions' is appropriate for the religious belief and practices found in Africa, and whether a synthesis of religious practices in Africa would be possible in future.

In the final analysis the study reveals that the African concept of the divine as pertains in the two countries is not different from that of Christianity and Islam but that the approach to the concept differs due to differences in the perception of the divine through socio-cultural and religious milieus.

Title of thesis:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS BETWEEN GHANA AND LESOTHO

Key terms:

Concept of the divine; Theism; Deity concept; Supreme Being; Lesser deities; Ancestors; Monotheism and polytheism; Humans in the divine status; Worship; Attributes of God; Myths; Symbols; Proverbs; Foreign influences on the Religion; Comparative analyses of findings; Title of the religion; Future of the religion: syncretism (synthesis).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As an educator who has handled the teaching of Religious Studies in Secondary and High Schools both in Ghana and in Lesotho, and African Traditional Religions in form six ('A Level) classes in Ghana, the researcher became interested in evaluating:

The concept of the divine in African Religions;

The relevance of this concept to the Traditional believers of various tribes and ethnic groups in Africa;

The similarities and differences of the concept between Akan of Ghana and Basotho of Lesotho;

The problem to be examined in this research can therefore be expressed as follows:

Are there any significant differences in the concept of the divine between the Ghanaian and the Basotho Religious beliefs?

The researcher would like to address this question with reference to Ghana and Lesotho in particular, and Africa south of the Sahara in general. He believes that it would help him to ascertain whether the concept of the divine is an African universal concept. He would be interested in finding out:

- (a) If the African Religious concept of the divine belong to the present or the past.
- (b) If the concept is in any way different in both regions under study. And:
- (c) If the African concept of the divine is different from the Western concept of the divine in both countries under study.
- (d) If the foreign religions and westernized education have not influenced the concept of the divine in both countries under study.

The context under which this study is being carried out is to find out how African Religious phenomena, particularly the concept of the divine, permeate the various

African ethnic groups or tribes. This study will also ascertain why the term African Religions has been used to qualify the various religious beliefs and practices found in Africa.

It should however be noted that the researcher is not trying to be a theologian but a religious researcher who is interested in the development of all religious phenomena. Kirwen (1987:vii) adds, "...in Africa, traditional religion is a legitimate interlocutor of Christianity; they can work to fulfil each other and bring sub-Saharan Africa to a fuller awareness of the magnitude and magnanimity of God."

1.2 SOME DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In selecting the tribes and or ethnic groups for study in the two countries the researcher considered the fact that the ethnic groups selected are the largest groups and or cut across the conventional boundaries to the neighbouring countries. In Ghana the Akan are the largest ethnic group and they share certain beliefs and practices in common with the Nzema of Ghana and Cote D'Voire and the Baule of Cote D'Voire. Similarly the Sotho speaking people of South Africa share certain beliefs and practices in common with the Basotho of Lesotho. The Tswana of South Africa, and Botswana also share certain beliefs and practices in common with the Basotho, to mention but few examples. Therefore information collected from the Basotho would represent two or more countries. The above examples again reveal that different tribes or ethnic groups sometimes share certain beliefs and practices in common. Needless to say, therefore, that the researcher's inability to cover large areas in his personal research contact would not be a handicap in his findings.

It should also be borne in mind that since the inflow of missionaries and white administrative officers into Africa in the 15th century onwards followed by the Partition of Africa at the Berlin conference in the 19th century, there has been much foreign influence on both the religion and culture of Africans as a whole. Such influences have been very high especially in the coastal countries where the foreign influence has been

much higher due to early contact with foreigners. In collecting data, therefore, the researcher would be mindful of possible adulterations due to the foreign influence especially from the missionaries. Such anomalies would be taken care of in the literature study as well in order to come out with true and fair comparison.

The study is a part-time undertaking of the researcher for academic purpose for which there is no sponsorship. There are therefore logistic problems; hence the researcher had to economize the limited resources at his disposal in order to complete the study successfully within his means. Again as a full time educator, the researcher could only do his investigations at weekends and during the vacation periods. These periods are also not without problems. As an educator he is supposed to plan and prepare for the following week or term as the case may be. In view of the foregoing limitations the researcher would focus mostly on the analysis of the findings from the Akan of Ghana and the Basotho of Lesotho. It was highly impracticable to collect data from every tribe or ethnic group in the countries under study. It is hoped that the researcher's decision on the selection of accessible areas for the case study would be acceptable as fair representation of the countries that cover his theme for the research.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Since scholars became interested in the African way of life with respect to their socio-cultural and religious practices, many scholars, Europeans and Africans alike, have produced many research findings on African beliefs and practices with regard to religion. There has also been a significant growing concern in the study of thought patterns, symbols and practices of various ethnic groups of Africa. However, there are few religious research findings on comparative study of the diverse ethnic beliefs and practices in the various regions of Africa that identify their similarities and differences.

The researcher feels it is important to embark on such a study to provide posterity with adequate information on the beliefs and practices in Africa with regard to religion. It is

also pertinent to find out where and how the African thought patterns are similar or different from other worldviews in respect to the religious beliefs and practices

The researcher believes that in as much as there are differences in the beliefs and practices of the various ethnic groups, which make them identifiable as distinct from others, there are equally similarities that unify them as one people - a microcosm within the macrocosms of Africanness. Individuals are unique and distinct human entities who belong to families, which are also distinct and unique in their own respect within a town or a village and in an ethnic group at large. These differences and similarities are there naturally to harmonize our universe. The researcher is therefore not studying these differences and similarities in order to underrate any particular group but to identify the natural sequence of beliefs and practices, which should be admired and respected.

1.4 SOME IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE PROBLEM

A look into what constitutes religion in general and from African point of view in particular would throw more light on African religiousness and their perception of the divine. In this case, a survey of various definitions of religion would be in the right perspective.

In dealing with the sanctification of life in African religions, Zuesse (1979:4) says, "The core of religion is the experience and aspiration after the holy; this is the real point of all cults." He goes further to add that the motive behind all religious behaviour is the yearning for and the experience of transcendental meaning. This brief definition of religion is a general one that looks at religion from the point of view of humanity in general. It includes monotheism, polytheism and the so-called animism. It explains the African outlook to religion.

He goes further to classify religion into two main groups in view of the intentionality; namely, religions of structure and religions of salvation. Religions of structure, according to him, find fulfilment precisely in the norms and eternal relationships, which structure

all process, and change in the world. Religions of salvation, on the other hand have a low estimation of all that is relative, due to their longing for what is absolute, immutable, finally real. Thus African traditional religions are religions of structure while Christian and Islamic religions are religions of salvation. He adds that Judaism evenly balances the two intentionalities even though salvation ideas often dominate the Middle Ages and structural ideas the Biblical periods.

Similarly Theo Sundermeier (1993:131) also divides the world's religions into two groups namely religions of salvation and religions of reconciliation. Including African religions in the category of religions of reconciliation, he states that in the case of religions of reconciliation, the world forms the centre of human activities. These activities focus themselves on the fellow human being or neighbour with whom one wants and has to live in harmony since there is otherwise no survival possible. Happiness and success are either achieved jointly or not at all. In as much as these activities are experienced as edifying and constructive by the community, Sundermeier points out that they are meaningful in themselves and need not be accorded any transcendent value. Prosperity and peace are the result of social justice and not the rewards of unseen forces.

The researcher does not fully agree with this assertion because in African perspective religion is not totally this worldly. It has transcendent value because the African believes in life after death and that one continues with the success achieved here in the ancestral world.

Viewing African Religion in similar perspective Kiernan (1995:25) also says:

On the evidence presented so far, there can be little doubt that this religion is an expression of humanism, in the sense of emphasizing human or this worldly concern. All its active features - ancestors, diviners, herbalists, sorcerers and witches - are essentially human agents without any pretensions to divinity. Secondly, it is unashamedly devoted to the realization of purely human interests, and this can be seen in two ways. It is overtly preoccupied with the temporal promotions of physical health, economic well-being and human development. It is a system of ideas and practices aimed at the delivery of human welfare and human therapy.

Kiernan, unlike Zuesse sees the religion of structure as something shameful. He does not see it from the point of view of Zuesse above. The researcher does not find anything shameful about this concept. Kiernan is entitled to his views but other people's views and beliefs must also be respected. Religion of structure is not totally worldly as the Kiernan claims. It has transcendental outlook in the sense that it looks up to God, the spirits and or the divinities for a total well-being. It does not look up to bliss in heaven or a condemnation in hell after death. It believes in a transcendental world, which is probably the carbon copy of this world, where one will continue with a new life, therefore one has to struggle to better one's lot here by appealing to the ontological powers or influencing them for a better life hereafter. The African does not see life on earth as the end of man neither does he dream of being like God or the gods, he aims at perfection here and now for perfection hereafter.

David F K Steindl-Rast 1978:127) also defines religion from within when he says'

What we call our religious quest points somehow towards an ultimate meaning of human existence. It is my contention that the religious quest is universal because it is the quest for meaning, and without meaning in life we cannot be happy. ...We all want to be happy. What constitutes happiness certainly differs from one person to the next... For we all know people who have everything one could need to be happy and who are miserable. And we know other people who lack all the things that are thought to make one happy and who have nevertheless found true happiness, namely peace of heart. They have found meaning. The difference between happy and unhappy people is that the former find meaning even in suffering, while for the latter the many things they could enjoy remain meaningless. What makes the difference is meaning... Seeing, then, that the quest for happiness is universal and that the happiness hinges on meaning, we realize that the religious quest, the quest for ultimate meaning must also be universal.

This definition and its explanation thereof, even though defined within the Catholic concept, clearly reveals the dual meaning for religions of salvation and religions of structure. While the religions of salvation look for ontological meaning of things, maybe in eternal bliss in heaven, religions of structure find meaning to things by trying to harmonize the material world with the transcendental world through rituals and sacrifices to achieve happiness here and now.

However, it should be noted that human desires are insatiable and it is through our unsatisfied quest for knowledge about things we desire and the meaning of our desires that leads to finding and knowing God. We are all aware that human existence is made up of enjoyment and suffering, happiness and sorrow, sacred and the profane or material and spiritual. The combination of these phenomena for our good develops the quest for knowledge both materially or physically and spiritually. Therefore both physical and spiritual quests for solution to our life problems are religious experiences. The one who finds happiness in suffering would be happier if he finds solution to his suffering. He is merely trying to contain his insurmountable problems.

Bowker (1978:17) also has this to say about religion,

Religions thus emerge as bounded systems of information process and transmission, built up through a long accumulation of tradition in which plausibility may very frequently have been threatened or even destroyed; but in which general description of man in his environment and of the possibilities which are available to him and of what counts as appropriate action, if he is to live a life with an ultimately successful outcome, remains sufficiently plausible for individuals to continue to incorporate it - or in other words, to allow it to become informative in the construction of their lives. If not, then those goals and those religions go without further ceremony, as Mencken put it, straight down the chute!"

He adds that religions, then, are contexts of information process, from which individuals acquire material for life-construction and from which individuals derive procedures and goals which act as constraints over the otherwise near-infinite possibilities of outcome in any human life.

The researcher feels this assertion about religion is based on institutionalised or historical religions namely Christianity and Islam. It is placed outside the socio-cultural life of man- even though it aims at individual's ultimate successful outcome. In African context, religion, the researcher feels, is not under such threats of annihilation. It forms part of the socio-cultural life of the people. Wherever there is man there is religion.

Idowu (1973:1) says, "Religion qua religion, needs no apologetics to establish the fact of its existence and that it has been a concomitant of almost every sphere of human activity from time immemorial..." He quotes Max Muller's definition as attractive: Religion "is a perception of the infinite." He finds it attractive on two counts: (a) it can imply a psychic activity of the whole person, and (b) it signifies an object of perception, which is real. He goes further to say that on second careful thought, it appears to be vague in that infinite needs to be clearly defined; and perception may suggest subjectivity and passivity rather than objectivity and activity. Similarly, the researcher feels that perception of the infinite does not reveal how it relates to the finite - the profane life. Religion is not only spiritual, it relates to the material or physical life for harmony in order to achieve material and spiritual well-being. This is what Allport (1967:19-20) says about religion: "To many men, religion is primarily a search for complete knowledge for unfissioned (sic) truth" Allport (1967: 27) defines religion in terms of culture as: "Religion is merely a culturally created design for living" The first definition, though logical, sounds academic; neither the primordial man nor the ordinary street person of modern times thinks about religion this way. How do we determine an unfissioned truth when we are not sure about the truth?

It is impossible to study all the various definitions given by eminent scholars in this study. Therefore, with these few examples, the researcher would like to add that religion is human endeavour to harmonize the profane with the cosmos for their benefit. This benefit could be here and now or transcendental - hereafter. It would be argued that this outlook to life, in the words of Allport, is a prelogic prelude to pragmatic and scientific approach to life. But it is also an undeniable fact that even though a successful result of any undertaking would come from empirically proper manipulation of phenomena, there are factors in the situation beyond human rational understanding and control which call for a dual action in the solution, namely applying factors within comprehension and control and factors beyond comprehension and control to solve the problem. This applies to the three worlds but mostly to the third world. Even in our scientific age, science cannot solve every problem hence in Max Weber's terminology; science deals with problems of empirical causation, religion with problems of adequate meaning. In

traditional life, Africans view life from two perspectives namely: physical and spiritual, hence their approach to life is two dimensional - physical and spiritual.

Therefore in the treatment of disease, for example, the traditional healers apply both spiritual and physical treatments because they believe that every disease has both physical and spiritual phases.

1.4.1 THE SETTING

Africa is a large continent that has been conveniently sub-divided into five regions, namely, North, South, East, West and Central Africa. The researcher's study focuses on Ghana in West Africa and Lesotho in Southern Africa. Lesotho is in fact, surrounded by South Africa.

The choice of these two countries for the study was influenced by the researcher's personal interest. He is a native of Ghana, precisely of the Akan tribe and has been working in Lesotho as an educator since 1992. He therefore feels that his background knowledge of the two regions and the two countries in particular will enhance his research work. Secondly it is highly impracticable for him to attempt to study the two regions on his theme as a part-time student.

Ghana is a coastal country that borders with the Atlantic Ocean in the south, Burkina Faso in the North, Cote D'Voire in the West and Togo in the East. West African countries are grouped into two colonial linguistic sections, namely: Francophone and Anglophone countries. Ghana falls under Anglophone, but strangely enough, it is surrounded by Francophone countries. It has a total area of 238,533 sq. km. The coastline is 554 km, (344 miles) long. Its population according to 2000 population census is 18.4 million, 34% of which are Muslims, 62% Christians and 4% pagans or Traditionalists.¹ Ghana in the colonial era was called Gold Coast, a name given to it by the colonial masters due to the abundant gold they traded in there. The name was changed to Ghana on attainment of independence in 1957.

The single largest tribe that takes more than a third of the population of the country is the Akan people. Williamson (1974:X) adds that they are principally composed of the Asante, Bono, Fante, Wasa and the Twi groups. They trace their descent through the mother's line, speak a common language with dialectal differences, and reveal a common pattern in their political, economic, social and religious structure. Apart from a number of necessary crafts such as pottery, weaving, stool carving, and work in gold and other metals, they are by tradition an agricultural people with the supplementary pursuits of fishing and hunting. They inhabit the southern half of Ghana with the exception of the Southeast corner, the habitat of the Ewe and Ga-Adangme people.

On the other hand Pula (1990:332) says that Lesotho is a country with an area of 30,355 sq km and the bigger part of the land is mountainous; its altitude is from 1,500 to 3,482 metres and its population in 1985 was 1,519,000. According to 1996 census it is 1,960,069.² It is also an Anglophone country.

As a nation, Lesotho was historically formed by many tribes and refugees. The process of this nation building is believed to have been started by King Moshoeshoe I between 1800-1824. The focus of that process (of nation building) was on a special mountain called Thaba Bosiu (Night Mountain).

The study of a religious phenomenon in two different geographical settings and ethnic groups is not a small task. In such a case one has to guard against overgeneralization through mere assumptions. To offset this problem, the research findings are going to be based on critical analysis of the religious phenomena studied so as to obtain true and meaningful results. To this effect Idowu (1973:16) says, "In the study of religion, the first rule in the scholar's highway code should be caution". The findings from tribes or ethnic groups selected from the two countries in the two regions selected for the study would form the basis for the comparison.

Opong (1998:78) says, 'African Religions are not historical religions' in that they have neither documented history nor founders like Christian or Islamic religions. Therefore to study a people's religion or religious phenomenon, one has to study the social and cultural behaviour of the people in order to come up with their religious concepts because in African context religion is not separated from the socio-cultural life of the people. This implies that there would be overlaps into other disciplines in order to be able to identify and understand a religious phenomenon in the traditional religions. Krüger (1982:10) says, "Between science of religion and its neighbours are no tightly closed gates. Cross-fertilization between the various disciplines is vital."

The above characteristics of African Religions do not fall in line with W. Cantwell Smith's statement quoted by Idowu (1973:5) that in the Western world religion and culture are different in origin. On this issue Allport (1967:27) also says that conformity to culture, especially during the period of childhood, is indeed an important origin of the religious quest. In the first place cultures of all peoples in the world give great prominence to ritual and myth, and possess some mode of organization or priesthood to sustain religious beliefs and practice. Secondly, whenever religious systems are hopelessly disrupted, the consequences for the life of the people are disastrous, unless some equivalent systems of belief replace them. Thirdly, religious systems are not independent of the remaining portions of a culture, but are intimately integrated with them. He adds that for this reason the supplanting of one religion by another is not possible unless the culture itself is basically altered. It implies that the approach to the study of African Religions could be somehow different from that of Western Religions.

The concept of the divine in African Religions, under study, is a universal concept that raises many issues as regard the type of deity namely monotheism, polytheism, spirits and ancestors. The Universality of the concept lies in the fact that religion, whether primitive or modern, usually entails a concept of the divine in one of the above-mentioned forms. The concept of the divine, the researcher believes, forms the basis of most religious phenomena. Many eminent scholars of Religion have propounded many theories about the origin of Religion, for example Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, to

mention but two examples. What the researcher has deduced from their theories is that in humanity's attempt to find solution to the numerous insurmountable problems beyond their control they look up to formulated supernatural power(s) that can solve such problems. In African perspective the origin of Religion needs no theories to be propounded. Religion originated with the creation of human beings. It emanated from instinctive awareness of powers behind the creation of the universe. This awareness is quite often reinforced by revelation and the experience of the wholly other. In the light of this, rituals are performed, prayers are said and sacrifices are offered to deities or a deity or ancestors, whom we look up to, for the solution to problems beyond our control, and in order to forestall other future problems, we seek to harmonize the material world with the transcendental world through such religious acts.

The concept of the divine is so vital to African Religions that the African looks everywhere in search of a hierophany or a manifestation of the divine. Thus we find the divine manifestation or hierophany in Kings, prophets, trees, rivers and stones. Eliade (1957:11) has this to say, "Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself as something wholly different from the profane." He goes on to say that the history of religions - from the most primitive to the most highly developed - is constituted by a great number of hierophanies, by manifestation of the sacred realities. He adds that from the most elementary hierophany like manifestation of the sacred in ordinary object like a stone or a tree to the supreme hierophany, which for a Christian is Christ as the incarnation of God, there is no solution of continuity. In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act - the manifestation of something of wholly different other, or a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are integral parts of our natural 'profane' world. Therefore, such objects should be viewed as the manifestation of the divine different from other objects, because they have added a spiritual character to the profane one. This manifestation of the divine in material things is very rampant in African Religion. The researcher would not overlook such phenomena as mere idol worship.

1.5 THE TITLE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

One wonders why scholars do not call the various religions of Africa - 'African religions' but rather 'African Traditional Religions.' In the first place, to what extent is the title African Traditional religions justified as a title for the various religions of Africa? The justification of this title lies in the epithet 'traditional'. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines tradition as a custom, opinion or belief handed down to posterity - especially orally or by practice. Traditional is also defined as of, based on or obtained by tradition. Thus this word connotes cultural orientation and states the fact that the religions evolved from the tradition of the people; therefore it has no founder and no doctrine written down to explain concepts of the religions. Of course the indigenised Christian or Islamic religions could also be conveniently referred to as "traditional" because as Parrinder (1969:8) put it they have been with us for a long time and they have been acculturated. On the other hand, since they did not evolve from the African culture they do not fall precisely within the sphere of traditional religions. At best they could be called African religions. In the absence of doctrine in the traditional religions, one could say that the traditional ethics could, one way or the other, serve as the doctrines of religions. Kiernan (1995:25) asserts that like the other Africans, for the Bantu speaking societies religion upholds and concerns the moral order. Upright living is guaranteed to yield a good life.

Secondly the religions are not necessarily separated from the culture of the people. What we mean here is that religious activities are not separated from the socio-cultural activities, as Mbiti (1970:2) put it, "Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the field where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony..."

On the other hand one could think of an alternative title like 'African religions' which equally fits because it denotes Africanness and the plural 'religions' show that there are many forms or ethnic religious tenets that differentiate them from each other. But a second thought reveals that the presence of foreign religions in Africa like Christianity and Islam that came with the colonial masters and the Arab traders, respectively, have

come to stay and have more or less been indigenised or are being indigenised hence they form a necessary part of African religions. Parrinder (1969:10) says,

The living religions of Africa fall into three natural groups: traditional religions, Christianity and Islam, in order of appearance. The term 'traditional religions' is being increasingly used to denote what former writers called 'animism' fetishism or 'polytheism'. All these labels can be justified, to some extent, but none is adequate as descriptive of the whole field, and all can be applied to many religious beliefs and practices in other parts of the world. Both Islam and Christianity are traditional religions in Africa, in the sense that they have long traditions in the continent, and so it must be noted clearly that when the term traditional religions is used...it means the older preliterate religions, mostly of tropical and Southern African.

Now for the sake of clarification and perfect distinction between the indigenised foreign religions and the preliterate African religions the epithet 'traditional' could be maintained, but looking at the issue from another angle, one can also say that the term 'traditional' connotes backwardness because in one way or the other Christian religion and Islamic religion are also traditional, looking at them from their places of origin. In this perspective the epithet 'traditional' sounds derogatory because basing ourselves also on Parrinder's line of argument every religion at their place of origin can be called traditional. Now if all religions are traditional in their respective places of origin but do not necessarily use the term traditional then African traditional religions can be called African religion(s) for short.

The origin of the prefix "traditional" most probably has to be traced back to attempts to differentiate African religious practices from those of Christianity and Islam in the African context. It is now generally conceived that the term "traditional" has negative connotations, implying primitiveness or backwardness. Olupona (1991:31) regards the usage of this term as indicative of the general hostile attitude that prevailed from the side of the two "conquering" traditions, namely Christianity and Islam. According to him, Islam relegates it to al-Jahilliyya, the time of barbarism, and Christianity views it as pure paganism.

The researcher therefore feels that the deletion of the prefix "traditional" mostly used by the Western scholars will disabuse people's mind from the notion that African religion is still at the rudimentary stage.

Another point worthy of note is that while African scholars mostly use the singular term "African religion," the Western scholars usually use the plural term "African religions." David Westerlund (1985:48) says that one conspicuous feature of the Africans' presentation of their material is the readiness to "unite" African religions into "African religion". He adds that religious beliefs and practices among the various peoples are unified into a common African pattern. This readiness particularly concerns the various concepts of God. He supports his claim with the assertion of Mbiti (1969:30) that it is remarkable that in spite of great distances separating the people of one region from those of another, there are sufficient elements of beliefs which make it possible for African scholars to discuss the concept of God as a unity and on continental scale. Mbiti (1970) used the term "religions" on the grounds that religious beliefs in Africa seemed so closely knitted to tribal structures, that no common set of dogmas could be identified and that religious beliefs in Africa did not form branches of one historic movement. The researcher does not see this as a contradiction of ideas but a retraction after further research into the study. Westerlund (1985:48) says that Idowu also holds to the singular term Religion for the fact that there is "common Africanness about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa. Above all, the cohesive factor of religion in Africa is the living God." Westerlund (1985:48) adds that Awolalu in support of Idowu also argues that since the religious pattern is in essence the same in every locality, we should speak of religion in the singular. The researcher feels that the basic tenet of African religions is deity concept or theism and ancestor cult. This seems to be predominant and can serve as basis for unity. Furthermore the ancestor cult is an indication of the fact that Africans believe in life after death, another indication of unity in belief. Therefore the singular term 'African Religion' holds good.

Although the researcher supports the idea of a set of common principles held throughout sub-Saharan Africa, he follows the widely accepted custom of referring to the different manifestations of African Religion, as “African Traditional Religions” in this study.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is for the researcher to investigate, assess and analyse his findings empirically and rationally in order to find the truth that would in the end, help to promote future research and help posterity to understand and uphold their African heritage. In the long run it will help the researcher as well as posterity to build their African identity and or personality. The comparative approach of the research will broaden readers' and the researcher's knowledge of African religions in general and particularly in the two areas under study. The researcher will find out identical religious phenomena in the two areas concerned not overlooking the dissimilarities thereof.

In the analysis and evaluation of the findings the researcher would be guided by the application of such methodological principles as hermeneutics, phenomenology and historical approach. The research methods mentioned above would generally guide the researcher to come out with unbiased findings and conclusions. It is pertinent to add Allport's (1967:24) contention:

When we think of a race of people, perhaps with a feeling of dislike or hostility, we have created an inner world of meaning that finds little or no support in biological or anthropological fact. All our life is biased in the direction of obtaining simplified perceptions and categorical meanings. If we say that the intelligibilities of religious people leap far ahead of verifiable evidence, we must not forget that the intelligibilities of irreligious people do so likewise.

These findings would by no means include literature study and personal research findings. For example, the phenomenological approach will help the researcher to identify the various religious phenomena that help to reveal the concept of the divine in the two areas under study and the hermeneutical approach will also enable the researcher

to give the correct interpretations to the phenomena involved as the people see them to be.

1.6.1 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Krüger (1982:16) says Phenomenology is not a method of empirical scientific investigation, but a philosophy of human consciousness, more fundamental than empirical science can be. Yet it has proved to have important implication for the way in which science is done. Its fruitfulness for human sciences has been realized anew since the sixties.

By phenomenological approach the researcher means that he wants to see clearly and describe adequately how people experience their own world in the sense that he wants to see and experience what they adhere to and hold as their belief and contention. Krüger (1982:16) adds that Phenomenology focuses on things as they appear in human consciousness. Thus the word phenomenon refers to a thing, as it appears in human experience. We all live in this world and we experience this world but our experience of the natural phenomena differ in many ways. Our experience of the world is influenced by our perception through social structure, cultural structure, economic structure, educational structure and environmental structure. For instance, the sun is the major determiner of weather differences in this world. Yet the seasons are not the same everywhere. People within the tropics experience only two seasons namely wet and dry seasons, but people in the temperate regions experience four seasons namely, summer, autumn, winter and spring. Hence life in the Temperate as far as the weather is concerned is not the same as life in the Tropics yet we are all influenced by the sun's energy. One cannot talk of the sun of the Tropics and the sun of the Temperate. Similarly in the study of religions the Phenomenologist of religion would study a people's experience of God as they express it in their religious practices or as it affects them from their social and cultural milieus.

Of late there has been a tendency of studying other religious phenomena by basing the study on personal experience or, to be precise, on one's home or personal religious tenets. The researcher has no misgivings about this methodology per se but the tendency of understanding and super-imposing their beliefs and religious convictions on other religious phenomena. The result of such approach to the study of religion is misunderstanding and false conclusions. Onunwa (1992:7) says that Western scholars and indigenous African writers who attempted to interpret the religion (of Africa) did so with western theological and philosophical concepts often alien to the votaries of the religion. The late Ugandan scholar Okot p'Bitek (1970:41) reacted in the early 1970s against what he described as "They dress up African deities with Hellenic robes and parade them before the western world." And he added that, African studies have been seriously handicapped by this Hermeneutical problem. After all Allport (1967:119) also says, "just as there is no standard pattern of content in subjective religious experience, so too there is no common point of origin." It should however be noted that much as there are differences in the beliefs and practices of religious phenomena continentally and inter-continentally, there are equally similarities that prove the universality of religion in Africa and globally. And so long as we use Western language to express African religiousness, this problem of addressing the African religious thought in maybe Western religious thought is unavoidable. Since it is a comparative study we should feel free to use Hellenic Western robes to dress up the African Supreme Being or deity if they fit. That is if they help to give the true picture (maybe in specific areas). If we try to differ where there are similarities, we distort our studies, conversely if we try to force similarities where there are differences we equally distort our studies. What matters is to face facts and try to be fair. It is true that not all African Regions or localities have similar western religious phenomena but those that are comparable should be compared.

Another tendency is picking on isolated phenomena and basing one's conclusion on them or generalizing on isolated patches of religious practices. Parrinder (1969:10) has this to say on this issue:

In some of the descriptions of African religion one is reminded of the Indian parable of blind men and the elephant. One found its trunk and declared it was a pipe, another felt its legs and said it was a tree, a third touched its tail and claimed it was a brush, and a fourth got hold of a tusk and said it was a spear. None of these had any proper conception of the elephant, not even when they put together their knowledge of the pipe, tree, brush and spear. But if they had a closer acquaintance with a more common animal, like a horse or even a dog they might have made more sense of the elephant. Similarly the comparative study of religions in Africa can be helpful in understanding the attitudes behind traditional religions.

Such is the predicament in which we find some of the earlier records about African religions.

However, much research has been done, in the present century, on the religions of Africa by modern scholars. Moreover universities, local and abroad, have included courses of African religions in their studies.

Parrinder (1969:7) has this to add,

In fact the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. When a great British University recently formulated a syllabus for study of different areas of the world, including most aspects of the cultures of Europe, Asia, America and Africa, in the first draft the only area for which study of religions was proposed was Africa.

In fact the place of religion in the socio-cultural and political life of a people need not be over emphasized. Sociologists and anthropologists do study religion in relation to their disciplines in order to understand the socio-cultural behaviour of people. This throws light on the importance of religion in the social life. He again says,

Many books have been written about cults and rituals in restricted areas, but few attempts have been made till now to consider the religions of Africa as a whole. It is important that this should be done, because the interactions of religions are significant facts of modern life, and the effect of religious belief and practice is felt in social and political spheres.

How is the study of religion different from and related to the other related disciplines like sociology? The answer to this question can be found for example, in Krüger's

contention, quoted earlier, that there is an area of overlap between sociology of religion and science of religion, but that there is a difference in perspective; sociology of religion studies society and sees religion under the aspect of society; science of religion, on the other, studies religion and deals with the social dimension of human life under the aspect religion not society. Thus while the primary category and basic referent of sociology is society, the primary category and basic referent of religion is religion itself not society. This shows how religion is in its own perspective in relation to social norms. If there are no strictly closed gates between religion and its neighbour disciplines and that cross-fertilization between them is vital, as Krüger asserts, then needless to say that there are equally no closed gates between various religions, and that African religions, for that matter, are tolerant of other religions as "allomorphs of one morpheme." African religions therefore easily absorb other religions and are absorbed into other religions. They do not underrate or claim superiority over other religions and they do not regard some people as non-religious or atheists, hence no evangelisation.

To the African religion is intrinsic; it is like culture which embraces the totality of the society. In the words of Josef Goldbrunner (1964:171), Jung describes the psychological background against which comparative religion introduces its figures. According to Goldbrunner, Jung's researches allow him to draw a conclusion based on the results of comparative religion, namely, that the parallelism and common features of all religions and popular traditions are the expression of one soul of the whole human race. The difference between the various religions is a proof of this in themselves since they demonstrate the dependence of the soul on environment, climate, soil and national tradition. Each nation seeks after God; the various religions are expression of the different ways that lead to Him. All of them are true but restricted to particular human group. Race, nation and culture are different vessels in which even the divine truth assumes different forms. Therefore the researcher holds the same contention with Allport (1967:119) who says, "people are often called atheists, and often call themselves so, for no other reason than that they do not believe in the generally approved definition of God." Religion is therefore a natural phenomenon embedded in every human being and to declare a human being irreligious is to dehumanise him.

1.6.1.1 INTENTIONALITY

In this approach the (religious historian) researcher will see and describe how the people themselves experience their own world. Phenomenology refers to this experience as intentionality. The researcher will go into the field with an intention specified in what he wants to see clearly and describe adequately, and this in clear terms is how people experience their own world under their natural conditions. However, due to foreign religious, educational and cultural influences, he would be critical in identifying what is truly African experience. The understanding of a religious phenomenon lies in observing and experiencing it. He would guard against going into a field with some set religious principle from a different environment or religious beliefs as the basis of his study. It would be like trying to identify temperate seasonal characteristics in the tropics. The environment would dictate what the weather conditions are and the seasons thereof. Similarly people's religious experience and beliefs are determined by the socio-cultural condition of the people.

1.6.1.2 ESSENCE

One of the characteristics of phenomenology is to drive at the heart of things. Krüger (1982:18) asserts that it insists on looking for the 'essences.' It means the researcher would look for the root cause of the religious phenomena at stake. For example, the root cause of the presence of gods in West African Traditional religions or the essential character of ancestor worship or veneration without which the ancestor worship or veneration is incomplete; or differentiates it from the worship of the Supreme Being.

He will thus come up with the essential structure of ancestor worship or veneration as far as African Religion is concerned.

1.6.1.3 EPOCHE

Another characteristic of phenomenology is that it insists on penetrating into the core of things. Thus it refuses to take things for granted. The researcher will therefore suspend all his previous assumptions concerning the phenomenon in question. In phenomenological language, as Krüger (1982:19) asserts, it is called epoche. Here the phenomenologist (the researcher) suspends his belief that a thing is real or not, in order to concentrate better on human consciousness of something. He looks at the world of reality irrespective of the type of people living in it because whatever their modes of life things look real to them. The blind people live in their own world, which is real to them, so do the mad and the normal people. He will not enter the field of study with pre-conceived notions or pre-judgments. He neither doubts nor endorses the true value of religious phenomena in point. He will observe with neutral mind-the mode of certainty but will not totally deny his own personal experience and presuppositions because they will, one way or the other, help him to understand and analyse the religious phenomena in question better. On the other hand he would be cautious of possible distortions of the investigation at hand.

1.6.2 HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

Hermeneutics in this study would deal with the interpretation of the concept of the divine as it is manifested in the various phenomena in the African religions such as theism and atheism and in the deity concepts such as Supreme Being, monotheism, polytheism, spirits and ancestors.

The attributes of God, divination and spirit possession, magic, medicine, myths, rituals, sacrifice and prayer, to mention but few examples would be studied in relation to the concept of the divine as pertaining to the general socio-cultural and religious life of the people. Needless to say therefore, that in order to interpret the phenomena at hand, he has to consider the socio-cultural background of the people in the case study.

It is therefore important that the researcher bears in mind the religious setting in the socio-political life of the people when interpreting the phenomena at stake. He will not be blinded by his religious or personal tenet.

The religious phenomena pertaining to the concept of the divine must be seen in the context of the socio-cultural life of the people in the case study. Their religious connotation would therefore be viewed in terms of what the people concerned deem religious. In this perspective hermeneutics would be based on a three-dimensional approach.

- a) What the concept used to mean in the past to the people concerned.
- b) What it means to the present generation under the influence of foreign culture, education and religion.
- c) What it means in relation to other African societies far and near.

Thus the synthesis of these three outlined approaches, in the mind of the researcher, would give the true religious interpretation to the concept and the ritual phenomena involved in the case study.

1.6.3 HISTORICAL APPROACH

A historical approach to the study is essential in order to know how far a particular religious phenomenon has been influenced by foreign religion and or culture such as Western culture and Christian or Islamic religion. A historical approach would enable the researcher to study the trend of affairs from the early missionary era and Western cultural influence in Ghana and Lesotho up to the present. It is however difficult, if not almost impossible, to include the pre missionary era since there are no documented data for reference.

The study of the relevant recorded material on the topic by the missionaries, anthropologists and sociologists is not without problems. One obvious problem is that

the early researchers were basically foreigners whose works were distorted by their personal convictions. Setiloane (1976:4) contends that each individual takes to the study of another culture the assumptions of his own, which condition not only his interpretation of facts, but also the very facts, which in the past resulted in the many derogatory terms used to describe African Religions. Another problem in this field is lack of trust on the part of the Africans who saw these missionaries and anthropologist as intruders who wanted to poke their nose into African affairs. There is an adage in Akan which goes like this: '*ōhōhoō nni nkō ye ōmani mfōnee*'-which literally means 'the feeding of a foreigner is the denial of a citizen'. Thus the suspicious attitude, towards strangers or foreigners results in giving them distorted information or misleading them. And this attitude, the researcher believes, is not uncommon outside Africa. T Cullen Young, writing about the idea of God in Northern Nyasaland talks about 'it is our custom' syndrome in answer to some African cultural or religious practices. Much as such answers to a researcher could betray the questioner's ignorance about the case in point, it could also imply that it is a polite way of refusing to answer the researcher who is regarded as an intruder who wants to know too much. Machobane (1995:18) asserts that the other problem is that by their admission, missionaries found Africans quite reluctant to reveal their religious beliefs. There was always a danger that Africans might choose to tell missionaries what they want to hear, and not the actual facts.

Willoughby (1928:6) felt that Rowley was not wide off the mark in his opinion that Africans preferred the ignominy of being thought of as "fools, or utterly ignorant of any sort of religion" rather than pander their religious beliefs to strangers or those who have not gained their confidence.

One popular saying of the Akan that reveals their intention to deceive foreign researchers is: "*Asem a wobeka ama Obroni abō ne ti nkō dee ketewaabi*" which means: what one should say for a white man to believe is not a problem.

Even in the present generation of comparatively higher percentage of literacy in Africa, people are usually sceptical about researchers who try to collect data from them and sometimes refuse to answer questionnaires and even turn down a request to be

interviewed, how much more in the distant past when the missionary and foreign researchers made their first appearance on the continent. Even though such handicaps are not completely eradicated, the African researcher is less prone to such problems than a foreigner. Again having lived in Lesotho among the Basotho for nearly ten years and being a native of the Akan in Ghana, the researcher feels that such problems would not be a hindrance to his study of both areas because he will be able to overcome them.

1.7 THE STUDY

While based on the observations and critical analyses of the findings of specialised researchers, this study represents a personal research, based on interviews with people of general and renowned traditional background and academic stand such as traditional priests, chiefs and some lecturers of the National Teacher Training College and the National University of Lesotho and the colleges of Education among the Tswana of South Africa; some renowned people among the Akan of Ghana such as those mentioned above and some Lectures of some selected colleges and universities in Ghana. Questionnaires were distributed to collect data from a sample of people in both rural and urban centres in the two areas of study.

1.8 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The selection of the two countries and ethnic groups for the study was based on accessibility of the said countries to the researcher. People selected to answer questionnaires were males and females of twenty-five years and above. Religious denominations were considered in order to ascertain the influence of foreign religious beliefs on the responses of respondents. Gender, marital status and age groups were also considered because the researcher believes that the gender, marital status and age groups also have some influence on the responses, and could also be analysed. The questions asked were of three types i.e. open-ended questions; closed-ended questions and semi closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions demanded the respondents' own answers or opinions. The closed-ended questions, on the other hand, required specific

answers framed by the researcher in multiple-choice forms or a Yes or No options. In this case respondents were required to tick the appropriate answers. The semi closed-ended questions were questions with multiple-choice answers to choose from, and at the end space provided for other alternatives the respondent may have. For example, what part do shrines play in traditional worship i.e. Adoration, consultation, sacrifice. Any other...? This gives chance to respondents to give other alternatives they may have other than those supplied by the researcher.

There were some informal interviews for data collection and apart from that the researcher identified some resource persons whom he consulted regularly for information on some specified issues. The informants are Lecturers, Priests or Pastors and some aged diviners, (*Sangoma*) and Traditional Priests; and Chiefs and Queens. The researcher found this sampling technique more useful than the formal interview where one moves from questions to questions, which makes the interviewee, feel uneasy and tense. The responses to questions therefore become rigid because the interviewer goes to the interviewee with pre-set questions.

In the informant method the researcher becomes the student of the informant who supplies him with the necessary information on selected topics with interlude questions for clarification.

In this case one informant may be visited several times and that would build some sort of cordiality between the researcher and the informants. The more familiar the researcher becomes to his informants the greater the chances of getting or taping relevant information from them because as the tension and suspicion die down with time, trust builds up.

This technique combines easily with personal observation. The diviners and the traditional priests sometimes extended invitation to the researcher to go and observe worship or a divination as the case may be.

The purpose of the interview was to ascertain how far the traditional religious phenomena that reveal the concept of the divine in both Lesotho and Ghana, found in the literature survey, are still practised or have changed with time.

Rigid formal questions and answers were avoided during the interviews. Experience from the M. A. dissertation had shown that such formalities create tension between the interviewees and the interviewer. The researcher therefore adopted an informal conversational method whereby the interviewees felt free to deliver their goods to the researcher with ease. They were however directed with some leading questions to avoid digression.

The interviews were conducted on random selection of interviewees, but with certain category of people in view, namely male and female, young and old, literate and illiterate. These people provided the researcher with a cross section of ideas and opinions on the subject matter. Due to lack of finance and time the interviews were mostly limited to the towns and their suburbs. Most of the interviewees were introduced to the researcher or suggested to him by his former students and friends who knew their backgrounds. Such suggestions sometimes took the researcher to some remote places.

The interviews were conducted during the schools vacations because the researcher is a full time educator.

Out of the twenty people who were interviewed in Lesotho, ten were from Maseru, two from Morija, two from Mafeteng, two from Quthing and four from Berea.

In Ghana, out of the twenty interviewees selected, eight were from Techiman district, four from Nkoranza district, two from Wenchi district, two from Sunyani, two from Nsuta in Mampong Ashanti and two from Asante Akyem Wenchi.

Generally, people interviewed were contacted beforehand and yet the interviews were not without problems. There were many disappointments. People kept on postponing their

appointments until the researcher became weary and sometimes gave up. Others turned down the appointment flat in the face of the researcher. For example one Senate member in Maseru, whom most people recommended to the researcher, refused to be interviewed without any reason. However, most people were friendly and helpful.

During the interview, peoples' views about the Supreme Being, the ancestors, the gods or divinities and the spirits in the traditional religious beliefs and practices were sought. The traditional religious role of chiefs, diviners, priests, sorcerers and witches were also discussed.

Apart from these there were a few chances where the researcher did personal observation of some current traditional religious practices among the Akan people of Ghana such as Apoõ and Adae festivals. The assumptions, which formed the interpretation of findings in such studies, are basically the researcher's own.

The second section of the research work, which was based on historical, anthropological and sociological books, is carefully analysed to bring out the relevant religious connotations.

1.9 QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires formed an essential part of the research study. The aim was to tap views and assess the present generations' knowledge and attitudes towards African religious beliefs and practices in Lesotho and Ghana. And to find out how far Christianity and or Islam and Western culture have influenced the African religious practices and beliefs.

The questionnaires were structured in such a way that the researcher could find out the religious influence on the public in general, and how far Christianity and other religions had influenced the modern generation. Provisions were made for people to state their religious denominations, gender, marital status, and age groups in order to assess their responses in relation to these variables.

In all, five hundred copies of the questionnaires were disseminated in Lesotho and Ghana. Two hundred and fifty copies were distributed in Lesotho through the help of the senior students in the researcher's school.

The distribution was done mostly in Maseru, the capital, and the suburbs and some district capitals or centers such as Mafeteng, Berea, Leribe and Mohale's Hook. Maseru, being the capital and the major commercial and municipal town in Lesotho, is a nodal point where people from all parts of the country converge for employment and commercial activities. So the researcher believed that he would have a fair representation of the people of Lesotho, in Maseru and the district centres.

In Ghana, the researcher focused on the Akan, people for fairness in comparison, and used the Brong-Ahafo Region for the dissemination of the questionnaires because he comes from that Region and has worked there for many years. Moreover it was highly impracticable to distribute the questionnaires throughout the whole country nor was it feasible to do so among all the Akan groups. Furthermore the limited amount of days he spent there during holidays did not permit the dissemination over a large area. In size Brong-Ahafo region might be bigger than the whole of Lesotho. He therefore felt it wise and convenient to use one Region as sample study. Again this Region was the least influenced by foreign culture and religions during the colonial era. Therefore he hoped to get less adulterated information on African religious beliefs and practices from there. The number of questionnaires distributed, on the whole, might seem inadequate but since it is not the sole method of seeking information from the public, the researcher feels, random sampling will suffice in tapping the general public views on the issue at stake to supplement other methods of collecting data.

Since the questionnaires were structured in English Language, the distribution was mostly limited to the literate members of the public, especially teachers, lecturers and social workers. Literacy rates in both countries are high so the researcher did not consider this as a handicap. Moreover previous experience has shown that interviews, and

questionnaires, which interviewees usually consider as a means of identifying them for taxation or for church sanctions usually, scare the illiterates. It is the literate class that understands what is meant by research study. This does not, however, mean that the illiterate folks were totally excluded.

In Ghana, out of the 250 copies of the questionnaires distributed 242 copies were filled in and returned. This, the researcher considers a great achievement. He owes this success to the immense help offered by some of his past students in secondary schools who helped immensely with the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

In Lesotho 231 copies were completed and returned out of 250 copies distributed. Here too the researcher made use of continuing students and former students in both distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires.

Generally, not all the questions were applicable to the Basotho or the Akan of Ghana respectively, yet some people did not respond to all questions that were relevant to them. On the whole no questionnaire returned was without some relevant information.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 The introduction: deals with the statement of the problems to be encountered in the research work, the setting or the background of the study, the objective of the study, methodology, data collection and sampling techniques.

In chapter 2, reference is made to what other scholars have done in the field. The concepts discussed are based on the general outlook of the concept of the divine in and outside Africa for example Theism. Deity concept: Supreme Being, the lesser deities, ancestors, monotheism and polytheism, some attributes of God and humans in the divine status such as kings, priests, diviners; sorcery and witchcraft.

Chapter 3 deals with the concept of the divine in Africa with specific reference to the Akan of Ghana and the Basotho of Lesotho; foreign influence on the concept of the divine such as Christian and Islamic religions, colonial rule and foreign culture through formal education.

Chapter 4 deals with the analysis of religious phenomena that reveal the concept of the divine such as worship: rituals, sacrifice, prayer, offerings, songs and dancing, myths, symbols, proverbs; Attribute and honorific names of God and the divinities that reveal the concept of the divine in Africa; traits of the concept in social utterance and naming of children.

Chapter 5 deals with the comparative analysis of the research findings: The similarities and differences compared; synthesis of the concept of the divine in the two countries of study; the questionnaires results, interviews and personal observations.

Chapter 6 also deals with the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendation.

NOTES

- 1. The information was collected from the Bureau of Statistics, Ghana.**
- 2. The population figure was taken from statistics unit Ministry of Education Maseru.**

CHAPTER 2

A GENERAL OUTLOOK ON THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE.

2.1 THEISM

Deity or the concept of the divine is the root of religion. There can be diverse perceptions of the divine depending on racial, social and cultural differences. Despite these perceptual differences there seem to be a general belief that the concept of the divine is a reality even though there is a class of people who contend that there is no God; as stated in chapter one, such beliefs arise out of unacceptable definition of God or the divine.

The concept of the divine as used in this study refers to the idea of a deity, god or an object of worship or reverence in one's religion. The researcher believes that the concept of the divine pertains in most religions of the world. It is the approach to the concept that varies. Thus all religions, advanced or primitive, view the divine from different perspectives and hence have different outlook and approach to it. Human beings are basically the same but different in colour, appearance and behaviour, hence our perception of the divine can definitely not be the same. One would wonder why the researcher adopts the term concept of the divine instead of a deity or God in this study. He is convinced that the term divine implies more than God or deity. It also implies anything regarded as sacred for example the ancestors, spirits, saints and angles.

It is also an undisputed fact, that whether it is evolutionary or revolutionary force that caused our world to be, there must be a force or power behind the universe. And this power, which eludes us, the researcher believes, is what we call God or in the words of Sir J. G Frazer-the great celestial phenomena personified.

Eminent scholars of religions have propounded many theories on this issue. For example in trying to find a common origin of religious sentiment, Sigmund Freud, according to Allport (1967:8), maintained that the individual's conception of God is in every case modelled after the father. The researcher has no misgivings about this claim per se because he believes strongly that we learn about the unknown from the known. A

physical biological father is the protector, provider and hence sustainer of the family, and seeing God in that perspective, he feels, is in the right line. Therefore it is justifiable to say that our personal relation with God is similar to our relation to our physical or biological father; but to add, "God is at the bottom nothing but an exalted father" renders Freud's claim a mere fantasy. In this light the researcher would like to differ because he does not see the idea of God as a mere fantasy.

In dealing with the concept of God, Goldbrunner (1964:160) quotes Jung as saying,

The concept of God is a necessary psychological function, irrational in its nature, which has nothing at all to do with the question of the existence of God. The intellect can never answer this question; still less can it provide any proof of God's existence. In any case such proof is entirely superfluous, for the idea of an all-powerful divine being is present everywhere, if not consciously then unconsciously, since it is an archetype. Something or other in our psyche has superior force and if it is not consciously a God, it is at any rate the "belly" as St. Paul says. I therefore think it wise to acknowledge the idea of God consciously; otherwise something or other will become God, usually something very inadequate, the sort of thing that an "enlightened" consciousness may well concoct. Our intellect has long known that it is impossible to think of, let alone imagine the fact and mode of God's existence accurately any more than the mind can conceive of any process which is not causally determined.

Therefore the researcher does not hesitate to say that the religious beliefs and philosophy, the world over, are fixed on the concept of a universal power, force or energy which is the cause of all life and which informs us about its existence intuitively. Theism, therefore, centres on belief in God or gods who take interest in human affairs.

Theistic religions have been subdivided into monotheism and polytheism. The monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism believe in a one jealous God who does not allow the reverence of any other deity. On the other hand the polytheistic religions, as a way of differentiation, believe in the existence of one Supreme God with many gods under him as his regents or messengers, or children.

Now, the researcher believes that the core of a theistic religion is the presence of a deity or deities on whom the religion is centred. Dichotomising the deity concept into monotheism and polytheism, the researcher believes, hinges on cultural and social differences of the believers of these religious concepts. So if the two factions understand the said differences there would be a common meeting point, which is theism.

Another issue that needs discussion is atheism, which the researcher feels R.S. Denisoff and R. Wahrman (1983: 216) have classified as abstract idealism. According to them,

Abstract idealism (from a sociologist point of view) is the belief in a holy way of thinking and behaving. Religions of abstract ideals don't have god in the sense western religions do and therefore do not centre on the worship of a god. The emphasis in such religions is on the search for a higher state of being, on attempting to reach a higher state of consciousness, and on becoming "at one with the universe", sometimes in a later incarnation. The religion points the "way."

This concept, like theism, boils down to one fact that this world of ours is full of mysterious entities or forces beyond the understanding and control of humanity, and in our attempt to understand and control them we seek to attain some state of perfection through a deity concept and or non deity concept- abstract idealism as the case may be. Atheism, therefore, is not necessarily anti-religious or irreligious. It is a situation where one's religious sentiments are not centred on any deity - hence abstract idealism. In an attempt to harmonize the theistic and atheistic concepts Allport (1967:25) asserts. "All our cognitive operations press towards coherence and unity. Whether we are theists or atheists. We are prone to stereotype the world we live in. Wherever there is uncertainty, hope springs eternal. The irreligious individual no less than the religious plans for a happy landing"

No matter how hard we try to study the why and how of nature we realize that our knowledge and solution to empirical problems are incomplete. We thus realize our nothingness before the force or forces that control this world. Therefore it is a natural sequence that we look elsewhere for solution to our insurmountable problems outside our cognitive structure. Life is full of uncertainties and we resist these uncertainties with

optimistic pursuit. And the most common optimistic pursuit in this world of evil and suffering is to look up to a heavenly father or a transcendental deity for solution to the problems. Prayer to one's ultimate reality or a deity, in time of trouble or need, is intrinsic. We all resort to prayer in one form or the other to our deity or object of worship, one time or the other, when we are faced with serious crisis in life. Our quest for meaning of the mysterious and problems of life inclines us to a deity concept for solution. This does not however mean that the deity concept is a fantasy.

The world is made up of happiness and suffering, day and night, heat and cold, health and sickness and what have you. Man struggles to achieve happiness and goodness amidst evil but man's desires are insatiable and hence compound the problem of evil. We are all aware that success in this life does not depend on the most physically fit nor the most learned, the wise nor the most healthy person or persons, for there are many a physically fit, healthy, wise, learned, who have failed in life while the weakling, stupid, disabled and what not prosper. Likewise death does not depend on ill health or carelessness alone nor does it depend on old age, for the healthy, young and careful people die as well. The careful one can die through the carelessness of others. This shows that with all our modern technology we cannot control our destiny or in plain terms nature; therefore we resort to the ontological powers for help and keep moving on as long as the life force continues to push us on. Therefore whatever we do while the life force continues to flow in us is in waiting for our turn to die. Allport (1967:23), quoting from the Yogavasistha, a sacred Hindu text writes,

What happiness can there be in this world where everyone is born to die? Everything comes into existence only to pass away...Life is an evanescent as autumnal clouds, as the light of an oilless lamp, and as the ripples on the surface of water. ... Desire is as fickle as a monkey. ... It is never satisfied with the objects already on hand, but jumps to other unattained ones. There is nothing good in the body. It is an abode of disease, a receptacle of all kinds of agonies, and subject to decay. ... What delight can we have in the portion of our life called youth, which comes like a flash of lightning, soon to be inevitably followed by the thunder-claps and the agonies of old age? ...What direction is there from which cries of suffering are not heard? ... Let me know the best possible secret of becoming free from the sufferings of life.

Allport adds that like many religious systems the Yogavasistha is intended for people who are keenly alive to the undesirable aspects of life and are eager to know the secret of self-liberation. And we seek to achieve the knowledge of the secret of self-liberation through our appeal to the theistic concept.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE-GOD

The concept of the divine is not the prerogative of any particular race; it is a universal concept. It is therefore inappropriate to claim that some people are not aware of the existence of God or cannot conceive of the existence of God. Such contention undermines the universality of God. If God is said to be omniscient and omnipresent then he is known by all humanity and his presence is felt by all humanity, or else he ceases to be omniscient and omnipresent.

Again a human being is a rational being therefore all human beings, be they primitive or civilized, developing or developed, can rationalise God. Parrinder (1969:25) says, "To say that African people have no system of thought explicit or assumed would be to deny their humanity. The great philosophical phrase, I think therefore I am applies to all men."

Idowu (1973:40) quotes Baudin as saying,

In these religious systems, the idea God is fundamental; they believe in the existence of a Supreme primordial being, the Lord of the universe, which is his work...and notwithstanding the abundant testimony of the existence of God, it is practically only a past pantheism-a participation of all elements of the divine nature which is as it were diffused throughout them all...Although deeply imbued with polytheism, the blacks have not lost the idea of the true god... God alone escapes both androgenism, and conjugal association, nor have the blacks any statue or symbol to represent Him. He is considered the supreme primordial being, the author and the Father of the gods and genii...

Idowu (1973:41) again quotes Rattray also as making this statement about the Ashanti,

I am convinced that the conception, in Ashanti's mind of the Supreme Being has nothing whatever to do with missionary influence...contact with Christian or even, I believe, with Mohammedans. Surely; those who find it incongruous that the West African Negro who seems so backward in most things, should have so far progressed in religious development, forget that the magnificent concept of a one Supreme Deity was not the prerogative of the minds which we commonly consider the greatest of old...but was a conception of primitive people who lived after the pyramids were built...

Idowu (1973:140) adds that there is no place, age or generation, which did not receive at some point in its history some form of revelation and that to deny this fact is either to be deliberately blind to facts or to betray a gross ignorance of facts.

Deity, according to dictionary definition, is god or goddess; divine status or nature. Most religions in the world are centred on a deity concept. This concept, as said earlier in this chapter is grouped into two sections: One is the religion centred on one Supreme Being-God-who is the creator of the universe; the other is the religion which is centred on belief in many deities with one Supreme Being at the apex believed to be the creator and sustainer of this universe and prevailing over the other deities. In African worldview the lesser deities are represented metaphorically in rivers, trees, rocks, animals and mountains. These objects and animals are not the gods themselves but their habitats or symbols. The gods are themselves spirits. Parrinder (1969:28) asserts that man is dependent on God and the powers greater than himself and so religion is essential to his well-being because it shows him how to remain in fullest communion with the saints - in African sense with the ancestors and the gods.

The next issue is the placement of the Supreme Being concept vis-à-vis lesser deities in the monotheistic and polytheistic religions.

2.2.1 THE SUPREME BEING

The Supreme Being, as used in this study refers to the monotheistic deity -God, the God of gods and everything in this universe. Human beings and for that matter Africans, are

intuitively aware of the supernatural powers behind the creation and or evolution or revolution of this world. Scientists and philosophers have propounded theories but none has been adequate enough as far as this mystery is concerned. Rationally human beings believe that nothing can happen without a cause; therefore, be it evolution or revolution, the existence of this material world has a cause and the supreme power behind this creative or evolutionary principle is termed God or the Supreme Being.

Africans, like all other human beings, are aware of this supernatural power plus other powers believed to have been created by this God. Father Kirwen (1987:XX) says that where Christianity seems to say the same thing as the Traditional religions, for example, proclaiming the existence of a creator God, the Africans will respond that they already believed this before the preaching of Christianity. However, the Christian nuances about this creator God as triune and Father will not be readily heard. Similarly the Christians will not accept the claim that God is the god of the gods and great ancestor, as some Africans claim. Thus the same God placed in different cultural settings leads to diverse perceptions of him.

Some people contend that the universe is controlled by a universal force that is neutral, neither good nor bad and can be used positively or negatively. In such a case God is a neutral force that can be tapped negatively or positively, therefore, magic, sorcery, occultism and the like are means of using God power to achieve either positive or negative ends and can therefore, be regarded as religious phenomena.

What the researcher is concerned with here is that Africans, like all other human beings, believe that this universe did not come into existence out of the blue but that there is a divine force or power behind this creative or evolutionary force. This power is the Supreme Being (God). The uniqueness of the Supreme Being in African Religion as opposed to the lesser deities or gods is reflected in the fact that the Supreme Being is scarcely, if at all, represented in any form or worshipped in any shrine or temple. The African feels that this Supreme Being is too great to be confined to any shrine or temple. His attributes such as omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent and immanent render him

limitless and therefore cannot be enclosed in any building for worship. C.R. Gaba (1969:64) writing about the idea of a Supreme Being among the Añlō people of Ghana says that the Añlō people can never put up with the idea of a corporeal representation made of the Supreme Being let alone the thought of housing him in a building as the Christians do. Patrick J. Ryan (1980:166) also adds that the complete absence of any patrilineage dedicated to *Olódùmarè* (Òlórṅ the Yoruba God) as well as the almost total lack of any direct ritual worship of the Supreme Being may be taken not as indicator of *Olódùmarè* otiose nature but of his absolute transcendence. He is not merely God above the gods.

Noel Q. King (1986:9) also says that Muslims and Christians accuse the Yoruba of being polytheists, and the anthropologist and old-fashioned comparative religionists also accuse them of believing in a High God who is otiose, a God who is honoured every now and then in speech and piety but has no service, no temple, no being in real life. In our traditional religion if God has no services or ministers of his own, that is because the divinities are only his attributes, his messengers, and his agents. He is in our every thought and deed, and frequently on our lips; always his being and omnipresence are implied, and the divinities do not subsist except in him. Parrinder (1969:39) also adds, "The nature of God in African belief can be gathered from the qualities attributed to him. These correspond generally to many of the divine attributes postulated in other religions." Smith (1950:89) states that T Aboursset, one of the first missionaries in Lesotho, reports that the Bushmen he encountered said *Kaang* was also named *Kue-Akengteng*, a chief in the sky who was master of all things. "We do not see him with our eyes", they said, "but we know him in our hearts." Smith (1950:159) says, "*Nzambi Mpungu* is a being, (reports Van Wing), invisible, but very powerful, who has made all men and things, even fetishes which he has given to men for their good. If he had not given us our fetishes, we should all be dead long ago. He intervenes in the creation of every child; he punishes those who violate his prohibitions." He adds that Bauman also says that *Nzambi* is a typical High God whose residence is in the sky. If in tales he is treated as man-like, that is characteristic of all West African people and is not evidence of his being an ancestor-hero.

The gender of God is a matter of speculation because nobody has ever seen him, therefore nobody knows his nature and gender, but generally he is referred to as masculine. Among the Akan of Ghana he is known as grandfather (*Nana*). Parrinder (1969:42) says that the Southern Nuba, who have a system of matrilineal descent, refer to God as, "the Great mother" and when praying beside a dying person they say, our God, who has brought us into this world, may she take you. It should, however, be noted that not all matrilineal societies hold this contention because the Akan of Ghana have matrilineal system but they refer to God generally as male and even name him *Kwame* a Saturday male born. To the Akan the day of God is Saturday (How they arrived at that name is yet to be investigated.)

Sometimes Africans relate God to the celestial bodies, and at times, identify him with them. This, however, does not necessarily mean that God is the sky, the sun or the moon. They are merely symbolic representation of God. Parrinder (1969:43) has this to say on this issue,

Similarly God is related to heavenly objects, and at times apparently identified with them. His virtual identification with the sky, in myths of divine withdrawal-has been noted. In other stories God is closely linked with the sun, though this is not common. Some people may seem almost to identify God with the sun. The sun is sometimes personified in myths, or is regarded as a manifestation of God, but there are few clear indications that the sun is God or God is the sun. There is little ritual in connection with the sun, such as that which was performed in ancient Europe or Japan to make the sun return from its winter journey to the south. In the tropics the sun is always overhead, and needs no encouragement to shine. However, as it is supreme in the heavens the sun may be an apt symbol for God, and stories are told of men visiting the sky and reaching the sun or God.

In the presence of the nature gods and the ancestors God is the final arbiter in times of need or crisis. Parrinder (1969:44) adds: "Although nature gods and ancestors are both objects of prayers for good harvests and plentiful rain, yet ultimately they are the concern of the Supreme God." Edwin W. Smith (1950:60) also quotes Dr. Hastings Banda's comment on the issue of *Mulungu* as follows: "The fact that we used the plural form of

Mzimu [*mizimu* or *aazimu*, spirits], but never that of *Mulungu* (God) makes it plain that we never thought that spirits were gods, as some writers were inclined to think. The spirits of one's ancestors had to be prayed to, not because they were themselves the deities, but rather because they were the means of approaching the Deity, who was above everything else, including the spirits themselves." According to E. W. Smith (1950:101) J. H. Soga also says, "the Xosa (sic) name for God is *U-Dali* i.e. the creator or Supreme Being, and it is from the same root as *um-Dali*, the creator. And that worship is never offered to Supreme Being direct but through the medium of the ancestral spirits. Nevertheless, there is ever present to the mind of the Xosa, (sic) one beyond them who is supreme. Just as, we say it in all reverence; God is worshipped through the intermediary, Jesus Christ, so the Xosa worship the Supreme Being-Tixo through the medium of the ancestral spirits."

2.3 MONOTHEISM

Monotheism in this study refers to the belief in and worship of one Supreme Deity or God. The world religions seem to be torn between the monotheistic and polytheistic concepts, but the overlapping aspect of these two concepts as already said, is the awareness of a Supreme Being. While the monotheistic concept perceives God as a jealous god who does not allow reverence to any other deity, the polytheistic concept sees one Supreme Deity who delegates his powers to his regents the lesser deities who are respected and revered by his subjects as intermediaries.

The idea of a Supreme Being or God over and above the theistic concept, the researcher feels, is the result of a monotheistic concept. The historical religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism do not accept the presence of many nature gods as is believed in African Religions. However, these advanced religions do accept the presence of good and bad or evil spirits or supernatural powers in this world. In fact if Christians believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God and therefore God, and in the existence of Satan, the saints and the angels, then the researcher does not see any bone of contention between Christianity and African Religions and that if there is any, it is a matter of semantics.

Therefore African Religions are also monotheistic in diversity and monolatry because they believe in one Supreme Being over and above the other deities. Idowu calls the African Religions 'diffused monotheism.' The Supreme Being is not seen as one among equals but as one who is the creator of the lesser deities.

The acceptance of lesser deities in conjunction with the Supreme Being in African Religions reflects the socio-cultural background of Africans. Chiefs and Kings, traditionally, rule most African States. The Akan tribe is governed by a combination of a King and Chiefs. The Asante King for example, has divisional chiefs, chiefs and clan heads under him. He rules his kingdom through these deputies.

The whole system of administration is a complex network of hierarchy that must be followed to bring sanity into the kingdom. The other ethnic groups also have similar hierarchical system of administration of their chieftains. With such organized body of rulers the Akan and for that matter Africans do not envisage a Supreme Being-King of the universe who rules without regents and messengers in the form of lesser deities. They believe that what pertains in their realm is a replica of what pertains in the cosmos. In the African Kingdoms or Chieftains, one cannot bypass his chief or divisional chief to the king for arbitration. The king is the final arbitrator, when all other chiefs have failed. Such is the contention of African Religious believers as regards the worship of the Supreme Being.

E. W. Smith (1950:15) has this to say on this issue, "We may expect that social organization will be reflected in religious belief and practice. Where the kingship is strong the king is hedged about with divinity and only to be approached through a graded hierarchy of underlings, it is natural that the Lord of the universe should be thought of as remote chief with whom communication is possible only through intermediaries." The point we should note here is that the hierarchical system of rule is more social and political than spiritual. It is not necessarily the divine nature of the king or the chief that calls for the graded hierarchy of underlings as Smith asserts, but a matter of following protocol to streamline smooth administration.

Parrinder (1969:167-168) also says that God is close to most African peoples and that he receives regular worship, as in Christianity or Islam. However it is surprising to find that there is little ordered worship of God and few places where rituals are performed for him. That a Supreme Being is widely believed in, that he is the ground of life and is thought to be near to many people, is true, though there are exceptions. But regular worship is not usual. Zuesse (1979:98-99) also says,

The Ila religion is essentially monotheism, although with various "refractions." On the regional level preside the great ancestors of the Ila, whose spirits (muzhimo) may be recognized by all or many villagers as culture-heroes active in the creation of the world and of man. These great spirits rule the lesser ancestors and are ruled in turn by Leza, the Supreme Being.

What can be deduced from the above findings about African Religion's monotheistic outlook is that while Africans include the spirits and other divinities believed to have been created by the Supreme Being, in their worship, as their intercessors, Christian religion and other historical religions ignore them though they recognize their presence in this universe. The researcher would therefore like to conclude this section with Paul Radin's pertinent question on this issue quoted by Idowu (1973:167-168). He says,

Monotheism itself presents a number of phases. A recent classification of its history divides it into three stages; into monolatry, i.e. a belief in a Supreme Being but the persistence of the worship of other deities at the same time; implicit monotheism, i.e. a belief in a Supreme Deity yet no definite denial of other gods; and explicit monotheism, a belief in a Supreme Being and denial of the existence of other gods. If this were true, it might at first glance follow that we have to deny the existence among any primitive peoples of anything except monolatry. But it might be asked, is it really the mere fact of the worship of other gods or spirits or culture-heroes that constitutes the fundamental differences between explicit monotheism and monolatry? What of those cases where lesser gods have been created by a Supreme Deity; where all their powers have been derived from him; where they are merely his intercessors? Are we to interpret every act of worship not directly addressed to a Supreme Deity but to his divinely appointed intermediary as contrary to the spirit of monotheism? I am afraid that we should then find ourselves confronted with great difficulties.

2.4 POLYTHEISM

Polytheism in this study refers to the belief in and worship of many deities or gods. The concept does not nullify the Supreme Being concept but adds that there are other lesser deities or gods nearer to human beings than the Supreme Being. All the adherents of the divinities or lesser deities, interviewed among the Akan asserted that the gods were created by God to serve as a link between human beings and God. Many a traditional priest contacted claimed that during consultations with the gods, they (the gods) sometimes told them that they had to go into consultation with the Supreme Being before they could give their decision on certain issues. They, therefore, strongly believe that the gods work hand in hand with the Supreme Being. Parrinder (1969:47) says that it is said by the Dinka that 'Divinity is one.' Meaning not only that gods are dependent on the Supreme Being, but that all powers, divine and human, are interrelated. Whether the complex of power is thought of as hierarchy or a pyramid, it is still linked in all its parts, and there is only a difference in degree between man and the spirits by whom he is surrounded.

What the researcher has come to realize is that the concept of deities and spirits in polytheism is probably the basis or genesis of religion. If we call to mind the Biblical myth, we would find that it is asserted that the command says: the Lord God said, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us..." (Gen. 1:26 N.E.B.). Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea..." (Gen. 1:26 R.S.V.) Now the question is, who are referred to as 'we' in this context? To the researcher the quotation implies that God was not alone during the creation. He had some regents or helpers and they must be gods or spirits like him. Even if the 'we' refers to the trinity concept, it boils down to the fact that there are three gods in the Godhead. Therefore polytheism is not a misnomer; it seems to be the core of theism.

Parrinder (1969:47) also says,

...It is natural that men in all ages have considered spiritual powers to be at work in all material phenomena, and while old-fashioned materialism rejected this, the modern scientific mind discovers life or mind in; so-called inert matter and in rudimentary forms throughout the universe. Everything in nature is living, or at least pre-living and there is no such thing as absolutely dead matter. This is the truth that lies behind belief in nature gods or polytheism, a belief that seems crude and false, but which is based upon an apprehension of life and purpose in the world.

Now, it should be noted, that foreign researchers claim that Africans are polytheists just because they acknowledge the presence and influence of many deities or powers in the universe and revere them; but their religion is rather monolatry, as Radin puts it, because they acknowledge only one Supreme deity who is in control of the other deities, and the Universe. Thus we may say that African religion is a diffused monotheism. Parrinder (1969:47) again says,

To the monotheist, be he Muslim or Christian, the error of polytheism seems to lie in the personalization of the powers of nature into 'gods' and he may congratulate himself that in holding to one God, high and lifted up, he is at a more exalted level of spiritual evolution to which the polytheist must one day raise himself. But it is by no means sure that a bare monotheism produces, or is produced by a higher culture.

The researcher feels that it is also an undeniable fact that God who is acknowledged and exalted as the creator of the universe is also part of the nature powers. Parrinder (1969:48) clarifies this point saying,

Although African gods are said to be personal, having names, temples, images, priests and cults, the personification need not be taken too literally, but rather as poetical expression through the use of abundant metaphor. Modern theologians warn us not to think of God as 'up there', an 'old man in the sky', and they talk as if their opinion were something new, a kind of abstract religion which they imagine will appeal to the man in the street. But respectable theologians have always known that these embodiments and locations of God are metaphorical. Origen in the third century and Luther in the sixteenth century both said that to think of God, as sitting on a throne or rainbow above the bright blue sky was a child's picture-book description. And not only theologians but ordinary people do not necessarily take all religious language literally; they also understand poetry.

Therefore the personalization of nature powers into gods in Africa is not out of context in religious sphere. God power can manifest itself in any natural phenomenon from human being to other living and non-living things; and this is termed hierophany by Eliade. Polytheism and monotheism are therefore intertwined. They fall under one umbrella-theism-and that in African Religions monotheism is embodied in polytheism in the sense that the Supreme Being is at the apex of the gods in polytheism-monolatry. Again, it seems obvious that the monotheists are aware of the existence of other nature powers though they do not regard them as gods to reckon with, yet that does not nullify their influence on the universe. Evans-Pritchard (1956:316) says that a theistic religion need not be either monotheistic or polytheistic. It may be both; it is a question of the level, or situation, of thought rather than of exclusive types of thought. He adds that on one level Nuer religion may be regarded as monotheistic, at another level as polytheistic; and it can be regarded at other levels as totemistic or fetishistic. He says these concepts of spiritual activity are not incompatible. They are rather different ways of thinking of the numinous at different levels of experience. He adds that at no level of thought and experience is spirit thought of as something altogether different from God.

2.4.1 SPIRITS

Spirits in this study refer to the souls, rational beings without material body or form-ghosts, or lower spiritual beings beneath the divinities and the ancestors in status. In fact spirit embodies the whole deity concept, in that God, gods and the ancestors are all without form or body. They cannot be seen with the naked eye; hence they are spirits even though they are in some cases usually objectified metaphorically in images. Mbiti (1990:17) clarifies this point by defining spirits as the common spiritual beings beneath the status of divinities, and above the status of men. They are the 'common populace' of spiritual beings. Idowu (1973:173) also says, "we refer to spirits here as those apparitional entities which form separate category of beings from those described as divinities." He also adds that, no doubt, Divinities and ancestors come under the general nomenclature of spirits.

Spirits abound and are believed to exist in African tradition, but their origin is another issue that needs research. It is generally believed that they were also created by God. In the words of Idowu spirits may be anthropomorphically conceived, but they are more often than not thought of as powers that are almost abstract, as shades or vapours that take on human shape; they are immaterial and incorporeal beings. They are so constituted that they can assume various dimensions whenever they wish to be 'seen.' They may be either abnormally small or abnormally tall or fat or thin.

The Akan of Ghana believe in such spirits as ghosts-'*Osaman*,' dwarfs-'*mmoatia*,' hobgoblin-'*Sasabonsam*' and other unnamed spirits. *Sasabonsam* is believed to be a huge monster with very long legs, hands and hair that can touch the ground when it is sitting on a very tall tree. It is believed to be capable of performing impossible feats, hence there is an adage that "*se Sasabonsam firi soro siane besi fam a, na anwawasem nyinaa asa,*" which literally means, if the hobgoblin descends from on high to the ground then all wonders have ceased. This implies that this wonderful monster is probably a human imagination. Smith says that others imagine trees and rivers, mountains and lakes, to be resort or abode of spirits. On a lower level are hobgoblins like '*Sasabonsam*' of the Ashanti and the bogeys that frighten children into good behaviour. Smith (1950:23) asserts that in the Bantu cosmology they appear to give a less place than the Sudanic Negroes to these nature spirits. The dwarfs-'*mmoatia*' are believed to be very small and short with their feet facing the opposite of where they go. They are invisible but can reveal themselves to lonely people in the thick forest. Medicine men, traditional priests and magicians can acquire them. They live in communities deep in the forest. They can whisk away lonely human beings especially children left alone in the forest into their abode. They can mislead people to lose their bearings in the bush. Their staple food is banana. When children get lost in the bush, people attribute it to the dwarfs. They can be harmful or helpful. They can give spiritual powers to people, and those who acquire them claim that they can send them to harm or help other people.

Thokolosi is probably the equivalent of the *mmoatia* or dwarfs in Lesotho. According to Basotho account *Thokolosi* is a little creature used by sorcerers and witches and some

traditional healers- *ngaka*. He is very short, black and human in form not much bigger than a child of four or five years and malevolent. Minnie Martin (1969:104) describes *Thokolosi* as a little creature of whom all stand in awe. He is not much bigger than a baboon, but without the tail, and is perfectly black, with a quantity of black hair on his body. He has hands and feet like an ordinary mortal being, but is never heard to speak. He shuns the daylight, abhors clothing, even in the coldest weather. This wonderful creature is the evil one, whose deeds are cruel, revengeful, apparently unlimited. He has power to kill, to afflict in every imaginable way, to send madness, or to visit with unknown sickness; but to do good is beyond his power. They are generally employed by the "witch doctors" to do their dirty work. He added that to slight a *Thokolosi* was to bring disaster upon oneself. Once offended, he was condemned to injure the offender, he would hunt the offender down remorselessly until his objective was accomplished.

Ghosts are also lower spirits that are feared by people, and the belief in the existence of ghosts is more or less universal. People claim to see them, when probably they reveal themselves to friends or relatives, but such incidents usually occur at night in fearful places like burial grounds or in the bush, and this could be imaginary images or hallucinations created out of fear. Sometimes too people claim to have met a dead relative or friend somewhere in another town, village or country. Such encounters could be impersonation by witches and sorcerers or a mere coincidence. It is most likely that one may meet another person who resembles a dead relative or friend. The story below is an example of an incident where a mere resemblance made a woman believe that she had met a ghost (a dead relative).

The researcher remembers a personal experience of one of his teachers in elementary school, one Mr. Adu-Gyamfi who told the class his story about a ghost. He said that when he was a student of St. Joseph Teacher Training College at Bechem, one day when he was going back to college after holidays he heard one of the passengers in the bus whispering to other passengers that he, Mr. Adu-Gyamfi, was her dead relative. That he died two years back, and was the only son of his mother. From the narration of the death story, the teacher got to know the names of his alleged mother and father. The woman

could not confront him so he too did not respond to her allegation. He said the woman alighted at Tapa junction, and in order to make her story seem true, he gave her some money to be sent to his alleged mother. As soon as the woman received the money she started wailing. Traditionally when such news reaches the bereaved family it becomes a renewal of the funeral. What the teacher did assured the woman that he was truly the dead relative. Such incidents are not uncommon in African villages. This is but one example of such false beliefs about the existence of ghosts.

This story is not meant to say that spirit or ghost encounter is necessarily false but that not all such stories are really true. The ghosts, among the Akan, are said to be spirits of those who die prematurely of accidents and those who die of bad diseases. They are said to be rejected by the living dead and cannot enter the abode of the dead. They move about causing misdeeds and frightening people. Idowu (1973:174) says,

It is believed by the Africans that a person whose dead body is not buried, that is, with due and correct rites, will not be admitted to the abode of the blessed departed ones, and therefore will become a wanderer, living an aimless, haunting existence. This is also the fate of those who die bad deaths by hanging or drowning, of bad diseases, or during pregnancy; since they are accused, they will not be acceptable in the abode of the blessed. This category of wandering spirits includes also those who have been wicked while on earth and are therefore excluded from the fellowship of the good.

Apart from those mentioned above, there are many unidentified spirits that are believed to be hovering around the bush and human habitats. They can be harmful or helpful to human beings. They can bring death, disease and bad or good luck to those who encounter them.

To attract or ward off these spirits, human beings consult medicine men, traditional priests and diviners for charms, amulets and concoctions to use. Some of these medicines are drunk, smeared on the body, incised in the body or fumigated into homes as the case may demand. These spirits are usually not worshipped, but since people are conscious of

their existence they do things either to ward them off or to attract them as the case may be.

Mbiti (1990:79) says,

...In certain aspects, the spirit would differ radically from the human world. It is invisible to the eyes of men; people only know or believe that it is there, but do not actually 'see' it with their physical eyes. But more important, even if the spirits may be the depersonalised residue of individual human beings, they are ontologically 'nearer' to God; not ethnically, but in terms of communication with him. It is believed that whereas men use or require intermediaries, the spirits do not, since they can communicate directly with God.

2.4.2 ANCESTORS

Ancestors in this study refer to the living dead who play some vital role in the lives and beliefs of Africans. The vital role here refers to pre-mortem and post-mortem contributions they made and continue to make in the African society. In a recent study into the Basotho religious phenomena, Opong (1998:76) found that there was no consensus of opinion about whom they classify as ancestor and who qualified to be an ancestor. Nobody seemed to be sure of a definite answer. While some claimed that anybody who dies is an ancestor, others said that only adults who have families qualify to be ancestors and others still asserted that it is the aged, who have children and grand children, such as those who used to be buried in the kraal, qualify to be ancestor. The present generation believes that everybody qualifies to be an ancestor because even children who die would grow to be old in the ancestral world.

Mbiti (1990:83) has this to say on this issue,

'Ancestral spirits' or 'ancestors' are misleading terms since they imply only those spirits who were once ancestors of the living. This is limiting the concept unnecessarily, since there are spirits and living dead of children, brothers, sisters, barren wives and other members of the family who were not in any way the ancestors. One would strongly advocate the

abolition of the two terms 'ancestral spirits' and 'ancestors', and replace them with 'spirits' or 'the living dead'.

Berglund (1976) also prefers to use the term shades instead of ancestors. The two terms sound too loose to the researcher in that, unlike the living dead or the shades, which are too general, ancestors are dead people who led a spectacular life style that qualifies them to be intermediaries between God and the living relatives or ethnic groups. The defence put up by Mbiti, holds for identifying human spirits, in which case 'ancestral spirits' would delimit human spirits in general terms; therefore the living dead would be appropriate term in that case. But to drop the term 'ancestors' and replace it with the living dead would be misleading.

Scholars are of diverse opinions with regard to whether Africans worship their ancestors or not. The researcher believes that these diverse opinions on the ancestors result from the various angles from which they view the relationship between the dead and the living. Secondly some foreign researchers are influenced by their own convictions and, sometimes, background beliefs. For instance, G.W. Dymond (1950:137), writing about the Ambo religion says,

The cultus of the Ambo is, accordingly, not God-worship; it is ancestor-worship. Whilst in theory they may be but patron -saints and mediators between God and those alive on earth, the ancestors have in effect become barriers between God and mankind.

In fact the researcher would prefer the use of 'link' instead of 'barriers' at the end of his assertion. The conclusion seems to have been affected by his background and personal conviction. Edwin W. Smith (1950:87) also, speaking about Bantu religion, asserts that another outstanding characteristic of the religion is the almost entire absence of any speculative element. The mode of life of the gods is, in general, not a subject of thought; though it is implicit in their actions that life in the invisible world is much the same as in the visible world. Ancestrolatry is essentially a practical religion in which rites are of far greater importance than attitude of mind, action than belief. He adds that it may be true as Dr Junod says, that it has very little connection with the moral conduct of the individual; but in a broad sense there can be no doubt that it supplies strong sanctions for tribal

morality and therefore must have its effect upon the individual. On this issue Professor Busia (1959:24) clarifies the point by saying,

...The ideas suggested for our consideration are that religion, like morality and law, is an essential part of the social machinery, a part of the complex system of social arrangements; that the social function of religion does not depend on its truth or falsity; and that to understand a religion it is on the rites rather than on the beliefs that we should first concentrate our attention.

The ancestor concept in African context goes beyond the mere connection between the living and the dead. It means more than that, in the sense that the African sees death as a continuation of life beyond, where communication can still go on and help sought from the dead when the need arises. The living Africans believe that they owe some obligations to their ancestors who are, in turn, responsible for their welfare, failure to fulfil which they are punishable by the ancestors and the ancestors are also subject to reproof if they fail in their responsibilities. The ancestors or the living dead, as Mbiti puts it, are more powerful than the living because they are spirits and hence nearer God and the divinities than their living relatives, and can act as mediators to bring peace and harmony between the transcendent and the material world for the well-being of humanity. Zuesse (1979:85), writing about the Ila says,

By participating in an initiation ritual together for example, the Ila villagers rediscover each other as parts of a larger universal order. It is largely for this reason, perhaps, that ancestors and culture-heroes are the guides through most ritual celebrations: they are already integral parts of the transcendental order, yet are still tied through their descendants with the social world and everyday concerns. Rather than simply socializing the cosmos, they cosmicize society by providing the transcendental models that humans must follow. The living also enter that deeper reality when they perform the rituals, a reality all feel to be the source of social and perceptual contexts.

Parrinder (1974:26-27) also, writing about the relationship between the ancestors and the living, says that the ancestors receive great attention, but he wonders whether that is worship. He adds that some writers maintain that to speak of ancestor worship is

misleading. He says that there is a continuous community between the living and the departed, and there is no radical distinction between men and their ancestors, except that the latter are now more powerful. When men go to their graves with gifts, it is like going to a chief with present so, it is asserted, this is not prayer but a projection of social behaviour. It is like Europeans going to the grave with flowers (wreaths).

On the same issue, Driberg (1936:6) also asserted that it would be difficult, or even impossible, to find adequate substitute which would convey the real meaning of the words used by Africans in the context of ancestor reverence but at least Europeans may enter a caveat against the careless abuse of vocabulary to which they are unconsciously prone. For no African 'prays' to his dead grandfather any more than he 'prays' to his living father. That in both cases the words employed are the same and that he asks as of right, or he beseeches, or he expostulates with, or he reprimands, or he gives an address to his ancestor as he would to elders sitting in conclave, but he never uses in this context the words for prayer and worship which are strictly reserved for his religious dealings with Absolute Power and divinities.

Much as the researcher affirms the above contentions, he will also like to add that the African and his relationship with his ancestors cannot be said to be totally profane. There is some sort of religious connotation, in the sense that they can act as mediators, like the divinities or gods, between their living relatives and God. They are, in fact, the immediate link between the living and the transcendental powers. Therefore the approach to the ancestors is two dimensional, that is, social and spiritual. This is possible because, as already said, in African religion, there is no strict dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, they overlap.

Similarly Smith (1950:26) adds,

We may accept the caveat entered by T. Cullen Young and J.N. Driberg, but only on a narrow definition of religion can the ancestral cult be dismissed as 'purely secular.' If the essence of religion is a sense of dependence upon super sensible powers who are able and willing to help,

then we are in the presence of religion when Africans commune with their kinsmen in the unseen world, who have enhanced powers associated with their new status and particularly as mediators between man and God.

The universality of the so called ancestor worship is asserted by Busia (1959:26) who says ancestor worship was an important part of the religion of ancient Greece and it has been apart of the religion of China from the earliest time to the present day.¹

2.4.3 DIVINITIES

The divinities or gods in this study refer to the lesser deities or spirit powers that are believed to exist in the universe and have direct contact and more influence on human beings than the Supreme Being.

In African Religions the Africans, especially the West Africans, believe that there are spiritual entities below God and above the spirits and the ancestors or the living dead who are gods or divinities created by God to serve him and control and assist human beings. Mbiti (1990:75) adds that divinities are on the whole thought to have been created by God, in the ontological category of spirits. They are associated with him, and often stand for his activities or manifestations either as personifications or as spiritual beings in charge of those major objects or phenomena of nature. Idowu (1973:160) on the other hand asserts that from the point of view of theology of African traditional religions, it would not be correct to say that the divinities were created. It will be correct to say that they were brought into being, or that they came into being in the nature of things with regard to the divine ordering of the universe. From the researcher's point of view the question of being created or brought into being arises out of the problem of semantics. Many informants claim that these gods reveal themselves to individuals or communities through spirit possession and divination, and thus become state or family or clan gods as the case may be. The adherents claim that the gods deputise for God by assisting human beings in their difficulties and punishing evildoers. On this issue Driberg (936:5-6) says,

It should be observed, however, that while in a sense these gods have personal functions they also in part owe their validity to their inspiration

by the power-principle, and that prayers are as often as not addressed to them, not in 'propria persona,' but as intermediaries between man and the absolute power-a function of intercession which brings them more into line with the saints or Christian hagiology rather than with pantheistically independent deities.

Talking about the Ila religion Zuesse (1979:99) says that all agree that *Bulongo* (the greatest of the great ancestors) is beyond all other beings and dwells in the presence of God; *Bulongo* is the privileged 'friend of God' and is prayed to as God's emissary. *Bulongo* is more likely to answer prayers for rainfall; *Bulongo* merely intercedes for mankind.

They are also believed to be children of God or messengers. All Akan divinities are called children of *Onyame*. It is in consequence of this derivative relationship that these divine beings are entitled to be called divinities or deities. Idowu (1973:169) asserts that the correct interpretation of the position of the divinities is that they constitute only a halfway house that is not meant to be the permanent resting place for man's soul. While man may find the divinities 'sufficient' for certain needs, something continues to warn him that 'sufficiency' is only in Deity. Technically, the divisions are only means to an end and not end in themselves. Mbiti (1990:76) adds that in other respects, they are 'closer' to men than God is, in the sense that they are constantly experienced in the physical life of man as thunder and lightning, rivers or lakes, sun or moon. Parrinder (1950:226) also asserts that the religion of Yoruba and Ewe is not 'fetishism', but a system of polytheism presided over by a Supreme Creator. The many lesser divinities are often said to be 'sons' of God. And that one is met with this claim when speaking of Christ as the Son of God; they claim that so is our god (*Orisha*) a son of *Ōlōrun*.

This assertion by Parrinder reminds the researcher of an incident which occurred in 1963 when he used to assist a Catholic Priest on pastoral visits around Techiman and Nkoranza districts in Ghana. On one of the rounds of pastoral visits we happened to meet a divisional chief of Techiman traditional area, who on hearing the priest preaching about Jesus Christ, retorted that had literacy reached Africa (Akan people) earlier they too could have boasted of Okomfo Anokye - a traditional priest of Asante -as God-sent

saviour. Whether or not he was justified in comparing Okomfo Anokye to Jesus Christ is not the point the researcher is driving at. What he is trying to say is that Christianity or Islam did not bring God to Africa but rather Jesus Christ and Mohammed respectively. Every race or ethnic group has its religious personage, as the case may be, depending on how society regards him.

2.5 ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Attributes, in this study, refer to the characteristic qualities of God that bring out his identity. These attributes reveal who God is or what he can do-his powers and emotions. Through the attributes, Africans reveal their knowledge, beliefs and feelings about God. The tribes and ethnic groups of Africa have various honorific names and attributes of the Supreme Being. When these names are studied carefully, one gets a clear idea and understanding of a people's conception of God and their relations with him. The researcher, therefore, feels that honorific names and attributes of God are worthy of study to find out a people's religiousness and conception of God. T Evans (1950:245) says that much valuable information about a people's idea of God can be gathered from a careful examination of the names they use for the Supreme Being and of 'praise-names' they ascribe to him.

The researcher would like to use Mbiti's (1990:29ff.) classification of the attributes, namely, a. Eternal and intrinsic attributes, b. Moral attributes.

a. Eternal and intrinsic attributes are the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of God. Mbiti (1990:30) says these attributes are difficult to grasp and express, since they pertain more to the realm of the abstract than concrete thought forms. Broadly speaking, African thought forms are more concrete than abstract. Nevertheless there are considerable numbers of Africans who conceive of the eternal nature of God. Quite a number of African societies conceive of God as omniscient that is all knowing, omnipresent, simultaneously everywhere and omnipotent meaning almighty or all-

powerful. These three are essential and unique aspects of God's being. They are God's nature and no other being can be described in these terms

Many African people describe God as omniscient. By doing so they proclaim his universal nature. Akan people know God as he who knows, hears and sees all; *aniani mpempem aso-aso mpempem*, which literally means God has thousands of ears and eyes. He is the beginning and end of everything. *Ofiri kankyerekyere kosi daa mpem*. He sees from behind, all seeing, *Brekyi-hunuade*. He is enduring from ancient time, *Tetekwaframo*.² Again the Akan people call him: *Ananse kokroko*, which means the great spider i.e. the wise one. *Ananse* (spider) is the trickster in Akan stories.

The Anjō 'praise-name' which shows God's omniscience is *Nusianunyala- Gaba* (1969:75) says this is said to have originated with the dawn of Christianity. The Zulu call him 'U-Sivelele' which means, he who came of himself into being. Commenting on this attribute Smith (1950:109) quotes Farther Wanger as saying, 'It is a God-name more philosophical and theological more precise and significant, than any European people can boast of.' Mbiti (1990:31) also says, to the Zulu and Banyarwanda, God is known as the wise one. Smith (1950:143ff.) says that the Ovambo of South-West Africa call God *Kalunga*. He is known to be omniscient. He cannot be forced to do anything. Sacrifices are never offered to him but only to the *ovakuamungu*-ancestors. They claim that *Kalunga* does not need to be propitiated by sacrifices. He is never seen but he sees everything, He has no need of human attention or help. He is not connected with individual but with the universe. According to Parrinder (1950:228) the Yoruba call God 'Alaye'-'living' or 'owner of life,' 'elemi,' 'owner of breath. The Sotho-Tswana, according to Setiloane (1973:10) say God's origin is in antiquity-*Hla'a-Hla'a-Macholo*; God is the one "whose abode is on the highest peak of the mountains," *Na' Choeng Tsa Dithaba*, God is unknown-*Modimo gaQitsiwe*.

Africans know God to be omnipresent. Many Africans express this in different terms. Dymond (1950:145) also asserts that the Ovambo say, 'there is nowhere that God is not.' God is in the trunk and in the branches of the tree. 'The sun is God's eye; it shows God.

The Akan people know him as '*Obotantim*,' Rock of ages; always present. Mbiti (1990:31) says the Bamum express the omnipresence of God in their name for God-*Njinyi*, or *Nnui*, which means, 'He who is everywhere. The Sotho-Tswana according to Setiloane (1973:13) know God '*Modimo*' as *mothodi*, he is everywhere, involved in everything. C.R.Gaba (1969:75) says that the Anlō praise-name '*Afisiafinōla*' the omnipresent-used to describe the Supreme Being, many traditional believers affirm that it originated with the dawn of Christianity and that it is used only in Christian worship. God in the Igbo religion according to Metuh (1973:9) is at once transcendent and immanent. The transcendent God is the Creator, the father of *Alusi*, the consort of the earth mother. The immanent God is the Supreme Spirit, who sends sparks of him in the form of *chi* into men, natural phenomena and things. It is not only the Igbo, the researcher believes, who see God as near and at the same time far. It is implicit in most African beliefs about God. Mbiti (1990:32) says that many foreign writers have gone astray here in emphasizing God's remoteness over and beyond his nearness. These two attributes are actually contradictory and yet complementary because they show two opposite poles-far and near-but a second thought reveals that in terms of the omnipresence of God, he can be both far and near and both qualities are expressed in African religious thought.

Many African people also express the Omnipotence of God in various terms. The Akan people call him *Otumfoō* - Almighty, *Okokuroko*, the great, *Awurade-Lord*, *Ahene mu hene*- king of kings. Parrinder (1950:228ff) asserts that the Ewe know him as *oklunō*-Lord, *ganhunukpo*-almighty, *se-medōtō* - creating spirit The Yoruba call him-*Oluwa*-Lord, *Èlèda*-creator, *Alagbera-gbogbo*, all-powerful. . Harris (1950:278) also says that the Mende of Sierra Leone call him *Maha-yelei*, the one chief, *Maha-wa*, the great chief. *Maha-Ngewō*, God the chief. Setiloane (1973:10) says the Sotho-Tswana say God is owner or master of all. *Mong 'a rona*: our owner.

b. The moral attributes of God: They refer to the human relationship with God. The benevolence of God: God is said to be loving, merciful, generous, and just and protector.

The Akan people express God's love and mercy in the following terms: *Nana*-grandfather, *Bore-bore* or *Ōbōadee*-creator of all our needs, *Totrobonsu*-giver of rain, *Amaowia* -giver of sunshine, *Daasebre*-He who is beyond thanks. These show God's generosity. God as just and protector is expressed by *Abōmmubuafre* or *Nyaamanekosee* which implies the defender and protector in times of crisis or injustice, though T. Evans (1950:249) translates it, as God of comfort. *Twereduampōn*, which is more or less one of the personal names of God, somehow appears to be a praise-name. It implies that God is reliable and dependable.

Considering the etymology of *Twereduampōn*, there are two major derivatives. One is *Twere dua a wompōn*, taken up by T. Evans (1950:149) and which implies, if you lean on a tree you do not fall. Another one, the researcher considers equally logical is: *Twiediampōn* or *Twerediampōn*, *Twere no a wonni mpōn* or *obi a wotwere no a wompōn*, which implies: if you lean on him you will not fall. The implication is that we do not lean on trees alone. One can lean on a wall, a rock, a human being or anything supportive. *Twerediampōn* or *Twereduampōn* later changed to *Twiediampōn* for poetic effect.

Concerning the attributes that express God's mercy Parrinder (1950:228-231) asserts that the Ewe call him *Mawu-hōmefatō*, meaning 'God full of pity', *se-mehōtō*, saving spirit. The Yoruba call God: *Ēleda*, creator, *Alaye*, living or owner of life. Setiloane (1973:11) again asserts that the Sotho-Tswana also call God: *Montshi*, one who enables or helps to come out, enabler or mid-wife; *Modimo* is Mme; God is mother. This is a quality of tenderness in experience of God. In a discussion with Ntate 'Muso (Tjotjela Mora Moshapela) in Maseru on God's tenderness or benevolence, he remarked that the clause: "Lead us not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer (Christian prayer) beats his imagination because in Sesotho worldview God cannot or will not lead people into temptation because he does not promote evil. During our discussion on this issue he saw some youth returning from church service so he asked them to give their views on the issue. One of them replied that they could not imagine how God can lead people into temptation. So to them only Jesus could explain that clause. This is but one example of Christian teachings that conflict with African worldview. Writing about the nature and

the attributes of *Kalunga* Dymond (1950:143-144) contends that the Ovambo say God is man's last hope and resort in trouble. He is not an object of human love, for he is not concerned with the individual but with the universe. He is the author and sustainer of life.

E.W. Smith (1950:33) asserts that it was the general testimony of pioneer missionaries that they had discovered some belief in the existence of God among the Africans. He adds that since one cannot know that anything is without having some knowledge of what is, Africans have some idea of God's attributes. He asserts Africans' acknowledgement of God as primary power in things above and below. However, he is doubtful about African assertion of the beneficence of God. Naturally, the presence of evil will make the beneficence of God doubtful. If he is seen as the source of all things-good and bad, then it follows as a matter of course that either he is not all-powerful to stop evil in this material world or he is not all merciful because he allows evil to prevail. Therefore people who believe that God is the source or maker of all things will naturally not be sure of his beneficence. One picturesque and enigmatic Akan proverb is *Ōdomankoma bōō wuo na wuo kum no*, which means, 'God created death and death killed him.' The precise meaning of this wise saying is not certain but it can mean that God created death and death has destroyed (killed) his creation, which is the manifestation of him. It can also mean God is life and life begins and ends in death and regenerates itself. It also illustrates in a wonderfully epigrammatic manner the power of death as asserted by Rattray (1916:28). This is an example of why people might not be sure of the benevolence of God.

Smith (1950:134) again talks about some Christian missionaries who in their teaching and translations of scripture adopted African names of God, and that the procedure was criticized on the grounds that African terms could never express Christian truth. In this light it can equally be asserted that Africans themselves can never understand Christian truth if the truth cannot be expressed in African terms. Again if the Christian High God is a God among gods then the African has no name for him, but if he is God the maker of all things in our universe, including the gods, then *Onyame, Mawu, Olorun, Molimo, Kalunga* etc. express the Christian term God.

The attributes and praise-names of God are derived from his exclusive power or powers and mysteriousness, which surpass all. Therefore most of his attributes are unique and not comparable to anything, though others are used to honour great kings and gods-the divinities.

Some scholars argue that African theologians are fond of using Christian terms in African Religion and thereby christianising African Religion, but it should be borne in mind that in comparing both religions one looks for similarities and differences, therefore the researcher does not see any reason why Christian terms cannot be used if they have similar meanings in African idea of God.

2.6 HUMANS IN THE DIVINE STATUS

Humans in the divine are common in the world religions. The divine status does not, however, necessarily place one at equal footing with God or the gods. However, some kings, prophets, priests and some religious founders are raised to divine status. In the Christian religion Jesus is raised to a highest divine status as the Son of God and therefore God. Here the researcher is presenting Jesus in the academic exercise as a human being born of parents, who had special divine qualities and hence was raised to that status, but not as God made man. The Muslims acknowledge him as a great prophet but not as God. Other prophets like Moses, Elijah, Mohammed, Buddha and Krishna, to mention but few of them, are respected in their various religions as spokesmen of God. They were not treated like ordinary people, but with special respect as people with divine powers or qualities. Priests (traditional) and diviners also feature as spokesmen of God and the gods and hence they are respected because, of the office they hold. They lead prayers, offer sacrifices, and consult the deities on behalf of the people among whom they live. Humans, in the divine status, feature prominently in African Religion.

2.6.1 KINGS AND CHIEFS

Most Africans do raise their kings and chiefs to the divine status and treat them as such. Setiloane (1976:27) says, 'Morena' is not only the chief "empirical" authority in the 'morafe.' He is also the chief official at rituals involving whole society. This is what Smith (1950:82) says about the Bantu people's Chieftdom or Kingdom.

Under the stress of the wars and commotions during the early years of the nineteenth century some of these tribes, or the remnants of tribes were amalgamated into nations, whether by conquest by Chaka, Mzilikazi, Soshangane and other military leaders, or for greater security from subjugation as under Moshoeshoe, the leader of the Basotho nation. In either case, the chief or king is the focus of tribal life, and enjoys considerable rights and powers with corresponding obligations to his subjects... His person is sacred. The well-being of his people is mystically sustained by him; he is the bull of 'the herd', 'the wife' or 'the husband' of the tribe. He is the link between them and the great ancestors- the high priest as well as sovereign.

He adds that a chief, during his earthly life is revered as a quasi-supernatural being, and when he passes into the invisible realm he is promoted to be a god or godling. But it is not that he has unlimited and autonomous powers; he is a delegate, a representative deriving his powers from a still higher authority, between whom and his people on earth he is a mediator.

Setiloane (1976:26) adds that 'Morena' is the apex of authority in 'morafe' in that he alone derives authority direct from 'badimo,' whereas all subordinate authority-down to that of the father in the household-derives from him. 'Morena' is not "ruler" in any recognizable sense of that word. As in Christian theology Christ is not only the head but the whole body of the church, so 'Morena' is the mediator of grace flowing from 'badimo' but "head" only in so far as the head has no significance apart from the body; the apex no existence apart from the whole triangle.

Another outstanding characteristic, Smith (1950:87) asserts about the Bantu is the almost entire absence of any speculative element in the religion. The mode of life of the gods is, in general, not a subject of thought, though it is implicit in their actions that life in the

invisible world is much the same as in the visible world, whence the older practice of slaying or burying alive some members of the chiefs retinue and family to accompany him into the unseen world. This is not strange because African Religion is basically religion of structure as classified by Zuesse (1979:7). In actual fact the African in his religious beliefs does not strive after eternal bliss in heaven but a successful continuation of life in the abode of the dead. People struggle to achieve a better life here in order to continue hereafter.

The divine kingship or chieftainship is common in African religion. Below is what Zuesse (1979:88-89) says about the Ila chieftainship:

It is evident, for example, that the chief has a spiritual link to the land itself and its powers of fertility that the Ila regard as organic and substantial. We learn also that when a chief is chosen...he must go through a series of rites that make him a "warlock" or witch of benevolent sort. The medicines he is fed and provided enable him to fend off evil efforts of chiefs and witches from other villages or districts and preserve the health and fertility of his people, herds and land.

With regard to the burial of chiefs he (1979:89) adds,

These beliefs seem to be especially strong in the Nanzela area of Bwila. Funerals of chiefs here used to involve human sacrifices to accompany the corpse: a deep pit was dug with a mat on the bottom, on which dead slaves were laid. The chief's body was laid on these corpses, with his wives on either side, and at his head and feet some of his children. Passing strangers, it is said, were also killed and added to the grave and lesser wives would sometimes leap in to be buried alive.

In another account concerning the belief people hold about divine kingship connected to the burial of kings among the people of Ovamboland in South West Africa, G.W. Dymond (1950:151) asserts that until about 1906, at least one slave used to be buried alive on the death of a chief to serve the great man forever in the Big Country in the ancestral world. Gennep (1977:148) also says that during mourning social life is suspended for all those affected by it and the length of period increases with the closeness of social ties to the deceased, and with a higher standing of the dead person. If a chief or

a king dies the suspension affects the entire society. There is public mourning, proclamation of holidays, and a "period of license."

The kings and chiefs are given the divine status not in the sense that they are worshipped but that they are revered as living representatives of the ancestors. They are the living intermediaries between the divinities and the ancestors. In times of crisis the king or chief is expected to save the nation or chiefdom as the case may be. He controls the political, social and spiritual life of the nation or kingdom. Hence he is expected to lead some sort of restricted life ideal to the divinities.

The death and installation or crowning or enstooling of chiefs and kings involve a lot of rituals, which reveal the divine nature of the institution. Hence Zuesse (1979:120) quotes Evans-Pritchard as saying, "It is the kingship not the king who is divine." And it should be added that it is the ascendancy over the divine kingship that makes the king divine not his personality. Among the Akan a chief or a king's mode of life and diet are restricted. He is not allowed to walk alone; he should not eat in public; sit on the bare-floor or walk bare-footed. These are but few examples of the don'ts of chiefs or kings. He must lead a life, which is considered pleasing to the ancestors and the divinities. Failure to comply with the regulations is subject to destoolment or where that is not allowed, forced death. Even in dying he does not die alone. He dies with some of his wives, children, subjects and slaves, though this practice is believed to be obsolete now.

The chief, king or queen is addressed as '*nana*' grandfather, in the case of the queen, grandmother. Even God, the divinities and the ancestors are also addressed as '*nana*' individually and '*nananom*' collectively. It is not the personality of the king or the chief that entitles him to be called '*nana*' but by virtue of his position as heir to his great grandfathers as a king or chief that gives him that honour. Therefore his parents and grandparents must call him not by his name but '*nana*.' Since he deputizes for the divinities and the ancestors and mediates for his subjects, he holds a divine status. Every Akan king, chief or even clan head has an ancestral shrine known as '*Nkonnwafie*' where

libation is poured on every 'Kwasidae' forty days or six weeks to be precise, to renew contact with the ancestors and the divinities.

Writing about the Ila divine kingship Zuesse (1979:117) says,

The similarities go further: just as the king is the embodiment of the culture-hero and repeats the history of the culture-hero, so too among the Ila each year repeats the legendary history of the culture-hero (and even of creation). We have already seen that the Ila chieftainship is patterned closely on divine kingship of the Lunda culture...But these Lunda kingdoms share a remarkable number of characteristics with others scattered from the Southern Congo to the Zulu of South Africa and to the interlacustrine states of Uganda, Kitoro, etc. Probably the most discussed kingship of this type is the Shilluk of the Lower Nile.

Gennep (1977:110-113) also says that the ceremonies of enthronement or crowning show a very great resemblance to ordination ceremonies both in detail and in their order. The enthronement includes the handing over and an acceptance of the regalia, which include drums, a sceptre, a crown, relics of the ancestors and a special seat. These are at one and the same time the symbol and the receptacle of royal magico-religious power. He adds that the Habé (or Dogon) of the Niger plateau are governed by a *hogon* whose role is simultaneously political, judicial and religious. He is as much the chief priest as he is the chosen king, and his regalia are also the sacra of the temple in which he lives. They consist of a necklace adorned with an opal, an iron bracelet in his right leg, a copper ring on his right ear, and a silver ring on the middle finger of his right hand, a special cane and special clothing. He must not be touched. He is addressed only in the ancient dialect, *Sarakolle*, is entitled to the first fruits and has to keep a special diet. There is *hogon* for each tribe or clan and a great *hogon*. When the great *hogon* dies there is a three-year interregnum, during which his death is concealed from the people.

Talking about African divine rulers in general Mbiti (1990:177-178) asserts that these rulers are not simply political heads: they are the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbol of their people's health and welfare. He adds that the individual as such may not have outstanding talents or abilities, but their office is the link between human rule and

spiritual government. They are therefore divine or sacral rulers the shadow or reflection of God's rule in the universe. People regard them as God's earthly viceroys. They give them highly elevated positions and titles such as saviour, protector and chief of the divinities. The sacred position of African rulers is shown in many ways. Some rulers must not be seen in ordinary life. They wear a veil, take meals alone and have diet restrictions. Other kingdoms and chieftains like the Zulu, Shilluk, Ashanti, Lunda and Nyamwezi make sacrifices and offer prayers at the groves of the departed kings.

What pertains in the divine kingship applies in a minor form to the divine queenship. In both patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance the queen is the mother, sister, maternal aunt or cousin or, in some cases, the wife of the king or chief.

2.6.2 PRIESTS

Parrinder (1969:74) says that an individual sacrifice may be offered by any layman, and in time of sickness by the head of the family on behalf of his family group. But when sacrifice involves a whole lineage there will usually be a master of ceremonies who is appointed for the task and trained in its performance. Some of these are properly called priests. They can be men and women who are set apart and trained for the work. They may work full-time at ritual functions and attached to temples. Others may have a part-time smithery, hunting or agriculture. The priests are usually married and are usually trained by older priests. They may have prophetic functions.

Mbiti (1990:182-183), looking at the African use of the term priest, says that strictly speaking priests are religious servants associated with temples, shrines, groves or elsewhere. There are priests reported among societies including the Banyankore, Yoruba, Igbo, Akan, Shona, Baganda, Basoga, Ewe, Sonjo and others. He adds that the tradition of priests is stronger in West Africa than in other parts of the continent. He goes on to say that the priest is the chief intermediary: he stands between God or divinity and men. Just as the king is the political symbol of God's presence, so the priest is the religious symbol of God among his people.

He is the spiritual and ritual pastor of the community or nation. It is he who officiates at sacrifices, offerings and ceremonies relating to his knowledge. He may also contact the spiritual world by acting as a medium or having other individuals as mediums. In West Africa, particularly Ghana, the priests also act as traditional healers. Others combine divination and mediumship with prescription of herbs and provision of amulets. During the course of their training they have a lot of restrictions, from dietary to sexual abstinence. They wear white clothes and use white clay to symbolize purity.

Parrinder (1961:75ff) also says.

Priests...are set apart for divine service and receive some kind of initiation and training for it. There are different methods of training, from very simple to highly elaborate, but the priesthood as a class is distinct and developed.

Writing about the priests among the Yoruba, Idowu (1962:139) says that the priests are inevitable in the social pattern of the Yoruba since the keynote of their national life is their religion. Virtually nothing is done without the ministrations of the priest. Apart from looking after the 'soul' of the community, he features prominently in the installation of kings and making of chiefs.

The initiation or ordination of priests in general as classified by Gennep includes the rites of separation, transition and incorporation, which are systematized in their own ways. In the case of Roman Catholic and Orthodox priest, Gennep (1977:105-106) says, 'the 'tonsure' is the principal rite.' From the researcher's point of view the most conspicuous rite of the traditional priest among the Akan is the hairstyle-Rasta or a special type of haircut with some beads and other objects tied to the hair and the wearing of bracelets and amulets. Like the 'tonsure,' the Rasta or haircut is a permanent symbol and serves as rites of separation and incorporation at the same time. The transition period is the period of training.

He adds that the Brahman ceremonies include first a tonsure, a bath and a change of clothing. What we can conclude from this literature survey about priesthood in both

traditional religions and other religions is that the divine nature of the office of the priest renders him or her divine and must therefore live to the expectation of the people he or she serves as well as God and the divinities and the ancestors. According to interviewees, the traditional type of priesthood does not exist in Lesotho.

2.6.3 MEDIUMS

Mediumship and possession trance are somehow interrelated. While mediums are usually trained and more or less take up professional duties, possession trance is, in most cases, involuntary and restricted. However, the entering and controlling of a medium by a spirit is also a possession trance. A spirit or a god can seize and use a person at will and such a person can be trained and used to stabilize the god; in which case the one becomes a medium and or a priest for the cult. Informants on this issue say that a divinity (god or spirit) may introduce itself to a community or clan through a medium or a layman by means of possession trance and, instruct the community or clan concerned on how to invoke it. Through the instruction, a shrine is prepared by means of herbs and some objects arranged in a brass pan for invoking it. Among the Akan, the gods or divinities invoked through such media are called *Tanō*. Their shrine is at the source of River Tano and there is a god there whom informants say is the head of all the *Tanō* (gods) in the country and that the priests or mediums of all the *Tanō* are trained there, by the priest or priestess of the Senior *Tanō* known as *Taakora*.

The etymology of the name *Taakora* has two derivatives. One is *Tanō* the grandfather; the other is *Tanō a ōkora adec-Tanō* that preserves property. Popular opinion of interviewees favours the second derivative. *Tanō* is the generic name of all such gods and they all have their personal names. *Taakora* is said to be the father of all the other gods. As already said, the shrine is at the source of River Tano near Tanoboase a village in Techiman Traditional area.

When a person falls into possession trance very often, parents consult a medium or a diviner to find out which god or divinity is trying to take over their ward or spouse. They

can give their consent to it and send him or her to a priest to be trained. The training could last for three years or more. On the other hand if the parents disagree, they would send their ward to a traditional priest or a spiritual church to exorcise the spirit.

Another form of possession trance is ancestral spirit possession or to be precise possession by the spirit of the living dead-*Nsamankōm*- among the Akan people. During funeral rites, a relative of the deceased may be possessed by the spirit of the deceased and be used as a medium to express his or her will, the cause of his or her death or reveal where a property or a treasure-trove is hidden. The researcher witnessed several occasions of this type of spirit possession in the 1950s and early 60s when such occasions were rampant at funerals.

When he was a teacher at Fumesua in the Ashanti Region in the 70s, his landlady, Madam Afia Adomakoaa recounted her personal experience of '*nsamankom*' to him. According to her, she befriended a railway stationmaster in the 50s when she was a girl. And they had an issue, a bouncing baby boy, so the man wanted to marry her but she refused because the man had a wife. Some years later the man fell ill and went home on sick leave. Finally he died and she attended the funeral because of her son. It was her first time of travelling to Akuapem area where the man hailed from. She said, at the funeral she was possessed by the man's spirit and was used as a medium to communicate with the deceased's family. She said, in trance she was able to call names of people and places she did not know and told the family of the deceased how he, the deceased, wanted his property to be distributed. She impressed upon the researcher that possession trance is a reality.

Zuesse (1979:184) points out that among the Alur, a Nilotic people of North West Uganda and Eastern Zaire, for example, possession generally is part of ritual lasting at times throughout entire nights of drumming, dancing and violent exertions, and such visitations by God and or his spirits heal the sick, it is said. He adds that Alur mediums are chosen by the Jok spirits through the experiences of illness or suffering. No one consciously wishes to be a medium, and the selection is often restricted, but it is possible

to avoid. He says among the Fon of Dahomey and related Nago and Yoruba cultures of Dahomey and Nigeria, possession is very different. There the individual seems to be almost entirely subordinated to the communal aspects of cult. While sickness or bad luck may be a sign of election, as determined by diviners, a person may also dedicate a member of his family to a demi-god in gratitude for some great stroke of fortune etc.

Zuesse (1979:191) goes on to distinguish mediumistic state from shamanism, which according to him flourishes among Siberian peoples and throughout American Indian cultures. In Shamanism the crucial trait is the continuing clear consciousness of the Shaman: his ego-self remains alert and exerts control when in trance. He adds that possession trance is also very common in Mediterranean area, in European and Western cultures and in South and East Asia, although in these cases it is often interpreted as demonic possession requiring exorcism.

Mediumship and trance possession can conveniently be divided into positive or negative possession, integrating or disintegrating possession. A possession is said to be positive when it aids in the integration of the individual and his society and the universe, and negative when it causes disintegration and fundamental psychic and cosmic conflict. The problem encountered by society in this case is how to control and direct the cosmic order. The inability of the social order to integrate these experiences into its own normative context is both social and psychological, and the basic denominator is the religious intentionality. Tendencies that might drive a person mad in one culture might well be considered as expressive of the transcendental realms in another and so not mad at all.

Mbiti (1990:167) says,

The main duty of mediums is to link human beings with the living-dead and the spirits. Through them messages are received from the other world, or men are given knowledge of things that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to know... Mediums function in this role only when 'possessed' by a spirit; otherwise they are 'normal' people without specialised abilities. Their distinction is the ability to be 'possessed' or get in touch with the spirit world, but this also depends on the willingness of the

departed or other spirits to get 'into' them and communicate through them.

Mediums can work with diviners and priests in shrines and temples, and a priest or a diviner can serve both purposes. That is, a priest or a diviner can have the ability of spirit possession. Many West African priests and diviners are of this type.

2.6.4 DIVINERS AND MEDICINE MEN

The two personalities are put together because in African Religions, they are interrelated. Though not all medicine men are diviners, diviners, like the traditional priests, are in most cases necessarily medicine men because they combine divination with prescription of plant and herbal medicine and other protective or curative media.

Among the Basotho there is a type of diviner (*Senohe*) who does not prescribe herbal medicine and other protective or curative media for patients. According to informants the *Senohe* diagnoses patients, tells them their problems and sends them to an herbalist for prescriptions.

Berglund (1976:136-137) says nobody can become a diviner by personal choice at least not in theory. All diviners he interviewed were emphatic that they had experienced a very definite call to the office of diviner by the ancestors. Hence they regarded themselves as the servants of the ancestors. In theory a male or a female can become a diviner but in practice the overwhelming majority are women. (This is referring to Zululand). Diviners interviewed in Taung district of North West Province of South Africa by the researcher affirmed the above assertion of Berglund.

The means of calling a diviner is through dreams, particularly obscure dreams. Besides dreams the ancestors can indicate their calling through sneezing, yawning, belching and hiccups. While sneezing and yawning are considered preliminary stages of calling, belching and hiccups are considered a little more advanced signs of calling.

Emily Dichaba, a female diviner at Pampierstard in the Taung district, told the researcher that nobody actually wants to be a diviner by choice or on his or her own accord. The call is usually resisted but when things get beyond control then there is nothing one can do but to accept the call. She said when she completed her Basic Education she fell sick, vomiting, sneezing and belching quite often. She dreamt and saw visions and was very much disturbed. She went to Johannesburg to seek employment but the sickness persisted and she was finally taken to a diviner who said that her ancestors want to use her. She was then shown a diviner to whom she went for training for one year and since then she has been a practising diviner. She says she can use bones, water and even mirror to divine. She says that quite often she does not use the bones or other media to divine because the spirits usually talk to her and tell her what to do for her patients. She can also prescribe medicine through dreams. She uses snuff to call the spirits and she becomes possessed through drumming and clapping of hands by her attendants.

One traditional healer, J.P Botho Hlalele, who lives at Mohalalitoe in Maseru, also narrated how he became an *ngaka*. He said that when he was a boy (1938-1939) he went to live with his uncle who was an *ngaka* and working in the mines in Kimberley. He used to help his uncle by supplying him with medicine from the *sefahla* (dispensary). Later his uncle died and he returned to Lesotho for his formal education. Over thirty years later he had a vision in which he saw his late uncle and other relatives who had died and they taught him how to use various herbs and roots to cure diseases. In subsequent visions and dreams, he received further instructions on medications from his ancestors. He wrote everything down so that he might not forget. Later people started coming to him for treatment of their ailments. After his college education when he was teaching at Christ The King High School, he received many patients who were referred to him from Roma Clinic.

He classifies the Basotho traditional doctors-*ngaka* as follows:

A. *Ralitaola* or *Selaoli*

The characteristic features for identification of this category of *ngaka* are:

1. Unshaved head- bushy hair or Rasta.
2. Iron tool (kepi) for digging herbs and roots. (A smith makes this tool).
3. A tail of *nku* (sheep), which he holds as a symbol of his office.
4. He wears a hat or cap made from a baboon skin or a wildcat skin.
5. He carries a skin bag in which he keeps his divination bones arranged on a string.

He says that the Selaoli does not wear beads. What is seen these days is a practice imported from Zululand.

B *Ngaka - Chitja*:

- 1 They do not throw bones for divination.
- 2 They become possessed. (They are highly psychic. They feel the presence of the ancestors)
- 3 They can communicate a lot with the ancestors.
4. Their media of communication are the movements of the body feelings.
5. They get their prescriptions through visions caused by the ancestors.

They are not very common these days. Since they depend solely on the ancestors for the prescriptions, some patients may report several times before they get their prescriptions whereas others may get them on their first consultation.

C. *Senohe* is another group of *ngaka* described above. (2.6.4 second paragraph)

The religious connotation of divination lies in the fact that the diviner is the link between the cosmos and the material world. He is an intermediary between the divinities, ancestors, spirits and the living human beings. He is respected as having divine nature by virtue of his office, not his personality. Similarly the medicine man in discharging his duties deals with physical and spiritual aspects of diseases in diagnosing and prescribing medicine for the cure of the disease. This is so because generally Africans believe that disease, misfortune and even fortune have both social and religious causes. Many a time people who seek bio-chemical medication at clinics and hospitals are referred to traditional healers when there is suspicion of spiritual involvement in a disease, and the traditional healers usually cure such people.

Goody (1962:210-211) says divination is very common among the LoDagaa of Northern Ghana. Most men are qualified to divine, but there is a great difference in reputation among them, and good diviners are of course most frequently consulted. It is not knowledge of the future that the clients require so much as the cause of present troubles. He adds that there are many situations in which divination is resorted to. When a man's child is sick he consults the diviner, who prescribes a course of positive action, which temporarily relieves anxiety. If this and other measures fail and the child dies, a diviner is again consulted to reveal the cause, so that further deaths may be avoided.

Mbiti (1990:165) says,

In African villages disease and misfortune are religious experiences and it requires a religious approach to deal with them. The medicine men are aware of this and make attempts to meet the need in religious (or quasi-religious) manner-whether or not that turns out to be genuine or false or mixture of both.

Evan Pritchard (1937:251) adds that among the Azande the medicine men cure the sick and warn of an impending danger. They provide charms against failure from hunting and farming. They attack witchcraft and magic with medicines.

Mbiti (1990:164) asserts that the duties of medicine men are many and varied and overlap with those of other specialists. He adds that the Ndebele medicine man supplies medicated pegs for the gates of a new homestead. He combats witchcraft and magic by preventing their action and sometimes by sending them back to their authors.

Of late, there are new kinds of medicine men that have emerged through attempts to revive traditional method of healing known as Traditional Healers Association. These people are mostly literates who are studying or have studied the herbal and plant potency through exchange of ideas by means of national and international conferences. They do not divine and they do not hold any divine status though their prescriptions and application of medicine sometimes involve some dos and don'ts and numerical figures which connote spiritualism.

Kiernan 1995:112) asserts that the diviner is a specialist who formulates a religious response to crisis and adversity that is conducive to the restoration of normality. Yet not all of these measures are entirely within the competence of the diviner. He adds that the resort to curative and retaliatory medicines is a male specialization based on an acquired knowledge of herbal and vegetable potencies. Medicines provided by the herbalist are put to a range of uses to promote harmony, fertility and prosperity in the community, to protect property of all kinds, to settle interpersonal conflict; to stimulate sexual attraction and to restore health and well-being. These medicines can be ingested or otherwise consumed, applied externally or worn simply as protective charms against the whims of nature. He adds that the activities of diviners and herbalists are mutually dependent, but that there was a tendency in the West to combine them within a single profession, that of the doctor (*ngaka*-medicine man) who was usually a man whereas they were practised separately in the East.

The researcher has purposefully tried to give broad view of the religious phenomena that pertain to the two regions under study and beyond, in other parts of Africa, and even beyond Africa; in order to be able to identify what may be purely African and what is worldwide. The researcher hopes that after reading this chapter, readers might begin to

see the synopsis of African Religions, which he hopes may be clear at the end of this study.

2.7 THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL SURVEY

The study of the literary works of scholars on the topic has shown that the concept of the divine is an important religious phenomenon in the African religious milieu. It is the basis of religious beliefs and practices in the two countries for this research work. Divinities abound in Ghana and Lesotho, and in each case the Supreme Being is at the apex of the divine concept, though it is evident that the concept of the Supreme Being is not prominent in the Basotho religion as in that of the Akan of Ghana. While the 'Molimo' of Basotho looks completely otiose in their religious purview, *Onyankopōn* of the Akan is regularly addressed publicly and privately in their religion; though he is not formerly worshipped as the Christians do, he is not totally otiose as in the case of 'Molimo.' Generally, in African perspective the Supreme Being is usually contacted through intermediaries who are the gods and the ancestors. Therefore the contact is usually indirect.

They tried to abolish some traditional, cultural and religious institutions of their country. The acknowledgement of sacred in material things such as trees, rocks, mountains, rivers and even humans as the Ghanaians and the Basotho do, has earned the African religion some derogatory terms such as animism though the animistic traits are not prominent in the Basotho religion as in Ghana. The Basotho and the Ghanaians perceive the divine in the Supreme Being and the ancestors, gods and spirits who manifest themselves in humans, animals, rivers, rocks and trees but this does not warrant it to be animistic because this practice is not the totality of the religion, it is only a component part.

The study reveals that rituals are African religious phenomena through which they express and acknowledge their feelings towards the divine. It is through rituals acts that cosmology is harmonized. Zuesse (1979:85), talking about Ila rituals, asserts that in a religious sense, the important point to stress about this is that the social imperatives in ritual are secondary to the spiritual imperatives. There are cosmological implications to

ritual that the social aspects merely interpret. The social groupings actually take on their special value from the cosmological classifications.

Thus the prominence of ritual act in portraying the concept of the divine in the two countries buttresses the fact that ritual is an important religious phenomenon in African religion. Benjamin Ray (1976:17) as already cited says, 'Through ritual man transcends himself and communicates directly with the divine. The coming of divinity to man and of man to divinity happens repeatedly with equal validity on almost every ritual occasion.' Ritual act is therefore the embodiment of African worship. The efficacy of prayer, sacrifice, offering, religious dance and music depends upon following the correct rituals.

The survey again reveals that both Ghana and Lesotho were influenced by foreign culture and religions which had some adverse effects on the traditional religion and hence the concept of the divine. In the colonial masters' attempt to civilize the two countries and their other African colonies in general, they attacked the cultural and religious institutions, which in the long run, affected the religious concepts.

They tried to abolish some traditional, cultural and religious institutions as already mentioned, and such institutions formed the core of the religious beliefs of the people. The introduction of Christianity, in some ways, helped to bring God to the limelight in the African religion and ceased to be 'deus otiosus' as he was believed to be in the precolonial era.

The statistical data presented in Chapter 5 indicate that Christian religion runs side by side with African religions in the two countries; and in Ghana Islam also has considerable hold on the country but the African religion is not defunct as people believed. However, there are some modifications in both the African religion and Christianity or Islam. Each has been influenced by the other.

It is also worthy of note that Angels, heaven, hell and the devil are Christian innovations, they do not exist in the African cosmology, instead the ancestors, gods, spirits, the

underworld or the world of the ancestors are dominant in the African worldview. The serpent also plays a role in the concept of the divine. While the Akan of Ghana talk of the python, the Basotho talk of the water snake. This serpentine concept in the religious beliefs prevails in the myths and beliefs. Minnie Martin (1969:74) asserts that some sort of belief in the transmigration of souls is evidently indulged in by the Basotho for they will tell you solemnly that such and such a snake is the spirit of so-and-so's grandmother and that the spirit of another ancestor has revisited the earth in the form of a dog or baboon. Such assertions seem to support Rakotsoane's contention that initially the water snake was an object of worship in Basotho cosmic view-if not the sole object of worship.

It is also evident that the ultimate goal of religion in the two countries is salvation here and now as opposed to the transcendental salvation of the Christian and Islamic religions. Benjamin Ray (1976:17) asserts the uniformity of this salvation goal in African religion when he says that the experience of salvation is thus a present reality, not a future event. The passage from the profane to the sacred, from man to divine, from moral conflict to moral unity occurs here and now. In short almost every African ritual is a salvation event in which human experience is re-created and renewed in the all-important ritual Present. Mythical symbols and ritual acts are thus decidedly instrumental. They not only "say" what reality is, but they also shape the world to conform to this reality.

Ethics as revealed in the literature survey is dealt with in three sections i.e. moral evil, religious evil and physical evil. The social or moral evil affects individuals and their neighbours, the religious evil, is social evil that affects the ancestors and the gods and thus affects the whole community, tribe or ethnic group because it brings the wrath of the ancestors and the gods on the community. The physical evil is believed to have been caused by nature in Christian sense but in African religion it has human agents who bring it to society by causing the wrath of the ancestors, the gods or the spirits, or (may be caused by) witches and sorceress. So in all cases, the source of evil, be it social, religious or physical, is humanity. Benjamin Ray (1976:150) says, 'unlike Western religions, African thought does not conceive of the source of evil to be a fallen god or spirit like Satan or the devil. Instead, the source of evil is located in the human world among the

ambitions and jealousies of men. The source of evil is the demonic humanity, the witch or sorcerer. He adds that the suffering and misfortunes caused by the ancestors and gods are not evils. They are punishments aimed at correcting immoral behaviour. Evil is a different matter; its effects are both undeserved and socially destructive.

Myth in the literature review points to the fact that it is a channel through which a religious belief and practices of a people can be studied hence the concept of the divine in the two countries is revealed in their myths. The myths tell us about the people's belief about God, the gods, ancestors and spirits, the origin of man, death and the subterranean world. African philosophical thoughts are revealed not in theories but in myths and proverbs, which are also channels of religious concepts.

The social utterances in daily conversations are also not without religious concepts. The expressions made by people concerning life reveal their conception of the cosmos. They therefore reveal the African concept of the divine. Numerous examples are cited in chapter 4.

Finally the religious symbols are also both philosophical and religious channels through which the concept of the divine is revealed in Africa. The symbols as well as the other religious phenomena discussed in chapter 4 help to clarify the similarities and the differences between the two countries under study. They also throw light on the differences between African religion and Christianity or Islam.

NOTES

1 Homer's *Odyssey* abounds with several examples of Greek 'Beliefs', in gods and ancestors.

2 This attribute has the same implication or meaning as other derivatives like: *Akrōbetoe* and *Obotantim*. They mean that God was there from the beginning and will continue to be, 'ad infinitum.'

CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

3.1 GOD AMONG THE AKAN OF GHANA.

In this section the Attributes of God mentioned briefly in chapter 2 are going to be treated fully.

Among the people of West Africa, and Ghana in particular, the concept of the divine includes belief in God, deities or divinities, ancestors and spirits as powers controlling the affairs of humanity on earth.

The Akan concept of God reveals their type of God, yet the true God is not of several kinds. The one true God is the same omnipresent God found and experienced everywhere. He can be known under several degrees or shades among the various races as they perceive him to be, for each people has a name for God through which name is to be found the quality or category in which they put him as appeals to them. Dankwa (1968:1) says, "to discover the meaning of this name or quality is to discover the doctrine, the teaching and impression of, e.g., the Akan people concerning God. What a race takes God to be, or believe he ought to be, hangs on the meaning of the name. Therefore when the researcher speaks of the Akan as having a perception of God native to the Akan race, it means that there is a 'native' seed quality (using the words of Dankwa) about their name for God that is evidence that they intrinsically know God. The name thus reflects the qualities of God which most appeal to them. Some of the popular and early writers of the products of Akan thought like Rattray, Westermann and Christaller gave testimony of the fact that the Akan have had a definite conception of the 'true' nature of God. Modern studies about the Akan concept of God hinge on the work of the above mentioned early writers, especially Christaller.

At the end of this section we will find that the quest of God in Akanland is expressed in their culture, their politics, their economics and the spirit of their art and life. In the words of Dankwa (1968:4), it is a catholic (universal) quest to discover the discipline attained

by the Akan in their contact with the rough edges in nature and the attempt or effort to hew and fashion those edges into something harmonious, beautiful, satisfying and true under the control of the Akan mind and for the service of their kind.

God among the Akan is *Nyame* or *Onyame*. This is the basic and popular name of God. The etymology of the word as discussed in Chapter 2 is diverse. While some scholars hold that it derived from *Nyam*-shine or flash, others believe that it derived from *Nya-mee* get and be satisfied or one who 'satisfies', implying God's generosity. In Dankwa's point of view *Nyam* means flash of light. Therefore *Nyame* in terms of light or shine would mean a flash of lightning. Like the case of Rattray, most of the informants of the researcher asserted that *Nyame* implies *Nya-mee* the satisfying one.

On this issue of the etymology of '*Nyame*' Dankwa (1968:35-36) criticized Rattray on his assertion that the Akan God or Supreme Being is conceived to be a satiation God or God of fullness. He argues that looking at the form of the name (*Nya-me-mee*), it is perhaps, enough to point out that the highest authority Rattray discloses for the derivation is that it was given by natives. He adds that, of course, no scientific enquirer would be satisfied with the merely popular or "man in the street" interpretations of a highly technical theological term like '*Nyame*' of God. And that doing that could never bring researchers the exact knowledge. He argues that as to "satiation" there can be no doubt that anyone who gets God (*Onyame*) would be full or satisfied, in the same way as any one with whom God abides (in the phrase "God be with you" corrupted into "Goodbye") would be good or expected to have God with him. But that both interpretations are ignorant popular etymologies, and *Onyame* no more originates from "obtain-and-be-satisfied" than God from 'Good.' He feels that the etymology '*Nyamee*'-which he puts it '*Nya-me-mee*' (whichever way comes to the same point) is too basic a term to merit academic and scientific interpretation of God.

The researcher feels that though Dankwa's argument sounds logical, '*nyam*' interpreted in Akan, as 'the shining one' does not suit as the correct etymology of *Nyame* either. *Nyam* as wave or flash, *Onyam gya*, he waves a firebrand (a verb) is different form

Nyam: adjective) honourable, respectable, dignified. For example 'n'anim ye nyam' meaning he is honourable, dignified, respectable. To the researcher's mind this derivative dwells on personification of God. The argument put forward by Dankwa (1968:36-38) is an attempt to dress the Akan God or the Akan concept of God with Hellenistic robe (using p'Bitek's words). The researcher feels that Rattray did the right thing by accepting what the local people say the word is derived from, more so when, unlike Dankwa, he was not a native.

If Dankwa claims that no scientific inquirer would be satisfied with the mere popular or "man in the street" interpretation of a highly technical theological term like *Nyame* or God, then the researcher is afraid, he is not far from Emil Durkheim who said that deity is a philosophical concept, which a primitive man is not capable of conceiving. The researcher therefore holds to the derivation of *Onyame* as "*Onya-mee Nyame a wonya no a na woamee*," the satiation God who satisfies anyone who experiences or gets 'Him'. In Akan, God is not so much a shining or bright entity as the provider for human needs, the sustainer of life; after all nobody has ever seen him to be able to give a precise description of him. God could be derived from "Good" as devil from evil. In each case it sounds so simple but has deeper meaning.

3.1.1 THE AKAN GOD AS SKY GOD

To the researcher's mind, to refer to the Akan concept of God as sky God, in some way, is not a misnomer because the Akan associate God with the sky. They believe that God resides in the sky. At the same time they acknowledge the omnipresence of God. These two assertions are expressed in Akan adages in Dankwa (1968:195): '*Wodwane Nyame a wonam/wohye n'ase*', if you try to run away from God you walk under him or you are under his canopy. The other one is, *Wope aka asem akyere Onyankopōn-a, ka kyere mframa*. If you would tell God, tell the wind. But looking at it from another angle, from the deeper sense of the concept, the term is a derogatory term as Dankwa (1968:30-31) asserts, because the fact that the Akan associate God with the sky, as many people do, does not mean that the Akan God is a sky God. They do not see the sky as God but

manifestation of God. Moreover the Akan interpretation of heaven is '*ōsoro aheman*' which means sky-kingdom or the kingdom on high. *Soro* means high up or sky. Heaven does not exist in Akan religion. It is a Christian term.

Another Akan name for *Nyame* is *Nyankopōn* or *Onyankopōn*, which means "one great or supreme God." Here the root word or stem of the word is *Nyame*. *Nyankopōn* is derived from *Nyame-koro-pōn*. One-great-Nyame. A prefix 'O' can be added to the root word *Nyame* to make it *Onyame*, or *Onyankopōn*. It should be noted that the prefix 'O' is not the pronoun 'Ōno-he, she, it, as Dankwa (1968:31) asserts but a common prefix added to a noun that begins with a consonant. It is dropped when a word that ends in a vowel precedes it. Thus we can say *Owusu Kwame*, but we don't normally say *Kwame O-wusu* but rather *Kwame Wusu*. Addition or subtraction of the prefix does not bring about any difference. Therefore *Onyankopōn* or *Nyankopōn* does not make any difference. The suffix *kopōn* or *koropōn* is the epithet 'one-great' or supreme. This suffix is added to the stem *Nyame* to distinguish him from other deities. This implies that the Akan people acknowledge only one Supreme God; therefore the other deities are subservient to him. It also reveals their acknowledgement of other deities over whom God is supreme.

Another derivative of *Nyankopōn*, which needs to be discussed, is *Nyōnkopōn*, 'great friend.' The researcher does not agree with Casely Hayford on this derivative because the word '*Yōnko*' or '*Nyōnko*', as he puts it, implies equals, fellow or age mate and God is not our equal in any sense. *Yōnko* as friend differs from '*adamfo*' or '*adamfoō*' which is another word for friend. In fact it is the proper word for friend. When somebody claims that another person is not his '*yōnko*' or '*afē*', '*Nye wo yōnko ne me*' or '*Nye w'afē ne me*' he means, that person is not his equal or age mate. Dankwa (1968:44-45) also disagrees with Casely Hayford's assertion. C.G. Baeta cited in Dankwa (1968:xv) also says that the idea of God as the Great friend, or neighbour or fellow, might occur in Christianity but it is totally foreign to Akan sentiment on this point suggesting, as it does, impudent disrespect.

Another attempt at the etymology of *Nyankopōn* is *Nyanku* or *Nyankom*. It is said to be the Fante name for rain. Three Basel missionaries identified the word '*Nyankom*' as a Fante word meaning 'rain', and Casely Hayford also mentioned that the god of rain of the Fante was and is known as '*Nana Nyankom*'. *Nyankom* forms part of the following: *Nyankoensu* or *Nyankonsu* (Asante) meaning rain 'water.' '*Naynkotōn*' rainbow; *Nyankomiremire* noise produced by rain in the air/sky before falling. *Nyankonnes* 'things obtained from God or from the sky, '*Nyankonsorornma*' stars. '*Nsoroma* means children of the sky. *Nyankom* has to do with the sky, and that '*Nyankom*' is in fact rain in *Asante-Akyem*, as it is in Fante. Christaller also cited in Dankwa (1968:XIV) translates it as 'rain', making it a synonym of *osu*, the more usual word for 'rain'. He adds that Christaller gives the word '*Onyankome*' as the name for God in Fante.

The researcher agrees with him in saying that *Nyankom* is also a God-name; in that sense it is equivalent to *Nyankopōn*, which sometimes means 'rain' (maybe in the sense that *Nyankopōn* is the maker of rain). The phrase *Nyankopōn aba* or *atō* means 'rain has fallen'. Likewise '*Nyankopōn bom*' means it thunders. Hence *Nyankom* and *Nyankopōn* are interchangeable or synonyms. The *pōn* of the latter is signifying 'great.' As rain is seen to come from above, *Nyankopōn* is therefore used also to mean "the apparent arch or vault of heaven." The researcher feels that the words discussed above were derived from *Nyankopōn*-God that is believed to reside in the sky and not the other way round. This is not to say that God was or is the sky. *Nyankonsu* can mean *Nyankopōn nsu* 'God's water.'

Ōdomankoma is the next Akan name of God that needs to be discussed. In chapter 2 this word was interpreted etymologically as, one who alone is capable of grace, bounty, the absolute giver of grace or love. He who alone out of free will gives or who alone gives out of his bounty. The researcher agrees with Dankwa's (1968:61) explanation: the term *Ōdomankoma* written out completely is *Ō-dom-ara-nko-ma*. This gives us the full-dress meaning of "He who (or that which) is uninterruptedly, infinitely and exclusively full of manifold, namely, the interminable, eternally, infinitely, universally filled entity.

It should be noted that these three names of God are not used interchangeably. The occasion calls for the appropriate name to be used.

3.1.2 GOD AS ŌBOADEE (CREATOR) AMONG THE AKAN

God as *ōboadee*- Creator of the 'thing' (Universe) also addressed as *Borebore*, *Totrobonsu*, discussed briefly in Chapter 2, reveals the Akan concept of God. The question here is, does this concept originate from the Christian or Islamic theology or is it an indigenous concept of the Akan? This question can be answered by looking at the Akan beliefs and practices concerning the creative nature of God. In the Akan drum language, used of ages, there is a stanza about creation:

<i>Ōdomankoma</i>	<i>When Ōdomankoma (God)</i>
<i>Bōō Adee</i>	Created the thing (world)
<i>Bōrebōre</i>	'Hewers-out' Creator,
<i>Bōō Adee</i>	Created the thing.
<i>Ōbōō deeben?</i>	He created what?
<i>Ōbōō Eɛɛn,</i>	He created court Crier (Herald)
<i>Ōbōō Kyerema</i>	He created Poet Drummer
<i>Ōbōō Kawu Kwabrafo (sic)</i>	He created "Touch-and-Die"
<i>Di tire</i>	The big executioner as its quintessence / As principals.

This is an Akan poetic expression of creation myth in Dankwa (1968:70-71), which implies that when God created the world, he created order, knowledge and death first or initially. The literal translation of 'Eɛɛn' is court crier or herald, *kyerema* is the drummer and *Kwawuakwa Brafo* means the executioner (by name) *Kwawuakwa*. In poetic language imageries are not taken literally hence what they stand for are given in the interpretation. There are many versions of this drum poem in Akanland with different versions of the name of the executioner but the interpretation is the same.

The 'Eɛɛn' court crier as the symbolic representation of order in God's creation lies in the fact that the *Eɛɛn*, among other duties, keeps order at court and at any traditional public gathering. Dankwa (1968:72) sums up the duties of the Eɛɛn herald by saying that the duties of the Akan herald are indeed many, they all boil down to the underlying principle

of giving or maintaining order. His absence would mean chaos. The 'Ökyerema' - drummer uses the talking drum to communicate with chiefs and elders. He is both poet and historian who knows the history and tradition of the state. He sings the praises of the chiefs and elders during ceremonials and cautions them on their behaviour and conduct in public. He is therefore a symbolic representation of wisdom or knowledge. The 'Öbrafoö' executioner, as the name implies, is the killer, the one who kills anyone condemned to death by the state, in the pronouncement of the chief, therefore he represents death, and death is indispensable in the Akan state. What the researcher collected from informants on this issue are in line with Dankwa's (1968:73) interpretation. Dankwa says that 'Öbrafoö' executioner is derived from 'Öbra', moral ethos and 'mmara', the law (of the state). One's 'bra', life is governed by the 'mmara,' and the 'Öbrafoö', executioner, is part of the executive of the state. Thus in terms of God's creation, first he created 'ade' the thing in natural order by his knowledge and experience or the knowing principle, and finally he is interminable both in life and death because the Akan know him as the creator of death as of course life.

Death is another phenomenon that reveals the Akan concept of God. To the Akan, as mentioned above, God created death- 'Ödomankoma wuo', God's death. The last associative idea Christaller found to be suggested by the Ödomankoma concept is death: Ödomankoma wuo, God's (idea of) death. In connection with death, other races speak of "natural death" but the Akan speak of 'Ödomankoma' "God's" death'. The two notions mean the same thing, because 'natural' implies what God ordains. The Akan categorize death into two main sections, namely: *Owupa*, 'good death' or 'proper death' and *Atöfo-wuo* or *owu bone*, bad death. To the Akan 'good death' is when one dies at an old age or by one's *Nkrabea*, destiny, which is usually found out, through divination, at death. 'Bad death', on the other hand, is any improper or accidental death, poison, suicide, death through witchcraft, lightning etc. Naturally every Akan would wish to die a good death; which implies that one has been able to accomplish what God designed one to perform on this earth.

There is an Akan myth about death, collected from Okyeame Kofi Amponsa, which the researcher believes is popular among the Akan that needs to be mentioned here. He says that long ago, people became fed up with death for taking many people's lives. They sent a delegation to go and plead with God to take death away from the world. God agreed and took death away from the world. For a considerable length of time everything came to a stand still. There was no death, there was no birth and there was no growth. Life became so boring and unbearable that people began wishing for death. People realized then that they could not be wiser than God, and that God should not be blamed for whatever he has done. They, therefore, asked God to bring back death into the world. Thus to the Akan, order, knowledge and death are the initial principles on which God based his creation.

Therefore, in the words of Dankwa (1968:73) it is sufficient to say that if there is to be survival it cannot be considered in isolation of the total being of *Ōdomankoma* (God). And since he is all in all, immortality will not be possible for the individual unless he be immortal in all. Those who can share in the divine nature are only those who can be immortal. Actually the inside mind of the Akan cannot be expressed in another language when he talks about the '*Csen*' court crier, the '*Ōkyerema*,' drummer, and the *ōbrafoō*, executioner, as the quintessence of the creation *Ōdomankoma* has made. It may also interest readers to know that the myth above also reveals the Akan concept of life cycle in reincarnation.

The Akan drummer (poet) expresses his feeling and knowledge of God when he salutes God at dawn on the *Adae* day [Nketia (1974:47-48)]:

Csoro tre, tre, tre, tre, tre,
Asase tre, tre, tre, tre, tre,
Yeakukuru akō, Yeakukuru aba
Tetetete, tetetete,
Kwaakwa Otweaduampōn Nyame,
Otweaduampōn Nyame se
Ōkyere mo asem bi a,
Momma yenni so.
Na yepe fufuo a yeanya.

Yepe kōkōō a yeanya.
Tetetete, tetetete,
Kwaakwa Oteaduampōn Nyame,
Ōbōōnyame, Okurontō.
Onyame, makye oo, makye ōkesee.
Akokō bōn anōpa,
Akokō tua bōn nhemahema.
Meresua; momma menhunu.
Meresua: momma menhunu

Below is a similar version translated into English by Dankwa (1968:73-74) with slight changes and omissions. In fact it can be taken as the translation of the one above.

The sky is wide, wide, wide:
 The earth is wide, wide, wide.
 The one was lifted up,
 The other was set down
 In ancient time, long ago.
Nyankpōn, Tweaduampōn,
 We serve you.
 When *Nyankpōn* teaches you something,
 You profit by it.
 If we wish 'white' we get,
 If we wish 'red' we get it.
Tweaduampōn,
 Good morning,
 God of Saturday,
 Good morning.

In fact it is a form of prayer of the drummer asking God to help him to succeed as he learns the art of drumming. This is expressed, explicitly, in the last two lines of the Akan version. It reads: "I am learning let me succeed". 'White' and 'red' in the poem signify 'good' and 'bad'. It means man is given the free will to choose between good and evil. It can also mean ability to differentiate between things.

The drummer sings the praises of the divinities as well as the ancestors on the dawn of Aday festival. Below is a praise song for the Tanō god, river god of the Akan (Asante) in Dankwa (1968:74)

*Okwan atware asuo,
 Asuo atware kwan,
 Opanin ne hwan?
 Yebōō Kwan
 Kōtoo auo yi
 Asuo yi fri tete:
 Asuo yi firi
 Ōdomankoma
 Ōbōō Adeε.*

*The path crosses the stream,
 The stream crosses the path,
 Which of them is the elder?
 Did we not cut the path
 to meet the stream?
 The stream had its origin
 long, long ago
 in Ōdomankoma
 He created the thing (world)*

This drum poem has many versions and interpretations. There are two versions in JH Nketia's (1974:94-95) collection and they are much longer than this one. One appears under *Tanō* (god) and the other under proverbs. Dankwa explains this one above to mean that if man makes the least movement, even to imitate *Ōdomankoma* (God) in art, he finds all filled by *Ōdomankoma*. He is there; he is here; he is everywhere, long ago, before man came on the scene with his art and skill. In the full versions it is revealed that the drummer is praying to the *river god Tanō* for knowledge and perfection in his art. In this version the riddle means there are differences in rivers. Some are more powerful than others and that *Tanō* is a river among rivers that had its power from *Ōdomankoma* (God) long ago. In fact a short verse found in Noel King (1986:23) answers the riddle thus: "The children of *Onyame* include *Tanō*, who was called by God and did not respond immediately. He was fated to flow through hot savannah lands. The drumbeat says of him,

*The river crosses the road,
 The road crosses the river,
 Which is the older?
 Pure, pure, *Tano*.*

J.H. Nketia (1974:13) says that traditionally when a drummer stands before the *ntumpan* drums to play, he communicates only with the drum unless of course he needs to talk to someone who does not understand drum language. He does not interpret what he says on the drums nor tolerate anybody standing close by interpreting what he says to others. The chiefs and the elders should understand the drum language or else they would not know

when they are being addressed, cautioned or when something is being requested from them. Nketia (1974:15) adds that in traditional life, drum language is one of the major means of breaking news to the people especially during war, disaster, festivals and public gatherings. It is incumbent on the chiefs and elders to understand the drum language.

In addition to the names of the Akan God treated here, there are other honorific names and attributes discussed briefly in chapter 2. Space will not allow full exegeses of them here.

3.1.3 ANCESTOR VENERATION IN THE AKAN CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

As has been pointed out, most worship of God is done through the ancestors as the intermediaries between God-*Onyamkopōn* and man. But as Dankwa (1968:53) asserts, *Twieduampon*, as ever, is the supreme title of the Supreme God, the High one- who, above all, is known to man, and of whom the Akan poets ever sing. There is no symbol to *Nyankopōn* or *Twieduampon* in Akanland. The nearest to a symbol of God fashioned by man is the triadic altar called *Nyamedua*, God's tree, placed in the temple, *Nyamedan*, God's room, often found at the entrance of a King's palace or placed in the inner courtyard of the palace. To this temple the king retires once a year to sleep in it for a week, after the completion of the ceremonies for the ancestors, the *Nananom* at the turn of the year.

David Cannadine et al (1967:12), in the introduction to Rituals of Royalty: Power and ceremonial in traditional societies writes:

The repository of ancestral legitimating and the reservoir of kingly power in Akuapem are the black stools, which are recognisably the equivalent of royal thrones in Western society. A man may be elected to be monarch, but it is the relatively private act of enstoolment, which actually transforms an ordinary mortal into a person possessed of kingly properties and power. Only after this private ceremonial is there a more public installation. Power, in other words, is not intrinsic to a person as a human individual, but only to the monarch as the holder of an office. And that power is

obtained by contact with the stool, for the simple reason that is where the citizens of the kingdom believe royal power to reside.

In fact the researcher regards this assertion as a complete summary of all that pertains in the Akan ancestor veneration and kingship or chieftainship powers and the respect derived from the ancestors. The power is renewed constantly by the *Adae* festival, which falls alternatively on every three weeks or twenty-one days, in the form of *Kwasidae* and *Wukudae*, in the stool room or house in the palace. (In fact the researcher would prefer “ritual” or “secluded” in place of private in lines four and six in the above quotation to make his description explicit).

The popular nature of the Akan system of thought concerning their religious beliefs and practices is supported by Gilbert's (1987:303) assertion that traditional Akropong beliefs in gods and ancestors resemble those described for other Akan kingdoms and indeed a good many of the gods were brought to *Akuapem* from elsewhere. At the head of the pantheon is the Supreme Being, *Onyame* the giver of rain and sunshine, and *Asase Yaa* the Goddess of the earth; both are too remote to be approached directly. Beneath them are the deities, *abosom*, sometimes said to be the children of the skies or messengers of God since they act as intermediaries between God and man and are responsive to direct prayer and supplication.

It is pertinent to comment on the seemingly remoteness of God in the Akan system of worship. As has been pointed out in chapter 2, the Akan system of governance is akin to the assumed established hierarchy in the cosmos. In the ordinary way of life the king or paramount chief is too busy with the general maintenance of his kingdom to settle petty cases of the subjects. Therefore the divisional chiefs and chiefs and their headmen who are responsible to the king, are responsible for the people as in the case of the ancestors and the deities. It should also be noted that though the Akan invoke '*Asase Yaa*; Earth *Yaa* in prayer and libation especially during funerals when they ask permission to dig a grave in the earth, they maintain that the earth is not a goddess because it does not divine. *Asase nye bosom; onkyere musuo*. Yet it is revered and personified like God. Hence Gilbert's claim that *Asase Yaa* is the Goddess of the earth stands to correction.

Busia (1951:40) also says that the Asante believed that the Earth had power or spirit of its own that could be helpful if propitiated or harmful if neglected. This power in the Earth was conceived as a female principle, *Asase Yaa* (Earth) *Yaa* whose natal day is Thursday. He adds that Rattray translated *Asase Yaa* as 'Thursday Earth Goddess' and spoke of the cult of the Earth Deity. And that this was not an accurate rendering of the Asante conception. The Earth has no priests or priestesses, nor do the Asante consult her for divination in case of illness or need as they do other gods (*abosom*). He goes on to say that the Asante say '*Asase nye bosom; ònkyere musuo*' (The earth is not a goddess, she does not divine). The conception is rather that of a power or principle possessed by the Earth.

Noel King (1986:22) also wrote an extract from Evelyn King's note books, an information from her Akan lady informant, a piece of a drum poem "...As our drums say: O earth, earth, at birth we depend upon you. At death we repose on you - O earth, earth condolence." For us the earth is not a god (*Obosom*), nor is she God; but she is a divine being who has a day and rites of her own.

Coming back to the ancestor veneration among the Akan, it would be observed that it is more a state affair than individual, though individuals do occasionally offer sacrifices and prayers, in the form of libation, on festive days, during funeral and crisis times to their departed members of the family. It is incumbent upon the kings, chiefs and clan heads of the Akan states to renew contact with their state or clan ancestors through the blackened stools on every *Kwasidae* and *Wukudae* that fall alternatively on every twenty-one days or three weeks. Busia (1951:27-29) asserts that the *Kwasidae* is known as *Adae kесе*-big *Adae* and the *Wukudae* as little *Adae*. Thus each of the big or little *Adae* takes place on every six weeks or forty-two days. On such occasions the king or chief enters the stools house or room to pour libation and offer sacrifices to ask for support, guidance and blessing for himself and the state from the ancestors. As the name suggests the ceremony on the *Adae Kесе* big *Adae* is more festive than the little *Adae*. The Saturday preceding the *Kwasidae* is known as *Dapaa*, and on the evening of this day the *Òkyerema, ntumpan*

drummer, drums till late in the night and continues at dawn around four o'clock on the *Adae* day singing the praises of the ancestors and the king and chiefs. The ceremony takes place in the palace. The ancestors are believed to be present on that day. The king and his elders dance to the tune of '*Fōntōmfrōm*'. The *Adae* festivals are occasions of reunion with the ancestors of the state.

Ancestors are revered on other occasions such as *Odwira* and *Apoō* festivals and during funerals; in fact there is no festivity in which the ancestors are not involved. In talking about '*Odwira*' Busia (1951:29) says that Bowdich and Rattray pointed out certain features of the *Odwira* ceremony. It was a feast of the dead in the old days, and was closely connected with the first fruits. It was a cleansing of the nation from defilement and purification of the shrines of the ancestral spirits and the national gods. Hearth is also regarded as the shrine of the ancestors. In the old days women kept the leftover from the evening meals by the hearth, till the following day, so that the ancestors might come to partake of their share of the evening meal. For this reason the cooking pots, bowls and plates that were used to serve the evening meal were not washed until following morning. During meals the first morsel was put either on the dining table or on the floor inviting the ancestors to come and eat. At public gatherings, festivals and drinking bars when people are served they pour a little bit off before drinking and what is poured off is a sign of inviting the ancestors to come and drink. At funerals and ceremonials, the elders who do not drink alcohol, collect a little bit of whatever is being served and pour it on the ground for the family ancestors who might be with them. These practices have become part of the routine in the life of the Akan people, Christians and non-Christians alike.

Sometimes people refuse to perform some traditional rites in public when they are asked to do them. The excuse they usually give is that they are Christians and that their faith does not allow them to indulge in such acts. They do not say that it is bad or ungodly to perform the rite but that their church does not allow that. The implication is that they do not personally see anything wrong with it but they fear sanctions from their church. Hence they may do them in private. Sometimes too people use the Christian excuse as a pretext.

For example, in January 2001 the researcher attended a family funeral at home. During the funeral an elderly woman was asked to pour libation to the ancestors especially the recently deceased one who was her senior sister, but she refused with the excuse that she is a Christian and that her church does not allow that. Normally it is the male family head that should perform such rites, but he was incapacitated and she was the next elderly person around. Women are normally not allowed to pour libation but those who have passed the menopause can do so. People tried to persuade her to do it but she refused. Not long after that, one of the daughters of her deceased uncle came up with a local gin and, requested that a prayer, in the form of libation, should be said to the family ancestors through the deceased aunt, so that a business she had inherited, from her deceased sister, would prosper. Before anybody could say anything that woman, who had refused to pour the libation in the first instance, came forward prepared to pour libation on behalf of her uncle's daughter. Her reason was that the deceased daughter whose business the living one had taken over was her best friend. So she was allowed to do it. After that she was requested again to perform the first one she had refused and this time she did. It would be noted here that sometimes excuses given to refrain from traditional rites on religious grounds are not genuine. In the instance above the woman was refusing to perform the rite because somebody other than herself had inherited her deceased sister's estate and that person was not around during the final funeral rites because of ill health. Thus she was refusing because she was embittered. It is clear, here, that sometimes people obey the Christian sanctions put on some traditional practices not because they believe they are bad or ungodly but that they do not want to be sacked from the Christian sects or denominations they have joined for some social benefits.

It is pertinent to note that like the saints and angels in the Catholic Church, ancestors cannot be overlooked in the African religious doctrine. The Akan do not regard them as gods as such but as intermediaries like the saints and Jesus in his role of the intercessor.

3.1.4 THE DIVINITIES AMONG THE AKAN

Peter Sarpong (1974:14) asserts, that the belief in, and the existence of, the lesser deities in Ghana needs not be overemphasized. They abound in Ghana especially among the Akan people. They range from great tribal gods to little private deities. He categorizes them into four groups as follows:

1. Those generally worshipped by one tribe. These traditional general deities are few in numbers. The Tano River is such a deity for the Asante.
2. Those worshipped by inhabitants of certain towns, localities or traditional area. These are the local deities. They are very numerous; every locality has several of them.
3. Those worshipped by the smaller sections of the community such as special lineage or village companies. Every lineage or family has its own deity of this class.
4. Those worshipped each day by one individual or his household. In practice, the individual, since he is a member of a tribe, a community, a lineage and family, is subject to gods from all the groups.

These deities have shrines built for them either in the bush, homes, villages or towns where they are worshipped privately or communally. Sarpong (1974:14) adds that they have one generic name in every tribe but multitude of proper names. The Akan generic name for these minor deities is 'abosom.' It seems to have originated from the fact that generally their shrines were originally mostly stones, however, there are water or river gods such as *Tanō*, mentioned above, *Boōtwerewa* (all in Techiman Traditional area) *Antoa Nyamaa* and *Bosomtwe* (a lake), in Asante Region. When the researcher visited the *Tanō* shrine at Tanōboase, where the river takes its source, Nana Owusu Afriyie, Tanōboase *Gyasehene*, told him that the shrine of *Tanō* is at the source of the *Tanō* River on the Baafi road and that the river is not the *god-Tanō*. The *Tanō* (god) uses the river as an abode and it is the chief or father of all the *Tanō* (gods) of Akan land. The god protects the whole country (Ghana). He said that any newly installed chief of Akanland, especially *Asantehene*, goes there to collect water for purification and that all *Tanō* priests of Akanland are trained there for three years before they qualify as *Tanō* priests

or priestesses. The customary rite for collecting the water for purification is to present twelve yards of 'nwerá' - white calico, a full bottle of schnapps, a ram and some money to the god. He said that *Asantehene Nana Osei Tutu II* went there, when he was installed, to fetch the *Tanō* water for purification. He added that during every Odwira festival the *Asantehene* goes there to collect water for purification.

The symbolic representation of the *Tanō* (god) is placed in a brass pan and covered with 'nwerá'-white calico. It is said to have a wife (a goddess) and many children in the Akanland and they all use *Tanō* as their generic name. *Tanō* was formerly called *Amamfi Tanō* but the present name as already mentioned is *Taakora*, which implies *Tanō 'aōkora adeε'* - protector or preserver.

Tanō is said to be the son of God and that it calls God 'Noo' which means 'Eno'-mother. It respects God and is under the control of God. It protects Akanland; it divines. It helps people in their personal needs i.e. childbirth and health. Personal deities are mostly charms known among the Akan as *nsuman* (singular: *suman*) though some individuals may also possess *abosom* (*bosom*-singular) to protect themselves and their family. The *nsuman* may be worn as talisman or amulet or bracelet on the body or kept in a container or hung on the roof or wall or the lintel of the main entrance to a house.

Sarpong (1974:14-15) again says that among the Akan these lesser deities are said to be spirits. They have never become human beings. They are created by God and have their own earthly abode ranging from rivers to creepers and from beasts to rocks.

3.1.4.1 THE ORIGIN OF THE DIVINITIES

To clarify the relationship between the gods and the Supreme Being, Sarpong (1974:19) asserts that the general belief among the Akan is that all the spirits are creatures of God. They are therefore subject to his will. In other words God manifests himself through them. They are his children, regents, ministers, and messengers. God therefore executes his plans through them. Thus the Ghanaian idea of God is a conceptualisation of events,

which on account of their strangeness or variability as well as on account of their potentiality for fortune or misfortune, are said to be his activities. On this note one is likely to ask why an all powerful, all loving, all merciful God should create malevolent creatures like the gods who inflict evil and punishment on people let alone act through them? The answer to this pertinent question lies in the great Akan maxim: *Ōdomankoma bōō Owuo na owuo kum no*, which literally means God created death and death killed him. (This maxim has been explained in chapter 2 and elsewhere in this chapter). Thus the perfection of God's creation lies in continuity and discontinuity or thesis and antithesis. God resuscitates himself through death and revival or creation to keep the life cycle going. Therefore without evil there can be no good; without death we cannot understand life.

3.1.4.2 THE POWERS OF THE DIVINITIES

Sarpong (1974:15) says that the gods are conceived of as supernatural beings endowed with powers to bless or kill. They are generally thought to use their powers to produce effects out of the ordinary. They can foretell the future, prevent evil, and provide antidotes against sickness and ill luck. They are the spokesmen of the ancestors, making their wishes known to the living. They show the way through which the ancestors may be appeased by the living.

Concerning the services the gods provide for their worshippers Sarpong (1974:17) says that people consult their personal gods and or state gods to find out what will happen to them in the future. They ask for protection against calamities or to ascertain the underlying causes of disasters such as bad crops, poverty, and pests on crops, sterility and others. Some people consult their gods to know the outcome of certain enterprise they want to undertake. They also use the gods to avenge themselves on people who have offended them or their relatives in any way clandestinely or openly.

On the other hand national or state or clan gods assume proportionate responsibilities such as protecting the welfare of the clan or state. In times of crisis they are consulted to

find out what precisely should be done to avert or overcome danger. For example during war they forecast the outcome of the encounter with the enemy. If they foresee defeat, either a peaceful negotiation is made or necessary medications are prescribed to avert the situation to ensure victory. For example in one of the Asante wars with the Denkyira there was the need for a human sacrifice to avert defeat and one royalist, Tweneboa Kodua, sacrificed his life for the state and the then Asantehene, Osei Tutu.

When there is an outbreak of an epidemic in a state or the chief falls sick, the state god or gods are consulted for remedy or medication. When the gods are offended they show their displeasure by venting their anger on the state or the chief through war, disease or epidemic and such calamities can only be averted through consultation with the gods accompanied by the necessary propitiation. Sacrifices are usually the means through which to pacify them.

3.1.5 AKAN CLAN SYSTEM

We need to know the Akan conception of the nature of man and society in order to understand fully their worldview, which reflects their concept of the divine.

Busia (1954:169-197) says that among the Akan man is both a biological and spiritual being. They believe that a human being is formed from the blood (mogya) of the mother and the spirit (Ntorō) of the father. This belief reflects Akan social organization. The two sets of bond, a mother-child bond, and a father-child bond, derive from their conception of procreation and determine the two sets of groups and relationships.

The mother-child bond, which makes a man a member of his mother's lineage, also makes him a member of a wider group, her clan (abusua). Every Akan lineage belongs to one of the seven clans (mmusuaban) of Akan (other informants gave the number as eight). These matrilineal clans are 1.Ōyoko ne Dako 2.Bretuo ne Agona 3.Asona 4.Asenie 5.Aduana 6. Ekuōna ne Asōkōre 7.Asakyiri. Each of these clans identifies itself with a sacred animal, which serves as their clan totem (akyeneboa) and adopts its

characteristics. Meyerowitz (1960:27-28) says that this animal may be an antelope, a wild pig, a falcon, a leopard or some other animal that led them, in time of crisis, to a more fertile land or to water or to a safety place. It is venerated as divine because it is believed to have been a clan god that masked itself or assumed the form of the animal to help them. For example the Ōyoko clan, which rules the Asante, uses the falcon as their totem (akyeneboa). They, therefore, practise patience and endurance in achieving their aim. The Aduana clan also uses the dog as their totem (akyeneboa) because it is said that the dog discovered fire for the clan.

Busia (1954:197) adds that this biological bond has religious significance. The commemoration of 'the ancestors' links lineage and clans, and through the chief, it links the tribe. Ancestor veneration also emphasizes the unity of matrilineal ancestry.

The father child-bond is spiritual one. The Akan believe that every man receives a *sunsum* and *kra* at birth. The *sunsum* is a man's ego, his personality, and his distinctive character that he receives from his father. It is not divine because it perishes with the man. The *kra* is life force from god that lives in every person's "body." It returns to God when a person dies.

The *sunsum*, personality or distinctive character is called *ntorō*. The Akan believe that a child cannot thrive if his father's *sunsum* is alienated, he may be sick or meet misfortune. All who belong to the same *ntorō* are believed to have similar *sunsum*. Thus a man transmits his *ntorō* to his children.

The practices connected with the *ntorō* have ceased to be generally observed; hence very few people today have clear ideas about it. Therefore there is no consensus of agreement on the number of *ntorō* grouping in the Akanland. Busia's (1954:198-199) collection is as follows:

1. Busummuru; Sub-groups, Adufudee, Akrudee, Asadefee and Aninie.
2. Bosompri; Sub-groups, Aboadee and Ankamadua.
3. Atwidae; Sub-group, Agyinadee.

4. Agyaadefoō; Sub-group, Nketia.
5. Amoadee.
6. Akankadee.
7. Abankadee.

Dankwa also collected twelve principal *ntoro* groups as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Bosompra. | 5. Bosom-Dwerebe | 9. Bosom-Konsi |
| 2. Bosomtwi. | 6. Bosom-Akoma | 10. Bosomsika |
| 3. Bosommuru | 7. Bosomafi | 11. Bosomafam |
| 4. Bosompo | 8. Bosmayesu | 12. Bosomkrete |

The constant prefix 'bosom' emphasizes the fact that each *Ntoro* is believed to be under the aegis of a god (bosom). The *Ntorō* concept is a spiritual bond and it is strengthened by the belief that all who belong to the same *Ntorō* manifest the same characteristics. Each *Ntorō* transmits a particular type of character to its members. The distinctive characteristics of each of the twelve *Ntoro* groups listed above- given by Dankwa are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Bosompra | The Tough |
| 2. Bosomtwi | The Human |
| 3. Bosommuru | The Distinguished |
| 4. Bosom Nketea or Bosompo | The Audacious |
| 5. Bosom - Dwerebe | The Eccentric |
| 6. Bosom - Akōm | The Fanatic |
| 7. Bosomafi | The Chaste |
| 8. Bosomayensu | The Truculent |
| 9. Bosom - Kosi | The Virtuoso |
| 10. Bosomsika | The Fastidious |
| 11. Bosomafam | The Liberal |
| 12. Bosomkrete | The Chivalrous |

The observance of common taboos, common surnames and common forms of etiquette linked members of the same *Ntorō*. For example, Bosommuru group taboos the ox, the python, and the dog. Bosompra: the leopard and a white fowl. Bosomtwi: the bushbuck etc. The *Ntoro* groups also had common surnames and one could tell a person's *Ntoro* by his Surname. For instance:

Bosommuru: Osei, Owusu, Poku, Saakodie, Amankwa, Nti, and Anin.

Bosompra: Dua, Boakye, Boaten, Akyeampon, Ofori, Bediako, etc

Bosom-Nketea: Duko, Baafi, Adom, etc.

They also had the same form of response to greetings. In the olden days, one's response to greetings could show which *Ntoro* group one belonged i.e.

Bosommuru: Akudōntō, Aburu/oburu

Bosompra: Aku, Esōn

Bosom - Nketea: Esua, Anyaado.

The *Ntorō* concept served to strengthen the spiritual bond between the father and his son. This spiritual bond was emphasized by the fact that a father was held, and even currently is held responsible for his son's moral behaviour. He is liable for any damages that were/are claimed if a son committed or commits adultery with another man's wife. It is his duty to get a wife of his son's choice for him and give him the foundation for an independent life. The Akan dual personality expressed by the *Ntorō* (spirit) of father and Abusua/mogya (blood of the mother) emphasise that the social values and filial and parental bonds are both exogamous and need a full exegesis of their own which space and time do not allow in this study.

3.2 THE BASOTHO CONCEPT OF GOD

The researcher would like to open this section with two pertinent questions:

1. Did the Basotho really know anything about God before the advent of Christianity in the country?
2. Does the word Molimo really mean God in the Christian sense?

In the course of his research, the researcher happened to ask Mrs. Molefe a member of staff at St Joseph High School in Maseru about the Basotho concept of God before the advent of Christianity. Her answer was that the Basotho did not know anything about God; they worshipped their ancestors.

Stephen J Gill (1993:50) spoke of the Sotho as very religious people. He mentioned that according to some recent commentators the supreme power of the Sotho was called *Molimo*, unknowable and very distant from mortal man. The ancestor spirits (*balimo*) of the clan chieftainship, or extended family could intercede with *Molimo* in order to provide rain, good harvest, children, health, victory in war, and so forth. Hence prayers and sacrifices were made to the ancestors as intermediaries. He adds that such views, however, do not correlate with evidence, which was gathered in the earliest missionary accounts. The missionary account made it clear that strictly speaking the Sotho never had a conception of a Creator or any other 'distant and mysterious spiritual powers. Rather *Molimo* was probably the oldest known ancestor of any particular extended family or clan, and thus there were many *melimo* (gods), as the ancient prayer says, "*Molimo o mocha rape/a oa khale*," that is "New god intercede with the old god". This prayer was affirmed by many informants who added that it was usually addressed to a newly or recently deceased member of the family. According to this line of thinking, Gill argues that the Sotho religion was extremely particularistic and therefore quite distant in some respect from the monotheistic and universalistic religion brought by the missionaries. Among the Southern Sotho no high god held the allegiance of the people. Rather the family ancestors as a corporate reality often known by name, were the focus of religious feelings, be it adoration and thanksgiving or fear and dread.

He adds that the ancestors or departed ones could afflict their living descendants for violating the laws and customs of the society. Furthermore, the ancestors could choose certain individuals to be their channels for communicating more directly with the community by means of dreams, visions and misfortune.

One informant, JP Batho Hlalele, also tried to prove Basotho knowledge of God by quoting a Basotho prayer of the initiation lodge, which he translated for me as follows:

Molimo ak'u utloe rea rapela,	God, listen to us we pray
Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale	New God pray to the ancient one
Se rapele 'na rapela Molimo	Do not pray to me pray to God
Ke molingoaana oa eng oa tumela masaoana	What false God is this of superstition?

Rapela Ra-moloki Tlatlamacholo	Pray to the father of the redeemer the Almighty
Ra- 'moloki atla li maroba	The father of the redeemer with palms holed
Ra-moloki re tsoang ho uena 'mopong	Father of the redeemer from whom we came (created)
Ra-'moloki re khutlelang ho uena khotsong	Father of the redeemer to whom we return to peace.

Basing himself on this prayer he tried to ascertain the Basotho knowledge of God. He said that in an attempt to address an ancestor in prayer, the ancestor told the supplicant(s) to pray to God. (As stated in line 3 of the prayer) He went further to say that before the missionary era the Basotho knew about the redeemer - Jesus.

The researcher feels that this prayer is adulterated with Christian beliefs. Even if it is true that the Basotho did know about Jesus before the advent of the missionary it does not nullify the fact that it is a foreign innovation because Christ was not an African and he does not fall within the African religious milieu. Again it is most likely this prayer is an adulteration of the one cited from Lesaoana Manyeli elsewhere in this work.

Below is another prayer supplied by an informant Ntate Selemeng Ts'osane:

Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale	New god pray the ancient one
Re rapelle ho o moholo Jere.	Please intercede for us before the Almighty
Molimo a k'u utloe ra rapela,	God listen we pray
Molimo oa leseli oa Rammoloki,	God of light, the saviour
Molimo o liatla li maroba,	God whose hands are pierced
Liatla li robokiloe ke ho re shoela	The hands that are pierced out of redemption.
Liatla li tsoeu tsa Rammoloki	The hands of the saviour are white
Liatla li tsoeu ke ho bopa masea	They are white as a result of creating babies
Hla hla-macholo, hlahla metsi o a etse keleli,	God Almighty, take some water to make tears of sorrow
Hoba keleli e nchafatsa lichaba	Because tears of sorrow rejuvenate nations
Lichaba li tlang ho khutlela meahong, Leseli	The nations that will return to the chamber of light

Some informants claim that this prayer is a typical Basotho prayer, which reveals their concept of the divine-God-the creator of the universe. This prayer specifically states that God is the creator of babies (human beings). The researcher, however, feels that there are some elements of Christian influence in it. "God whose hands are pierced." Line 5 and "The hands that are pierced out of redemption," line 6 could be signs of missionary

influence.

Another prayer for asking for rain from God was given by the same informant as follows:

Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale,	New God pray to the ancient one
Rammoloki atla li maroba	Father of the saviour with pierced hands
Atla li maroba ke ho bopa masea	The pierced hands with which you created babies
Atla li marotholi a pula	The hands with droplets of rain
U re fe pula	We ask for rain
U re fe marotholi a pula,	We ask for droplets of rain
Re tsebe ho cheka lihoete	So that we can plant carrots
Le lioe-lioetla naheng	And the wild root crops in the veld
Bana ba leseli ba Rammoliki	Children of the light of the father of the saviour
Bulang leseli ngoanes' o a kene	Open the light for brothers and sisters to enter

These two prayers given by Ntate Selemeng Ts'osane sound more original or traditional than the other one supplied by Ntate Hlalele. In this prayer the supplicants are asking for rain from God. However it is not totally devoid of missionary influence. One wonders who the saviour with pierced hands could be if not Jesus Christ.

On this *Molimo* issue, informants are divided. While some cling to the assertion of Gill, others hold to the latter. Dr. Francis Rakotsoane, a lecturer in the Theology Department of the National University of Lesotho is of the view that *Molimo* does not refer to the Supreme Being of the Christian missionaries but rather a water snake of a pond, which the predecessors of the Basotho did worship. This water snake was their god of fertility that helped with fecundating women as well as the fields for cropping. Verification of this assertion of Dr. Rakotsoane revealed that people seemed to know very little about it but the snake as a cunning and divine animal, in fact dates back to the Biblical myth in Genesis. Guma (1967:9&27) also says that few old men in the Roma Valley of Lesotho identified Senkatana with Christ and insisted that the snake in the Garden of Eden was '*kholumo-lumo*' which they equated with sin. Other informants asserted that the witch uses water snakes to cast spells on their victims. M Martin (1969:155-158) has a collection of Basotho legends and customs in which the water snake is used for evil purposes.

In one of the stories a despotic ruler, Ra-molo became a snake after killing his brother, Tau, who prayed in his agony for revenge on his wicked brother. The powers-that-be heard his prayer and Ra-molo was turned into a snake with a sheep head and moved into a big pool of Senqu and dwelt there. Professor Machobane of National University of Lesotho also told the researcher that witch doctors (traditional healers) are believed to have contact with snakes during their initiation and that snakes are not specifically designated as gods but can be used by ancestors to help their wards. He added that in Zulu relationship with the snake, they regard some snakes as personification of ancestors. Therefore they revere such snakes highly as religious animals. They do not kill snakes.

Another legend in Martin's collection tells of a chief's daughter's suitors, Morongoe and Tau who were vying for her. Incidentally, Morongoe also a chief's son gained favour in the eyes of Mokete and her parents. Tau did not take Morongoe's victory over him lightly. He took to evil means and bewitched him. Morongoe was turned into a snake by a medicine man and was thrown into a pool. The mysterious disappearance of Morongoe shocked both parents. No sooner had Morongoe disappeared than a son was born to him from their wedlock. When the child grew up into a young man he started searching for his father. Finally he discovered the pool in which his father had been plunged, with the help of a medicine man. The snake eventually emerged through the help of the medicine man and Mokete was married to the snake to the astonishment of the neighbours. The medicine man performed a ritual and the hut in which Mokete lived with the snake was burnt down plus the snake. Then the ashes of the snake were thrown into the pool and behold, Morongoe emerged from the pool and reunited with his wife.

The pertinent questions here are: What does the water snake episode reveal to us about Basotho religious beliefs and practices? Can it be or represent their ultimate reality-God? Or is it a devil agent to thwart and outwit the godhead genre? It is probably a devil agent because in the two legends above, like in the Bible, it was used as devil agent.

One informant Mr Moiloa Tota affirmed the above contention when he added that, in fact, Basotho have strong belief in a water spirit. They refer to it as water snake, but it is

not necessarily a snake but something like a mermaid that lives in the under-world and whisks people who loiter around such water sources as pools into the under-world. He said that before an *ngaka* can be powerful or be initiated, he had to be blessed by the water snake or the mermaid. Basotho like the Asante and the Bono of Techiman traditional area in Ghana, believe in the existence of an underworld, and that the entrance to this underworld is in pools, rivers, lakes and the sea. The Basotho, according to Gill (1993:44), claim to have emerged from a bed of reeds; primeval time: *Ntsoana Tsatsi*. The Asante also claim to have emerged from a hole at Asante Manso while the Bono of Techiman claim to have emerged from a hole at Amowi near Yefiri. The Asante and the Bono are all Akan people. The researcher believes that the above claims of the Basotho and the Akan that they emerged from the ground are the result of their belief in the existence of the underworld.

3.2.1 THE ETYMOLOGY OF MOLIMO

G M Setiloane (1986:24) gave the etymology of the Sotho-Tswana word *Modimo* as follows:

The word initially had nothing to do with godimo, high, above, supreme or legodimo, heaven, sky. The prefix of the Third Class on the table of Nouns in African languages called the 'Mo-me class'. There is a whole number of Nouns in this class, which do not take the plural form. Such nouns are names of invisible, intangible objects often describing natural phenomena. For example Mollo-fire, mosi-smoke, mmuoane (moholi) -mist, monyo-dew, ngoeli-moon, mookoli-rainbow, etc. This regulation or principle applies to equivalents of these words in all African languages. The root or stem of the word-dimo is a derivation or local permutation of the original African stem-dzimu. All African philologists agree that the correct translation of dzimu is spirit or pertaining to spirit.

He adds that Moffat records that *Modimo* was an experience of something, fearful weird, monstrous terrible etc. *Selo se se boitshegang*: All these convey as the word *boitshegang* does, numinousness, unapproachability, taboo, Holiness. They certainly did not have a 'person' in mind. The one quality of *Modimo*, which nearly approaches a human quality,

is being associated with 'penetrating' insight into men and all things' as if it had some human cognition. Setiloane (1986:25-26) goes on to say that the Batswana (and most probably Basotho) already knew that *Modimo* is *Modiri*. The doer (creator) although they never actually told how *Modimo* did create (probably because it would mean trying to probe into something beyond human comprehension) *Mothodi*: The source: *Motlhodi wa Botshelo*: The source of life, the cause. *Hlaa-hlaa Macholo (unvelingqangi)*: one who appeared in times no one could remember or fathom.

To the researcher's mind the personification of God is a poetic expression (imagery) and should not be taken seriously or be used as a claim of difference. Christians, Muslims and Africans, all see God as spirit, or vital force whose presence is felt in all his creation. Therefore whether people refer to this as him or it - does not make much difference and should not be a bone of contention.

Klaus Nürnberger (1975:188) also adds that the fact that *Modimo* is not existentially experienced as a person does not mean to say that he is not conceived of as a person. We have to note the difference, however, between an existential experience of God that is essentially personal and a mythological personification of an existential experience that is essentially impersonal. *Modimo* is personified by the Sotho and Tswana tribes under review, often in the direction of demi gods with human characteristics. He has variety of names. He has anthropomorphic traits. He may be conceived of as the creator of man and the world. He is said to have spoken under certain circumstances. But all this does not mean to say that he is certainly a person.

Setiloane (1986:18) contends that *Modimo* is the source '*Motlhodi*' of life. The African therefore tries to see God in all things and it is this experience of God, which has won the African religions the derogatory term 'Animism'.

A female diviner, Emily Dichaba, at Pampeirstard in the North-West province of South Africa told the researcher that any rational being needs no introduction to God because the natural surroundings tell us or make us aware of a mysterious power behind their

existence. She cited the human speech mechanism as one example. To her it is a wonderful thing that people should marvel at and be aware of God's existence.

Klaus Nürnberger (1975:183) says that *Modimo* is also not to be confused with the God of the Deists. This type of speculative philosophy is foreign to the Sotho. *Modimo* is not an invention of intellectuals to satisfy a rational curiosity concerning origins or to arrive at unified cosmology. *Modimo* is beyond human comprehension and manipulation but he is not beyond experienced reality. He adds that mythology surrounds the notion of the Supreme Being in Africa. But myths are not meant to supply valid and satisfying answers to philosophical questions. They are meant to come to grips with the ineffable by putting into metaphors or stories of the fable type what cannot be expressed in other ways. To the researcher the concept of God is more an intrinsic knowledge than philosophical. To the African one does not need a philosopher, in the Western sense of the word, in order to be aware of the existence of God. Nürnberger (1975:184) continues that to the Sotho *Modimo* is always and everywhere. He is, in some way, connected with the sky (*legodimo*) and conceived as being above (*godimo*). But he is equally associated with the bowels of the earth, where man had his origin and where he returns according to the Sotho mythology. *Modimo* is not associated with any particular tribe or nation in Africa. He is above all nations like the rain or the sun, which reaches everybody, whether, friend or foe, whether good or bad. In fact it is this nature of God that earns him the Akan attribute: *Aysampamu*-He who does not discriminate. The Sotho use the expression, *ke motho wa kgobe*: this is a man of God, to refer to somebody who leads an exemplary life of moral character desired by man. And this implies that *Modimo* personifies all moral characteristics of humanity particularly truthfulness, cleanliness and purity. A personality such as expressed above, in Akan is known as, *Oye Onyame ba*, he/she is a child of God. And in fact Thus among the Akan too *Onyame* is associated with good moral conduct. The African believes that

Nürnberger (1975:185) asserts that in African perspective God is a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum*, which means he has to be ethically neutral. Belief in fate is explicit in this context. Hence despite the belief in sorcery and witchcraft some misfortunes are attributed to the will of God. 'Ke *Modimo*' it is God. The Akan will say, *Oye Onyame*, or

Eye nkrabea: it is destiny or fate, and there is a common maxim expressing this belief. *Onyame nkum wo a, o'dasani bre kwa*, if God does not sanction your death the enemy will toil in vain.

3.2.2 ANCESTOR VENERATION IN THE BASOTHO CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

Concerning the relationship between *Modimo* and the *balimo* (ancestors) Klaus Nürnberger (1975:187) contends that the relationship between *Modimo* and the ancestral spirits is extremely vague. And it is important to distinguish existential relevance from mythological expression. In his view there can be no doubt that the real address of prayers and sacrifices are the ancestors themselves and not a further authority beyond. There is also no doubt that they act benevolently or malevolently in their own right and power. Nevertheless there is a connection of some sort, which has to be. If *Modimo* is the source of all dynamistic power around then it is obvious that the ancestors are 'closer' to *Modimo* in the sense that more such power is at their command than at the command of the living. This power they are expected to utilize for the benefit of the living offspring. Put into mythological imagery the ancestors then appear as mediators between man and *Modimo*. He adds that obviously the example of normal social relationship between a minor and a superior is mythology not existential experience.

It is pertinent to comment here that, in the view of the researcher, to a Mosotho, and for that matter any other African, the relationship between the living and their ancestors is not a myth, but a real life experience. Communication goes on between the living and their departed relatives through dreams and divination and spirit possession. And in each case positive or negative answers or results are achieved. The African believes that if contact between him and his ancestors were severed there would be chaos. Therefore contact is always maintained to create harmony.

He adds that existentially nothing more can be said than that there is some sort of continuity between the power of the ancestors and *Modimo* as the great beyond of all

dynamistic powers. It is also clear that the ancestors, though they may seem to be omnipotent at times, are themselves dependent on *Modimo* and "at his mercy" as much as the living. The researcher believes that it is not only at times but also always the ancestors are subservient to *Modimo*. They get their powers from him whether they act authoritatively or not. It is only in Christian perspective that one can say, as he claims, that when *Modimo* becomes existentially relevant the ancestors are powerless. In traditional or African religious sense there is no such thing. It should be noted that in African worldview it is a sign of respect rather than fear that one speaks to a superior through a spokesman; therefore using the ancestors as spokesmen or intermediaries or mediators is a social norm that cannot be overruled.

Nünberger's (1975:187) claim that the notion of ancestors' mediatorial function between man and *Modimo* is widespread among Bantu tribes need not be overemphasized. But that it is imagery derived from the normal social life of any African tribe is overstated in the sense that, from the point of view of the researcher, it is practical rather than imagery. Pula (1990:333) adds that it is the belief of the Basotho that their ancestors, the *balimo*, are concerned with a person's everyday life, from birth to death. It is believed that it is the *balimo* who bless a woman with fecundity. If a woman is infecund, there is a special ritual to be performed towards her *balimo* on her behalf. This is clearly stressed in a song of Ntli.

Bewitchment, according to Pula (1990:333) is believed to occur when an individual is isolated from his or her *balimo*, and thus exposed to all kinds of evil. A person must always be united to his or her *balimo*, and this is accomplished by doing what is socially required, especially in family life. One of the implications of this is that the *balimo* must be constantly remembered; and that they in turn bless their relatives. Any major success in life must be understood, as the blessing by the *balimo*, and there must be a special celebration for this. For example a good harvest is celebrated with certain rites of thanksgiving to the *balimo*.

Again, Nürnberger's (1975:187) claim that the Christian emphasis on the omnipotence of God and the necessity of mediation between God and man through Christ led to a sort of degradation and subordination of the ancestors under *Modimo* is a misconception. It is rather the ancestral mediation practice in Africa that has made it possible for the African Christians to understand and accept Christ as a mediator in Christian worship.

The *Balimo* play a major role in Basotho cosmology. Pula (1990:339) says, 'The experience of the *Balimo* should not be suppressed. In fact the missionaries tried to destroy it but they have failed: because the Basotho continue to give different names to that practice and keep it going.' The researcher believes that this assertion does not pertain to the Basotho alone but to Africans in general especially the Akan of Ghana.

Gill (1993:51) says that the ancestors collectively represent and uphold social order and harmony, which is embodied in or preserved by various laws, customs and rituals, and personal qualities. These are to be obeyed, honoured or cultivated by the individual, family and larger society. In the process, one developed *botho* (fuller humanity or personality) and increased *seriti* (spiritual power/dignity, the ego). Conversely, to disobey or disregard the ways of the ancestors was to bring misfortune and illness upon oneself, as well as upon the family, community, animals and crops.

Ashton (1952:115) also says that according to Dieterlen during times of national calamity and danger, the principal chiefs of Basotho used to meet at the graves of Moshoeshoe and of other early chiefs at Thaba Bosiu to pray for their help. And that Dieterlen was told that they, particularly chiefs of Leribe and Berea, still do so and that at such occasions a beast was sacrificed.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:53-58) also asserts that a study of some prayers of the ancient Basotho and their initiation poems has proven the existence of the name '*Molimo*'. It is found in its singular form '*Molimo*' in its diminutive form of '*molingoana*' and in its plural form of '*melimo*'. He condemns Laydevant's derivation of *Molimo* from the root 'ema' 'ima' which means 'to stand', on grammatical grounds that it is defective and also

disagreed with him that the root of *Molimo* is the Hebrew word 'elm', which means gods. He however agrees with the explanation of Casalis' etymological derivative of *Molimo* as simple and coherent. According to Casalis, *Molimo* is derived from the Southern Sotho verb '*holimo*' that means 'up', elevated and high. According to him the real meaning of *Molimo* coincidentally expresses the real meaning and the idea of divinity that the Basotho had. It means a being or someone who occupies an elevated position or a high place. '*Molimo*' is defined in terms of the sky. He/she has attributes of the sky and therefore is far away, up there, superior to all other beings, elevated, inaccessible and infinite just like the sky. He/she is the highest one, the sky divinity, the Sky God. He adds that the concept 'superior to all other beings' is the closest to the meaning of '*Molimo*'. It does not only mean 'high' but 'above' any other high or prominent one. To emphasise his assertion, Manyeili (1995:60-66) adds that Eliade says the idea of transcendence is found among ancient religions. He adds that this idea that divinities are beings that occupied the sky and high mountains was common among ancient tribes. He goes on to say that one of the distinctive qualities ascribed to '*Molimo*' is inaccessibility, which is explained in the attitude of the Basotho. In a nutshell he asserts that the Basotho look upon '*Molimo*' as '*deus otiosus*' a lazy God who is finally forgotten. That he/she played such an insignificant part in the religious life of the tribe that people were pushed or forced to other religious forms such as ancestor worship, magico-religious forces and tribal hero veneration. On account of this inaccessibility the tribal religious life is not dominated by belief in the Supreme Being.

Lesaoana Manyeli's discourse throws light on the people's assertion that the missionaries introduced the idea of the Supreme Being to them. And in fact the remoteness and otiose nature of *Molimo* has made the people forget all about him. He sees the Supreme Being in Basotho perspective as essentially passive and inactive. *Molimo* has no cult in Basotho worldview. They do not offer him sacrifice because he is not only far away and inaccessible but also because he does not punish human beings. Pula (1990:334) says,

It is my conviction that, traditionally, the Basotho were not interested in speculations about the Supreme God. Hence, their concept of God must be sought in the understanding of the balimo. God may be the creator of the

balimo, but this is not so clear in Sotho myths of origin. The Supreme God is believed to be very remote, so, the Basotho do not go to God for their daily needs. They rather resort to the spirits of the dead, 'Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale, meaning new god pray to the older one' i.e. the recently deceased are asked to pray to the former ones and so on.

In African worldview it is true that the Supreme Being (God) is regarded as essentially passive and inactive in human affairs and therefore usually relegated to the background in African religion. It is also true that God has no cult in most African cultures and that they do not offer him sacrifice because he is far away and does not punish people as the ancestors and the gods do. It is pertinent to note that there are variations in this belief and practices. With Akan of Ghana it would be observed that the relegation of *Onyankopōn*-God, to the background in their religious practices is more an inclusive than exclusive in that the position of *Onyankopōn* in their religious practices is viewed in administrative terms. As already said, the Supreme Being, like their chiefs, must be approached, out of respect, through an intermediary. And he is too great to be bothered by human beings and their sacrifices. When he is however addressed in prayer, his name is usually mentioned first before the ancestors and the gods '*abosom*' but there is no formal worship like the Christians do.

3.2.3 BASOTHO CLANS

Basotho also have clan bonds. They are divided in to social groupings or affiliations distinguishable by mane and also by totems and other cultural features known as patrilineal clan bonds, which bind a man and his children.

People of the same clan see themselves as one people of the same family stalk who can trace their descent to one ancestry. Unlike the Akan abusua/mogya clans, which are matrilineal and exogamous and regard intermarriage as incest and therefore taboo, the Basotho patrilineal clans, on the other hand are endogamous and therefore promote cross-cousin marriage. According to informants this keeps the family properties and genes intact. For example Ashton (1952:62-63) asserts:

As the Basotho are patrilineal and as marriage between brother and sister is forbidden, the closest and most senior relative that one can marry is one's father's brother's daughter, and many important chiefs actually do choose their senior wives from among these cousins. This type of union is further encouraged by the desire to retain the marriage cattle within the family, which is expressed in the couplet: Ngoana rangoane 'nyalle likhomo li boele sakeng', cousin, marry me that the cattle return to the kraal.

Thus they prefer that the family property and the characteristic traits of the clan portrayed in the clan totems or emblems be kept within the family and or the clan. Therefore a wife's infidelity with the husband's brothers (junior brothers) or close relatives is preferred to that of a stranger or people from other clans.

The most common clans, plus their totems, found in Lesotho at present, are arranged below in the order found in Lesotho Mehlang ea. Khale fifth edition 1983 printed at Mazenod Book Centre Lesotho.

CLAN	TOTEM
Batlkoa	Wild cat
Bafokeng	Hare
Baphuthi	Gnu, (wildebeest/duiker)
Bakoena	Crocodile
Bakhatla	Vulture
Bataung	Lion
Batloung	Elephant
Batsoeneng	Baboon
Basia	Cat

Informants could not agree on the precise number of clans in Lesotho currently but the above list featured in the examples supplied by various informants.

Professor Matsela also talks of Sotho-Tswana clans with numerous subdivisions as follows:

Bafokeng	-	the hare
Bataung	-	the lion
Bakoena	{Makhoakhoa}	white pumpkin
	{Basotho} -	crocodile
Bakhatla	-	the hawk

Basia	-	the cat
Batlokoa	-	the wild cat
Batsoeneng	-	baboon
Batloung	-	elephant
Makholokoe	-	crow
Bakubung	-	hippopotamus
Maphuting	-	granite stone
Bafula	-	bush pig
Baphuthi	{Nguni group} -	Spider
	{Bamangoato} -	wildebeest
Barolong	-	big hammer
Banareng	-	buffalo
Bahlaping	-	fish

Ashton (1952:12-13) also asserts that Fokeng, Hlakoana, Khoakhoa, phuthing, tloka, sia, taung, kholokoe, phetla, ploane and phuthi are common among Basotho. He adds that some of these have subdivisions, distinguished by the name of their early leaders e.g. Bataung of Moletsane found in the Mafeteng district, Bataung of Molete and Bataung of Mothebesoana found among the tlokoa, and the Bakoena of Monaheng and Bakoena of Molibeli. With regard to the religiosity of these clans he says that these emblems or totems - whether metals, trees, animals or insects symbolize a mysterious being, a god, all the more to be feared because he has a Molimo, that is an invisible being.

The totems portray the personality traits or characteristics of the clans. For example the Bataung use the lion as their emblem/totem to symbolize bravery, courage and strength. Therefore a Motaung is expected to exhibit these characteristics to benefit his identity. The Bakoena, like the crocodile, their totem, profess to be strong, courageous and invincible.

The totems as emblems are social and spiritual guide and strength. Ashton (1952:14) asserts that the totems are held in high regard. The people used to honour and venerate them, they sang and danced in their honour, they glorified, praised and swore by them. Unfortunately we are not given any details of their virtues and material benefits.

He adds that the reasons for the adoption of a particular totem are obscure in many cases, however in few cases it was connected to some historical events. For instance a group of Khatla broke away from the main clan, and shortly after came upon a land teeming with duiker (phuthi) and thereupon called themselves Maphuthing. The Tlokoa adopted the wild cat as a mark of respect and friendship with the Sia, whose emblem it was, and with whom their chiefs intermarried.

The status of the clans differs. There is no common order of the clans according to status. Informants differ in the presentation of the clans according to seniority. But ordinarily the politically dominant Koena is given the pride of place even though most informants asserted that the Bafokeng are the senior.

D.F. Ellenberger also asserts that the first Bantu inhabitants of Lesotho were three small clans from the banks of Tugela namely Maphetha, the Mapolane and the Baphuthi. Not long after the Bafokeng of Ntswana tsatsi crossed it in the opposite direction on their long journey, which ended in Tembuland.

Ashton (1952:14) also says,

Ordinarily pride of place is given to the politically dominant Koena, the clan of the paramount chief, but strictly speaking, the Fokeng is senior. The Tlokoa, in their own area, do not recognize this and claim to be superior. In practice the question of seniority seldom arises, and when it does as for example at initiation, it has to be settled by amicable agreement. The position is very confused and I have never seen a list of clans in order of seniority, which meets with general approval.

It is asserted by informants that at the initiation lodge, rituals and ceremonies are performed in the order of seniority of the clans and that if this order is broken by accident or plan the culprit may face calamity or even death. It is therefore incumbent upon every

Mosotho to know his/her clan. It is claimed that the clan bond plays a very important role in Basotho religious and social worldview.

People of the same clan have common taboos and share common ancestry traits. Therefore they fall under the common ancestry protection and guidance. And where the clan is the ruling clan as in the case of the Koena, the clan totem automatically becomes state emblem and their ancestors become state ancestors, responsible for the protection and welfare of the clan and the state.

Like the Akan "Ntoro" a Mosotho transmits his *seriti* (personality spirit or ego) to his sons through the clan bond. That is, he acquires his power and personality from the clan bond embodied in the totem and transfers this power and personality to his sons who become members of the clan through birthright.

People of the same clan regard themselves as brothers and sisters or one family regardless the distance between them. When one travels away from home to a far away place and finds his clan there, he is welcomed into the family and treated as a member of that family.

It would be noted that there seems to be some sort of imbalance in the comparative discourse on the concept of the divine (God) in this section of the study due to lack of counterparts of some of the religious phenomena (discussed in the Akan section) in the Basotho worldview. But the researcher feels that a genuine imbalance must be accepted as one of the characteristic features of a genuine comparative study. After all the aim of this study, as stated in chapter one is to find the similarities and differences in the concept of the divine in the two countries or ethnic groups concerned. It is not to pass the judgment or to find out, which is better or superior. The researcher however welcomes criticism, of any genuine omissions for fair comparison in the Basotho religious milieu.

3.3 FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON AFRICAN CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

The early European contact with Africa South of the Sahara had multiple effects: economic, social, cultural and religious. These effects have both negative and positive sides that call for discussion. As the European explorers and merchants came along with their missionary counterparts it was no wonder that their influence was also diverse. As this thesis demands, the discussion will be based on how their activities and strategies affected the African religious beliefs and practices. The discussion is specifically based on the Akan of Ghana and the Basotho of Lesotho but mention will be made of other African ethnic groups where and when necessary.

3.3.1 INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON AKAN RELIGION

Odamtten (1978:12-13) says that the early Christian missionary activities in Southern Ghana-dominated by the Akan tribe, dates as far back as 1471 when the Portuguese explorers, sponsored by Prince Henry the Navigator, first set foot on the shores of Ghana (then Gold Coast) at Elmina (Edna). According to *Azurara*, a Portuguese Chronicler, one of the reasons that prompted the Prince to send expeditions beyond Cape Bojador on the West Coast of Africa "was his great desire to create the Holy Faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ and to lead in this faith all souls desirous of being saved". Chaplains, therefore, always accompanied the fleet of the Portuguese explorers and some of the Negroes had the opportunity of watching the Catholic priests celebrating mass both on the shore and on board the ships. Later they built a castle at Elmina in 1482 and then opened trading stations at Efutu and Komenda. Christian worship was introduced to these areas and in 1503 the chief of Efutu together with his councillors and elders were baptised.

The propagation work of the Catholic missionaries that came with the Portuguese explorers was short lived by the capture of the Portuguese fort, Sao Jorge, by Dutch West Indian Company, which was predominantly Protestant, in 1637.

Platvoet (1979:552) also adds that in 1632 the vicar in the castle at Elmina wrote a gloomy letter to the '*Sacra congregatio de Propaganda Fide*' at Rome, stating that in Elmina town there were some 400 Christians, half the population of the town, he estimated, but they were Christians in name only. They participated freely in such 'pagan' rites as pyromancy and the annual festive veneration of a large rock on the beach. They also secretly consulted pagan priests, placing more confidence in them than in their Catholic priests. 'Magic' was a great passion for them. From the most distant parts they invited 'magicians' to come to Elmina. The governor of the castle had on several occasions tried to drive these impostors out of the town, but to no avail.

Obviously the pioneer Catholic missionary work at Elmina was with problems. Odamtten (1978:12) writes that the missionary work was brought to an abrupt end when one day the people attacked the missionaries and took the vestment, chalice etc. Even though the cause of the outburst is not known, the incident demonstrated that the people retained their independence and were interested in the various articles introduced by the Europeans.

Records in Platvoet (1979:551) show that active Western Missionary activities in Ghana started around 1828. Before then the attempts at establishing the Christian religion were short lived mainly because of the heavy death toll on the lives of the early missionaries, which the climate and tropical diseases exacted. Odamtten (1978:32-33) asserts that in December 1828 four Basel missionaries in the persons of G Holwarth, C Salbach, J Schmidt and JP Henke arrived at Christiansburg to work under the Danish administration. By November 1831 they had all died. A second batch of missionaries arrived. They were Andreas Riis, P Jaeger and C Heinze. By 1835, Riis was the only survivor of the three. He moved to the Akwapim hills, which he considered much healthier.

Odamtten (1978:39-47) says that in 1835 the first Wesleyan Methodist missionary; Joseph Dunwell arrived at Cape Coast in response to a call for help by a small group of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (S P C K). Unfortunately Dunwell died six month after his arrival. Mr. and Mrs. Wrigley also arrived in September

1836. Mrs. Wrigley and Mr. Harrop, who joined the couple four months later died on the same day. Mr. Wrigley therefore wrote home for help but before Rev. T B Freeman and his wife arrived, Wrigley was dead.

The arrival of Rev. T B Freeman marked the real beginning continuity of Wesleyan missionary activity in Ghana (then Gold Coast). The Fante converts did a lot in founding Christian groups in various villages and towns where they had settled to trade or for other reasons. For example before Freeman visited Kumase (the Asante capital) in 1839, James Hayford, a Methodist convert who had been appointed British Representative in Kumase by Governor MacLean, was already conducting regular services in his residency. Before Freeman went to Kumase Riis had been there in the same year but had failed to contact the Asante king who expressed the wish to see Freeman again in his capital.

According to Platvoet (1979:554) the Roman Catholic missionary work re-emerged in 1880 and when the French priests Moreau and Murat started work at Elmina, they too noticed the Catholic pagans in whose houses they found old worn statues of saints. Some of the people called themselves the *Santamariafo*, the people of Santa Maria. Others were also known as *Antonifo* or *Santonafu*, the people of Anthony. The *Santonafu*, which was a contraction of the Portuguese 'Santo Antonio', were the people of Bantuma. They had a traditional cult in the town called *Ntona Buw* (Residence or house *buw*) of Ntona, which was the centre of the most popular traditional cult in the town of Elmina, that of the *Obosom-god 'Nana Ntona'*. In this shrine was found a special calabash in which the remnants of the Anthony statue of 1632, an old altar, an ancient missal and remnants of church vestments were kept.

Platvoet (1979:552) says that one governor brought the statues of Mary, St Francis of Assisi and the one of St Anthony of Padua to the castle chapel at Elmina. Two miracles were reported that set these saints in the centre of attention and devotion of Elmina people. Two questions need to be considered here: a. Why could the natives of Elmina keep these Catholic remnants for worship for over two hundred years after the Portuguese missionaries had left the scene? b. Why did the Catholic worship degenerate into a

traditional sort of worship but not jettisoned altogether? With the first question, what the researcher can say is that the said miracles that occurred when the statues were brought built the people's confidence in the Catholic faith so they wanted to keep it but there was lack of sustained leadership. To the second question the researcher feels that the sacra nature of the objects for worship in the 16th and 17th centuries, i.e. the statues were similar to those of the traditional religion i.e. statues, stones and other objects hence it easily degenerated into the traditional *bosom* (god).

It would be observed, after reading the missionary activities in Lesotho and Ghana, that even though the Catholic missionaries were late in starting the propagation of the Gospel in both Ghana and Lesotho, they seem to have more followers than the other Christian denominations at present. This could probably be due to the fact that in addition to other factors like organizational ability and finance, the Africans find their way of worship more accommodating and similar to the African worship than the others. For example the ancestor veneration is similar to the veneration of the saints and Jesus as mediators. Again the statues of the saints, Mary and the cross of Jesus are similar to the symbols and statues of the *abosom*-the divinities of Ghana as mentioned above.

Space will not allow for detailed discussion of the missionary activities in Ghana. Instead we will discuss their influence on the Akan people in particular and the country in general. By 1980, about half of Ghana's population was on record as belonging to one or other Christian churches, and the churches were (and still are) exercising remarkable influence on the society even though the nation cannot be regarded as a Christian nation. Although Christianity has brought many benefits to the country and the people, much of their ancestral belief, customary practices and way of life have been eroded as a result of Missionary and colonial influence.

3.3.1.1 THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM MISSIONARY SERVICES

The Akan people and the country as a whole owe great debt to the Christian churches, the remnants of the missionary activities in the 18th and 19th centuries. The influence of

Christianity, according to Buah (1998:139), has helped to reduce some bad cultural practices and beliefs such as witchcraft, magic and sorcery and some taboos resulting in some evil practices such as the killing of twins. The missionaries contributed a great deal to the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:218-219) also add that they collaborated with the colonial government to enforce the slave Emancipation Ordinance of December 1874. They bought several slaves and set them free after the slaves had worked for them to offset their purchase price. They also granted loans to pawns to redeem themselves.

The Basel missions encouraged the cultivation of cocoa in 1857. It had already been introduced into the country in 1814 but did not thrive. In the 1860s the Basel missionaries were cultivating cocoa at Akropong Akuapem. From its experimental farm at Akropong, the mission supplied seedlings to farmers at Aburi, Mampong and Odumase Krobo. In the 1890s the Basel Mission supplied pods imported from Cameroon or the West Indies to its converts and urged its Catechists, congregations, and graduates of its schools to take to cocoa farming. One Christian exile of Moseaso, Solomon Agyei, had a farm of 4000 trees (about 2.8 hectares) in 1900. Cash crops like coffee and cocoa provided the rural population with a regular source of income and raised their standard of living. In the account of Buah (1998:140) the Basel and the Methodist missionaries used scientific farming methods in nursery farms, which were of permanent service to the people. They introduced modern industrial crafts such as carpentry, masonry, and architecture as part of their educational programmes.

Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:219) assert that they popularised scientific medicine. The Basel missionary, Bauer, of Begoro station became very busy as a dispenser in 1893 with people from all walks of life coming from all parts of Akyem to ask for his help. The popularisation of scientific medicine contributed to the relief of human suffering and improved the quality of life. They, according to Buah (1998:140), established dispensaries at their mission stations and later clinics and hospitals scattered far and wide. It is a tribute to the Christian missions that they, unlike the government, built most of

their hospitals and clinics among the rural communities. By 1980 the churches provided about one third of the bed strength of all the hospitals in the country.

There were many hospitals run by the churches. For example the Catholics had built a maternity home at Eikwe-a small village in Nzema, the orphanage at Akyem Swedru and many other Catholic hospitals spread throughout the country. The Presbyterian hospital at Agogo in Asante Akyem; the Methodist hospital at Wenkyi in Bono Ahafo; the Seventh-Day Adventist hospitals at Agona in Asante and at Atibie in Kwawu were all built by the churches. All these and many more are really models to the government's own ones for their efficiency and dedication to the care of the sick and for healthy spiritual atmosphere they provide.

In architecture and sanitation Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:219-220) assert that the Basel mission Christian suburb towns, the 'salems,' became model settlements. Their well-laid streets were imitated in the non-Christian sectors of the towns and villages. The provision of large windows and the replacement of thatch with shingles promoted proper ventilation.

The greatest contribution the missionaries made toward the building of the nation is perhaps formal Education. As early as 1529, the Catholic monks at Elmina started a school but it hardly made any impact. Buah (1998:140) adds that Rev. Philip Quaque did the pioneer work at Cape Coast castle, the European missionaries opened several schools in the coastal and inland towns. The Basel and the Wesleyan missions, according to Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:220), were the pioneers of the Primary school education in the country. By 1844 the Wesleyan mission had opened schools in eighteen towns including Accra and Winneba. The Basel mission had English schools at Osu and Akropong (1847) and Twi -Vernacular schools at Akropong Akuapem (1844) and at Aburi (1847). The English and Twi schools at Akropong were merged in 1848. A teacher training college was also opened at Akropong Akuapem in 1848 and by 1850 the two missions had 1000 pupils between them. By 1881 the government had only two schools as against 132 run by the missionaries. Buah (1998:140-141) says that in 1900 while the government had

only four elementary schools, the missions together had 141 first cycle institutions two training colleges at Akropong *and* Aburi and two secondary schools. The Wesleyan mission founded the first secondary school in 1876 and later absorbed another secondary school founded by Joseph Casely Hayford, Rev. Ato Ahoma and others in 1908. It then changed its name from Wesley High School to Mfantsipim, the name of the second school. Other secondary schools such as Wesley Girls High School (1884) Adisadel college, formerly known as St Nicholas Grammar School, opened by the Anglican in 1910, St Augustine College opened by the Catholics in 1936 were all sited at Cape Coast, the then capital of Ghana. (Gold Coast)

The Presbyterians opened their first secondary school at Krobo Odumase in 1938 and it was later transferred to a new site near the University of Ghana, Accra. Before 1950s pre-university education including teacher education was largely in the hands of the mission churches.

In literature, Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:221-222) assert that the missionaries produced considerable literature in Ghanaian Languages and also reduced the indigenous languages to writing. Christaller published a Twi grammar in 1875 and followed it up with a Twi dictionary in 1881, a collection of Twi proverbs, and a translation of Bible into Twi and some Twi prayers and hymns. He was described as the father of Twi literature.

Johannes Zimmerman translated the four Gospels into Ga (1855) and published a Ga grammar and dictionary (1857). In 1866 he printed a Ga version of the whole Bible. Schlegel produced the first Ewe grammar in 1858 while Westermann published an Ewe dictionary in 1905. The Basel Mission developed the structure of elementary education in 1869 including syllabus, curriculum and boarding house system that featured in the Ghanaian educational system until recently. The missionaries financed their educational programmes largely from their own resources. Government financial support was minimal. Indeed as late as 1913 the government's educational budget was only £25000 or 3% of the national budget.

The missionary formal education products became leading figures in the development of the country. For example Dr Kwegyir Aggrey of the Wesley boarding school, J W de Graft Johnson Snr., John Mensah Sarbah and J P Brown used their knowledge to promote development and defend the interest of their country.

3.3.1.2 DISSERVICE OF THE MISSION CHURCHES

Though the missionary activities contributed immensely to the social, spiritual and political development of Ghana, it cannot be denied that it had some adverse effects on the socio-cultural and traditional religious life of the people.

In the first place it would be noted that the Christian religion and the Western type of education with its enculturation has alienated the Christians and the elite from Ghanaian culture and religion. Buah (1998:139) also remarks that instead of adapting the teachings and practices of the Christian religion to suit the harmless Ghanaian indigenous values and practices, as happened when same religion 'Christianised' Greek, Roman, German and Anglo-Saxon native practices and rites, the early Christian missionaries in the country totally condemned them as 'pagan' and to be shunned by converts, whatever they considered as strange.

The Salem system of the Basel mission, whereby their converts were separated from their non converted brothers into new twin townships, tended to isolate the converted Akan from contact with their traditional culture, which the missionaries considered to be impediment to civilization and progress. With time the Akan Christian imbibed the missionary prejudice against the traditional culture. Consequently, they refused to participate in festivals and other cultural activities of their people.

According to Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:220) their activities disrupted the smooth administration of the traditional leaders (chiefs). In 1904 the chief of Tumfa expressed the feelings of many Akyem people when he told Rev. Notwant of the Basel mission,

“You missionaries make two towns of each town, and bring division among us, who are brethren.” This protest was echoed in 1914 when Nana Sir Ofori Atta I criticized the Basel Mission for segregating Christians into a separate community in each town and adopting a hostile attitude towards African ways. FK Buah (1998:139) also asserts that this situation arose largely from the missionaries’ ignorance of the true meaning and significance of certain local institutions and practices. They were misled by some of the converts, particularly the over-zealous catechists and other evangelists who misled them to misinterpret the people’s ancestral heritage. To emphasise this assertion, the researcher would like to add his personal experience, which occurred in the early 1960s at Techiman, his hometown. The Parish Priest of the Catholic Church, a Dutch of the SMA group tried to Christianise some Akan culture by first putting a traditional stool on the church tower and then introducing the ‘*Ntumpan*’, the talking drums, in the liturgy. The *ntumpan* replaced the ringing of bells during consecration. Thus instead of the mere ringing of bells at the peak of the Catholic Mass, the talking drums were used to recite the honorific names of God with praises. It was devotional, inspirational and touching from the Akan point of view. Unfortunately the illiterate church leader opposed it on the grounds that same instruments were used in the worship of the traditional gods so people would not know the difference, but the stool on top of the church tower is still there. This was the result of the early missionaries’ wrong impression created against African ways of life. The converts, therefore, found it difficult to go back for what they had been told was bad.

The attack on the Akan marriage system disrupted the institutionalised cultural system. The insistence on monogamous marriage, according to Fynn and Addo-Fenning (1991:220) disrupted the pre-existing polygamous households. At Kyebi, for example, evangelist Emmanuel Yaw Boakye, father of Nana Sir Ofori Atta I, was forced to divorce four of his wives in the early 1880s when he became a Christian. Similarly Basel mission presbyter Solomon Botwe divorced three of his four wives. In the late 1960s the researcher’s aunt suffered the same fate. Her husband, with whom she had lived for over forty years, was forced to divorce her when he joined the Catholic Church. She came back to her brothers’ house with a number of children, and she has never married again

since then. Polygamy, in the researcher's view, is not a social or religious vice because there is nothing evil in it. It rather reduces the incidence of fornication and prostitution. Again the Akan being an agrarian community, the farmers always need farm hands and the polygamous marriage provided labour in the form of wives and children, in the absence of which labour must be sought in the form of slaves.

McWilliam (1975:24-25) asserts that the missionaries, having realised that African religions, and for that matter Akan religion, art and music and other social activities were closely connected with each other, decided to banish other social activities in order to consolidate the Christian faith. Hence traditional institutions such as rites of passage like the '*Bragorō*' of the Akan and the *Dipo* among the Krobo were regarded as the 'bulwarks of Satan, and school children were trained to be citizens of the minority Christian communities rather than the Akan community at large. African dancing and music were banned from school curriculum for the above reasons. The result was that the Akan child, instead of learning to appreciate and practise Akan cultural and religious institutions tended to shun them but learned foreign culture which, in the final analysis, resulted in alienating him. Therefore he was torn between two worlds, African and European worlds.

Wrigley, a Wesleyan Missionary forbade Christians to partake in and to share the cost of traditional funerals. Platvoet (1979:561-562) remarks that to the Akan the onslaught against their customs conveyed in loud and insulting languages assumed the character of personal abuse and consequently took offence at what they regarded as a wonton piece of insult. Their reaction to these attacks resulted in hostilities in Dominase in September 1837. And at Asaba, where a few Christians were manhandled, the chiefs complained of Christians behaving as if they were a race apart.

Platvoet adds that the condemnation of traditional culture and religion was even more acute with the missionaries of the Basel mission. Mader, a missionary, used to punish students of Akropong Seminary, when he was in charge, by sending them to fetch black soil for the garden, from the sacred grove of Akropong which the students could not do without running the gauntlet of the scandalized and angry townsfolk.

The educational system (i.e. school curriculum) was planned in such a way that it de-Africanised the students and promoted Western culture. Graham (1976:21) adds that the British Educational policy in the colonies, among other things, included the following aim: To inculcate the principles and promote the influence of Christianity and to spread a grammatical knowledge of the English Language as the most important agent of civilization. In many places, McWilliam asserts, the only education available was in Mission Schools, which tended to produce 'two worlds' separating the literate from the rest of the community.

Aggrey's biographer presented by McWilliam (1975: 22-24) also tells us:

Every life in Cape Coast took on the colour of the Victorian era. The school Assembly Hall would echo one evening to the resolutions passed by the local branch of the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, the next would be filled with an enthusiastic audience treated to a magic lantern lecture on the Stately Homes of England, followed by "selections on a patent organ which combines the whole effect of a brass band in itself" Beeton's "complete Etiquette for English Gentlemen" sold at the bookshop. English clothing and English names were postulates of the Christian life. It was undoubtedly an English kingdom of God that the Cape Coast prophets looked forward to. So much English (of a sort) was spoken that the Wesleyan Missionaries did not, as a rule, think it necessary to learn the language of the country. They preached in English. Mr. Freeman introduced the practice of reading English liturgy at the morning service in the Wesleyan Church, and at that service even African ministers delivered their sermons in English and the hymns and lessons were all in that tongue. The vernacular had its turn in the evening.

Nearly all the 19th century missionaries tended to follow closely the words of St. Paul: "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? ...Therefore come out from them and be separated from them, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:15-17 R.S.V.) The aim was to establish Christian communities isolated from traditional influence. This policy tended to produce 'two worlds' separating the literate from the rest of the community. The Akan membership or affiliation to one of

the various Christian denominations in the country falls under one of the following categories:

1. Those who are members by birth because one or both parents belong to that church. The parents who marry in the church also have their offspring automatically registered in the church.
2. Those converted from traditional religion or other denominations.
3. Those who are affiliated to one denomination or the other through education- because they attended i.e. Catholic or Anglican School - they remain members of such denominations though some leave on completing their education.
4. Others are won over through employment. By virtue of the fact that they are offered employment in mission hospitals, school or other establishments of the church, they become members.
5. Others also pull their lovers into a particular church. They join a particular church because their partner (wife or husband) attends the church.
6. Some people also join or affiliate themselves to the Christian churches for some social benefits such as Christian burial. Not all those who claim to be Christians are true practising Christians, abiding by the rules and regulations of the church. Most of them are mere church attendants. Some of them are attracted by such organizations as Catholic Youth Organization. Christian mothers' Association etc.

3.3.2 COLONIAL RULE

The colonial rule in Ghana has positive and negative impact on the traditional religion of the country as a whole. Neither the missionaries nor the colonial masters stayed out of each other's domain in their contact with the Africans. They each played a role in the

colonization and Christianisation of the Akan people in particular and Ghana (the then Gold Coast) as a whole. They both, therefore, share the credit and the discredit of the Christianising programme, which affected the Akan religion. Under this heading the starting point will be 1874 when the then Gold Coast was declared a crowned colony and a governor was appointed to govern it.

Generally the part the colonial administrators played in the socio-cultural and religious development among the Akan of Ghana was to give the missionaries a push and to use them as mediators. The missionaries usually served as mediators between the chiefs and the governors in the colonial administration. And where there was a conflict between the missionaries and the natives the governors usually supported or sided with the missionaries. Odamtten (1978:64-65) says that it is true that the British administration established the peaceful condition necessary to make missionary activity possible, but the missionaries were the social welfare officers in the country, and came face to face with some difficult social problems.

One point to note about the Akan is that their political system is not independent of their religion. They are interrelated because the chief or king plays the role of state political and spiritual leader. Therefore any attempt at interfering with their system of governance, one way or the other, affects their religious practices and vice versa. Fynn and Addo Fenning (1991:216-217) assert that among the European merchandise that was brought to the then colony, were clothes, guns, gunpowder and alcohol. While the textiles improved the living standards of the people, the guns, gunpowder and alcohol proved socially and spiritually harmful. Alcohol triggered petty quarrels, fights and immorality, war and slave raids. For example in 1681 the Kommenda armed men brought home from one of their inland wars hundreds of captives and sold to an English interloper three hundred captives.

The Ghanaian became addicted to gin and brandy which took precedence over the locally produced alcohol like palm wine, *pito* and others in ceremonies. In Akyem Abuakwa, for example, several chiefs were destooled during the first decade of the twentieth century on charges of drunkenness. During the same period crime rate increased.

On the other hand food crops such as coconuts, onions, eggplants, okra, rice and cocoyam were brought from Asia. Cassava (manioc), Sweet potatoes, maize, peanuts, pawpaw, pineapples, guava and sugar cane were brought from the new worlds. Oranges, melons and lemons were introduced from Europe. The introduction of these imported food crops in the country, no doubt contributed to the rapid population growth and the life style of the people.

3.3.3 THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM AMONG THE AKAN

According to Platvoet (1979:588-589) Akan Islam is composed of two mutually exclusive types. The first is Sudan or Maliki Islam which began to spread into Akan territories from as early as 1480 along trade routes; at first those from Mali, later those from Northern Nigeria. The Maliki Muslim scholars and traders exercised much power and influence over some Asantehene (kings of Asante) in the 18th and 19th centuries, but the number of Akan converts to Islam remained so low as to be negligible. The immigration of many non-Akan people from the Savannah regions in the north increased the numerical strength of Maliki Islam in Southern Ghana dominated by the Akan. Most of them came as non-Muslims but settling in the 'Zongo', the twin-towns for aliens attached to the Akan towns, many of them became Muslims there. Maliki Islam attracted very few Akan converts, mainly because it stood aloof from modern, colonial society and especially from Western school education. It became a religion of immigrants with a ghetto character.

Ivor Wilks (1966:138-320) says that between May 1816 and March 1820 account collected from European Merchants who visited *Asantehene* Osei Tutu Kwame of the time shows that Kumase Muslim community lived in the centre of the town, their quarter lying along the avenue leading from the main market to the king's palace. The head of the Muslim community was Muhammad al-Ghamba, 'the Mamprussi, more commonly known as Baba who had first settled in Kumase in 1807. He was the *imam*' spiritual leader of the community and '*qadi*' social leader as well. He established an Islamic school over which he presided and seventy pupils were taught the Quran reading and

writing elementary Arabic. He also asserts that the Muslim community might have originated from Muslim merchants who were attracted by the rich natural resources of Asante, especially gold and kola, and whose representatives visited, and sometimes resided in Kumasi.

3.3.3.1 THE KUMASI MUSLIM AND THE MUJADDIDIN (THE REVIVERS OF ISLAM)

Sharif Ibrahim, whose operational base seems to have been Busa on the Niger, arrived in Kumase in or about 1815, from Arabia. He remained there until early 1818, when he departed for Mecca and he was notable for his uncompromising attitude of disapproval towards Kumase Muslims on matters of status. He clearly regarded both their use of amulets and their general tolerance of pagan Asante customs as indicative of apostasy.

The reformers' doctrine generated a moral dilemma for the Kumasi Muslims since it laid great emphasis on the simple stark dichotomy of *dar al Islam* and *dar al harb*: The government of a country is the government of its king without question. If the king is a Muslim, his land is Muslim; if he is an unbeliever, his land is a land of unbelievers. The Kumasi Muslims were, therefore dwelling in *dar-al-harb*, not *dar-al-Islam*, a fact that committed them, it would be argued, to certain course of conduct. Flight (*al hijra*) from the land of heathen is, therefore, obligatory by assent. And that to make war upon heathen king who will not say "There is no God but Allah" is obligatory by assent and that to take the government from him is obligatory by assent. Failure to observe the twin obligations of '*hijra* and *jihad*' of withdrawal and return, could, according to the reformers, itself constitute apostasy, since the approval of paganism is itself paganism...the *jihad* is incumbent on all who are able. Trading with the unbeliever is 'disgraceful'. Those voluntarily remaining in heathen territories necessarily involved themselves in 'blameworthy customs' for example in the payment of uncanonical taxes.

The reformers added that one of the ways of their (i.e. the pagan) government is their imposing on the people monies not laid down by *shari'a*, and in compulsory military service.

Matters concerning the Muslim involvement in the payment of taxes and serving in wars were of grave concern to the Kumasi Muslims. They complained to Dupuis that the believers in Asante were compelled to pay tributes and fight the battles of heathen princes, whose religion and interests are necessarily the reverse of their own.

Ivor Wilks (1966:323-325) asserts that although Shaikh Baba did effect a limited and revocable sort of *hijra* in 1818, in general the Kumasi Muslims would seem to have been too deeply involved in Asante affairs to be able to regard the pronouncements of the reformers as indicative of any practicable course of action. The researcher feels that the Muslims could not make any proper *hijra* probably because of the lucrative trade in gold and kola that has been maintained up till now. The Asante and for that matter the Akan were not interested in Islamic religion per se but rather in the charms and amulets that the Muslim leaders could provide for the king and his subjects. In this respect the people found similarities with the traditional religion in which the priests and the diviners were duty bound to provide the state with such protective charms especially in times of war. Wilks also says that while only a limited number of conversions were achieved through such orthodox educational processes, Islam nevertheless made an impact upon all levels of Asante society in its magical aspects *ruqya*. The production of prospective amulets was a highly organized lucrative affair.

The Muslims failed to win converts through the provision of their efficacious charms because Wilks (1966:331) says that despite their confidence in the efficacy of Muslim magic the Asante became, by no means tenacious of their pagan doctrines.

Platvoet (1979:589) says that under the 1969 Aliens Act some 150, 000 Maliki Muslims were expelled from Ghana. This may have affected the exclusive character of Maliki

Islam of late, and, perhaps caused it to reconsider its relationship to the cultural and religious traditions of the Akan.

The Maliki Islam in Ghana, initially, did not ally itself with the Western form of education and social amenities provided for the people. Hence their religion did not seem attractive to the people. It is however well established in northern Ghana. Now they have a secondary school in Kumasi and many elementary schools in the country.

The second type of Islam in Ghana is the Ahmadiyya. Platvoet (1979:590) says that it originated in the country in 1920 when a group of disaffected Fante Muslims, the 'Ben Sam group' at Ekroful near Saltpond requested the Ahmadiyya mission in London to send out missionaries to them. Ben Sam had been a Methodist Catechist and had been converted with his entire Christian congregation to Maliki Islam before 1900. But this had not tempered their eagerness for Western Education, which provoked many severe rebukes from visiting Hausa Malams, and caused internal strife which was resolved only in 1921, when those in favour of Western education were taken into the Ahmadiyya fold. By 1958 there were some 25,000 Ahmadiyya Muslims in Southern Ghana. They built western-type of school system crowned by a secondary college in Kumasi. According to McWilliam (1975:40) the secondary school in Kumasi received Government grant for the first time in 1957. Platvoet (1979:590) again adds that Ahmadiyya Muslims in Ghana were converted from Christian Churches; a few have been won from Maliki Islam. Conversion from traditional religion seems to have been very rare.

The Ahmadiyya Islam, from the account of McWilliam (1975:40) originated in India in the time of British rule, and reached many British colonies along the Coast of Africa through Indian traders. Its followers differ from the Orthodox Muslims - and indeed from all Christians - in believing that Jesus after his crucifixion preached in India, and that Jesus and Mohammed were both reborn in the person of the founder of the movement Mariza Ghalam Ahmed who died in 1908.

The Ahmadiyya Islam, unlike the Maliki Islam has Akan converts and many schools and some hospitals in Ghana. For example there is a secondary school at Fomena and Hospitals at Saltpond, Asokore and Techiman.

The influence of Islam on the concept of the divine among the Akan is obvious because their strict monotheistic concept conflicted with the seemingly pantheistic outlook of the Akan concept of the divine. Moreover they ruthlessly forced the Islamic concepts on their converts without any tolerance for enculturation. The Islamic Religion lacks similarities in the Akan Religion like the divine humans in the Christian Religion therefore their converts are cut off from the Akan socio-cultural life. Their intolerance of the traditional Asante customs invariably caused some social and religious disturbances among the Asante people, which made them reject their religion. Another point is that apart from the charms, they did not provide other social amenities for the people such as formal education, health facilities and other social amenities that the Europeans provided. If the hijra of 1818 had been successful the impact would have been more disastrous to the indigenous religion than Christianity caused.

3.4 THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON BASOTHO RELIGION

The influence of the missionary activities, on Basotho religion and culture, like that of Ghana, is two dimensional - positive and negative influences. To be able to tackle this problem effectively the issue should be looked at from three angles. Firstly the nature of the Basotho system of religious thought and practices before the arrival of the missionaries in 1833, secondly how the missionaries, basing themselves on the Western culture and religious thought viewed the Basotho culture and religious practices, and thirdly their reaction to these indigenous beliefs.

It would be noted that according to Pula (1990:335) the missionary approach to the Basotho religion and culture was total onslaught, even though records show that they came to Lesotho upon invitation by the founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I, to help promote peace and school education for his people. That means the propagation

of the gospel, if anything at all, was a secondary matter. Taking a brief look at the Basotho religious thought and cultural background before the advent of the Missionary, he says that for the Basotho the term *balimo* is understood, in relation to the life after their death. To Basotho death is not considered to be the end of life but the beginning of a new existence in another world, which is not very different from this one. As a symbol of this, at death a Mosotho was traditionally buried with certain personal belongings, plus seeds of various crops, so that he or she would make a good start in the New World. Thus when an adult dies and is buried properly without any witchcraft practices made at the burial, that person is believed to go to join his or her *balimo*. He or she often becomes one of the *balimo*. The deceased person's continued relationship and interaction with the living is also maintained. This means the cosmology of the Basotho has two dimensions: the visible world and the invisible universe of the *balimo*.

He goes on to add that it is the belief of the Basotho that their ancestors, the *balimo*, are concerned with a person's everyday life, from birth to death. It is also believed that it is *balimo* who bless a woman with fecundity.

In the everyday life of the Basotho, any major misfortune is attributed to witchcraft. If a person dies there must be an undue cause, usually believed to be bewitchment. Bewitchment is believed to occur when an individual is isolated from his or her *balimo*, and thus exposed to all kinds of evil. Therefore a person must always be united to his or her *balimo* and this is accomplished by doing what is socially required, especially in family life.

He adds that one of the implications of this is that the *balimo* must be constantly remembered; and that they in turn bless their relatives. Any major success in life, for that matter, must be understood, as the blessing by the *balimo*, and there must be a special celebration for this. For example, a good harvest is celebrated with certain rites of Thanksgiving to the *balimo*.

Another important factor, according to him is that the *balimo* are considered to be the indicators and the appointees of the traditional healers. A Sesotho traditional healer is known as *ngoan'a hlooho ea balimo*, meaning “the beloved one of the *balimo*”. It is therefore misleading to consider genuine Sesotho traditional healer as witch doctors. Their work is not malevolent or to kill, but to heal people, and to do good work in the society. Looking at this word ‘witch doctor’ from another angle, the researcher feels that it is not necessarily a derogatory term, in that, it could imply that the doctors are capable of healing people who have been bewitched and can also expose witches, which he believes are part of their work.

Pula goes on to say that the first missionaries to Lesotho, the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, arrived in the country in 1833 and founded the Lesotho Evangelical Church. The three pioneer missionaries, Aboursset, Casalis and Gossellin had their first interview with the Chief Moshoeshe at Thaba-Bosigo. That date was a memorable one for the history of the Basotho as well as for the French Missionaries. The latter was destined to contribute to a large extent to the protection and the salvation of Lesotho. Ellenberger (1938:15) says that the missionaries settled at Morija in the valley, which extends between the high plateau of Makhoarane and the isolated mountain of Masite on 9 July 1833. The Catholics came in 1862. Later the Anglicans and others followed.

3.4.1 BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE MISSIONARIES IN LESOTHO

Van Hagt (1938:15) says in the field of education the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society opened the first normal school at Morija on 14 June 1868. Mr. Adolphe Mabile and his wife founded it. The aim was to train Lesotho Teacher-Evangelists as well as Teachers. The subjects then followed were Scripture or the Bible, Singing and Games, Sesotho, Arithmetic, Geography and English. Sargent (1906:7) adds that by 1905 there were 224 schools registered with the Government out of which they controlled 185. Records from 1999 Education statistics show that the L E C (formerly P E M S) has 478 Primary Schools and 68 Post Primary Schools in the country.¹

According to Widdicombe (1891:66) the Roman Catholic Missionaries settled in Lesotho in or about 1862 with the approbation of Moshoeshoe. They were also Frenchmen, and members of a religious order. They came with a bishop, Mgr. Allard at their head and accompanied by a strong contingent of nuns. The clergy and the lay brothers of this mission were all "Oblates of Mary Immaculate", the sisters being nuns of the order of the "Visitation of the Blessed Virgin". They settled in a lovely spot-a "Hoek" or recess in the hill not far from Thaba Bosigo, which has become their headquarters. The station is now known to Europeans by the name of Roma, though the Roman Catholic converts call it the "*Motse oa 'MaJesu*" - the town of the mother of Jesus. Sargant (1906:7) says that they founded the first school around 1865. By 1905 they had only 10 registered schools as against 185 of L E C and 28 of the Church of England. Roma College was turned into Christ The King High School in 1961 and the Training College was reopened in Maseru-now St Joseph High School. St Monica's High School was founded in about 1876.

In 1944, when the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa met in Cape Town to establish an institution of higher learning for Catholic Students, Bishop Bonhomme of Lesotho offered a site at Roma, and in 1945 Pious XII University College was founded and was affiliated to the University of South Africa in South Africa. Later it was changed to the University of Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland; and now it is the National University of Lesotho.² The records from the 1999 Education statistics show that the Catholics have 508 Primary Schools and 76 Post Primary Schools in the country.³

The Anglican Missionaries arrived in Lesotho in the 1870s and settled at Mohale's Hoek and opened stations at Masite and Leribe. They aimed at evangelisation and handicraft schools especially for girls. Some of their schools are St Stephen's High School at Mohale's Hoek, St Agnes at Teyateyaneng and Fr. Forgoty opened a Technical School in Maseru which was later handed over to the government due to lack of funds.⁴ By 1905 they had 28 registered schools. The 1999 Education statistics show that they have 176 Primary Schools and 32 Post Primary Schools. Out of the 214 Post Primary Schools of 1999 Education Statistics, Government and the Community schools are only 21 and other Missions have 12 schools. With the Primary Schools, Government and the Community

Schools are 42 and other Missions have 46 plus one Private school.⁵ The country, therefore, owes much gratitude to the churches for the development of education.

Machobane (1995:1-2) says that missionaries played a major role in three key areas in Lesotho politics and society. First, they were central in Moshoeshe's efforts to save his territory for his people. Second, they introduced literacy into the country. Third, they introduced implements and products such as ploughs, wagons, horses, angora goats, European cereals, turkeys and ducks, which revolutionized the economy of the country. They also served as a modernizing factor; even though this modernizing influence was exerted on a culture that they first destroyed and then rebuilt so that it could compete with other cultures elsewhere in Africa, which Europe had similarly destroyed in order to reassemble in its own image. In fact the researcher will add that the good work done by the missionaries in the 19th century has gone a long way to make Lesotho what it is today.

Another obvious contribution of the missionaries is health facilities. The country owes the clinics and hospitals in the rural areas to the good work of the mission churches. For example, The Lesotho Evangelical Church built Scott Hospital at Morija and Pabalong Hospital at Qacha's Nek. The Roman Catholic Church also has hospital at Roma - St Joseph Hospital, Thaba-Tseka, Paray Hospital; Butha-Buthe, St Charles' Hospital and 'Mamahao Hospital at Leribe. The Anglican Church also has a Hospital at Thaba-Tseka, St James Hospital. They might also have contributed a lot to architecture and modern building technology. Sargent (1906:10-11) asserts that owing to the instructions given by the French Protestant Missionaries in stone work and Carpentry, the manner of building native huts is changing rapidly so that in most villages of importance are to be seen one or more huts resembling comfortable stone cottages in the North of England. The beautiful stone church buildings and mission schools might have been the only imposing buildings in the past.

Widdicombe (1891:7) adds that they also introduced European fruits such as peach, the nectarine, the apricot, the plum, the apple, the pear, the cherry and the strawberry and not to mention the numerous vegetables that are found in Basotho homes.

Another point worthy of note is the documentation of Basotho history. Records on Basotho religion and culture from the time the missionaries arrived and after are the works of the early missionaries. Without their records the present day researchers would have no any other source of information about the past other than oral traditions, which are quite often influenced by Christianity, distorted and full of omissions. The Lesotho Evangelical Church has a printing press at Moriija, which was established there in 1867.⁶ The Catholic Church also owns the Mazenod Printing Works established in 1931.⁷ It goes without saying that the missionaries have contributed immensely to the development of Lesotho.

3.4.2 THE MISSIONARY DISSERVICE TO BASOTHO RELIGION AND CULTURE

The missionary disservice to the Basotho religion and culture according to Machobane (1993:8) is centred on traditional marriage-polygamy and *bohali* payment (marriage by cattle), initiation (occasionally and imprecisely referred to as circumcision) and finally what may be lumped together as the instrumentality of religion. That is how people employ religion to solve practical problems, such as drought and health led to conflicts between the missionaries and people among whom they worked.

Machobane (1993:7) adds that to the missionaries polygamy was the most offensive aspect of traditional marriage. Casalis talks about the Mosotho monarch's thirty to forty wives introduced to him upon his arrival in Lesotho and how he was determined to destroy that institution. John Edward, of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (M M S), following his failure in 1833 to persuade 'an important (Morolong) chief with above 40 wives against polygamy, aired his frustrations in a letter to the General Secretaries:

Polygamy is a great hindrance to the Spread and influence of the Gospel, A man who has a plurality of wives is unwilling to give them up for Christ's sake, and thinks the terms of that Gospel hard which require it.

Machobane (1993:9-10) goes on to say that even though there were no convincing arguments against polygamy, the missionaries devised a policy for dismantling it. The policy was that, upon conversion to Christianity, an African wife was to seek divorce from her polygamous husband. He was to do so provided she was not his first wife. In the case of a converted man, he was to divorce all his wives leaving only one, probably the first wife. Since divorce upon those grounds could not be obtained in customary law missionaries decided themselves to become divorce officers. In taking this stand the missionaries did not foresee any aftermath problems because they based themselves on Western type of marriage that involved mostly husband and wife, whereas in Africa it involves even more than the families of the couple. The policy created more problems in Basotho society because *bohali* was undermined. It therefore raised three issues, namely, the status of the divorced woman in society, the *bohali* negotiations, and right of custody over the children. In Sesotho marriage *bohali* strengthened a woman's position in society, gave her status in her new household and prevented her husband from ill-treating her. In case of divorce resulting from ill-treating the wife or another cause, the woman leaves the husband and goes to her relations and divorces. Her husband can get all his cattle, which are still in existence returned to him. Furthermore, *bohali* gave children legitimacy and position in a household. For instance children of a mother for whom *bohali* had not been negotiated belonged to her own people, regardless of the personal understanding between the biological parents. Such children had no status in the family of the man who sired them. Thus in customary law, such a biological father's rights were always subject to challenge.

The missionaries' response to the issue raised was contained in their letters of divorce, and the pertinent section read as follows:

[The divorcee] shall return to her relations, and there be at her own disposal or be free (a ipotoke); and if she shall again marry it shall not be said she commits adultery, if she remains single, she shall be considered a

free woman. As to the children, they shall be brought up, as their parents... shall agree together.

The response to the issue raised was deficient because it did not deal with all the issues. First, it did not address itself to *bohali*, the key issue in the traditional marriage. However, the understanding of the missionaries on it was that *bohali* should not be returned. The disregard for traditional marriage laws was the way Christian divorces were treated in Lesotho until 1872. Without the return of the *bohali* the people were not likely to uphold the law and such divorced women were likely to be referred to as 'matekatse' (loose women). The new divorce system introduced by the missionaries created many social problems and conflicts. Machobane records a divorce case in which the missionary concern's battle to keep the children involved from their non-Christian extended family dragged on until 1872, four years after Lesotho became a British Crown Colony. Machobane (1993:14-15) says that that year the missionary appealed to the Colony Governor's Agent, C.D. Griffith to use his authority and assist him to achieve this end. To his surprise and exasperation, Griffith saw the matter differently. In his reply to the missionary he stated:

I conclude that Pauluse Matete married the two divorced wives with cattle, but did not get his cattle back when he divorced them...consequently, his heirs claim the children (according to Sesuto custom) in place of his cattle. If the cattle had been returned Pauluse Matete 's heir would have no claims to the children. In these remarks I wish you to understand that I am not approving or supporting Sesuto heathenish customs, but I am bound to administer the law as I find it, and in this case I am bound to point out to you what the possibility of its proving your feeling as a Christian Minister, as the case of these children is a very important one, involving as it does, the serious question of whether the children of Christian parents can or ought to be handed over to the care of their heathen relatives.

On that basis the Agent awarded Matete's heir the custody of the children. The missionary, being furious claimed that the decision was wrong and that it encouraged "heathenish customs." The missionary - Basotho conflict over the question of *bohali* plagued Basotho society for a long time. The issue of polygamists aside it posed a problem to young people who were considering becoming both Christians and parents.

Young men feared that if they got married without *bohali*, as required by the missionaries they risked begetting children who might later be claimed by their mother's extended families, especially where the latter were still traditional. Likewise, young women were uneasy about contriving the sort of marriages in which society would continue to regard them as *matekatse* (loose women). They also feared bearing children with debatable legitimacy in their fathers' extended families.

Another issue of conflict was the initiation rite usually referred to as circumcision by foreigners. Machobane (1993:16-18) says that the missionary opposition to this rite might be better appreciated after a brief account of what it involved and meant to the societies that required it. From his account the youth aged between eighteen and twenty-one were isolated for about three months in caves in the mountain areas. The elders instructed them in those traditions, customs and laws that were considered essential for adult males to know. These instructions were systematic and carried out through chanted sacred poems called *dikoma*. They were also trained in warfare and underwent certain ordeals to condition them to endure pain, suppress feelings of fear and surprise. Generally, they considered it their supreme duty to protect their *kgosi* and to put the nation before their own interests. When they came to their chief's cattle enclosure after the initiation, they were reassembled there to receive adult garments and accoutrements of warfare. Thus they join the society as a military unit, sworn to keep the secrets of the lodge and to maintain solidarity among themselves.

Young girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty also have similar institution to train them in the rudimentary principles of motherhood, the duties of wives to husbands and their duties to the state and to the chief. The affairs of women's lodge were similarly secret.

The initiation rite is a rite of passage ushering the youth into adulthood. At the completion of their training, they set their lodge with all their belongings on fire. This is to symbolize rebirth into new state of life, the adulthood. The old ways are destroyed and forgotten. It is a rite of separation and incorporation. They have been separated from the

raw Basotho citizens by the burning of the old belongings and incorporated into full Basotho adulthood by the new clothes and accoutrements of warfare they receive from their chief.

When the missionaries learned what the initiation was all about and realised that it was the cornerstone of the Basotho traditions, customs and religious thought, a chairman of the conference of the Ministers of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society in 1891 said that *lebollo* was the embodiment of all the customs of the society and taught young people “to despise everything which is not connected with those customs.” He said it was interconnected with the African penchant for war and it existed “to exalt courage”. He viewed it as the chief hindrance to the Gospel, to learning and to progress in any sense.

The attempt to destroy this rite, according to Machobane, failed despite the leniency and cooperation of the king who allowed the missionaries to fetch children of their converts from the initiation lodges, but initiation neither lost its appeal nor momentum. Children of converts went to the initiation lodge against the advice of pastors and the will of their parents. In April 1880 for instance, a male convert with three children suddenly informed his Christian father that he was going to fulfil his rite of initiation. His father evinced surprise at the fact that he was a man. He had “even solemnized a marriage in church.” And he had three children. Hence he forbade the son from going to *lebollo*. The son retorted that he was not asking for permission, he merely wished his father to know of his whereabouts. And there were instances where newly married men and other young men of marriageable age who had never been initiated on account of their Christian upbringing were organizing themselves into parties and going to initiation lodges “to acquire manhood where it was obtained.”

Again the missionaries launched attack on customs and rituals concerning social and traditional religious rites. The missionaries restricted their converts from consulting traditional healers, accepting traditional funeral and burial rituals and many other rites.

In Machobane's (1993:20-21) account, one example of conflict of Christian and traditional practices occurred in 1859 when a Christian convert Nathaniel Makotoko's wife died - and he sent to inform his mother-in-law about the death of her daughter. The mother-in-law responded with an offer of a black goat, a traditional religious symbol of death. This put the son-in-law in a serious predicament. It was a sign that the funeral was going to be in the traditional way. Makotoko conferred with the minister to bury his wife in the Christian way without informing the wife's relations but in the process the brother-in-law intervened and took his sister's corpse away for traditional burial. Below is the minister's account of the brother-in-law's outburst:

What right have you to seize this corpse? Where is it? Where is the father that begot it and the mother who gave it birth? When did you inform them? When did you call them? My father has sent me with the beast of sacrifice; he said nothing to me about the burial of his daughter. It is his daughter and her corpse is his, it is ours, it is mine! You may talk, moruti (preacher) and Molapo, our chief can give orders. What is that to me? I am going to seize this body, and bury it as my heart bids me and as our fathers have taught us. And how should I present myself before my father, and endure the wrath of his eyes, if I abandon the body of his child to strangers! He will seize, I know he will seize his spear, and will pierce me, and stretch dead at his feet the son who does not respect his father's mouth. We are men of the world; we scoff at the preaching; we despise, we hate these meaningless words.

Thus the missionary, the Rev. Coillard was caused to relinquish the burial service and hand over the responsibility to traditionalist. He tried in vain to explain to Nathaniel's brother-in-law that Nathaniel had given consent for the Christian burial. He added that the chief Molapo of the District had approved. But that did not change the situation. The man took his sister's corpse, which was then prepared and buried traditionally.

In October 1848 another incident occurred when Moshoeshoe commanded a cattle raid on a neighbouring polity of *Batlokoa*, the P E M S missionaries opposed it when they learned of it and gave instructions to the Christian converts not to participate in the raid. They argued that cattle raiding was heathenish practice, and that warfare was antithetical to the teaching of Christ, they warned the Christians who participated in the raid that if

they did not reject their war booty they would be excommunicated. The result was mass apostasy. Led by Jeremiah Molapo, Moshoeshoe second son in the Great House and about seven princes dramatically turned their backs to Christianity. One of Moshoeshoe's Christian brothers, Mopedi, who had studied at Cape Town in 1844, even declared that he would give himself up to the devil than to give up his rights. The incident triggered traditional revolution.

Machobane (1993:30-32) says that the missionary observations by the end of the 19th century was unanimous, they agreed that very little progress had been made. Most Basotho were still empathetically heathen people. They viewed Christianity with suspicion and in fact considered it an affliction of the spirit. Parents regarded conversion as a malady. The Rev. L Duvoison of the P E M S mission of Berea, Lesotho, observed in 1885, "The old national institutions, as well as the heathen customs persisted and remained like the solid frame work, the very basis of the entire edifice." He summarized the situation in the missionary policy as follows:

In demanding of our Basuto the abandonment of their ancient customs, such as polygamy, marriage by cattle etc, we have adopted towards these institutions an attitude of hostility the effect of which has been to alienate the tribe, beginning with the rich, the influential men and more especially the chiefs who, with only a few exceptions, have persisted in their former order of things or, which is worse have turned to it, as if here, there was complete incompatibility and one could not be, at the same time and in full sense of the term a true Mosuto and a Christian

What the researcher can deduce from the conflict between the missionaries and the Basotho is that the latter appreciated the secular services of the former and were prepared to pay the price but not at the detriment of their culture. The missionaries on the other hand wanted to propagate the gospel through Westernization of the Basotho, hence there was conflicting cosmic view. If the missionaries were prepared to Africanize the Christian message as it was westernized in Europe there would be no conflict.

On this issue Machobane (1993:32) concludes:

The chiefly class specifically admired their secular usefulness and was determined to keep them close. If that was achieved at the cost of a bearable sacrifice, they were prepared to pay the price. But, when it came to converting people, missionaries aimed a blow at their traditions, and little differentiated between Christianity, which happened to be introduced earlier in Europe and Westernisation, which represented conflicting cosmic view. Throughout nineteenth century the two missionary sects failed to realise or did not care that they could evangelise despite, or even through their adherents' traditions. In short, missionaries were unmistakably imperialistic in their view. Other than have their traditions and hence their identity destroyed the...Basotho rebelled against the imperialism.

The modern trend of Christian worship and the Basotho religious worldview reveal that the Basotho concept of God ' *Molimo*', as of old, persists under cover of modern Christianity. The Pentecostal churches and other spiritual churches have taken over the role of the *Ngaka* or diviners in the country. The main streets of Maseru are dotted with many vendors who display roots, herbs, bones, skins and feathers for traditional medication. Among the diviners and the traditional healers there are both genuine and quack ones in town and the suburbs. Research has shown that almost all Basotho are Christians. Now one would ask: Are all those who claim to be Christians abiding by the norms of Christian doctrine? If yes, then who are the customers of the numerous vendors who sell those traditional concoctions and other items for medication? Who are the clients of the diviners and the traditional healers? If they don't get customers or clients they definitely will not go on with their work. This shows that the Basotho, like all other Africans, have not abandoned their old ways of perceiving God through their ancestors. There has been no marriage ceremony (which the researcher attended) without an immolation of a sacrificial beast for the ancestors. There has also been no funeral without a sacrificial beast for a communal meal with the ancestors, the washing of hands in water shredded with aloe leaves, the cutting of hair of the bereaved family members and the wearing of *thapo* (a black band worn to symbolise mourning). And there has been no single occasion when the researcher saw a person or a group of people trying to isolate themselves from these practices because they consider them as heathen (to use the word of the missionaries)

The researcher, therefore, supports Pula's assertion (already mentioned) that the experience of the balimo is a very significant religious value among the Basotho, it should not just be suppressed. And that the missionaries tried to destroy it, but they failed because the Basotho continue to give different names to that practice and keep it going. Pula (1990:339) adds that in the case of balimo veneration, the first element to purify would be to clarify that ancestor veneration need not obscure the worship due only to God and that in the Catholic Church there is the practice of the veneration of saints, which, when rightly practised normally does not make the worship of God obscure. The researcher would like to say again that if the ancestors are truly intermediaries in the Basotho religious views, then there is no need for fear of obscurity because in African sense the use of intermediaries is a sign of great respect for the object of worship or the ultimate reality. The chiefs and kings (especially among the Akan) are contacted through spokesmen-intermediaries-because it is part of African etiquette.

Here are J.C. Macgregor remarks on this issue:

The idea of a mediator is quite in keeping with the present-day methods of these people. Few Basotho will approach a chief directly with the request for something they desire. They will always try to enlist the services of a mediator to speak for them to the chief, as they put it. Even the most ordinary every-day transactions with each other a mediator is desirable.⁸

Klaus Nürnberger (1975:194-195) also says that the Christian way of life continued to be rather foreign in its Western form, while the newly experienced life force of the lineage and the tribe breathed the atmosphere of Africa. There was no question of going back to the 'primitive' stage. But it became fascinating enough to call for a reappraisal. The spiritualistic and individualistic interpretation of the Gospel by pietistic missionaries did not do justice to the bodily and social comprehensiveness of the African experience of reality. Christian community life was too superficial. Rites of passage were too feeble. Healing was secularised and unable to reach into deeper layers of disease in the context of dynamistic experience. The pietistic form of the Gospel did not cover the socially distinctive force of guilt. Christ himself was not as familiar and near as the fathers whom

they had known and respected before they died. The outward advantages of education and participation in the 'modern' way of life were seen to be dissociable from the Christian faith and the congregation of believers, which lay under restraints on the newly gained freedom of the individual. Within the new congregations themselves much hypocrisy emerged.

Nürnbergger adds that one way out of the dilemma was to return to the bosom of the lineage and tribe. Thus there are hundreds of 'backsliders' in the Sotho community. Many members of our congregations are faithful churchgoers on Sunday mornings but at night you also find them in the secret vigils where magic rites are performed, or where an 'independent' prophet offers his healing powers. Many youth attend confirmation classes and the Sotho initiation school at the same time. The 'Independent Church Movements' present another possibility, which offer all sorts of African pretensions of Christian faith or Christian pretensions of the African religion. There is also the possibility of seeking the 'European' way of life and building on the heritage of the missionary (with some traditional innovations). This is what the individual progressive elite has to a large extent chosen to do.

Investigations conducted by the researcher show that membership to the Christian denominations in Lesotho falls under the following categories:

1. Those who are members of the church because they were born into it, their parents or grand parents were converted. Therefore they have been brought up in the beliefs and practices of the church.
2. Those who were converted through personal contact with a member or a clergy.
3. Those who by attending a mission school, remain affiliated to the church. Most of such people leave the church after the completion of their education.

4. Those who are affiliated to a church because of job opportunity. They are employed in the establishments of the church so they remain affiliated to it. They are also likely to leave the church when they lose their jobs.
5. There are others who are drawn into the church by their lovers. They are members because their husbands or wives sent them there.
6. Others are affiliated to the church because of some social functions such as church organizations like the Christian Leadership Group, Choir, and Christian mothers' Association. Etc.

There could be many other reasons for people belonging to one Christian denomination or the other but these are the findings of the researcher.

3.5 SOME PROBABLE CAUSES OF THE MISSIONARY DISSERVICE IN AFRICA

Machobane (1995:5-6) asserts that evidence from missionary destruction on Basotho culture in favour of Western civilization is glaring and abundant and that the missionary justification for the destruction was not in the interest of Christianity. It was in the service of Western civilization; and in some instances it consciously promoted imperialist objectives.

Basing himself on Mills defensive theory for the justification of missionary acts in South Africa, he says that the significance of 'Millennialism' as Mills argues about it is that it was seen as justifying the destruction of the cultures of those to be converted. Destruction of unchristian societies was a precondition to conversion. It was felt that first you destroy the culture. And then you can convert. To be converted meant separating from native culture. The ultimate aim was to put new wine in new bottles, new ideas in new brains.

He adds that another approach as opposed to that of Mills is the perception of a culture-clash between Western and the African cultures and that it seems more convincing that the French missionaries came with a more aggressive cosmic view of Western Europe. And 'by cosmic view' here he implies the general outlook that a people, in a given generation, views the world around it, and defines its relationship to it. It could therefore be argued that the French missionaries found in Basotho a more communal society, one in which individualism, that is self-centredness, and acquisition of material things took second place to community welfare. In this regard, the civilizing mission found company in imperials and support of imperial agents. So that Christianising and Westernising seemed to them to be logically the same thing.

Again Machobane (1995:7-8) cites 'liberal individualism' in the Western 'cosmic view in Sandina's paper to support his argument. Sandina defines liberal individualism as follows:

Liberal individualism is sometimes called possessive radical, abstract individualism. The terms possessive, radical and abstract are indicative of its principle and nature. Liberal individualism envisions a world in which each person is confined purely to a subjective point of view. This is the world that arises out of Hobbes State of nature, a world in which each person is considered singularly and has only private and self-centred thought. In this theory people look at the world and others through the perspective of subjective self-interest, and in terms of the protection and enlargement of their property.

He goes on to explain Sandina's definition by saying that Sandina points out that the state of nature depicted by Hobbes, which characterizes Western thought, "each person has a natural right to everything that is required for self-preservation." In this way there is no limitation on the way of a person's natural right. Individuals have natural right to everything. This means that Western Society has an aggressive 'cosmic view' or way of looking at the world, its people, and relating to them. It is an outlook that motivates the individual or group to attack others out of need to do so, not because there has been any provocation. In regard to this case, it is an outlook that attacks 'native' culture, not because Christian Millennialism requires it, but because it seems convenient to attack and

conquer. According to Machobane (1995: 5-5) the argument of “millennialism” was that missionaries, basing themselves on what was foretold in Revelation 20 of the New Testament, believed that they had an obligation to save mankind and assist in preparing all souls for heaven. It was believed that the terror or horror that could result from not being saved in the blood of Jesus Christ was so frightful that missionaries concluded that it was their duty to save humanity from damnation in the second Advent of Jesus after thousand years.

Machobane (1995:8-9) adds that according to R M Unger’s view, liberalism had a number of agents in the 19th century Africa. Those agents were the administrators, mission educators and evangelists. Acting as agents of change, to make Africa in the image of Europe, “Missionaries joined with Merchants and Colonial Administrators to launch an onslaught on African Society.” So missionaries acting as “bearers of civilization” in this connection, made mission school, and Christian religion supposedly an apple of Western origin “the most destructive forces of African traditional institution and values.”

The African Cosmic View, on the other hand, emphasized the bond between individual and the community. Respect for life and communities were a priority. And it abhorred individualism. To use Mbiti’s quotable maxim again, in African society people say: ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.’

It is obvious then, that those two cosmic views were diametrically opposed in their positions. While it was true that the Millennialism was a part and parcel of missionary tool of trade, it was nevertheless, not a necessary condition for the destruction of African culture. The Western disposition was in itself sufficient to achieve that.

Platvoet (1979:556ff.) has also enumerated nine factors that contributed to the Missionary and the colonial government’s disservice to the Akan in Ghana. Due to space and time only five of them will be discussed here.

1. Europeans felt it was their burden to civilize the Negro along the West Coast of Africa-who they believe is morally, intellectually and culturally inferior. They believed that the white man is himself a major cause of the Negro's degradation through slave trade, commercial exploitation and bad moral example. So he should not now scorn to admit the Negro an equality of origin, but take up the mission of civilization and toil patiently to undo the effects of long ages of progressive debasement.
2. The social origins of many of the missionaries and their often narrow, lower - bourgeoisie pietism, which gave them the impetus to follow some course of action, which to others may seem widely inopportune, extremely dangerous and possibly subversive to the natural order of things. Their pietism brought them an enormous release of power and energy. They belonged to the humbler circles of European society, more precisely to those underprivileged who, in the industrial revolution had become an upward noble group, entering into the respectability of the lower bourgeoisie. Some artisans such as boat makers, smiths, rope makers and others studied Greek, Hebrew and Bible and were sent out to India, Oceania and Africa as missionaries.
3. These missionaries who bettered themselves set out to better the Negro. They had been hard upon themselves, so they did not intend to be less exacting upon the African. In their minds African societies lacked the benefit of an industrious, Christian middle class. Therefore they set out to create one. So they showed severely antagonistic attitude to the culture and religion (of the African) by their separatist missionary policy.
4. The social background and the general character of the early Christian Communities also contributed to the disservice. Most of the early converts were people with low social background. For example one of the causes of the disturbances at Kibi in 1878 was that the entire Christian congregation there consisted of 200 former slaves of the

Paramount Chief '*Omanhene*' of Akyem. They were freed by the abolition of internal slave trade and domestic slavery.

5. The relatively weak resistance and response of the traditional society to this intrusion intent on destruction of culture was a factor. One way of explaining this leniency is that the traditional leaders were acutely aware that the colonial administration always supported the missionaries. On the other hand the benefits they derived from them softened their reactions. Again Traditional courtesy demanded that missionaries as strangers and priests of God be received well.

From the two analyses presented by Machobane and Platvoet the researcher can say that the underlying factor of the missionary onslaught on African religion and culture is the theory of "Liberal individualism" which aided their aggressive cosmic view. To the researcher the motive of their aggression was good but the approach was bad. They came with a pre-conceived notion that the African was uncivilized, barbarous and therefore had nothing to offer the world. Therefore they should prune the African's mentality and set it in tune with Western civilization. They might also have been pushed by the Biblical text i.e. the letters of St Paul already referred in this chapter: "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? Therefore come out from them, and be separated from them, says the Lord." (2 Corinthians, 6:15-17 R.S.V). On this issue it is pertinent to add that Allport (1967:27) also says that the supplanting of one religion by another is not possible unless the culture itself is basically altered.

Maybe if they had been more humane they would have helped to evolve an African civilization that would have evolved a better African indigenous religion.

NOTES

1 The information was collected from Education Statistics section in the Ministry of Education, Planning Unit 1999. Primary Schools figures p. 25, Post Primary Schools figures p. 60.

2 The information was given by Rev. Johannes Matooane at the archives section of Oblates House Maseru.

3. Ibid.

4 Information collected from the Anglican Schools Secretariat at the Cathedral Maseru.

5. Ibid.

6 Information collected from the private record or history of the Morija Printing Press written by Mr. J Zurcher one of the early managers of the Press.

7 Information collected from the management board of Mazenod Printing Press.

8 Macgregor J C in Ellenberger, D F 1992 History of the Basotho Ancient and Modern written in English by J C Macgregor.

9* Molimo and Modimo are used interchangeably in this section. The difference is orthographic but the pronunciation is the same: **Modimo** while the Sotho-Tswana write Modimo, the Basotho write Molimo, Balimo or Melimo (Plural)

CHAPTER 4

RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA AND THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE IN LESOTHO AND GHANA

4.1 WORSHIP

The various religious phenomena that reveal the concept of the divine in Africa abound in worship and doctrines. In this Chapter we will deal with the various religious phenomena that constitute worship and reveal the African concept of the divine. The researcher, therefore, deems it appropriate to discuss briefly what worship means in general and in African perspective in particular.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (by A.S.Hornby) defines worship as: the practice of showing respect for God or a god e.g. by praying or singing with others at a service. Schleiermacher quoted in Allport (1967: 3-4) says that religious experience is a feeling of absolute dependence, and Allport (1967:3-4) also adds that it is a sense of appeal, dependence and surrender (to a deity or a “wholly other”) (The bracketed is mine). Now, basing himself on the assumption that worship is the expression of ones religious sentiments, the researcher can equally define worship as an expression of a feeling of absolute dependence or a sense of appeal, dependence and surrender to a deity or a wholly other (to use Otto’s words). Again from the researcher’s point of view worship is a gesture of respect paid to one’s deity (object of worship) through prayer, sacrifice, offering and rituals. It can be direct or indirect- through an intermediary. In African perspective one can hardly find a shrine of the Supreme Being in the confines of an enclosure. This does not depict the absence of belief in the Supreme Being but that the omnipresence of God renders it unnecessary to do so. Some Western scholars regard this indirect worship of God through intermediaries with disdain. Of course it is natural that anything outside ones environmental experience looks and sounds strange unless it is given a second thought. Westermann quoted in Idowu (1973:151) asserts that in Africa God does not live in practical religion. This assertion results from misunderstanding of

African way of life. Again as already quoted, Gaba (1969:66) says, “The Anlō people of Ghana can never put up with the idea of imagining a corporeal representation made of the Supreme Being let alone the thought of housing him in a building as the Christians do...”

In Akan and Basotho sense of the word and for that matter in African perspective, worship is not confined to a particular space or time alone; and since there is no strict dichotomy between sacred and secular in African way of life, worship can be identified in almost every social activity. Allport (1967:27) also says “...religious systems are not independent of the remaining portions of a culture, but are intimately integrated with them.” This assertion is supportive of the fact that the intertwining of the sacred and the secular is not peculiar to African Worldview. Worship can be congregational or individual and not necessarily in an enclosure like a church or chapel. Some Christians do have small portions of their rooms or one room in their house set-aside for private prayer and veneration of God. The African traditionalists do the same with their *suman*, *muti* or *thakhisa* as the case may be. Mbiti (1970:178) defines worship broadly to mean man’s act or acts of turning to God. These acts, he adds, may be formal or informal, regular or extempore, communal or individual, ritual or unceremonial, through word or deed. In his ‘Introduction to African Religion,’ he defines worship specifically as a means of renewing contact between people and God or between people and the invisible world. He (1975:54) adds that African peoples are very much aware of the existence of the invisible world, which they see as real part of the universe. Therefore they perform acts of worship to keep alive contact between the visible and invisible world, between humans and God. Gaba (1982:131) also sees worship in two ways. First, worship is the ritual in what Ninian Smart refers to as the numinous religious experience, which engages the most frequent attention of homo religious. It is therefore, a main source for our knowledge of religious ideas. And second, the ritual utterances that form part of worship constitutes a main source of a people’s own account of their religious experience. This source is indispensable to the investigation of religion qua religion.

Again Idowu (1962:107) also adds that worship is an imperative urge in man. Its beginning may be traced back to the basic “instinct” which was evoked in man by the

very fact of his confrontation with the “numinous.” Man perceived that there was a power other and greater than himself, a power that dominated and controlled the unseen world in which he felt himself employed; a power that he therefore made out by intuition to be the “ultimate determiner of destiny.” Worship in its rudimentary form originated in the spontaneous and extempore expression of man’s reaction as he found himself confronted with revelation, which evoked in human an active response.

To the researcher the presence of evil and the numerous insurmountable crises of this universe prompted man to perceive the presence and influence of cosmic powers that are believed to control human affairs in this world. This perception called for a means to appeal to a deity in the form of prayers, sacrifices, offerings and rituals to pacify, propitiate or appease the powers that be, in order to rectify or clear the impediments in the way of our struggle through life for success here and now, not here after. The African believes that life hereafter is the continuation of the achievements here and now.

4.2 WORSHIP AMONG THE AKAN OF GHANA

Opoku Kofi (1972:1) asserts that the Akan word for worship is *ōsom*. It derives from the verb ‘*som*’ which means to serve. It is used to express service to God or a deity or a King or a master as subject or slave. *Ōsom Nyame* means he worships the Supreme Being and *Ōsom bosom* means he worships a deity. Worship *Ōsom* means more than a call to cultic performance; it embraces all that the Akan does in his response to God or a deity. Worship in the context of Akan religion is a very concrete expression of Akan religiosity and not an intellectual submission or assent to a set of propositions in response to an awareness of a deity. Through his worship, whether it is purely cultic performance or otherwise, whether in words or deed, the Akan acts out his dependence on a power superior to himself, and each act of worship becomes a reaffirmation of man’s dependence on the ontological.

It is pertinent to remark here that the absence of a shrine or temple for the worship of God among the Akan is not a misnomer but derives from the way they perceive God and the

respect they have for him and the fact that he is omnipresent and need not be confined to a specific place. His presence is felt everywhere hence the maxim: *Wope aka asem akyere Nyankopōn a ka kyere mframa*. If you want to tell God tell the wind. Here the word *mframa* means both wind and air. This implies that God is in the air rather than the wind being a messenger carrying the message to God. But it does not mean that the air is God.

Akan worship, and for that matter African worship, is both corporate and individual. Writing about Akan worship, Opoku Kofi (1972:1) adds that worship refers to what is done in the cultic sphere but a more accurate designation of worship is an imperative or commanding response to the spiritual world, or to a power which is greater or other than man. This imperative response is not exclusively confined or limited to cultic activity, as Akan worship clearly illustrates. From the point of view of the researcher, worship is done during festivals or other ceremonials such as marriage, puberty or initiation, naming, entoolment or enthronement, funeral, and harvest time, to mention but few examples. Worship on special occasions with specific intention in mind such as during crisis usually goes with sacrifices and offerings. Such occasions are the moments of involvement in transcendence (to use the words of Smiths).

Worship can be grouped into state or national worship, family or clan worship and individual worship. State worship among the Akan occurs during state festivals like the *Adae*, *Odwira*, *Afahye*, *Apoō*, *Aboakyere*, and during national or state crisis like epidemic and war.

Sarpong (1971:66) says that the *Odwira* festival differs from the *Adae* in many respects. Unlike *Adae*, it is a national festival celebrated only in such towns as Kumasi, Wenchi, Akwamufie, Kibi and Akropong-Akuapim. It is performed once a year. It is not entirely devoted to the ancestors as the *Adae* is, nor does its celebration end in one day. It lasts over a period of more than one week.

Worship among the Akan falls in line with the general definitions given above except that direct worship of the Supreme Being is uncommon if not totally absent. Signs of worship

abound in the homes, shrines, in the bush in the form of sacrifices and offerings at crossroads, riverbanks, near rocks and under sacred trees.

The phenomena that constitute worship include rituals, sacrifices, offerings, prayers, songs and dance.

4.2.1 RITUALS:

Rituals are performed during worship in sacrifices and offerings, sometimes depending upon the dictates of the gods through divination, spirit possession, and revelation or through dreams.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby) defines ritual as actions that are always done at a fixed time and in the same way, especially as part of a religious or other ceremony. From the researcher's point of view ritual is a systematic procedure of performing religious or other acts of worship at stipulated times or as dictated by the deities concerned. Benjamin C. Ray (1976:78) also says that in Africa as elsewhere-ritual behaviour is a way of communicating with the divine for the purpose of changing the human situation. As such ritual has two dimensions: what it "says" and what it "does."

What rituals does or is believed to do is a variety of practical things. Rituals are performed to cure illness, increase fertility, defeat enemies, change people's social status, remove impurity and reveal the future. At the same time ritual words and symbols also say important things about the nature of what is being done - for example how and why men communicate with the gods, expel illness, settle conflicts, manipulate sacred power, make children into adults, control and renew the flow of time.

Benjamin C. Ray (1976:17) adds that the ritual sphere is the sphere par excellence where the world as lived and the world as imaged become fused together, transformed into one reality. Through ritual man transcends himself and communicates directly with the

divine. The coming of divinity to man and of man to divinity happens repeatedly with equal validity on almost every ritual occasion.

When a fowl (the commonest sacrificial animal among the Akan) is offered for sacrifice, the immolation takes different forms according to the nature of the sacrifice. It may be slaughtered, the head may be wrung, or it may be held at the back of the neck and some incantations recited for it to die. In all cases it is allowed to struggle to death and the position at death will determine whether the sacrifice has been accepted or the request has been granted or not. If it dies lying on its back, face upwards, it is interpreted as accepted, *musuo no ata/adi*. On the other hand if it dies lying on its belly then it is a bad omen and another sacrifice should be made. Sometimes the fowl is induced to eat some grains of maize. If it refuses it is a bad omen. In most cases a pure white fowl is demanded for the sacrifice because white denotes purity.

In the case of a sheep (another common animal for sacrifice) or a cow, the beast is immolated by being held over a sacred object of the deity concerned so that the blood may spill on the object when the throat is cut. In the case of a sacrifice to the ancestors in the stool house, the blood is collected in a bowl in order to smear all the blackened stools with it. When the animal is flayed the entrails are examined to find out whether the sacrifice is accepted or not.

In all cases the sacrificial beast should be pure, unblemished, (that is, it must be without any deformity) fat and healthy. Before the immolation the beast is led before the shrine and the worshipper or a spokesman of the deity states the purpose of the sacrifice and a prayer in the form of request is said by laying hands on the beast. Where the animal is consumable, certain parts are put on the shrine of the deity. It may be the head, heart or part of the entrails. The remaining parts may be cooked and consumed in a communal meal or in some cases (especially in the palace) the meat would be shared or distributed to the chiefs, elders and the servants in the palace. The distribution, in this case, is done according to rank, which should correspond, with the various parts of the sacrificial beast. For example, Busia in (1951:52) gave the following distribution during an *Odwira*

festival at Wenchi in the Brong-Ahafo Region - then northern Ashanti: The entrails of the sheep were placed on the stools. The rest was cut up and distributed. Each elder got a portion. One leg went to the people in the *Konton* quarter, one shoulder went to the *Gyaase* people, a leg and the heart went to the chief, the feet and skin were given to the stool carriers, the jaws to the horn blowers and the drummers, the rest of the entrails to the umbrella-carriers, the waist to the queen mother, the lungs to the court crier (herald). Every part of the sacrificial beast belonged to some specific people according to their ranks and duties in the chieftainship. The distribution pattern is always followed; there is no change.

In the case of offerings, certain numerical figures are considered. Money, cowries, kola nuts and eggs are offered in threes, sevens or twelves. Five is abhorred in all cases even as an ordinary gift in Akanland. It connotes regret as the name '*num*' suggests. Textile for offering is usually white (calico). The offerings may also be a live beast. These offerings may be placed before the shrine of the deity or at a crossroad, a riverbank, or under a sacred tree as the gods may dictate through divination or in trance. Drinks offered are usually palm wine (local drink) or dry gin, which is usually used to pour libation to the deity or the ancestors and part drunk by the offerer and the attendants.

4.2.2 SACRIFICE AND OFFERING

The researcher decided to treat the two topics together because they seem to be inseparable during worship even though they are not the same. Whilst sacrifice involves immolation of a beast whose blood and part of the flesh are offered to the deity, offering, on the other hand, is the presentation of items that may also include a beast, to a deity. Mbiti (1970:178-179) says that sacrifice and offering constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples. He draws a distinction between 'sacrifices' and offerings' by saying that 'sacrifices' is used where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal or part of it to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the departed. 'Offerings', he adds, is used to refer to all the other cases that animals are not killed, and in which items like foodstuffs, utensils etc. are used for presentation to God or other

recipients. He goes on to say that sacrifices and offerings are acts of restoring the ontological balance between God and man, the spirits and man, and the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people “experience” misfortunes and sufferings or fear that these will come to them. They therefore help, at least psychologically, to restore the balance. Again they are acts and occasions of making and renewing contact between God and man, the spirits and man.

The researcher agrees with Mbiti’s assertions but would like to add that sacrifice is an immolation of an animal in order to present it part or whole to a recipient during worship as a means of thanking, appeasing or propitiating to renew cordial relationship with the recipient who may be God, deities, the departed members of the family, or spirits. Offering, on the other hand, is presentation of live animal and or material items to God, deities, the departed ones, and spirits during worship to renew cordial relationship with the presenter.

The Akan make sacrifices and offerings to their ancestors, ‘*nsamamfoō*’ and deities ‘*abosom*’ as a symbol of renewal of fellowship and recognition of their presence in the family or clan. They serve as gifts and gestures of respect. The Akan do not revere their departed ones out of fear of punishment from them. It is the gods or deities, in their case, that punish on behalf of the departed ones.

Sacrifices and offerings to the ‘*nsamamfoō*’ are done on festive days such as *Odwira*, *Afahye*, *Apoō* and *Adae*, to mention but few of them, but sacrifices and offerings to the deities and spirits occur both on festive days and during private or family worships. Items for sacrifices and offerings among the Akan have been treated under rituals.

St John T Evans (1950:252-253) asserts that one of the most interesting features of the Akan religion is the existence of actual temples for the worship of ‘*Nyame*’ God. He adds that so far as he has been able to ascertain, they are found in the compounds of Chiefs. The researcher would like to clarify that these might be private temples for the Chiefs or Kings but there are no public temples for God in Akan land. There are, however, altars of

God known as *Nyamedua* found near shrines of deities (an indication of the fact that they worship God through the deities (abosom) and in palaces and in the old days in every family and or clan heads' houses. The '*Nyamedua*' is a triple fork pillar cut from a tree usually called *Nyamedua*. The actual name of the tree, according to one Mr.Kwaku Dapaa, an informant at Techiman, is '*Sennuro*'. It is commonly known as *Nyamedua* because of its function as altar of God. On top of this forked pillar is placed a brass basin or a clay pot inside which is placed a Neolithic Celt '*Nyame akuma*' God's axe and some herbs. Why did the Akan select this particular tree to serve as the altar of God? Is it because of its forked nature, which makes it convenient for placing receptacles on it? Sarpong (1971:10) says *Nyamedua* and *Sesɛ* are said to possess very vindictive spirits. It is probably because of its spirit power that caused the Akan to select it for the altar of God. According to Sarpong the three most renowned trees used for carving by the Akan are *Nyamedua*, *Sesɛ* and *Tweneboa* and they all possess powerful spirits that are very vindictive.

Sacrifices and offerings to God are presented under this altar. It is consecrated by the sacrifice of a white fowl. The blood is not smeared on the pole but poured on the ground at the base. Since this altar is not placed under roof nor the receptacle on top closed with a lid, rainwater collects in it and is usually covered by water plant that grows in it. The water is therefore considered as holy and used to cure infant diseases like convulsion.

Sacrificial victims in the old days ranged from a fowl- the commonest to human beings - the highest. Human beings as sacrificial victim was categorised into human sacrifice and ritual murder. Whenever there was a need for human sacrifice the reasons were given and in most cases the victim offered himself or herself. They were usually of royal blood and in case of females, virgins. 'Ritual murder' on the other hand, was done when a chief or a King died and people were killed to go and serve him in the land of the dead. Others do it to strengthen their '*suman*' amulet or fetish or to get rich through ritual means '*sika-duro*.'

During sacrifice three procedures can be identified, namely: Presentation, invocation and immolation. Presentation is the act of setting aside of a victim for the sacred and putting the victim before the deity. It can be done by the worshipper himself or herself or by proxy. It is presented with two hands to the deity. A spokesman 'Ōkyeame' usually does the breaking of the news to the deity. For example, the following presentation was done on a Wednesday *Adae* (*Muruwukuo*) by the Chief of Techiman before the state deity *Ta Mensa- (Ta Kese)*. This traditional prayer is taken from Rattray (1955:119)

Ta Kese Brempo whose temple stands in the quarter of the town known as Aban-mu, today is Muruwukuo (Wednesday Adae), your Grandchild Yaw Kramo says here is his wine for you. He begs you for life, he begs you for strength, he begs you for love of his people, he Begs you for continuing health, may this town prosper, may the bearers of children and the males beget children; when we seek for wealth let us get some...

This prayer was accompanied by an offering of a drink of palm wine used to pour libation.

Benjamin Ray (1976:79) also has these divisions of sacrifice: Ritual sacrifice thus has basic threefold structure: consecration, invocation-immolation, communion-purification. He adds that socially, public forms of sacrifice bring people together and reinforce the moral and social bonds that bind them as a group.

The objective of sacrifice or offering could be propitiatory, purification- communion and thanksgiving or votive.

a. Propitiation: When the normal cosmic order changes and calamities befall individuals or the state then there is the need to find out the cause and appease the powers that be, through sacrifice or offerings. In all cases divination or spirit possession reveals the type of appeasement the deities and the spirits need. It is usually believed that the wrath of the deities is incurred hence they should be propitiated.

b. Purification/Communion: Personal defilement can bring misfortune in the life and affairs of an individual and lower a person's '*sunsum*' spiritual powers, which can make him unlucky and prone to accidents or misfortune. Purification and communion with one's deity is required through ritual sacrifice or offering. Communion here has two connotations, namely abstract and concrete. Abstract communion in the sense that it serves to renew the bond between the worshipper and the deity, which has been broken by way of wrong doing, and concrete in the sense that it serves as a sacred meal shared by the deity and the worshippers.

Apart from the above-mentioned purification rituals, hunters purify themselves when they kill certain wild animals believed to have souls or spirits that can haunt them, such as an elephant *ōsono*, bear *sisire bongo trōmo*, buffalo *ekoō* waterbuck *fusuo* and yellow backed duiker *kwaduo*. They believe that without the necessary ritual the spirits of such animals can cause misfortune during hunting. Purification rituals are also performed when an epidemic hits a village.

c. Thanksgiving or votive sacrifice occurs when one's request or favour made to a deity with a vow or promise has been granted. The person therefore fulfils his or her promise by making the promised offer. In the case of a state or national sacrifice, it occurs at the annual harvest time or during other annual festivals to thank God, deities, ancestors and spirits for their protection and blessing.

Animals presented to deities as offerings, among the Akan, are usually not killed instantly or sometimes not at all. They are the property of the shrine and may be killed when need be. Others are set free in a sacred bush as stray animals for the deities or spirits concerned.

Akan religious rites are more explicit rather than implicit in the sense that one can always see concrete evidence of religious acts not implied. Births, puberty and marriage rites are not accompanied by sacrifices. However, offering in the form of palm wine or dry gin-is offered to God, ancestors and the family deities during prayers to inform and request for

blessing. Animals killed during such rites are basically for secular purposes. However, when a taboo is broken there is always the need for a sacrificial animal to appease the gods who have been offended. For example an anti puberty rite taboo 'kyiribra' is when a girl is found pregnant without going through the puberty rite. The ritual involved in the purification of the culprits and propitiation of the gods is so humiliating and degrading that those men or boys who impregnate such girls usually run away before the pregnancy is detected, leaving them alone to suffer the consequence.

4.2.3 PRAYER

Prayer is one of the means of expressing one's religious sentiments. Allport (1967:10) asserts that all of human life revolves around desire. And Dunlap (1946:126) says, "there seem to be no desires that are not, or have not at some time been, items in religions. Prayer certainly is an expression of desire, and there is nothing which man could desire that some man does not or has not prayed for." Truly desire is an implicit prayer to have what you have not. The desire will push you to work to achieve it. This desire 'prayer' may not be addressed to any deity in particular but implicitly it is addressed to powers 'wholly other' than yourself. Therefore an irreligious person is the one who does not desire anything; hence every human being is religious, because every human being prays/desires.

Allport (1967:10-11) adds that to demand some form of reassurance is a spontaneous response to insecurity. The typical religious supplication results, with variants in all faith:

*Guide me o thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak but thou art mighty,
Hold me with thy powerful hand.*

The reciprocal of fear, he adds, is the desire for companionship. In most human beings the capacity to love is great and the desire for love insatiable.

Prayer is spontaneous reaction to one's desire, sometimes explicitly addressed to a deity or one's object of worship. It is the combination of a petition or request, thanksgiving and praise. Prayer as an expression of desire can be voiced out or in silence.

Parrinder (1969:67-72) says the poetry of African prayer, delights in expressive words, and subtleties of traditional aphorisms, and are not allowed to detract from practical purposes. Faith in God implies his providence, his interest in men and his ability to help them in times of need. This is illustrated by a prayer made at sacrifices by the Gikuyu. "You who make mountains tremble and rivers flood; we offer you this sacrifice so that you may bring us rain. People and children are crying; sheep, goats and cattle are crying. We beseech you to accept this sacrifice and bring us rain." He adds that prayers are not fixed in form and it is a widespread delusion that 'primitive' people always pray in exactly the same words for fear of uttering a word out of place which would have harmful effects. Prayers are made in everyday language, to express general or particular needs, and they can be short and simple or long and complicated.

He goes on to say that prayers are comprehensive and tend to include any spiritual force that may give help. This may be shocking to a monotheist, but the purpose is to call all the various powers to give health and well-being. He cites an example of a prayer at an annual *Apoõ* festival in Techiman traditional area in the Brong-Ahafo Region in Ghana (formerly Northern Ashanti).

*Sky God, upon whom men lean and do not fall,
Goddess of the Earth, creatures that rule the under world,
Leopard that possesses the forest, Tano River
By your kindness the edges of the year have met...
Stand behind us with a good standing,
Let no bad thing whatever overtake us,
We give our children. We give our wives.
We give ourselves unto your hand,
Let no evil come upon us. **

He asserts that the traditional concept of the world is not static but dynamic. God has not fixed an order that can never change or placed people in positions where they are doomed

to stay forever. The philosophy of forces pictures many different powers, under the supreme one, striving for improvement and progress. Great endeavours are made today by people and communities to get up, improve and modernize themselves and become successful, because of this dynamic idea. So prayer, petition and praise, all seek augmentation of force, by recognizing and invoking the powers of the spirits and the Supreme Being.

Mbiti (1970:194) also asserts that as a rule, there are no sacrifices without prayers. But praying is not always associated with or accompanied by sacrifice, and many African peoples pray without making sacrifices and offerings. And that prayers are the commonest acts of worship, some of which may be long and formal, but most of them are short, extempore, and to the point. Most of the prayers are addressed to God, and some to the living dead, divinities, or other beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries.

The researcher agrees with the above assertion as true reflection of the people of Ghana and Lesotho as far as his research findings are concerned. He would like to add that among the Akan of Ghana, prayers are in most cases addressed to the Supreme Being, the deities and the ancestors formally, during ceremonials. The *abosom*-gods, acknowledge the supremacy of God. The Akan public or formal prayer said on national days and festive days are accompanied by the pouring of libation with usually dry gin as an offering. During such prayers the order of invocation follows one of these sequences: First the Supreme Being is addressed, then the Earth Spirit, the ancestors and the deities; or the Supreme Being, the Earth Spirit the deities and the ancestors. Opoku Kofi (1972:7) asserts that prayers are often accompanied by the pouring of libation, usually of palm wine or some other alcoholic beverage. The normal procedure for the officiant is to bare his chest and take off his sandals and call on the Supreme Being, by raising the container (calabash or glass) skyward, and first offering him a drink, then to Mother Earth, and afterwards the ancestors and the gods, before the petition is made. Some examples of prayers cited in this work follow this pattern.

Most Akan believe that the Earth Spirit is the wife of the Supreme Being hence they are always invoked together even though they maintain that the Earth is not a goddess because it does not divine. Private individual prayers, however, are addressed to either God directly or through the deities- *abosom* or *suman*-fetish or an ancestor.

During prayer and invocation the Akan address God as Nyankopōn, Twieduampōn Kwame or simply as Twieduampōn Kwame. Prayers are said on occasions of rites of passage, national days like Independence Day, state ceremonies and in times of crisis. Private prayers may also be said when one embarks on a journey, starts a new farm, sick or desires something.

Below are two examples of prayer said during rites of passage recorded by Rattray (1954:45) written in modern orthography with some modifications.

Abosom mommegye nsa nnom
Nsamanfoō mommegye nsa nnom
Nnua ne nhoma mommegye nsa nnom
Nyankopōn Twieduampōn, wo na wowoo me, bra begye nsa nom
Asase Yaa begye nsa nom
Ntadee abosom mommegye nsa nnom
Mommra mmegye bi nnom
Na mommegyina m'akyi akyiginapa na menkōm akōmpa
Mommfa nsuo nnyina moanom nka asem nkyere me
Obi yare a momma mentumi nhwe no
Mekōm ahen-kōm a mommma mennhye nkōm bōne
Mma me kōte nwu
Mma m'ani mfira
Mma m'aso nsi
Mma me kōte mmfa me nnye akoo.

The translation has also been modified to suit what the prayer implies.

Ye gods come and accept this wine and drink
Ye ancestors come and accept this wine and drink
Trees and lianae come and accept this wine and drink
Supreme Being, the dependable one, you who begat me,

come and accept this wine and drink.
Spirit of the Earth 'Yaa' (whose natal day is Thursday)
Come and accept this wine and drink
Come all of you, and accept this wine and drink
Spirits/gods of lakes/pools come and accept this wine and drink
Give me good protection and let me be possessed well
Do not speak to me with water in your mouth (speak clearly)
If somebody is sick, let me be able to tend him.
When I become possessed and prophesy to the Chief grant that what I
have to tell him may not be bad.
Do not let me become sexually impotent
Do not let me become blind
Do not let me become deaf
Do not let my penis enslave me.

This is a prayer of a priest under training. The prayer below cited in Rattray (1954:70) is a prayer for female puberty rite. The Akan do not have initiation or puberty rite for boys. If a boy becomes of age, the father provides him with the necessary advice, instructions and materials to begin life with. Then he marries a girl of the boy's choice for him.

Nyankopōn Twieduampōn Kwame, gye nsa nom.
Asase Yaa, gye nsa nom
Nsamamfoō mommegye nsa nom
Ōbaa yi a Nyankopōn de no ama me yi
Nne na wabō ne bra
Oni a ōwō asamando, mmeɛfa no na ōnye bra nwu

Supreme Being who alone is great and dependable,
 Take this wine and drink
 Earth Spirit, whose natal day is Thursday,
 Take this wine and drink.
 Spirits of our ancestors receive this wine and drink.
 This girl whom God has given to me,
 Today she has experience her first menses.
 Do not let her mother in the ancestral world come and take her away so that she menstruates only to die.

There are some modifications in the translation and the orthography of Akan version of this prayer made by the researcher. The English version is translated literally. Prayer is a symbol of man's dependence on something wholly other than himself, which he regards as powerful and or transcendent.

4.2.4 SONGS

Like other religions, songs form part of Akan liturgy and there are songs of seemingly secular activities in which God is mentioned. Below is an example of a thanksgiving song to God on the occasion of a newly installed chief. Among the Akan there are no strictly secular activities. The song below is usually sung when a newly installed chief is paraded through the street amid jubilation.

Osee! Yei!	Hurrah! Hurrah!
Yiee! Yei!	O! Hurrah!
Twieduampōn ee!	Dependable God e!
Yɛda wo ase oo!	We thank you!
Yɛanya yɛn hene o!	We have got our chief
Yɛbɛwe ate dɛ nnɛ atadwe e!	We will eat and feel the sweet taste of "atadwe" today

As Dankwa asserts Twieduampōn is the potent name of God used to invoke him in prayer. We must however be mindful of songs that may sound traditional but are recent Christian innovations. For example, the song below is a Christian song set in the traditional background.

Mtu metu metu makō soro,	I will fly, fly, fly to heaven
Nea Yesu wō	Where Jesus is,
Sɛ mewō soro abōfo ntaban a,	If I had the wings of an Engel
Anka metu makō sorofie	I would fly to heaven
Asase yi so yɛ ōhao ne amanehunu.	The earth is full of misery

This cannot be a typical traditional religious song because there is no heaven in Akan cosmology and the name Jesus was introduced by the Christian missions.

Sarpong (1974:120) writes that the Ghanaian spontaneously resorts to songs or dance on any occasion, in any mood and at any time during work or games, on battle fields, at festival celebrations, when a child is born, when a girl reaches the age of puberty, during the installation of a chief, on the occasion of death of a relative, in the street, alone or in

company of others, to express sorrow or joy. Music goes with dancing and the Akan express their religious and secular feelings in music and dance. They sing to praise God and request something from him during occasions. An example of a thanksgiving song during the installation of a Chief is cited above.

Parrinder (1969:77) in his Religion in Africa, says the importance of music in African religious life is that it gives expression to the deepest feelings, but it is not only feeling, for it points to belief in the life force that underlines religious thought.

4.2.5 DANCE

In traditional life, as Bishop Sarpong asserts above, the Akan resort to dancing to express joy or sorrow, to communicate love feelings towards the opposite sex and to express his or her social status and religious concepts. The elders, chiefs and priests dance to express their feelings of joy or sorrow, show who they are and the limit of their powers. Sarpong (1974:123) says that music goes with dancing and for its beauty, dancing depends very much on bodily movements. Foot-work, manipulation of the neck, manual gestures, gesticulations with the arms, raising of the eye-brows, pouting of the lips, pliability of the torso, shaking of the lower part of the trunk- all this adds a lot to the aesthetic aspect of dancing. Parrinder (1969:123-124) adds that the beauty lies in the symbolic meaning or the significance attached to the various bodily gestures. Every action of the dancer is symbolic and could be adequately interpreted by those who know the language of dancers, especially seasoned dancers, the aged and trained spokesmen of the courts. For example when a dancing chief points to the West and to the East and then to his breast, he is saying something like this: Everything belongs to me. When he ends his dancing by pointing his both hands to the sky or looking upwards, he is saying that he depends on God. A paramount chief or a king usually does this to imply that only God limits his powers. The divisional and sub chiefs usually end their dancing by turning their back to the King and jerking towards him or facing him and pointing both hands towards him, implying that they rely or lean on him. They are his subjects.

An ordinary dancer may dance and put the right palm in the left and look up in supplicating manner meaning he or she is in desperate need of God's help; or he or she may raise both hands while looking up implying, 'God, help me!' These are but few examples to show the religious significance of Akan music and dance.

Another aspect of religious dancing as part of the Akan liturgy is ritual dancing that is performed by the priests of the deities on ceremonial days and other occasions of public worship as discussed above. Opoku Kofi (1972:4) has this to say about *akōm* or ritual dance:

It must be pointed out at this stage that akōm or ritual dancing which is performed on occasions of public worship is not simply an emotional response to the drumming and singing, neither is it a set of haphazard movements and wild random gesticulations without meaning or significance. On the contrary, each dance has a symbolic meaning and may re-enact some period or incident in the sacred history of the deity or the tribe. The dance may also depict the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the deity, which distinguish him from others. The dance is an important feature of formal worship among the Akan, for there is crucial element of communication between the priest and the deities as well as between the worshippers and the priest. Through the dance movements the priest communicates, and the movements say more than verbal utterance. The dramatic element is very strong and is the most distinguishing aspect of our formal worship.

Parrinder (1969:77), talking about Africa in general says that dancing is symbolic and expressive in sound, gesture and costume expressing the life of the family and society and the meaning of the world.

The priest dances when possessed by the deity. During the possession he can prophesy, prescribe medicine for patients or reveal a hidden treasure. When the spirit of the deity leaves him he ends up helpless and is carried into the temple of the shrine and the worship ends. Before a priest starts the ritual dance he must be possessed then he throws white clay powder up and down to indicate his acknowledgement of God and the Earth spirit. The religious dress for the priest is either *dōsō raffia* skirt or *batakari* smock.

4.3 OTHER AKAN RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

4.3.1 AKAN PROVERBS/MAXIMS

Akan maxims are also a means of expressing their concept of the divine. It is the contention of the Akan that proverbs are not given at random, a situation calls for its proverb to explain or summarise it. Some of them relate to the characteristic behaviour of some animals and others reveal the Akan belief in God and his attributes. The hawk says, 'all that God has made is good.' The baboon says, 'seeing is believing,' *kontromfi se*, 'me *suman ne m'ani*,' literally, the baboon says, 'my eyes are my fetish.

To help readers to understand and see how the Akan express their feelings and beliefs about God's qualities and attributes, the researcher has arranged the various proverbs or maxims concerning God under various qualities of God.

a. The Omnipresence of God

Wodwane Nyame a woman n'ase: You cannot run away from God or literally: If you try to flee from God you move under him or his canopy. *Wope aka asem akyerε Nyame a kakerε mframa*: if you want to tell God tell the wind. (Wherever there is air there is God.)

Obi nkyerε abōfra Nyame: God needs no pointing out to a child.

b. The Omnipotence of God

Onyame nkrabea nni kwatibea: There is no by-pass to God's destiny. *Onyankopōn nkum wo a ōdasani kum wo a wonwu da*: unless you die of God, let living man kill you and you will not perish. *Ōdomankoma na ōma owuo di akane*. It is non-but God who made death eat poison. *Adeε a Onyame ahyehye no onipa ntumi nsee no*: The order God has settled living man cannot subvert. *Nneema nyinaa ne Nyame*: God is the justification (end cause) of all things. *Asase tere na Onyame ne panin*: The Earth is wide but God is the Chief.

c. God as all merciful/kind

Onyame ma wo yadee a ōma wo aduro: If God gives you disease he gives you medicine.

Aboa a onni dua Onyame na ōpra ne ho: God keeps the flies away from the tailless animal.

Onyankopōn hye wo nsa koraama na se ōteasefoō ka gu a ohyira wo so_bio: Let the living man empty your goblet of wine God will fill it up.

Onyankopōn amma asomfena katakyi biribi a, ōmaa no ahodannan, If the plucking sparrow got nothing else from God, it got dash.

d. The justice of God

Onyankopōn na odi kwasea asem ma no: God is the defender of the fool (defenceless).

Onyankopōn mpe nsemone nti na ōkye din mmaako mmaako. To prevent fraud, God gave each person his name.

e. God as creator

Nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma; obi nye asase ba.

All humanity are the offspring of God, no one is the offspring of the earth. *Ōsansa se: adee a Onyame aye nyinaa ye;* the hawk says: All God has made is good.

f. God's Patience

Onyankopōn fa boō a ōkye na wato. When God decides to punish a living man he takes time.

g. The deities (abosom)

Ōbosom a ōye nam na odi aboadee:

Only the capable god 'bosom' gets the votive offering.

Ōbosom anim wōkō no mprensa: One appears thrice at the presence of a god 'ōbosom'

Ōbosomfoō ka ne nkonim na ōnka ne nkoguo:

The god 'ōbosom' tells of his victories, never his failures. *Wobu wo suman animtia a ekura wo*: If you do not respect your charm/fetish it is yours.

Se ōkōmfo-bōne se ōman bebō a ōte mu bi: If the bad priest prophesies that there will be a disaster in the state it will affect him.

Suman see abosom, charm/fetish spoils the gods.

The above maxims under **g**, tell us about Akan feelings about their gods 'abosom' and fetishes 'asuman. As long as they prove their worth they are kept, respected and worshipped but when they lose their potency they are rejected and new ones are sought for. They are there to harmonize the Akan cosmology. God's potency is not to be tested or rejected like the gods. He is all in all.

h. Ancestors

Nsamamfoō mpo se wōpɛ dodoō na ateasefoō

If the living-dead expect to increase in number what of the living?

Se saman-bōne ba fie a wōde tō kōkōō ne fufuo na epam no.

If an evil ghost comes home it is driven away through persuasion.¹

The latter maxim reveals the Akan belief that the living dead can be very treacherous at times therefore people should be wary of them.

4.3.2 SOCIAL EXPRESSIONS

The belief in God in the Akan cosmology is expressed in their social life, in carrying out their day-to-day activities. There are short prayers, invocations and constant references made to *Onyame*-God at appropriate times and occasions. Somebody who feels cheated in arbitration would be consoled by his or her friends with such expressions as: *Fa ma Nyame*, leave everything in the hands of God. *Nyame bedi ama wo*, God will settle your case for you.

At the start of any undertaking or business the Akan would say: '*Onyame boa me*' God help me. Another short expression is: *se Onyame pe a...* If God wills, if God permits or *se Onyame boa a...* If God helps... if God grants it... It is courteous to inquire about the health of a neighbour, a friend or a relative after greeting by saying *apomu ε?* How is your health or *wo ho te sen?* How are you? And the response is usually *Onyame adom*, by the grace of God or *Onyame tumi*, by the power of God. The Christians have of late added: *Yesu adom* or *Yehoa adom*, by the grace of Jesus or Jehovah. On escaping from an accident or a disaster one usually says: *Onyame nko ara...* It was only God.... Or *Onyame ampata a...* If God had not intervened... In bidding somebody farewell we normally say, *Wo ne Onyame nkō*, may you go with God. The one also responds: *Wo ne Onyame ntena*, Stay with God. *Mede Onyame gya wo*, I leave you in the care of God.² On consulting a traditional healers or priest for the treatment of a disease, he usually tells the patient: *se Onyame pe a mesa wo yadeε*. If God permits I shall cure you. Another way of expressing this feeling is: *Onyame ne hene*, God is the chief, meaning God's decision is final; nobody can change it.

4.3.3 NAMES

Akan acknowledge their belief in the divine by incorporating a divine name in the names of their children. A person may face childbirth problems and would name the first child *Nyamekyε* "God's gift" to express gratitude to God for having answered his or her prayer. She may choose to name the child *Nyameama* - God has given or simply *Nyame* to imply God has given. Others also approach a shrine and request for a child and when such request is granted, the child is named after that deity such as *Ntoa*, *Mframa*, *Ntaana*, *Tanō*, and *Diamono* etc. By such names the Akan is expressing his religiousness and acknowledging the fact the children are a blessing from God. Opoku (1972:12) says it is common among the Akan to say of a barren woman that "*Onyame amma no ba*" or *Onyame amma no yafunu*. God did not give her a child or literally: God did not give her womb. He adds that another name, which parents may give to their child, is *Famanyame*. Give to God. He says that this name is a concrete expression of faith in God as the one who answers all prayer and the one to whom we must refer all our problems. The

researcher would like to add that this is a proverbial name which may mean 'leave it with God - as explained above to imply that the oppressed or cheated is advised to leave the matter or problem in the hands of God who is the just judge. Another way of expressing this is '*Nyame bedi ama wo*'. God will settle it or God will judge your case. However, the researcher's concern here is the religiousness of such maxims and names.

4.3.4 SYMBOLISMS

Symbols abound in human life. Nations have national flags and coat of arms, which express what they believe in and stand for, and such symbols are given honoured respect. Symbols, like proverbs, are not taken literally. They express a people's philosophical thought. Africans generally lack modern scientific and philosophical thesis and anti-thesis (theory) to express and defend their beliefs and practices, but they have signs and symbols, which express what they stand for in life socially, politically and religiously.

Benjamin Ray (1976:17) talks of archetypal symbols as sacred images whether they are gods, ancestors, sacred actions or things, which make up the traditional universe. Such images, he adds, enshrined and communicated in myth and ritual, provide a network of symbolic forms, uniting social, ecological, and conceptual elements into locally bounded cultural systems. They give order to experience by framing the world in terms of sacred figures and patterns. Thus encapsulated within local universes of archetypal forms traditional African thought tends to abolish both time and chance by shaping experience to interrelated moral and ritual patterns. Archetypal symbols, he continues, are modes of behaviour as well as modes of thought. To re-enact the deeds of the gods, to become possessed by the divinities, to manipulate sacred objects, to speak sacred words, is to conform experience to normative patterns of meaning and thereby to control and renew the shape and destiny of the world.

Symbols are used to express Akan philosophical thought in social, political and religious spheres. For example the chiefs and the clan heads have symbols of clan totems and personal philosophical principles of life that govern their lives. These symbols are carved

then his breast, repeating these words three times. It is sometimes stamped on sheepskin or leather. The symbol is fig.4

Fig.4.



Krapa (Musuyidee) is a symbol of good fortune, security or evil diverting talisman. *Krapa te se okra: okyiri fi*; sanctity like a cat abhors filth. Dankwa (1968:79) says, “A cloth with this design stamped on it lay beside the sleeping couch of the King of Ashanti, and every morning when he rose he placed his left foot upon it three times.” The symbol is fig.5.

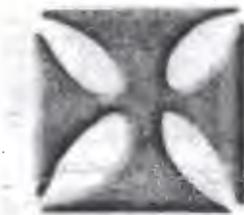
Fig.5.



Ohene Aniwa: In the King’s eye: Everything is seen in the King’s eye. He has lots of eyes and nothing is hidden from him. This shows the supremacy of the King or Chief as the head, the high priest and the agent of the ancestors. His informants are his eyes; it shows his divine nature.

fig.6.

Fig.6.



The moon: *Ōsrane: Ōsrane mfiti preko ntware man*. It takes the moon some time to go round the nation. The moon plays important role in Akan social and religious life. The annual calendar is calculated with the appearance of the moon. It helps to determine the sacred days of the gods *da bone* and the festivals. Fig.7.

Fig.7.



The star, *Nsoroma* literally a child of the sky: *Ōba Nyame soroma te Nyame so na ōnte ne ho so*, like the star, the child of the Supreme Being, I do not depend on myself, my illumination is only a reflection of his. This expresses the Akan belief that human beings depend on God for everything. See

Fig.8.

Fig.8.



on staffs, stools and state umbrellas. A chief who uses a staff 'akyeampoma' with a symbol of a tortoise and a gun, or a snail and a gun or a hunter on top is telling people that he stands for peace. The symbol says: *Ekaa akyekyedee anaa nwa nko a anka otuo nto wō kwaee mu da.* 'If other animals were like the tortoise or the snail, a gun will never fire in the bush.' Fig.1.



Fig .1.

A hunter does not shoot when he sees a snail or a tortoise; he just goes to pick it - if he wants it. We shall limit ourselves to religious symbols in order not to digress. The Akan use the *Nyamedua* 'God's tree' which serves as the altar of God / as the symbol of God. It is represented in art as in fig.2.



Fig.2.

Another important symbol of God is *Gye Nyame*, which is also represented in Art as in fig.3. *Gye Nyame* means 'except God.' This phrase has many interpretations revealing the Akan concept of God. It may imply I fear nothing except God; it is only God who knows or who can solve my problem. It expresses the idea



Fig.3.

of the omnipotence, eternity and uniqueness of God. Kwame Gyekye (1987:72) says that perhaps the etymology of this symbol can be derived from an elaborate interpretation given to Kofi Antobam, a late Ghanaian (Akan) artist by his informant: This great panorama of creation originated from the unknown past. No one lives who saw its beginning. No one lives who will see its end 'except God' *Gye Nyame*. The meaning of the symbol is simply that *Onyame* is omnipotent, supreme and eternal.

Another symbol is: *Biribi wō soro*. There is something up. In full it is: *Nyame, biribi wō soro na ma me nsa nka*, God there is something up, above, let it reach me. It is a symbol of hope. It is a symbolic prayer. It entails asking for protection and power from God. This pattern according to Dankwa (1968:187) was stamped on paper and hung above the lintel of a door in the palace. The king of Ashanti used to touch this lintel, then his forehead,

The Blackened Stool (*Apunnwa*) is an ancestral shrine, a symbol of the presence of the state ancestors in the palace. With the alternation of *Kwasidae* and *Wukudae* on every Twenty-first day, the chief enters the stool room/house *Nkonnwafieso* to pour libation and sacrifice an animal in order to ask for the blessing and support of the ancestors. See Fig.9.

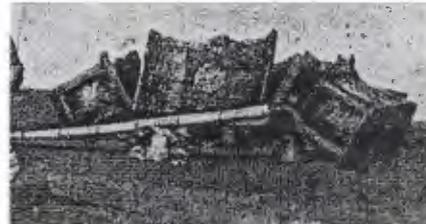


Fig.9.

Water '*Nsuo*' is a symbol of life, purification and rebirth. During *Odwera* and *Afahye* festivals the Chiefs and the priests take the blackened stools and the shrine of the gods to a stream for purification by using *adwera* plant to dip into a bowl of water collected from the stream to sprinkle on the shrines and the stools. The Chiefs purify themselves through the same process. A person who feels he has defiled his soul '*kra*' also purifies himself through similar ritual. During puberty rite the girl is carried to a stream to be purified in similar ritual and carried back covered with white cloth.

4.3.5 ETHICS

Ethics can be defined as behavioural norms or patterns of life in conformity with the rules governing society or tribe or state or religion. African ethics is both social and religious because religion is not set apart from the socio cultural life of the society. Mbiti (1990:201) asserts that the essence of African morality is that it is more societal than spiritual. It is a morality of conduct rather than a morality of being. The African society and for that matter the Ghanaian society is governed by the theory of corporate life rather than the theory of individualism. The theory of corporate life can be explained with Mbiti's (1990:141) maxim. "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am. Thus individual life is governed by the whole societal norms because his or her violation of a taboo can bring disaster to the whole clan or community.

Akan ethics is therefore a combination of social and religious morals. One cannot extrude religious morals from the social morals because in Akan Worldview religion is not

independent of social life. The religiosity of Africans and, for that matter, the Akan has been emphasised by many scholars. This is what Opoku (1972:1) observed about the Akan people:

The phenomenon of religion is so pervasive in the life of the Akan, and so inextricably bound up with their culture, that it is not easy to isolate what is purely religious from other aspects of life. It may be said without fear of exaggeration that life in the Akan world is religion and religion is life.

This does not, however, mean that the Akan life is nothing but religion. On this issue Gyekye (1987:129-130) says that in the light of the alleged religiosity of the Akan people, writers have not hesitated to establish some kind of necessary connection between religion and morality of the Akan. He adds that these writers maintain that the Akan moral system derives from, or is based on religion. And that Opoku, writing on Akan morality said that generally speaking, the morality originates from religious considerations and religion is so pervasive in African culture that ethics and religion cannot be separated from each other and that morality flows out of religion. Bishop Sarpong also asserts that ethics merges with religion and religious practices and assumes communal proportions. Gyekye (1987:130) adds that among the Akan, every ethical conduct may be said to be religiously oriented. Busia also thought that religion defined moral duties for the member of the group or tribe. And Dankwa said that everything else has value only in its relation to the ideal of the great ancestors.

Gyekye refers to the above assertions as mistakes because he holds the view that morality has humanistic origin and non-super naturalistic origin. He says that in Akan moral thought the sole criterion of goodness is the welfare or well-being of the community. Gyekye (1987:132) adds that in the course of his research, the response he had to the question of what the Akan people mean by 'good' invariably included a list of goods, that is habits and patterns of behaviour considered by society as worthwhile because of their consequences for human well-being. The list of such goods invariably includes kindness-generosity: *ayamyɛ*, faithfulness, honesty, truthfulness: *nokorɛdie*, compassion: *mmōbrōhunu*, hospitality: *ahōhoyɛ*, *adoeɛ* that which brings peace, happiness, dignity and respect and so on.

The researcher does not wholly agree with Gyekye's assertion in the sense that Akan morality is not wholly determined by social values alone. There are some religious influences in the formulation of these social moral values, not in the sense that they are dictated by God or a supernatural being as he asserts, but that the morals are formulated in conformity with what will harmonise the secular with the sacred, because the Akan, like other Africans, believe that the supernatural or the cosmos has influence on their lives. Gyekye (1987:131) quotes Kudadje as saying that where we are thinking of the origin of influence, that moulds behaviour or the factors that enable one to lead the morally worthy life, or indeed, the determinants of what is right or wrong, good or bad or obligation, there are factors other than religion, which come into play. In this assertion, like those of other scholars, secular or sacred influence is not totally ruled out. Both factors combine to build Akan ethics.

Morality per se does not comprise good deeds alone. There are good morals and bad morals which in Christian terms are known a virtue and vice. Among the Akan the very bad vices are known as taboos '*akyiwadeε*'. Busia (1951:70) terms these public or tribal offences; he classifies them into five groups. The taboo or *akyiwadeε* offences come before the chief because they are religious offences. They are the offences that estrange or threaten to estrange the ancestors or gods from the community and so endanger its well-being.

1. **Murder** (*awudie*), suicide by hanging (*hyε akōmfo*); by wounding oneself (*di woho awu*).

2. **Tabooed Sexual offences:** sexual intercourse with one of the same blood or clan; with a woman during her menstrual period; with a woman who has been impregnated by another man; with a girl before she had reached puberty; with a half-sister by one father or a father's brother's daughter; with a woman in the bush. (Sexual relations with maternal cousins is unspeakable; but one can marry a maternal uncle's daughter or a paternal aunt's daughter.)

3. Offences against the chief:

Committing adultery with the chief's wife.

Assault on the chief, his soul-washer, stool carrier, or keeper of his mausoleum. Stealing from the chief. Invoking a curse on the chief. Abusing the chief.

4. Oaths

Treason

Cowardice: (*dwane dōm*) flee from the enemy (during war); commands enjoined with the chief's oath.

5. Supernatural powers

Stealing from the gods

Witchcraft

Other taboos.

All such offences must be settled in the chief's court and the necessary charges made for appeasing or pacifying the gods and the ancestors. Sacrifices must be made to the gods and the ancestors.

a. Generally offences are classified into private (*afisem*)

b. Public (*ōman akyiwadee*) taboo.

Private offences concern the living only, and are deemed to affect only social relations of persons or groups living in community.

Busia (1951:67) says that public offences affect the relationships between the community on the one hand and the chief's ancestors and the tribal gods on the other. Such offences are religious offences deemed to affect the weal of the whole tribe. (These days all criminal cases are tried in judicial courts). The above-cited example of moral rules shows clearly that Akan ethics is combination of religious and social morals.

Sarpong (1973:41) says that in order that these rules may be faithfully kept, the Akan has ingeniously organized the more serious of the offences as taboos, so that when one

commits incest the offence is against the gods (*abosom*), the ancestors (*nsamamfoō* or *Nyame* the Supreme Being rather than the individual. He thus gives a very important ethico-religious dimension to what would otherwise be mere rules of life.

With regard to sin, Dankwa (1968:82) asserts that the Akan knows no original sin. Each human being comes to this world pure and clean with his or her *Nkrabea*, 'fate' and destiny '*hyebea*' to fulfil which may be fully accomplished through several incarnations. Dankwa says that the Akan does not imagine that man ever could have had a fall. His conception of *Nkrabea* and *hyebea* for each particular individual precludes any such possibility of one man's soft heart or one woman's indiscretion, making all the rest, even their countless generations to suffer a fall. To the Akan each man holds his own message *nkrabea* or intelligence or nous in his own hands. Moreover, each man is in direct touch with the source, and only needs, on this earth an exemplar or intermediary that will take him nearer to the source or make the source better understood. He adds that if there had been no fall then there could not have been any original sin.

Going back to morals, Bishop Sarpong (1973:41-42) says that because ethics is made to concern what is done as opposed to what is, the mere commission of an evil act often implies culpability. And that deliberation and consent, so vital in the thomistic school of thought, are of minor consideration (in Akan ethical thought). If the parricidal and incestuous 'crime' of Sophocles' Oedipus is a true reflection of classical Greek ethics then there is little to choose between the Greek and the Akan from the point of view of imputability of guilt. Like Thebes an Akan city may be subjected to unspeakable hardship and affliction because of the 'folly' and shamelessness of a citizen who may be totally unaware of his sinful state or would be the first to condemn if he were. He adds that the myth of Oedipus offers a very interesting parallel in ethics between ancient Greece and traditional Akanland. The ethical behaviour of a person is sometimes predestined by destiny. The Akan strongly believe in destiny (*nkrabea*) hence the maxim: *Onyame nkrabea nni kwatibea* (it is impossible to thwart the decrees of God).

This proverb brings to mind a story told by one informant about destiny. He said: In the old days there lived a man in a village who, on consulting a deity's shrine about his destiny, was told that he would die by automobile accident. This man thereupon decided that he would try to avert this death by automobile. Therefore he decided not to travel by any vehicle, and avoided walking alongside roads.

One day he was sitting in front of his house when a lorry descending a hill, just before entering the village, had a mechanical fault and one of the front tyres came off running ahead and bumping down the road towards the village. Before he was aware the tyre had hit him and killed him. With all his efforts he could not divert the course of his destiny. Another maxim about destiny similar to the above one is *wokra tuo a wonnwu agyan*, if you are destined to die by the gun you will not die by the arrow.

Akan ethics is religiously inclined because the deities and the ancestors abhor social vices that violate taboos. Hence the offenders are made to provide an animal for sacrifice to appease them. What society accepts as good does not necessarily need to be decided by the divinities before society terms them religious, but if part of the motive for doing that which is good is religious like in the maxim: I am doing good so that my way to the world of the ancestors may not be blocked; *Mereye papa na ankosi me nsaman-kwan*; then it shows that apart from the social desire to do good for social harmony, there is also religious inclination to do good. The Akan religious person does not aspire to go to heaven because heaven does not exist in Akan religion. When he dies, he knows that he is going to join his ancestors in the ancestral world.

Busia (1954:207) also says that it has often been said that Asante (a section of the Akan people) religion has no ethical content. And that if this means that the Asante do not aspire to grow like the gods then it would be true. The Asante do not seek identification with the Supreme Being or the gods; their emphasis is not on becoming, and therefore little emphasis on morality. But the Asante have concepts of right and wrong, of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, culturally defined in terms of their own life and belief and, the ancestors and the gods punish those who violate the traditionally

sanctioned code, and reward those who keep it. Within their culture then, Asante religion is ethical.

Talking about Africa in general Parrinder (1969:28-29) says that African ethics receive sanction from a consideration whether actions help or harm human power. There is a profound conviction of the wickedness of witches, sorcerers and many others who are thought to damage the life and health of beings, prevent childbirth or spoil the crops. A true man, who is unified and in harmony with God and the spirits lives according to the principles of this philosophy, recognizing human worth and not exploiting others, continuing the traditions of the past and adding new power to them. He adds that morality is bound up with religion and receives its sanction from the creator who gives the order of the world. What is ethically good must be ontologically good also.

Mbiti (1990:202) also, talking about the Nuer, says that for them the evil lies not in the act itself, but in the fact that God punishes the act. By committing a particular offence a person puts himself and other people in the dangerous situation where God punishes him and other people. Since the consequences are bad, therefore the act which invites them must be bad, and the outward manifestation may only indicate the bad or evil inside, and the outward misfortune may contaminate other people who are closely related to the offender. Such is the logic of the matter in the sight of the Nuer and, it would seem, many other African people. Something is evil because it is punished: It is not punished because it is evil. This implies that the Nuer do not consider any act evil until it has been considered so by the deities or God by way of punishing the act. Akan ethics is thus not different from other African ethics.

Evil can be divided into moral evil and physical evil. Moral evil concerns behaviour and conduct; it deals with the character of the person, for example, selfishness, wickedness, immorality, injustice, falsehood etc. Physical evil, on the other hand, deals with experiences in life, which involves natural disaster, illness, childlessness and one tragedy or other. Physical evil seems to be beyond the control of the affected and it implies sorrow on the part of the afflicted, his relatives and friends. For example a flood or an

earthquake that destroys property and even human life is caused by nature but among the Akan, like other Africans, such evils almost always have a cause. The cause may be an agent, human or spiritual, but the affected may sometimes be the cause. Physical evil can happen to anybody but always when it happens people raise eyebrows and question: why not others but those afflicted? There must be something wrong. The African does not hold the contention that things can happen by chance; therefore they resort to divination or other means to find the cause and solution to physical evil. We cannot give full exegeses of Akan ethics here for lack of space and time.

4.3.6 MYTH

Myths abound in world religions and, African religion is no exception. Parrinder (1969:29) says that all people have myths; stories which try to explain the origins of the world and men, the mysteries of birth and death, and activities of celestial and mundane beings.

In this section we will deal with myth in Ghana particularly the Akan people. The myths here will be grouped into the origin of man, the separation of man and God and the origin of death. The Akan do not have any typical creation myth because they do not speculate much about the mystery of creation. The maxim *Gye Nyame*, 'except God' explains this stand of the Akan. It is only God who knows the beginning of this world.

Myth of separation: Parrinder (1969:29) says that the primal myth of most cosmologies the world over is that of creation. The common myth that some scholars take as Akan Creation myth is what the researcher sees as myth of separation. According to Busia (1954:192) the well-known myth is that *Onyankopōn* long ago lived very near to men. His abode was in the sky. There was a certain old woman who used to pound her fufu (a meal of mashed yam or plantain) and whenever she did so, the long pestle she used knocked against *Onyankopōn*, who lived just above in the sky. So one day *Onyankopōn* said: "Because of what you have been doing to me I am taking myself away far up into the sky where men cannot reach me." So he went up and up into the sky, and men could

no longer approach him. Whereupon the old woman instructed her children to collect all the mortars they could find, and pile them one on top of the other. They did so, till they required only one mortar to add to the pile so that it could reach to *Onyankopōn*. As they could not find another mortar, the old woman advised her children to take one mortar from the bottom and put it on top. The children accordingly removed one mortar from the bottom, and when they did so all the other mortars rolled and fell to the ground killing many people.

The myth explains the separation of man from *Onyankopōn* the Supreme Being. We must be mindful of the fact that this myth is full of metaphor and must not be taken literally. God being very near the earth or the sky being close to the earth implies close relationship between God and man in the beginning and that man through a woman strained that relationship, hence God distanced himself from man. A woman being the cause of the separation seems to have a universal outlook because in many African myths it is apparent that woman, being the weaker sex, is usually the cause of man's downfall. Even in practical life there are many instances where a woman has been the cause of one hero or another's downfall. The Christian biblical myth is no exception. Parrinder (1969:32) explains it away by saying that women are often blamed in these myths for the disruption of the primeval bliss, perhaps because the stories were invented by men.

The researcher seems to differ from his assertion because generally speaking men give due respect to women when they deserve it. Women are indispensable partners of men. In Akan custom a chief cannot be said to have no wife. It is a very responsible position which bachelors are not qualified to hold. Therefore even if a boy of fifteen years is enstooled or crowned as a chief, immediately after the enstoolment he automatically becomes a married man because there are some stool wives who become the automatic wives of any new chief. In addition to these he can marry his own. Again at critical situations where the elders need to decide on an issue and they go into consultation privately, they use the aphorism: We are going to consult the old lady, '*Yerekobisa aberewa.*' This aphorism implies that women are thoughtful supporters of men. Therefore

such myths are stating the obvious rather than exception. What the researcher means here is, women are always given the credit or discredit where it is due.

Parrinder (1969:33) again, asserts that some writers consider that the African myths that explain creation and separation of man and God depict an original fall of man from a state of innocence, as in the Bible, but this seems to be forcing a theological explanation into stories that are more concerned to explain the distance of the sky and God from man, rather than the expulsion of man from paradise.

The researcher would like to differ from Parrinder's assertion in that the setting does not change the theme. The common theme in the Biblical myth of creation and those of Africans is the separation of God and man. The African religious myth places God in the sky instead of the Garden of Eden as in the case of Christian theology. In each case God is personified and the fact that God distanced himself from man due to the fault of man, initiated by a woman, is maintained in both instances, the researcher does not see any difference as far as the theme is concerned. If anything at all, they are both figments of somebody's imagination to explain the creation and the separation of God and man. Paradise, to the researcher, is an imaginary place of bliss conceived by man to explain an imaginary state of happiness man enjoyed when he lived in the close contact with God. The only difference perceived by the researcher is that the setting is complex in one and simple in the other.

Busia (1954:192) explains the Akan myth thus: The idea of the original nearness of God illustrated by this myth gains support from the Asante (Akan) belief that everyone has direct access to the Supreme Being. This is expressed in an old Ashanti maxim: '*Obi kwan nsi obi kwan mu* (no man's path joins another's)', meaning everyone has a direct path to the Supreme Being.

Myth about the death of a hero in Ashanti is another example of the downfall of man through a woman. According to Bishop Sarpong (1974:131) Okomfo Anokye, the famous Ashanti priest, who gave the Ashanti people the golden stool and helped Osei

Tutu to found the Ashanti nation, died through the fault of a niece or some relative of his. One day he decided to fight and kill death and make man immortal. He then locked himself up in a room with strict instructions that nobody should weep during the seven days that he would be engaged on the perilous venture. The relative did not obey the instructions and wept after few days. The weeping was fatal. Anokye got so infuriated that he allowed himself to be overpowered by death.

One myth of origin found in Sarpong (1974:129) is the origin of the Aduana and Oyoko clans of the Akan people. One Monday night, a worm bored its way up through the ground at *Asantemanso*. Seven men and several women, a leopard and a dog followed it. The names of these people are not supposed to be mentioned except on Mondays and Tuesdays. They belonged to the Aduana clan. The people of the Oyoko clan, which was later to be the ruling clan of Kumasi, came afterwards. The two clans then split up. Oyoko went to Kokofu and Kumasi, to become the ruling clan. When the creator was going round the world creating things, there were people already on the earth. He met them and took one of the Oyoko people on his rounds as his linguist, and gave him a staff, which was present up to the time of King Karikari, when it was lost.³

An Akan creation myth, the researcher collected from one of his informants - Mr.Kwaku Dapaa of Techiman - is about the creation of man. He said that when God created the world there were no human beings. And when he took some clay from the earth to go and mould the first human beings the earth asked him where he was going with the clay. God answered that he was going to make human beings with the clay and after that he would send them back to the earth. So after making the first male and female, he sent them to the earth that is why dead or alive, human beings depend on the earth. The myth explains how God created the first human being from soil, and how man came to depend on the earth for his survival and death (as recited on the talking drums of the Akan) cited in 3.1.3.

Parrinder (1969:35) gives a myth of procreation of the Akan people. He says an Ashanti story says that a man and a woman came from 'heaven' with a python. The latter asked

them if they had any children and offered to show them how to make the woman conceive. He stood the couple facing each other and sprayed water on their bellies, saying 'kus, kus', a formula still used in clan rituals. Then he sent them home to lie together and children were born who took the spirit of the river where the python lived as their tutelary spirit. The python is taboo to them; it must not be killed, and must be buried in a white cloth if it is found dead. He adds that the phallic symbolism of the snake is clear, as in Genesis.

Another myth of origin an informant, Nana Kwame Wusu, Akwamuhene of Tanoboase, told the researcher is about the origin of 'yam', a staple food of some of the Akan people. During 'afahye' (yam festival) at Techiman, the elders usually talk of '*deɛ Kofi a ne ti firi Mangye*' which means "Yam Kofi which originated from Mangye." The researcher inquired about how they came to address yam thus and, the elder told the following story: In the ancient time there was no yam in the state. People fed on wild roots and fruits from the forest. It happened that a serious famine broke out at Mangye and claimed many lives including the life of the chief. On his death bed, the chief promised his people that he would send them food after his death (from the ancestral world). He died and was buried in the sacred bush.

The following year there was copious rainfall and new plants sprouted from the soil. During the annual funeral celebration of the chief, the relatives and the people went to his grave to pour libation and to remind him of his promise. To their surprise they found a new type of creeping plant covering the grave. They tried to clear it off, but they found that it had developed some big tubers. The deity of the town was consulted and it disclosed to the people that the chief had fulfilled his promise. The tubers were dug out after they had fully matured; some were cooked and eaten and the rest were cultivated in mounds or beds like the grave. Gradually it multiplied and became the staple food of the state. The annual commemoration of the new-found-food was instituted during the harvest time that coincided with the annual funeral rite of the memorable chief. This festival is called *Afahye* as Rattray describes in his book: 'Ashanti'. *Afahye* - celebration of *Fa*-festival, and '*hyɛ*' means celebrate. Therefore *hyɛ fa* means celebrate a festival. To

make a noun out of *hye fa*, a prefix 'a' is added to form the noun '*Afahye*' celebration of a festival.

This myth is an example of the Africans' belief and conviction that the ancestors show concern for their living relatives and the state ancestors also show concern for the welfare of the state. The ancestors, in Akan worldview, are not treated as deities but as relatives on the other side of the world who can plead with God on their behalf because they are in the spiritual world and are therefore nearer God or the supernatural powers than the living. There is no trace of fear in the Akan veneration of the ancestors. The relationship is cordial because they are regarded as senior members in the spiritual realm, and they do not punish their living member, it is the gods who make their wishes known to the families or clans concerned and punish them on behalf of the ancestors when they go wrong.

4.4 WORSHIP AMONG THE BASOTHO

Worship is a universal religious phenomenon therefore the Basotho religion is not without worship. What constitutes worship in general has been discussed in 4.1 therefore we will go ahead with Basotho worship. The Basotho unlike the Akan of Ghana do not have any symbolic representation of the Supreme Being such as a shrine like the Akan *Nyamedua*, which serves as the altar of God, nor do they have an ancestral shrine like the blackened stools of the Akan. Informants told the researcher that Basotho use the tomb as shrine for the *balimo* and prayers and offerings are made on the grave. One informant Ntate Tšokolo 'Musu said the spear of a dead man placed in the house could serve as a shrine because it is the indication of his presence in the house.

Worship permeates the traditional life of the Basotho. It forms part of their life activities. Traits of worship can be identified during harvest in the field, during rites of passage such as birth, initiation, marriage and funerals. Worship includes prayer, rituals, sacrifice and offerings. The Basotho do not have deities in the form of '*abosom*' of Ghana but some people possess '*muti*' or '*thakhisa*' like the '*suman*' charm' of the Akan people. Worship

is also performed during divination and the ritual for calling back home the spirit of a newly dead man; and when a person has to propitiate or appease his ancestor - who has been appearing in his dreams.

4.4.1 RITUALS:

Basotho traditional religion is not without rituals. Their social activities are punctuated with sacred rituals that reveal their religiousness. Like all other Africans, one cannot separate a purely social or profane activity from a spiritual or sacred one, because religion permeates the whole social fabric of the Basotho. Rituals play important role in the religious life of the Basotho from cradle to grave. The potency of a ritual lies in the strict adherence to the sequential order to be followed, failure of which would render the whole ritual powerless or ineffective. There are sacred rituals for all the rites of passage without which a Mosotho cannot regard himself or herself as a true Mosotho.

Stephen J Gill (1993:53), writing about Basotho rituals, says that like most people all over the World the Southern Sotho periodically felt the need to purify themselves or their kin from various forms of pollution and defilement to make sacrifices to the spirits so as to put things right, and to strengthen themselves or their houses, fields and animals so as to ensure prosperity, fecundity, and so forth or alternatively to ward off forces and bad medicine.

To the Sotho, like the Akan, the Community Welfare is as important as individual welfare, hence the need to purify themselves and their kin and even domestic animals from various forms of pollution, and defilement through ritual healing by making ritual sacrifices to appease the gods, their ancestors, so that everything will be in perfect harmony. In ritual healing there is the need to ward off bad people and or bad medicine known in West Africa as *juju* and *thakhisa* in Sotho and '*adu-bōne* bad medicine among the Akan people.

According to Casalis, there were five modes of purification, namely: by sacrifice proper, by inoculation, by ablution, by sprinkling and by fire.

Gill (1993:53) adds that purification was needed after coming into contact with a corpse, after killing someone in battle, after childbirth etc. Sometimes it involved washing or bathing with certain herbs or medicines, while at other times fumigation was employed. Purification rituals abound in Africa.

Justinus Sechefo (s.a: 14 -15) also says the Basotho have a ritual for a sick person whose case has been critical. This ritual is known as 'expiation to the gods for the sick.' When a young man who has been sick for a length of time shows no sign of recovery, the Basotho pray for him to try to appease the wrath of the departed ancestors who are the gods.

A sheep, which has remained tied up for some time during the day, is killed for him in the evening. First of all the sheep is led walking to the bed of the dying person and is shown to him by others. With doleful expressions they say: Behold this is your beast, by which we pray for you. 'O! You ancestors who are our gods, we beseech you, dip your hands for us in cold water, so that our sick man may find good sleep, and arise from his sickness. May it be that on our coming here next morning, we find him sitting up, sipping some porridge. May his sickness now depart with us.' Generally, the earnest compassionate hearts of all, sooner or later do the dying man well.

He adds that there is another ritual for the release of the aged sick man who has been sick for a length of time without improving or dying, but continuing to suffer hopelessly, to release him from his suffering by giving him something substantial, '*a ne hoe ntho*'; like sheep as provision for his journey.

This animal, is brought towards the evening near the deathbed of the unconscious man, and in a loud voice, into his ears, he is told, 'herewith is thy food of which we give thee! The animal is instantly killed by piercing it with the '*lehlabo*' basket needle under the armpit. Before everything else is done, the liver is hastily taken out and roasted on fire.

Then he is given only a small piece of it, which is pressed hard between his stiffened teeth - in this way he eats his last and farewell supper.

It is not uncommon that the suffering patient with piteous request will exclaim. 'O! You hearted people do release your hearts, and let me go.' Then his family are asked to come by his bedside and to express their willingness to part with him. They, though with feelings of sorrow, agree to let him go. The lingering tough man will gradually and quietly pass away. All the meat must be cooked and entirely consumed by the family on the same day. No portions of it should remain uncooked for the following day.

A funeral ritual known as a feast provided for the friends and relatives who have come for the funeral is called *Mohoha*. According to strict custom, a beast called *Mohoha*, pure black cow/bull and of the same sex and approximately the age of the deceased is killed. If this cannot be afforded, a sheep or goat will do instead. This meat is cooked and distributed in the usual manner and no particular observances mark this as a special occasion. Beer should also be provided. Much of the food and drink may be consumed before the funeral actually takes place so that visitors can reach home before dark.

The *mohoha* is said to be the deceased's "companion" on his journey to the ancestral world. According to some people, it furnishes him with a blanket to cover his nakedness in the next world.

A story about the origin of this custom according to Ashton (1952:107-108) runs like this:

A rich man died and was buried like other people. After a time, his spirit returned and became a ghost, and went to his cattle and opened the kraal at night. However hard the people tried to keep them in, they always broke out. So they ran to a diviner. He went into his medicine hut and anointed himself with the foam of the medicines in the hut, and then he came out and said, "Alas, alas, a great man has died, a rich proud man. The gods have refused to allow him into their village, saying he was too proud and arrogant for them to let him in. And so his spirit has returned to his cattle for shelter." So they appealed to him to advise them what to do. He retired to his medicine hut, and they remained outside, amazed at this unprecedented happening.

Then he came out again to them and said, "Do this tomorrow, early in the morning, take his biggest ox, kill it and skin it quickly, and before you have finished skinning it take out the stomach and the second stomach and from the little pocket in the first... take the cud that has not been chewed. Then as the sun rises, sing his praises, spit on this cud and throw it on his grave." They did so and the cattle were quiet forever after. People say this beast attracts (hohela) the dead to the dead.

4.4.2 SACRIFICE AND OFFERING

Sacrifice and offering constitute an important aspect of Basotho religious acts. At birth, initiation, marriage and funeral the immolation of an animal as a sacrifice for the ancestors and the communal meal that follows solemnize the occasion. Constant reunion with the ancestors through communal meal during sacrifice strengthens the cordial relationship of the family and the community with their ancestors.

Offerings take the form of snuff, grains, locally brewed beer, tobacco, blankets and some implements. The items were usually offered during burial ceremonies. Offerings are usually meant to ease one's journey to the land of the dead and to enable him to settle and begin life there.

The Basotho, like the Akan and other Africans, make sacrifices during periods of crisis such as war, epidemic or when somebody is seriously sick to appease the balimo, who might have been offended, to iron out the differences so that cordiality may prevail.

Klaus Nürnberger (1975:180-181) observes that there is no prayer and no sacrifice directed towards *Modimo*. There is no shrine and no priesthood. There is no attempt of mediation on the side of the diviner. There is no ritual of any sort, whether in terms of religion or magic. There are no taboos that are unambiguously connected with *Modimo* himself. Being confronted with *Modimo* the only possible reaction of man is acquiescence. Acquiescence, he continues, is a sort of fatalism, but it is limited to the sphere of reality that lies beyond the comprehension and influence of man. It is not absolute; neither can it be equated with despondency. Normally the Mosotho is confident

that sooner or later the unforeseen impact of *Modimo* will subside. So he just marks time until normal life continues.

The researcher agrees with Nürnberger's observation and would add that lack of enough concrete evidence of the proof of Basotho knowledge and acknowledgement of *Modimo* makes it difficult to take a stand on the issue. The native scholars themselves are of diverse opinions on the issue. But as Nürnberger observes, one can say that *Modimo* influence is not completely absent in Basotho worldview.

D.F.Ellenberger (1992:256-258) has divided sacrifice into two groups: namely obligatory sacrifices and voluntary oblations. He says that obligatory sacrifices are those demanded by use and custom, and voluntary sacrifices are offered under special circumstances. The obligatory sacrifices are: when a woman became pregnant a sheep was sacrificed in order to render the gods propitious to her; the skin of the animal was dressed and made into an apron, which served to screen her from witchcraft. At the birth of the child the father offered another sheep, by virtue of which he took formal possession of the child and placed it under the special protection of the family gods. On the recovery of the mother, he again had to offer a sheep, the skin of which was made into *thari* (a portable cradle), in which the mother would carry the infant on her back. On circumcision of a child, of either sex, the father had to offer a sacrifice. When a girl was declared nubile, another sheep had to be offered, to place her under the care of the ancestors. At every marriage an ox had to be sacrificed by the father of the bride, so that the ancestors might look favourably on the marriage. When a person died, an ox called *khomo ea mohoba* (ox of purification) was offered at the grave not for the benefit of the defunct, but for the purification of all his relations and those who might have become defiled by contact with the corpse in the course of the obsequies. When contemplating a war like expedition the chief offered a sacrifice in order to make his warriors invulnerable. The preparation included inoculation.

Obligatory offerings were also made at harvest time to thank the gods for the good harvest. After the grain was thrashed and sifted, it was left in a heap on the threshing-

floor. It was necessary, before it could be touched, to proceed with a religious ceremony, which recalls the offering made, by the Israelites to Jehovah of the first fruits of the earth. The owners of the grain brought to the threshing-floor a new pot, and boiled some grain in it. When it was cooked, some handfuls of it were thrown on the heap with these words: ‘ *Ahe melimo, le hosasane le re fe bohobe* ’ (Thanks, gods tomorrow also give us bread). This having been said, the year’s crop was accounted pure and fit for use. Again, in the centre of the threshing floor each Mosotho made a hole twelve or fifteen inches in depth and diameter; and all the grain, which in threshing fell into this hole, was the portion of the household gods. It was called *mabele a leoa* (the fallen grain). Immediately afterwards this grain was made into beer (*joala*), which was offered in the evening to the household gods without being strained. It was left for their use during the night as a drink offering, and in the morning the family and neighbours assembled to drink “what the gods had left,” when it had been strained by the hostess before the arrival of the guests.

Voluntary sacrifices, on the other hand, include sacrifices on the occasion of illness, in order to invoke the gods in favour of the invalid and protect him from any magic, which might militate against the efforts of the doctor who had been called to cure him. On the reconciliation of two enemies, especially two chiefs, the sacrifice of a white ox was the correct thing, its colour being emblematic of the state of their hearts. On the occasion of two individuals contracting a close friendship, an ox was killed and they rubbed each other’s bodies with the *mosoang*. This was equivalent to an oath. In times of drought the rainmaker prescribed the number and kind of victims required by the rain gods. And when dead ancestors appeared to the living in dreams voluntary sacrifice is made to expiate their guilt.

Sacrifices in Basotho religion are not made to any deity other than the ancestors whom they call their gods, and even with the ancestors there are no shrines like the blackened stools of the dead chiefs of the Akan people. So sacrifices to the ancestors are usually not performed before any shrine and from the records at hand so far there is no evidence of formal presentation of a sacrificial victim to a deity before the immolation, except in the case of expiation sacrifice mentioned by Sechefo and cited under rituals. Even in that

case the presentation was done before the dying or sick person not the ancestors or a deity.

However, the importance of sacrifice in Basotho cultural milieu is not to be underestimated. This is what Rev. Stan Nussbaum (1984:54) says about Sesotho culture concerning sacrifice:

In Sesotho culture the most meaningful gift that can be presented is an animal for slaughter. Animals are still for many Africans, the nearest and dearest of possessions. A person identifies with his animals in such a way that he gives himself by giving his animal. He may do this for the ancestors at a wedding or funeral, for a special guest who comes for a visit, or on various other occasions. Such a gift shows the respect the giver has for the recipient as well as the desire to cement a harmonious relationship. It differs in kind from any other gift, which may be made.

Nussbaum (1984:58) adds that in Sesotho custom killing an animal for someone is sharing par excellence, and concludes that killing an animal to make a feast for the hungry is a sacrifice pleasing to God and should be called exactly that. But he adds that his claim is that the killing of an animal is a sacrifice only in the spiritual sense, but not in the ritual sense. One wonders what Nussbaum means by the latter claim. Is he saying that spiritual sacrifices are devoid of rituals? Is he saying that Christian religious practices are without rituals? What does he actually see wrong with rituals? The Catholic mass is said to be a sacrifice/offering to God but it is full of rituals. It follows a certain order and the same procedure. Again there are differences in prayer and attire for the different seasons of the year. So ritual forms part of religious and secular activities. And there is nothing wrong with ritual per se. It is the motive behind it that will render it good or bad.

He says that slaughter in connection with a baptism or wedding is a social obligation not perceived as connected to God, and that in form the sacrifice resembles a ritual sacrifice in that animal is killed, but beyond that the event is absolutely stripped of all ritual elements. There is no specific type of animal which must be used, no set time of day, no set prayers, no order of service, no priestly status required of the sacrificer, no use of the blood, no temple or altar, no burning or other direct presentation of the animal to God or

the spirits, and no guaranteed immediate benefit for the sacrificer. Such an event simply does not qualify as a ritual sacrifice.

The researcher does not totally agree with this assertion in that in African perspective there is no purely profane or social purpose of a sacrifice. Even though he is talking from Christian point of view, it would be noted that in African perspective his assertion would have double interpretation. The slaughter and the spill of blood renders it ritualistic, otherwise the meat could have been purchased from a butchery and, though the purpose of the sacrificer is to feed the poor, implicitly he is thanking God for a 'good harvest' that has made it possible for him to be generous. The recipients would also be grateful to the sacrificer and God and the *balimo* for being fed. Moreover an explicit ritual sacrifice does not render it unwholesome for consumption by beggars and the poor who could be invited to the service to share the meal as a communion with God, Christ and the *balimo*. The sacrifice cannot be purely social or secular in African sense, because in African perspective, there is no strict dichotomy between the secular and the sacred, therefore by turning it purely social is making it traditional and, whichever way is acceptable to God.

Gill (1993:53) says that sacrifices, were needed to show honour toward, or to appease, the spirits of the "living dead", which are often referred to in other literature as the "departed ones" or the "ancestors." The ritual killing of an ox, sheep, goat or chicken was also performed in thanksgiving for good fortune, or to solemnise many important family occasions such as marriage and burial. In all such cases the feast would be held in the presence of the "ancestors" and this usually required the brewing of beer as well.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:111-112) also says that sacrifices have at one time or other been regarded as sacred activities. Since religious phenomena are not usually defined in terms of the sacred and the profane, it is not easy to classify some ancestral sacrifices as hierophanies. The question remains, however, whether the dichotomy of the sacred and profane is valid in the case of the African idea of cosmic totality. He adds that traditional sacrifices of the Basotho awaken the mental states of the worshippers. And that their significance and reasons for existence is not what people say or do but what they reveal.

Their importance lies not in their materialistic appearance or visible descriptions but the visible, spiritual, internal and moral regeneration, which these acts and gestures bring about in the life of performers or worshippers. The sacred value lies not in the acts performed but in the faith that people express. The value of ancestral sacrifices lies not in what is done, whether it is good or bad, scientific or irrational, real or mythical, but in African thought, intentions and consciousness.

The above contentions show that the Basotho religion is not without sacrifice as a religious phenomenon and that it is a major means of expressing their religiousness.

4.4.3. PRAYER:

Widdicombe (1891: 60) asserts that the Basotho, in common with the other Bantu tribes, believe that the spirits of their ancestors interfere in their daily affairs and influence their destiny. Accordingly they endeavour to worship and propitiate them with prayers, incantations, sacrifices and offerings. Such worship as they render to these departed spirits is based on fear; love does not enter into it. Yet Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:93-94) says *balimo* are essentially good although they can threaten and punish humans whenever tradition and custom are not followed. Manyeli (1992:30-31) adds that the word *Molimo* that is used for the divinity is found explicitly in some prayers of the Basotho. One of them quoted by Fr. Laydevant on account of its importance is profitable to quote completely.

*Molimo ak'u utloe, rea rapela,
Molimo o mocha rapela oa khale.
Se rapele 'na, rapela melimo,
Melimo bo-nkhono ba llela matlala
Matlala ba a bona kang ba shoele?
Ba bona ka paka tsa mabitla.*

The English translation is as follows: -

*God hear us, we pray
New God pray the Ancient one
Do not pray to me, pray to the gods
The gods 'our grandmothers' desire
animal sacrifice
How do they see animal sacrifice because
they are dead?
They see them through cracks between the
tombs.*

<i>Ho itsoe shoe-shoe, ho iloe kae?</i>	<i>Everybody is dead, where have they gone?</i>
<i>Ho iloe ha sekoti ha se tlale, Sa ho lla lichaba.</i>	<i>They have gone to the bottomless pit, which gather all nations</i>
<i>Ha le rapele lea saoa</i>	<i>You are not praying seriously you are joking.</i>
<i>Ke Molimo oa eng, ha e le Motingoana?</i>	<i>Who dwell on the mountain slopes</i>
<i>Ba metse e methating.</i>	<i>Children of the father of the saviour</i>
<i>Bana ba Ra-Moloki</i>	<i>Father of the saviour with sacred hands</i>
<i>Ra-Moloki liatla li maroba,</i>	<i>It is a minor god that believes in witches</i>
<i>E le Motingoanyana oa tumela baloi</i>	<i>They are welcoming to the people</i>
<i>Sa ho lla lichaba.</i>	<i>Because they have created us.</i>
<i>Li entsoe ke ho re bopa.</i>	

Lesaoana Manyeli analyses this prayer by saying that the word *Molimo* which means currently God or rather which has been used to mean God appears seven times in this prayer and that in first, second and twelfth lines, it appears in the singular form of *Molimo*. In the third and fourth lines it appears in plural form of *Melimo* and in the twelfth and thirteenth lines, it appears in the diminutive form “*Motingoana*’ which means little god. This prayer, which is used at the initiation school, is full of jargons that can be understood by only the initiated Basotho who, by the rules of the lodge, are not allowed to explain to the uninitiated. The wording of the prayer indicates that it is addressed to the ancestors. The petition or request is not identifiable from the layman point of view.

Manyeli (1992:32) cites another prayer from Laydevant, which was said by sterile women in order to receive the blessing of motherhood:

Molimo a ku utloe rea rapela
O! God listen we are praying
Ntili o bitsoa ka balimong
Ntili is called by the Ancestors
Molimo ak’u utloe, rea rapela
O God listen we are praying.

Here too the name Molimo appears twice in the singular form in the first and the last lines and in the plural form *balimong* in the second line. It is not clear whether the prayer is addressed to God or the ancestors. And the petition is not stated.

There are other prayers cited in the ritual section in which the ancestors are addressed such as in the expiation to the gods for the sick person found in Sechefo (s.a: 14). 'Behold this is your beast, by which we pray for thee; O ye our ancestors who are our gods, we beseech you, dip your hands in the cold water, so that our sick man may find good sleep, and arise from sickness. May it be that on our coming here next morning, we find him sitting up sipping some porridge. May his sickness now depart with us!'

Unlike the two prayers cited above, the researcher is able to identify the invocative and request aspect in this prayer. The ancestors are being invoked to come and assist with the recovery of the sick person. Though the Supreme Being is not mentioned here, it is implied; as the ancestors are the intermediaries of the Basotho, they would take their prayer to God.

In another prayer, (cited above) the *Maroko* -a sick man threatened by death; the prayer is addressed to the gods (the ancestors) on behalf of the sick person: "May thou speedily recover, o thou Mokoena, Mofokeng, Motaung" etc, according to the clan of the sick man. "We pray that thou may have a good sleep."

Guma (1967: 114) also gives example of prayer for rain that is addressed to specific ancestors:

Tsholwane wee, re batla pula!
Helele! Pulae kae?
Morena re fe pula
Helele, Tsholwane pula e kae?
Re sala ka mehla re nyorilwe,
Le dikgomo di nyorilwe

Tsholwane we want rain
Hail! Where is rain?

*Chief, please give us rain.
Hail! Tsholwane! Where is rain?
Every day we remain thirsty,
And the cattle too are thirsty.
Tsholwane, where is rain?*

4.4.4 SONGS

Songs as part of worship in Basotho religious practices need not be overemphasised. They love music and are gifted in it. Almost all their prayers, both in the initiation lodge and outside are songs. Most of the prayers mentioned under 4.4.3 are sung. But the researcher could not find an occasional song in praise of the Supreme Being during maybe initiation, birth, marriage, death or installation of a chief. Setiloane (1976: 81-82) quotes a song from Casalis sung at a funeral:

*We are left outside,
We are left for trouble
We are left for tears
Oh, if there were in heaven a place for me!
Why have I not wings to fly there
If a strong cord hung down from the sky
I would cling to it; I would go up
I would go and dwell there.*

This song, to the researcher, sounds more Christian than traditional. Like the Akan song in 4.2.4 the researcher believes that it was an adulteration of the traditional belief with some Christian beliefs, because heaven does not exist in Basotho cosmology. "Leholimo", if anything at all is the dwelling place of Molimo. In an African traditional religious milieu, no man hopes to go to heaven. The Basotho believed in the subterranean world. All their legends and myths link to the subterranean world.

Setiloane (1976: 81) quotes this song to support his view that although the dead were buried in the ground, they were known also to go to 'legodimo', where the biologically living would never go. D.F.Ellenberger (1992: 299-300) calls it mourning hymn and adds that according to Mr.Arbusset, the hymn was formally particularly popular with the

afflicted widows, who were in the habit, when some one died, of meeting in an open space in the town to sing it in chorus. He adds that the desolate widow adds these lamentations:

*Oh! Foolish woman that I am,
When evening comes I open my window,
I listen in silence, I watch,
I fancy that he returns. (Her husband).*

There are other additions that readers can find in his book. Casting our minds back to Sesotho traditional belief about life after death and the subterranean world, Guma (1967:8) asserts that there is a type of story that deals with man's visit to the underworld from which he usually returns safe and sound. Unlike the Greek mythology where the underworld is radically different from that of the living, in that it is dark and gloomy place peopled by untouchables, in Southern Sotho mythology it is similar to this world. The only difference is that it is a place of plenty, in which various commodities of this life are found in abundance. The inhabitants of both worlds may even exchange visits as in the myths. In this connection, it may perhaps be added that to this day, a Mosotho in a serious trouble from which he would like an instant escape, usually says he felt like saying, "*Lefatshe buleha ke kene*"(Earth, open that I may go in). The foregoing assertion, the researcher believes, is a true reflection of Basotho belief. On this note, the researcher would like to affirm that the above song is either completely a Christian hymn or a traditional song that has been adulterated with Christian beliefs.

4.5 OTHER BASOTHO RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

4.5.1 MAXIMS

Maxims are also means of showing a people's belief in God and their religions in general. The Basotho maxims are not totally devoid of religious expressions. In the collections by Guma (1967:84-87), the researcher found few examples of Basotho maxims that have religious connotations: *Pha-badimo o ja nabo*: he who gives the gods eats with them, *Motse ho aha wa morapeli*. A successful home is that of a pious man, *Bohlale ha bo hahe*

ntlo e nngwe, science and religion know no bounds. An informant also supplied the following maxims: *khomo ke molimo o nko e metsi*, the cow is a god with watery nose. This refers to the cow, the most valued possession of Basotho. It is used to form people (in marriage) and other rituals and sacrifices are not without cattle. *'Molimo ha fe motho ka letsoho,*' the fortune from God will not be placed in your hand. This is like Heaven helps those who help themselves. There seems to be less reflection of the Basotho concept of God or the divine in their maxims. In the researchers view the maxim above which is translated as, 'A successful home is that of a pious man;' reveals that the Basotho, like other Africans, look up to God for a successful life here and now. By leading a pious life they hope to create a harmonious cosmology for success.

4.5.2 SOCIAL EXPRESSIONS

In ordinary daily life people's speech and activities reflect their beliefs and philosophy, and their concept of the divine is not an exception in such cases. The Basotho express their religiousness in their day-to-day activities and speech. Nürnberger records some examples in this respect: The statement '*ke Modimo*' it is God, which implies: 'there is nothing to be done about it.' Or God is there, we cannot do anything, '*Modimo o gona, ga re kgone selo!* If the phrase: *Modimo o gona!* is used alone, it has the connotation of 'God is in charge now!' and there is a certain ray of hope that the equilibrium of power will be restored in some way or other.

Nürnberger (1975:182) says that an afflicted person who has no means of personal revenge would say: *Modimo o tle go bona!* Which means 'God will see you! "In the sense of God will catch up with you." This is a sort of curse, which invokes a dynamistic power-equilibrium against the culprit. Casalis says that if anyone is struck dead by lightning, no murmur is heard and tears are suspended. 'The Lord has killed him' they say, he is doubtless, rejoicing, let us be careful not to disturb his joy. Conversely the Akan regard this act as an omen. Being killed by lightning is interpreted as a sort of punishment from God because one has committed some hidden crime for which God is

punishing the culprit. It is categorised as bad death and renders the culprit unqualified to be an ancestor.

Concerning lack of naming children after God or in connection with the name of God among the Sotho-Tswana, Setiloane explains by saying that it is a sign of respect not to call a person by the name of God. Conversely the Akan see it as a sign of gratitude to God for answering their prayer and granting their request, especially, in the case of parents with childbirth problems. For example, as cited above, *Nyamekye* means “God’s gift” and *Nyameama* means “god has given.” It should be noted that in this case, it is only the common name of God, which is used not the honorific names like *Nyankopōn*, *Twieduampōn* or *Odomankoma*. This practice of incorporating God’s name in the names of children to show gratitude or praise is not peculiar to the Akan people. According to Mbiti (1970:213) other African peoples such as the Azande, Burundi and Nuer do it. The Israelites also did it. For example according to Steinmuellar and Sullivan (1955:309&1077&1978) they had such names as *Eliab*-Yahweh is God, *Eliab*-God is a father, *Thobias* - Yahweh is good; in Greek we have a name like *Theodotos*-given by God.

Even though the Basotho do not incorporate the name of God in individual names, they have such names as Thapelo-‘Prayer’ and Tumelo-‘Faith’ which the researcher feels are equally religious.

4.5.3 MYTHS

Myths play important role in Basotho religion. They are used to express the concept of the divine and Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:147) asserts that myths are a way of contemplating the universe. They are explanations of what meets the eye and what is beyond the reach of human observation and knowledge through the external senses of sight, hearing, smelling, taste and touch. They are explanations of mysterious existence, activities, life and related problems.

Myth thus expresses human attempt to explain the mysterious in nature. It tried to make the existing structure of the universe understandable in the pre scientific era. Guma (1967:2) also asserts that myth is a tale, and in the original sense of the Greek word *muthos*, any tale would be a myth because it would be an oral communication. It professes to relate some happening in which supernatural beings are concerned and probably in so doing to offer an explanation of some natural phenomenon. He adds that a definition of a myth as laid down by the Folk-lore Society of London, quoted by Professor Alice Werner is: "A story told to account for something." He says that from these definitions it is clear that a myth is a sort of answer that primitive man had to find in an attempt to explain or account for the numerous questions that baffled him. His answers to the mysteries of life and death, love and hatred etc. took the form of a story, which is generally referred to as a myth.

The Basotho, like the Akan and many Africans, believe in the subterranean world. They have many myths about this underworld to impress the belief on posterity. However, there are no myths of creation or the fall of man.

One such myth about the subterranean world, given by Manyeli (1995:153), is that of *Kumonngoe*: a certain woman named *Thakane* refused to surrender her baby to the chief cannibal who killed all female babies of the tribe. While she was contemplating drowning the baby, an old woman who lived in a village situated below the river's pool saved the baby. She lived and raised the baby until it was initiated in the underground village. *Thakane* used to visit her daughter regularly. The old woman lived in a village inhabited by a large number of people. This story seems incomplete because we are not told whether the girl returned to the mother or remained in the subterranean world. However the import is that there is an underworld where people live after they have died.

Another subterranean myth in Manyeli (1995:156) is about *Marutlalitau* who married *Seholoba* and their marriage was blessed with a boy *Mosito* and a girl *Thakane*. This girl was deceived by her peers while they were playing. On account of that deception she threw her beaded loincloth into a pool. She was so disappointed when her peers

recovered their beaded loin-cloths from their hiding place that she ran away because she was ashamed to go back to the village naked. Finally she came to a lake where she was advised by a frog to obey orders of an old woman monster that she would meet. When all was said and done according to predicted orders the old woman led her to a subterranean village where they lived together with another girl peacefully until the initiation period. Out of desperation *Thakane* follows advice given by the frog and ends up in a peaceful and happy life in the underworld. This reveals Basotho belief in the ancestral world, which is also believed to be an underworld, and the hope of receiving help from them in times of crisis provided they create harmonious atmosphere between them and their ancestors.

Another myth mentioned briefly in chapter 3. but needs comments here is the *kholumo-lumo*, in which *moshanyana wa Senkatana* appeared as a mysterious hero/supernatural being to save his people from the monster *Kholumo-lumo* and was eventually killed by his ungrateful people. Guma (1967:9) adds that there is an interesting analogy that some informants drew between the story of *Senkatana* and that of Christ. A few old men in the Roma valley of Lesotho insisted on it. According to them the snake in the Garden of Eden is the *Kholumo-lumo*, which they also equate with sin. The sole woman survivor who bore *Senkatana* is the Virgin Mary, and *Senkatana* himself, the slayer of *kholumo-lumo*, i.e. sin, is Jesus Christ.

The researcher appreciates this analogy but would like to add that some Africans lack originality and hence attribute deeds to people other than themselves. Maybe this is due to inferiority complex. The *kholumo-lumo* myth may be a story of an ancient hero of a clan who delivered his people from some calamity which is coincidentally similar to the life history of Jesus Christ, but it cannot be Christ himself because before the advent of Christianity in Lesotho, the Basotho like all other Africans did not know anything about Christ. And from all indications this myth might have existed long before the advent of the missionaries.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:33-37), however, asserts that it was rather the missionaries who thought that the story had a Christian origin. He too does not agree with the above assertion because in the myth there are brutes. He goes further to cite examples of similar myths from Persians, pagans of Egypt, and Greek mythology. He adds that the *kholumo-lumo* myth does not have a Christian origin because pagans had myths of the same kind before Christ; and it simply shows the need that primitives had to communicate with divinities in a human manner, and how man expected his salvation or his participation of the divine perfections by the help of a divinity who would take a human form. This intimates, a remote preparation of the human race to perceive supernatural revelation. It intimates of universal activity of the divine pedagogy in view of the historical salvation by Christ but Christ does not fit into the African religious milieu.

The Basotho have a myth about how death came into the world. Ashton (1952:100-101) says that in the days of old there was a chief whose son was called Leobu. This chief heard that his people were distressed. He called his son but a servant of the chief was present; he heard when the chief was giving orders to his son to go and tell his people that they would die and rise again.

Leobu went; but the servant, whose name was Khatoane, went ahead of him and told the chief's people that it was said that men should die and not rise again. He went to the villages and hamlets telling the people his false message.

Afterwards, the Chief's son Leobu arrived. He said, "My Father says that I should tell you that men shall die and rise again." They said, "No! The first message is the message that we hear, that which comes afterwards is but mere talk." Leobu said, "No! I must tell you what the Chief said, that man shall die and rise again."

The people refused, saying, "No! We don't know you, we have listened to Khatoane's message: he said that men should die and not rise again, as for your message we do not believe it. The first message is the first message. That is where we stand, for the message which comes afterwards is but mere talk." Therefore men died and remained dead.

So death, the ending of corporeal existence is accepted as normal and inevitable. As the saying is: *lebitla ke mosima o sa tlaleng* - the grave is a pit, which never fills.

4.5.4 SYMBOLISMS

Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:58) writes that it is hard to admit that the Basotho were ignorant of the symbolisms of all their rites and ceremonies. He adds that Casalis does not only admit the existence of religious symbols in the religion of the Basotho but also gives the signification of some of them.

The horn, a symbol of power and confidence to the Basotho, Manyeli (1992:58-59) asserts, was a symbol of power and force among the Israelites. The bull and the horn were often used as signs of power. Not only among the Israelites did the bull symbolise power; in Akadian breaking the horn is equivalent to destroying power.

Manyeli (1992:59) adds that in magico-ancestral religions such as we find among the Basotho, the horn was used to express the same symbolism. It was used in public purification ceremonies. At the outbreak of an epidemic its contents were dissolved in water, which was used to sprinkle the people and their property as a means of protection. To establish power and authority on solid basis a chief used the horn. This power of the horn stimulated certain reactions in the Basotho. One of these reactions was confidence. The ancient Basotho placed their trust in the horn because they expected help from it. They believed that with the horn they could resist attacks of enemies, expel all misfortune and avoid evil. On account of this the horn was something attractive. It was guarded with care and respected. It was not a common object. It manifested a holy power.

The 'horn', from the above assertion, as a symbol of hope, confidence and power was respected and feared because of its content and what it was believed to be capable of doing for the people. Devoid of its content, but as part of the bull, it is still a defensive and protective weapon for the bull. Among the Akan the horn stuffed with concoction for

strengthening and protective measures is part of *suman-fetish* or *thakhisa*. Horns and elephant tusks are also used as musical instruments blown to praise chiefs and kings of the Akan. Hence horns and elephant tusks and elephant tails form part of the chief's paraphernalia. Here too the horn and the tusk chosen as musical instruments for the chief are significative of power. Not all chiefs among the Akan have the right to use the tusk but all can use the horn of the bull or other beasts. It should be borne in mind that there are better other native musical instruments that can replace the horns but they are preferable because of their symbolisms.

Similarly other materials or containers could have been used as the receptacle for the powerful concoctions of the Basotho but the horn of the bull was chosen because it is itself a symbol of power and the ingredients go to reinforce the power of the horn.

4.5.4.1 WATER AS A SYMBOL OF PURIFICATION

Water as a symbol of life, cleansing and purification is universal and most religions (if not all) historical and non-historical, modern and primitive use water for cleansing or purification and regeneration of physical and spiritual force.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:61) says that water has the quality of purifying and cleansing. In it dirt is dissolved, every uncleanliness ceases to exist. He adds that Eliade says water has the power of breaking up forms of impurities and crimes. Water, he says nullifies the past and restores the integrity of the being. What is immersed in it disappears and "dies" in a way; by emersion it rises from it clean, innocent and rid of its dirt. Having lost its impurities it begins life anew. For the Basotho it could be a purifying element from the unlucky presence of the dead, from sin and from physical uncleanliness. The ablutions were made through ritual of immersion. The ancient Basotho used water as a symbol of purification. For the pagan Basotho, water was a symbol of visible and invisible purification. Water purified physical and invisible dirt and danger of being haunted by the dead. This is what the people believed and understood by the rites of ablution. D. F. Ellenberger (1992:260) asserts that ablutions were performed on return from war. It was

absolutely necessary to purify the warriors of the blood they had shed, lest peradventure, the spirits of those they had slain might pursue them and trouble their sleep. If, as was often the case, the returning band was a larger one they would make the warriors stand in a stream, and then throw some of the mystic powder into the water higher up stream. The warriors then wash themselves and their arms with the water.

Manyeli (1992:61) quotes Eliade as saying, “immersion in water symbolises a return to the pre-existence, and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed.”

The Akan people equally use water among other things as annual purification rite for chiefs and the state gods and individuals or groups of people who might have defiled their soul “*kra*” to resuscitate its power. The rite is known as soul washing “*dware kra*” or “*kradwaree*” as discussed in this chapter.

Manyeli (1992:61) adds that on account of its life-giving capacity, water can be a symbol of regeneration. The same symbolism is found in initiation rites. Eliade says that in “initiation rituals water confers a new birth’ because it incorporates in itself all potentiality.” Initiation ceremony of the Basotho has this symbolism. Purifications are not rare in such rites.

The Akan had initiation rite for girls, cited above, known as puberty rite performed for girls entering adulthood. This rite began by carrying the nubile young woman to a stream at dawn to wash her and carry her back covered with white cloth.

The moon as a symbol of life and death: The faces of the moon depict the symbolism of life and death. It shines, wanes and disappears and then it emerges again and goes through the same process. From the ordinary African perspective that is how it appears to be doing but it does not mean that the African believes that the moon is a living thing that can die. It is only a way of describing the changing faces of the moon.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:63-64) says that the traditional Basotho women established connection between the moon and their fertility period. They thought that the moon had a direct influence or a positive role in the biological change. Their preparatory ceremonies of the “race to the moon” were performed after the first menstrual period. These associations of the moon and the period of fertility made the moon a symbol of periodic return and fecundity. Bereng (1987:18) says that the Basotho used the term she has started “observing her moon”, when a young girl is getting ripe (experiencing menstrual period).

It is observed that Basotho, like the Akan people of Ghana, use the moon to calculate the cycle of the year and they name the months according to the seasonal patterns or the activities of plant and animal life.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1992:64) says that each month was named according to the changes observed in the life of plants and animals. For example September was called *Loetse* because at that time growth of plants began, it was the sowing and raining period. Likewise, the Akan call September *Ɔbō* because during that month the atmosphere is generally cloudy and it is the minor raining season. The moon as symbol of religion among the Akan is revealed by Rattray (1955:143) who says, “the gold and silver ornaments, in the form of crescent moons, worn round the young priests’ necks have, embossed upon them the sun, the moon, and the stars.”

4.5.5 ETHICS

The researcher wishes to open this topic with Casalis (1861:302-303) assertion:

Morality among these people depends so entirely upon social order, that all political disorganisation is immediately followed by a state of degeneracy, which the re-establishment of order alone can rectify. Thus, in the mountains of Lesuto and Natal we have seen tribes, of gentle and humane habits, plunge into all the horrors of cannibalism during a season of universal confusion; and simultaneously, and almost spontaneously, abandon this kind of life as soon as a good and a wise chief sets about

reconstructing the social edifice. The sudden and premature introduction of new laws and customs, and the imposition of a strange authority, are, for the same reason equally fatal to their moral character.

He adds that in Sesotho, ugliness (*bobe, mashoe*); of damage, or deterioration (*sebe*); of a fault, or a debt (*molatu*); and of incapacity (*tsito*) represent the idea of evil. These definitions complete each other admirably. While the first shows the essence of evil, and condemns it, as ugly, disagreeable, and odious in itself, the second and the third show its natural and certain effects such as it spoils, destroys, it is a debt, a failure and demands reparation. The fourth explains its cause, the weakness of man left to his own resources. Any one of these terms is sufficient to express the idea of evil, but persons who study to speak well are careful to observe the shade of meaning, which is peculiar to each of them.

Casalis (1861:304-305) goes on to say that the idea of theft is expressed by a generic word, which refers to the violation of right, much more than to the damage caused. There is no marked difference between fornication and adultery. All illegal connections between the two sexes are generally expressed by the same word.

He says that Oaths only appear to them to be deserving of censure when used in confirming a falsehood. All the natives swear a lot; but it must be observed that the forms they use rarely bear the character of imprecation; they are generally oaths uttered lightly, and without reflection. The native generally swears by his chief (*ka morena*), by his father or mother, by the person to whom he speaks, or by the truth. The chief, on important occasions, swears by his elder sister, *mamila*. It is a delicate homage to the rights which were hers by birth, but which her sex did not allow her to enjoy.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:215) says that widows were not allowed to remarry except by levirate law. The Sesotho levirate law did not constitute essentially a second marriage or a new marriage contract, because no 'lobola' was demanded, expected or offered. Levirate law practice was an accepted licit marital union of convenience within the same family. Levirate law transferred the marital responsibility of the dead husband to his younger brother or to another member of the family. This practice was a public

acceptance of this particular individual. It legitimised all his actions in the family, providing support, raising children deciding inheritance right; all these were publicly recognised as legitimate and licit.

Where the levirate rite failed, widows were expected to remain in the family and to continue raising children for that family. The children born thereof were accepted and recognised by the family without any query, although such widowhood practice seems to contradict the clear-cut rules against adultery and extra-marital pregnancies. The Basotho explanation or defence for this practice is that the widow is a mother-to-be not a girl and she is expected to bear children; therefore there is nothing wrong.

Writing on Basotho understanding of marriage Manyeli (1995:218) says,

Another problem flows from Basotho understanding of marriage. Basotho marriage is not totally immune to abuse because the family marries a woman. She is not married to a particular individual exclusively. That is why the brothers of the husband were generally called her husbands - "ke banna ba hae." That did not mean that they had marital rights similar to those of the real husband. But the family preferred children fathered by them rather than the children fathered by strangers. Although Basotho "justified" or condoned such births by close blood relations of the husband the legal implications cannot be taken for granted. The problem of criterion of morality remains unsolved.

Manyeli (1995:219) adds that other apparent contradictions exist in the oral tradition that is known and followed by special secret groups of men and women. These contradictions look like moral customs, which are whispered and spoken, in the hush-hush fashion. Women for instance, say that a man belongs to all women "*monna ke qaati o'a lomisanoa.*" The profound meaning of this sentence is that man's sex life and activity is not restricted to his wife alone. His sex life is to be shared by other women secretly. In other words, clandestine sexual relations were an accepted way of life.

Men on the other hand, have a corresponding principle of moral custom, which declares that men share the love of a woman or that sexual relations of many men with one woman are not bad as long as the women gave one another a chance or as long as men

take turns without friction - "*li suthelana teng.*" He says the statuses of these quasi-principles are questionable. They seem to contradict the other straightforward rules that condemn fornication and adultery. Here again, one needs to identify the criterion of morality. In other words, what is the source of such a practice?

The researcher is not here to pass judgement on a people's moral code. What sounds right to a people and does not cause any conflict should be accepted as their social norm. Thus the justification of their behaviour depends on their moral code. Does natural law only constitute morality? If not then the researcher feels justified not to pass judgement on a people's accepted moral conduct.

Lesaoana Manyeli says, "*lesholu ke le tsoeroeng?*" This proverb, he continues, states that a crime is an act if proved beyond doubt by evidence. If this proverb is incorrectly and irrelevantly applied to extramarital sexual activity, written custom is completely silent. Silence on this issue may suggest that Basotho did not regard illicit intercourse as evil. He argues that if so, we are bound to examine the reaction of Basotho Society. He adds that perhaps, the general acceptance or disregard of intercourse that did not produce pregnancy offers a lead to social acceptance that gradually develops into a social criterion of morality.

Manyeli (1995:223) says that actions that did not disturb society, domestic or civil were of lesser importance. Private sexual actions, which remained private and unknown to the family, the village and the society as a whole, were neither important nor good nor bad because they had no repercussions on the family, village and society at large. It seems, therefore, that family, village and societal order was so highly regarded that actions that could disturb it called for legislation because that disturbance was judged at the outset as evil

In the account of Laydevant (1952:71) another ancient code of conduct still practised by the Basotho is a taboo called '*hlonepho*' which forbids a woman to call the name of her father-in-law under any circumstance. The natives regard this custom as a sign of reverential fear and a mark of respect. This prohibition includes the husband's uncles. On the other hand, the father-in-law and other relatives of the husband have no right to beat

or even touch their daughter-in-law. According to Laydevant this custom safeguards certain familiarities, which might lead to incest. In support of the above assertion Ashton (1952:76) says,

Between the bride and her husband's people there are numerous taboo and types of enjoined behaviour. Thus she must respect and avoid (hlonepha) the personal name of her father-in-law or other kinsmen in that clan and must call him by a special name should she inadvertently slip, she should immediately spit to drive away evil arising from this disrespect...

Ashton (1952:77-78) adds that with her husband's younger brother a woman is free and easy, sex relations between them during her husband's lifetime are less seriously regarded than other forms of adultery, provided that they are discreet. On the husband's death he should cohabit with her and look after her.

A man's relationship with his in-laws is not as complicated, or as important as his wife's, mainly because he does not often come into contact with them. He is on rather formal terms with them and between him and his in-laws, much the same type of 'avoidance' behaviour exist as between a man and his daughter-in-law.

Ashton (1952:62-63) goes on to say that marriage used to be, and to some extent still is, approached from the family standpoint. He adds that this applies especially to the wealthy and important families, particularly chiefs, and to principal wives of the senior son or sons, who are more concerned with the family's interest and traditions than are the junior sons or subordinate wives.

He says, in choosing a wife for the senior son, the family is influenced by two considerations - the girl's suitability and her family standing. She should be respectable, chaste, modest, hard working and good tempered. Her family should have a reputation for honesty friendliness and respectability and should be of at least approximately equal social and economic standing to theirs.

The chiefs and other leading families attach great importance to limiting their range of choice in view of the above point. In the case of the Paramount Chief's house there is no alternative but intermarriage. The Basotho are patrilineal therefore marriage between brother and sister is forbidden. One can, however, marry one's father's brother's daughter, and many important chiefs choose their senior wives from among these cousins.

He adds that this type of union is further encouraged by the desire to retain the marriage cattle within the family (already quoted in chapter 3), which is expressed in the couplet: Cousin, marry me so that the cattle return to the kraal. *Ngoana rangoane 'nyalle likhomo li boele sakeng.*

The second preference, according to him, goes to marriage between cross cousins. Custom demands that one's relationship with one's maternal uncle and his family should be particularly cordial, therefore marriage with his daughter is in keeping with this injunction and strengthens it.

Marriage with one's paternal aunt's daughter is also desirable for the above reasons. The next best match is with one's mother's sister's daughter. It should be noted, however, that intermarriage is opposed nowadays by some people who say that it is bad genetically because you might beget abnormal children.

Conversely as already stated the Akan of Ghana taboo all cousin and cross-cousin marriages as incest, however, one can marry one's father's sister's daughter or one's mother's brother's daughter. Since the Akan are matrilineal, these are the only cross-cousin marriages that can retain the property within the family.

With morals connected with medication, informants say that there is some form of moral regulations or discipline for both the medicine man and the patient. In certain cases one of them or both have to abstain from conjugal relations for a number of days to safeguard the potency of the prescription. During war the warriors prepare themselves with herbs, roots and *thakhisa* or *juju* and in the course of the preparation they abstain from sexual

relations with their wives. To safeguard this they sleep in the chief's *khotla*. During the war their wives should guard against infidelity and follow certain rituals such as folding the sleeping mat of the husband and leaning it against the wall. It should not be laid on the floor under any circumstance nor be allowed to fall or else the husband will die at the battlefield.

On this issue Lesaoana Manyeli (1995:238) says,

...It is worthwhile noting that a certain standard of morality was demanded as part of the prescriptions. Conjugal abstinence was often demanded, for instance, during the treatment of a barren woman, when the husband took a long hazardous journey, when the husband was in battlefield. Some missionaries classified these regulations as superstitious and magic.

This supports the view that in African perspective the sacred and the secular are interrelated, therefore the treatment of diseases has both spiritual and secular aspects, and both should be tackled in order to achieve effective cure. Goldbrunner (1964:147) asserts that the psychologist and the psychotherapist have to reckon with reality of the soul if they want to cure its diseases. Many neuroses are based primarily on the facts that, for example, the religious demands of the soul are no longer perceived, owing to a childish belief in rational enlightenment. The contemporary psychologist should know by now that religion is not merely a question of belief in dogma but an attitude, which is a psychic function of almost inconceivable significance. Again a moral code of a society does not depend on what outsiders feel or think. It depends on what the people themselves believe and uphold as good for their well-being. Therefore it is not right, the researcher feels, to pass judgement on people's moral code because by so doing he would be superimposing his or other people's moral code on others, because his judgement would be based on his background knowledge or others he has come to accept. After all it is said that if one goes to Rome one should do what Romans do.

NOTES

1. The proverbs or maxims cited here are mostly from Dankwa, *Akan Doctrine of God*. P.188ff. and Kwame Gyekye, *An essay on African Philosophical thought*. P. 76
2. Most of the social expressions are taken from Kwame Gyekye, *An essay on African Philosophical thought*. P. 71
3. Read also R S Rattray, *Ashanti*. P. 123-124. And Parrinder, G., *Religion in Africa*.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the findings from the two countries under study, namely: Ghana and Lesotho representing West Africa and Southern Africa respectively.

In the course of the study many things came to light that call for consideration. There are obviously some similarities and differences in the religious and socio-cultural phenomena in the two countries. While the similarities prove their Africanness and the universality of the religion, the differences also show that they are of different ethnic groups with different cultural and social milieus.

Comparative analysis is not an easy task. The study is within the same religion, namely African religions hence the differences may be regional and ethnic or tribal. For example, some differences may come about due to practices peculiar to Southern Africa or West Africa while others may be due to ethnicity i.e. peculiar to Basotho or Akan of Ghana.

The similarities, on the other hand, will depict practices common to Africans in general. Since it is internal comparison it will be devoid of attitudes of pride and prejudice, which is often experienced in the wider scope of comparison between different religions such as Christianity and Islam or Christianity and African religions. It is not aimed at finding out, which is right, superior or wrong. It is rather aimed at finding a common front of meeting as one people in African perspective and for the resurgence of universal African religion. It can also be developed and raised to a standard that will merit serious academic attention, especially in the institutions of higher learning.

5.2 THE SYNOPSIS OF GHANA AND LESOTHO TRADITIONAL RELIGION

5.2.1 SIMILARITIES

5.2.1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: The two countries under study are African countries inhabited by African peoples. They share some African characteristics such as black complexion, though the Basotho are much closer to light skins probably due to the cold weather. The staple food of the Basotho is maize. It is also common among the Ghanaians, though the Akan people eat mostly plantain, cocoyam, yams and cassava.

5.2.1.2 CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

There is the belief in and worship of the Supreme Being through intermediaries such as ancestors and the divinities. The native names of the Supreme Being such as *Onyankopôn* of (Ghana) and *Molimo* of (Lesotho) abound with attributes and honorific names discussed in chapter 2 and 4.

The Basotho, like the Akan of Ghana believe in the subterranean world and claim to have emerged from the ground. They believe in life after death and revere their ancestors. In fact the ancestors play a major role in their religious beliefs and practices. Sacrifices and offerings are usually made to the ancestors to create harmony with the cosmos. Both religions portray characteristics of religion of structure that is belief in salvation here and now, not hereafter.

There are some traits of divine kingship in the sense that both Basotho and the Akan of Ghana practise chieftainship. The chiefs are the custodians of the land and the religious leaders of their people; therefore they are mediators between the state ancestors and the people. Divine kingship here does not imply that the kings are gods but that they hold divine office as mediators between their subjects and the ancestors.

There is a hierarchy of administration in both chieftainships and kingdoms from the village chiefs or headmen to divisional chiefs, court officials, councillors, and the paramount chief or king. They believe that what pertains here on earth is the replica of what pertains in the cosmos; hence some scholars call the religion diffused monotheism.

5.2.1.3 BELIEF IN SPIRITS

Belief in spirits abounds in both countries' religious practices. Belief in hobgoblins (*Sasabonsam*) and dwarfs (*mmoatia/Thokolosi*) is common in both countries. They seem to be imaginary beings or some manipulative spiritual phenomena used by witches and sorcerers for their nocturnal nefarious activities.

5.2.1.4 WORSHIP

Worship in the two countries is not confined to a particular place or buildings like the Christians do. It prevails in all secular activities like: harvest, birth, marriage, funerals, initiations, farming, healing and hunting. In fact in both countries religious activities and secular ones are so intertwined that they are generally not viewed separately. Prayer, rituals, sacrifices and offerings, music, dance and divination are all expressed in worship.

5.2.1.5 MAXIMS AND SOCIAL UTTERANCES

Evidences of the concept of the divine prevail in the socio-cultural and philosophical expressions like maxims and daily utterances like greetings, sympathies and condolences. It shows that religion permeates the socio-cultural life of the people so much that it is expressed in their social expressions. Examples of these can be found in chapter 4.

5.2.1.6 MYTHS

Myths that express and explain the cosmic view of the Akan and the Basotho can be found in chapter 4. They have myths of the origin of man, the separation of God and man, beliefs in subterranean world and the origin of death.

5.2.1.7 RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

There are also some religious symbols that throw more light on the cosmic views of the two countries. They show how the people perceive God, the divinities and or the ancestors and give general purview of their philosophical concepts.

5.2.1.8 BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

Sorcery and witchcraft, which seem to be universal phenomena, abound in the two countries of study and they have similar characteristics and behaviour patterns. In both places they are known to be malevolent, destructive and full of negativity.

5.2.1.9 PRIESTS, DIVINERS AND MEDICINE MEN

These are some of the African religious agents who promote, preserve, direct and in fact perpetuate the traditional religious beliefs and practices. They are found in the two countries in one form or other. They help to cosmicize our world and promote and maintain cordial relationship with the ancestors and gods. They heal spiritual, physical and psychological diseases. People practise or apply both scientific medicines and the traditional ones concurrently for speedy recovery because they believe that most diseases have both spiritual and physical sides. There is strong belief in herbal and plant medicine for healing diseases, and plants, animals and human parts for charms.

5.2.1.10 ETHICS

In both cases religion is governed by some moral codes. The religious moral codes are the offences, which are said to be against the gods and or the ancestors. Among the Akan when such moral codes that are classified as taboos are broken sacrifices and offerings must be made to propitiate or pacify the gods and the ancestors whose wrath have been incurred.

5.2.1.11 TOTEMISM

In both countries the people are grouped into clans and they have clan totems as symbolic representation of their mode of life and philosophy. While the Basotho identify themselves as Bakoena, Bataung etc., the Akan identify themselves as Ōyoko, Aduana, Asona etc.

5.2.1.12 FOREIGN INFLUENCE

It is interesting to note that both countries were under British Colonial rule and suffered from Western political and religious influences. The effects of these influences on the traditional religion and institutions have been discussed in chapter 3. It would be noted that despite the dominance of the foreign political, social, economic and religious influences, in the two countries under study, the traditional religion managed to thrive. The tradition of claims of religious superiority, where Christianity and or Islam behaved like the Pharisee and the publican is dying down. Parrinder (1977:60) quotes the Süfi Rumi as saying, 'The lamps are different but the light is the same.' The researcher is of the view that every religion must be respected for no matter how dirty the lamp may be it holds the light. It may be cleaned and may become brighter than others.

5.2.2 DIFFERENCES

Ghana lies completely within the tropics and experiences tropical weather, which is warm throughout the year with dry and wet climatic conditions. The food crops are combination

of maize, millet, rice, plantain, cocoyam and yam. The vegetation is also a combination of tropical rain forest and Guinea Savanna, and the land is relatively plain.

The most striking relief features are the chain of ridges and escarpments bordering the broad basin drained by the Volta River. The ridges, which form the Akuapem - Volta ranges start from North of Accra, and run in a north-eastern direction. The highest peak on the ridge is Mt. Afajato, 815m.

In the account of Kyeremateng (1996:11-12) the Country is drained mainly by the Volta River, the largest and longest, and Tano, Densu, Pra and Ankobra. The dammed Volta River constitutes the largest man- made lake in the World. In terms of surface area it covers an area of 8502 square kilometers. It is navigable for about 400 km from Akosombo to Yapei in the North. The largest natural lake in the Country is Lake Bosomtwe, situated about 33km south east of Kumasi-the Asante Capital.

Lesotho, on the other hand, is completely outside the tropics and experiences temperate weather conditions. Therefore the four climatic seasons of the temperate regions, namely summer, autumn, winter and spring are experienced in Lesotho. There is sporadic snowfall in winter. The food crops are predominantly maize and millet. Pumpkin and potato are supplements.

According to Widdicombe (1891: 1-2) the vegetation is veld (grassland) and the relief is very mountainous. It is a country elevated some 6000 feet above sea level. These mountains are tossed about all over the country in endless and picturesque confusion. The country is separated from the West of Natal by the lofty range of the Drakensbergen, whose peaks range from 8000 to 10000 feet in height.

Countless rivulets drain it, brooks and springs among which are Caledon (Mohakare) Senqu and Malibatso. The climate is probably the roughest, the severest and the most bracing to be found anywhere throughout the whole continent of Africa.

5.2.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

In Ghana the belief in the existence of the Supreme Being *Onyankopōn* is without question among the Akan. There is also belief in ancestors and the lesser deities or gods. On the other hand Pula (1990:331&335) makes us aware that there is lack of uniformity in the belief, in the existence of the Supreme Being *Molimo* among the Basotho in Lesotho. They have no gods. Their ancestors are their gods. This means that the Basotho do not acknowledge the presence of lesser deities apart from the Supreme Being. Widdicombe (1891: 60) asserts that the Basotho, in common with other Bantu tribes, believe that spirits of their ancestors intervene in daily affairs, and influence their destiny. Accordingly they endeavour to venerate, worship and propitiate them with prayers, incantations and sacrifices.

5.2.2.2 ANCESTOR VENERATION

The Akan of Ghana use blackened stool '*Apunnwa*' as the ancestor shrine in state or clan worship but in private veneration the hearth and the graves are used.

There is formal regular contact between the chiefs and their ancestors on every twenty-one days on the *Kwasidae* and *Wukudae*, which alternate. On such days they offer sacrifices and pour libation to ask for their protection and blessing. On other festive days too the ancestors are remembered and revered.

The Basotho do not use shrines like the *Apunnwa* of the Akan for veneration of their ancestors but they use graves and the hearth as shrines. Contact with the ancestors occurs during rites of passage and '*Pha Balimo*' and other festive days.

5.2.2.3 SHRINE OF THE SUPREME BEING

The Akan have a shrine of God known as '*Nyamedua*' altar of God where sacrifices and offerings are made to him. It is a symbol expressing their belief in God even though he is not worshipped formally as the Christians do.

The Basotho, on the other hand, do not have any shrine or symbol of God. To them, according to Manyeli (1995:60& 140), the Supreme Being is completely otiose.

5.2.2.4 TRAITS OF ANIMISM

Sarpong (1971:10) asserts that the Akan believe that some animals and trees have spirits or are possessed by some spirits, which can be very vindictive and must be treated with caution.

Among the Basotho there is no overt trace of pure animism though they believe in the potency of some plants and animal parts including human parts for medicinal and charm purposes.

It should, however, be noted that the so called animistic traits are the identification of the sacred in the plants and animals concerned but not the plant or the animal per se that is respected or revered. Therefore the term animism sounds derogatory and presupposes misconception.

5.2.2.5 THE SUPREME BEING

The Otiose nature of God in African concept of the divine is not fully expressed in the Akan cosmic view because even though God is said to have withdrawn into the sky, in the Akan creation myth, his presence is still felt among the people. He is known to be dynamic and active in the affairs of men and in the creation in general. He is also known

to be patient, just and loving and the final arbiter in judgment. Judgment here, however, does not refer to the apocalypse. The Akan do not speculate last judgment.

He is believed to help and punish people when necessary, but formally it is the gods who punish people on behalf of God and even the ancestors. The characteristics of the above beliefs and practices are well exemplified in Chapters 3 and 4.

The Akan perceive God as a Supreme Spirit with human characteristic, hence he is personified and even given a natal name “Kwame” (a Saturday male born), which implies that God’s day is Saturday. Again the Akan acknowledge God’s exclusive control over life and death and he is the determiner of human destiny and fate. Proverbs and sayings that express these beliefs can be found in Chapters 3 and 4.

In Akan concept it is clear that God is the creator of the universe. The creation myth in Chapter 4 makes it clear.

The intermediary role of the ancestors and the gods does not reflect the remoteness of God but rather the hierarchical nature of the secular administrative system of the Akan Chiefdom. It is a sign of respect, and Akan social etiquette to address a chief through a spokesman ‘*Ōkyeame*’ hence God is not normally addressed directly but through the gods and the ancestors. It is interesting to note that the Akan “claim” that the gods are the children of God is not peculiar to them. Parrinder (1977:73) asserts that Mohammed attacked the pagan deities of Mecca for being called sons and daughters of God (Allah).

Manyeli (1995:66) asserts that in the case of the Basotho God is completely outside human experiences. He is outside the perimeters of the socio-cultural life of the people. He is passive and inactive in human affairs. It is rather the ancestors “*balimo*” who are active. God is only known as the creator of human beings but he does not influence their lives. He is inaccessible, remote and unapproachable. In Basotho cosmic view *Molimo* does not punish, punishment comes from the ancestors.

Lesaoana Manyeli (1995: 62) also says,

The real meaning of the name "Molimo" is someone- who-is-inaccessible, someone-who-is-unapproachable, someone-who-is-withdrawn-from-the daily affairs of the people, someone-who-is-often-forgotten. He is someone who is not directly involved in the daily events of the life of the community. He is a silent and muted divinity.

From the point of view of Setiloane (1976) the Sotho-Tswana depersonalise God as a thing. He therefore uses the pronoun 'it' for God. To the Sotho-Tswana God is a Supreme power outside human sphere.

The Basotho cosmic view according to Pula (1990: 340) is silent on God's control over life and death. They neither confirm nor clearly deny that God created all things besides human beings. He adds that the Basotho revere their ancestors mostly out of fear rather than of respect and love.

5.2.2.6 MEDICINE AND HEALING

Those who practise traditional healing among the Akan are the traditional priests 'Akōmfoō' and the diviners 'Adunsifoō' and some lay people who have inherited the art of herbal healing from their parents.

The priests get their prescription from the gods through possession trance, while the diviners usually divine to get their prescriptions by looking into a mirror, gazing into water, throwing cowry shells, dice or kola nuts etc.

The Basotho traditional healers are mainly diviners and the lay herbal healing practitioners. There are two categories of diviners, namely those who throw bones and those who do not throw bones. The Basotho do not have traditional priests.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their religious denomination in order to ascertain how far their response to questions are influenced by their religious beliefs. Out of the 231 questionnaires retrieved in Lesotho 206 (89%) respondents indicated that they were Christians, only 25 (11%) of them claimed to be traditionalists or pagans - as the Christians call them. This could reflect the general Christian proportion of the population of the country. It is therefore likely that most of the responses were influenced by Christian beliefs.

Figure 10 below is the graphical representation in percentage.

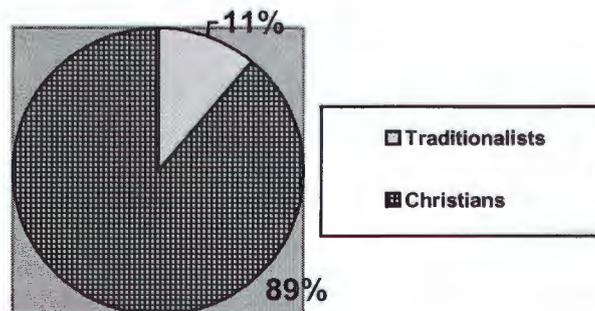


Fig.10

The male, female ratio of the respondents was 94 (42%) males to 131(58%) females. Six (6) respondents did not respond to this question. The percentage response out of the 225 respondents is indicated in figure 11. This datum is to ascertain how far gender affects the people's religious beliefs. The figures here suggest that Basotho women are more enthusiastic about their traditional religious practices than the men. This is not far from right because practically there are more female *Sangoma* than male in Lesotho.

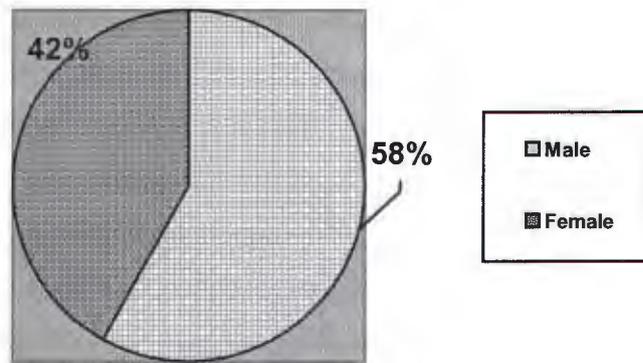


Fig.11

Out of the 242 questionnaires retrieved in Ghana as valid 209 (86.4%) were Christians, 13 (5.4%) were Muslims and 20 (8.2%) traditionalists or pagans. Though the data here does not reflect the population statistics quoted in chapter 1, it maintains the dominance of Christianity in the country as shown in the population statistics. The smaller percentage of Muslims over the pagans may be due to the fact that Muslims usually live in the Zongo - alien type of twin towns- in the Akan communities.

Again as indicated above the religious denomination of respondents could reflect the adulteration of the traditional religious concept with Christian doctrine.

Figure 12 is the pie graph showing the percentage representation.

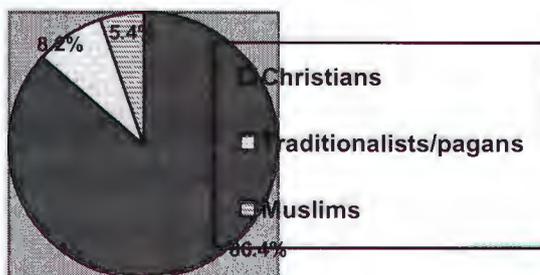


Fig. 12.

With the gender statistics, there were 164 (67.8%) males as against 78 (32.2%) females who responded to the questionnaires. This is a complete reverse of the data collected from Lesotho. It reflects the high rate of male literacy ratio over the female population and the fact that the males are more accessible than the females.

Figure 13 below shows the percentage representation of the male female ratio of the response.

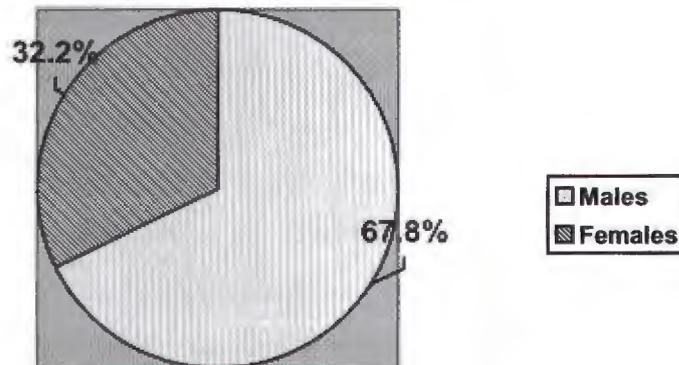


Fig. 13

5.3.1 THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE

With regard to the highest object of worship all the respondents in Ghana indicated God. In Lesotho 87% indicated God as their highest object of worship, 10% indicated that the gods (ancestors) are their highest object of worship and 3% said that their *muti/thakhisa* are their objects of worship.

According to the responses of the respondents the Basotho look up to their gods (the ancestors) for protection while others believe that their *muti* or *thakhisa* protects them. In Ghana the Akan in particular claim that they get protection from the gods '*abosom*', and from talisman, juju or amulets.

5.3.2 BELIEF IN GOD

On the issue of people's belief in God 96% of the respondents in Lesotho affirmed that they believe in God and pray to him privately. In Ghana the percentage of those who believe in God and pray to him privately was 90%. The occasions when respondents in Lesotho asserted that they pray to God are: Everyday, in times of trouble, in times of joy, meal times, bed times, after recovery from sickness, during rites of passage, morning hours when getting out of bed. In Ghana too the respondents asserted that they pray to

God: at the beginning of any venture, daily, in times of crisis, all occasions, joyful moments, worshipping times, during rites of passage.

The responses to the sources of knowing God or how people were introduced to God are shown in table 1 below.

TABLE 1 SOURCES OF KNOWING GOD

RESPONSES	GHANA		LESOTHO	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
PARENTS	114	47	144	62
CHRISTIANITY	89	37	81	35
ISLAM	5	2	-	-
TRADITION	29	12	3	1.5
SCHOOL	5	2	3	1.5
TOTAL	242	100	231	100

The interpretation of this response in the two countries is a bit difficult because parents are the major source of knowing God in the two countries, 47% in Ghana and 62% in Lesotho. The next major source is Christianity 37% in Ghana and 35% in Lesotho. Traditional or African religion is also to reckon with in Ghana 12%. In the case of the parents, one cannot tell their source of the knowledge of God. Christianity or traditional Religion could also have influenced them.

5.3.2.1 TRADITIONAL/LOCAL NAMES OF GOD

The questionnaires revealed that in Ghana God is known as *Nyame*, *Nyankopōn* and *Ōdomankoma* by the Akan; *Naam wine* in Dagari; *Mawu, se*, in Ewe; *Na yin* in Talensi; *We, Nawin*, in Kassena. In Lesotho, the Basotho call God *Molimo*. Some respondents added Jehovah, but the researcher believes that this response is the result of recent Christian influence on the people because Jehovah is not Sesotho.

The next issue is about the traditional or local attributes and some honorific names of God. The Akan respondents gave the following attributes and honorific names of God: *Ōbōadeε*, creator; *Otumfoō*, mighty one, *Twieduampōn*, dependable; *Totrobonsu*, giver of

rain; *Huntahunui*, all seeing; *Ōmaowia*, giver of sunshine; *Tetekwaframoā*, everlasting one; *Ōsedeeyō*, the unfailing one; *Okokuroko*, the great one; *Ōbrepōn*, the great one; *Asomdwee hene*, King of peace; *Ōnwanwa*, the mysterious one; *Daa Agya*, everlasting father; *Ōkyesoe*, indiscriminate giver, lover of all, *Ōkatamansoō*, protector of nations; *Ōdomfo-giver* of Grace, helper; *Awurade-Lord*, *Ahunuabobirim*, the fearful one; *Brekyi-hunuade*, omnipresent; *Aniani mpempem*, all seeing, omnipresent.

These responses are the confirmation of the literature survey of the Akan concept of God as discussed in chapters 2 and 4 and that the religion is not on the wane but practised along with Christianity and Islam. Most of the attributes and honorific names given by respondents here were discussed in chapters 2 and 4.

Basotho respondents also supplied a number of attributes and honorific names of God such as: *Rammoloki*, Protector, Keeper; *Raseapara Lome*, Perfect weaver; *Mashie Motlehali*, Perfect beauty; *Koetla*, perfect of all; *Mohalali*, sanctifies; *Sekhele*, Over all protector; *Moabi wa bophelo*, life giver; *Qhobosheane ya ho loka*. He is Fortress of trust; *Ramehauhelo*, Father of Grace; *Molopolli*, redeemer; *Rabosafeleng*, The never ending; Alpha and Omega: *Qalo le qetello*; *Morena oa Marena*, King of Kings; *Ramaseli*, Owner of light; *Ea matla ohle*, almighty; *Ea mosa*, Generous; *Altate 'Moji*, Father of Creation.

The researcher believes that some of the attributes above may be recent innovations; nevertheless, it is an indication of the fact that the present generation is conversant with the traditional religious practices.

5.3.3 BELIEF IN ANCESTORS

This question, like some others, was a closed-ended question where respondents were to choose between 'yes' and 'no'. Table 2 below is the tabulation of responses received from respondents in the two countries.

TABLE 2 ANCESTOR BELIEFS IN GHANA AND LESOTHO

GHANA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	LESOTHO	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	120	49.6	YES	157	68
NO	122	50.4	NO	74	32
TOTAL	242	100	TOTAL	231	100

The figures show that the ancestor belief is stronger in Lesotho than in Ghana. It is also an indication that foreign religion and culture have had some influence on the African religion especially in Ghana. It is a proof that ancestor veneration is not on the wane but rather practised side by side with the foreign religions.

The questionnaires also revealed that people believe that the ancestors play a role in their social and religious life. The responses to the role of the ancestors in the community were that they guide, protect, bless and punish when things go wrong, and mediate on behalf of people. In fact 29% of the respondents in Ghana asserted that they personally seek help from their ancestors. In Lesotho it was 47% who affirmed that they personally seek help from their ancestors. Table 3 below shows the frequencies of responses to the role the ancestors play in the communities.

TABLE 3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANCESTORS ON THE COMMUNITY

GHANA			LESOTHO		
RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Guide	54	22.2	Guide	46	20
Protect	70	28.8	Protect	35	15
Bless	50	20.6	Bless	53	23
Punish	24	10.2	Punish	72	31
Mediate	44	18.2	Mediate	25	11
TOTAL	242	100	TOTAL	231	100

While in Ghana the people’s expectations of the ancestors are protection, guidance and blessing, in Lesotho punishment is the main concern followed by blessing and guidance.

These responses agree with the assertions in the literature survey and interview responses in the study. Nevertheless the mediation concept is a belief to reckon with, though it is the least known belief in Lesotho. On the other hand punishment from the ancestors is the least considered among the Ghanaians. On the whole the statistics indicate that ancestral veneration plays a considerable role in African religion.

Another issue statistically considered is how the ancestors are appeased when they feel offended. It was a partially closed ended question or semi-closed ended question, in that there were multiple-choice (suggested) answers to choose from, and at the end a chance to suggest other alternatives was provided. Table 4 below is the summary of responses from the two countries on the issue.

TABLE 4 HOW ANCESTORS ARE APPEASED

GHANA			LESOTHO		
RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Prayer	102	42	Prayer	109	47
Sacrifice	121	50	Sacrifice	97	42
Ritual (others)	19	8	Ritual (others)	25	11
TOTAL	242	100	TOTAL	231	100

While in Ghana the major means of appeasing the ancestors is sacrifice (50%) followed by prayer (42%), in Lesotho it is prayer (47%) followed by sacrifice (42%). Ritual as a means of appeasing the ancestors is of little importance in Ghana as compared to Lesotho. But it is evident in the findings that people in the two countries do something to appease the ancestors when they feel that things are not going on well with them.

Some of the Basotho respondents gave reasons why they believe in Ancestors as follows:

Parents believe in the ancestors and when they pray to them, their prayers are answered. Others said that their parents told them not to reject or neglect the ancestors because they can punish them; and they usually get help from them when they ask them for help.

On the other hand, those who do not believe in the ancestors gave the reasons below (Unedited):

1. God said they are evil.
2. Before the coming of Jesus people were inclined to believe in many gods and ancestors; there is no reason to hang on to those old beliefs when the Son of God has come already.
3. They don't exist, and even if they exist they don't have power or influence on the people. The Bible says dead people have no authority over the living. (Eccl. 9: 5-6.)
4. A dead person has no power over anything. It is God who has power to give and to change things not ancestors.
5. They have bad influence on Christianity.
6. They are vindictive.
7. Others said that they have never experienced any ancestor before; they have never seen them in their dreams.

The above responses suggest how the Christian doctrines and beliefs influenced some of the respondents in answering the question. Apart from the general belief in ancestors, respondents were asked to state the role the ancestors play in traditional worship. 90% of the respondents from Lesotho said that the ancestors are intermediaries while 10% claimed that they are the sole objects of worship. On the other hand all the respondents from Ghana said that the ancestors are the mediators, protectors of properties and guardians of the living. The above figures suggest that the people of both countries believe in ancestors and practise ancestor veneration.

5.3.4 BELIEF IN GODS/DIVINITIES (ABOSOM)

In this regard the Basotho response was totally negative. They do not have any divinities like those of the Akan and other tribes in Ghana. Their gods are their ancestors.

Forty percent of the respondents in Ghana said they believe in gods (abosom) while 60% said they do not believe in them. The graph in figure 14 summarises the response.

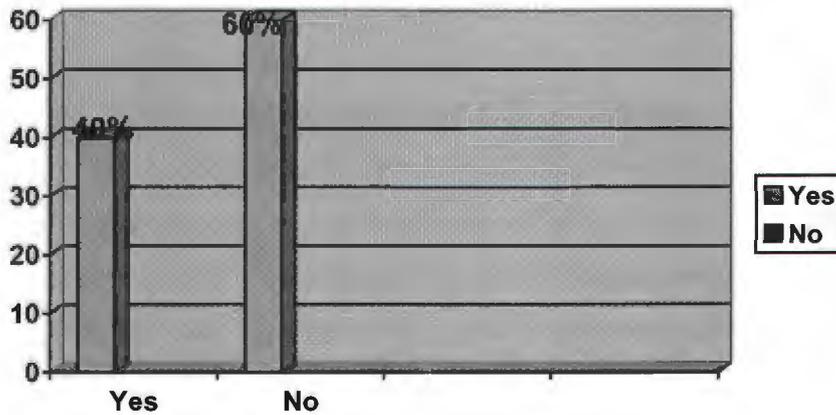


Fig. 14

Respondents gave numerous names of divinities in the country, which cannot all be presented here due to lack of space. Below are few of the examples they cited.

Boōtwerewa, Ntoa, Tano, Dente, Tegare, Kyiniaman, Mframa, Akonnedi, Nyamaa, Kwakufiri, Ta Mensa, Brakune etc.

These are the proper names of the divinities (abosom). Their shrines are called by their proper names; therefore there is no need repeating the names. The traditional shrine for the Supreme Being, among the Akan, is *Nyamedua*, Altar of God.

Respondents indicated that the shrines of the divinities are for adoration, consultation, sacrifice, healing, protection, intercession, prophecy, appeasing and pacification.

5.3.5 PROVERBS/MAXIMS

Respondents were also asked to give some proverbs that reveal their belief in God and the following were the responses from the Akan of Ghana:

Obi nkyere abōfra Nyame, No one points out God to a child; *Adeε nsae a yemmō Nyame somboō*, Query God not when the day has not yet ended; *Aboa a onni dua Onyame na ōpra ne ho*, God drives the flies away from a tailless animal; *Onyankopōn ye kokromotie a yensane ne ho mmō pō*, God is a thumb, which cannot be bypassed to make a knot; *Ōkyesoe Nyame a ōkye ma εso aboa tatea so*, The indiscriminate God who provides for even the ant; *Nso Nyame ye*, Nothing is difficult for God; With God everything is possible; *Sε Onyame ma wo ōsono kotokuo a ōma wo deε wode behye mu*, If God gives you an elephant bag (big container) he provides what to fill it with.

Sε Onyame ma ōsono aduane a ne were mfiri aboa tatea, As God feeds the elephant so he does for the ant; *Sε Onyame fa boō a ōnnto no ntem*, When God wants to punish, he delays. *Wope asem aka akyere Nyankopōn a kakyere mframa*, If you want to tell God tell the wind; *Ahuhuro ne awō nynaa firi Onyame ho*, Heat and cold, all come from God; *Ōbōfoō ne Nyame*, God is the hunter; God provides a game for the hunter; *sε Onyame si wo hene a ōkraman mfa wo mpaboa*, If God crowns you a king, it will never fail. *Sε Onyame se ōbema woamee a ennim nkontomoa kesseε*, If God means to satisfy you, you need not struggle too hard. Literally - if God means to satisfy you it does not depend on the size of the morsels.

It would be noted that though some of the maxims provided by the respondents can be found in chapter 4, most of them are new. This indicates the fact that Akan proverbs abound in their belief in God. It is one of the major means of expressing their concept of the divine.

The Basotho traditional maxims also reveal their concept of the divine. However there seem to be few examples as compared to those collected from the Akan of Ghana. Respondents of the questionnaires could cite only two examples, namely: *Khomo ke molimo o nko e metsi*, a cow is god with a wet nose. It implies that a cow is an indispensable animal in the life of the Basotho; hence it is equated to a god. In fact it is the social, economic and religious backbone of the Basotho. The next one is *Molimo ha afe motho ka letsoho*, which means -God does not use his hands to give or God's help is

indirect. Thus a fortune or help from other people is help from God. Though one of these two examples is already cited in chapter 4, it does not rule out the fact that Basotho maxims reveal their concept of the divine.

5.3.6 THE CHIEF

The role of the chief or the king asserted by the Basotho respondents is as follows:

‘He presides over traditional ceremonies and heads the tribe in rituals and sacrifices.’

‘He leads the tribe in funerals and marriages.’

‘He protects his people from bad medicine and witchcraft.’

The assertions above indicate that the chief is the spiritual leader of the traditional religion.

In Ghana the respondents asserted that the chief:

Is the spiritual head of the tribe.

Pours libation to the gods and the ancestors on occasions.

Prays, during occasions, for the people.

Purifies the blackened stools (ancestor shrines).

Is the mediator between the people and the ancestors and

Leads religious rites during festivals.

It is obvious here too that the chief is the spiritual leader of the traditional religion.

5.3.7 DIVINERS

In Lesotho, respondents asserted that diviners:

Heal the sick with traditional medicine.

Interpret dreams. Reveal the unknown to clients.

Guide the community in the traditional religion.

Help to rid the community of witchcraft.

Play intermediary role between human beings and God and the ancestors

Offer protection and peace of mind to the community.

Prevent misfortune.

In Ghana, the respondents asserted that diviners/priests are:

Rain inducers - they cause rain to fall during drought

Tell the future

Help the people to serve God and the gods in the traditional way

Help to prevent misfortune and troubles

Reveal spiritual secrets to the people

Prophecy; expose secret evil deeds of sorcerers and witches

Drive bad omen away

Help to shape destiny

Protect and forewarn about the future.

Some respondents, however, gave negative responses to questions about the diviners/traditional priests as follows:

‘They create hatred among the people, families and tribes.’

‘They tell lies to create confusion in the community.’

‘They are tricksters who claim to have powers, which are usually false’

‘They destroy people physically and spiritually.’

‘People do not believe in them.’

The Basotho respondents also said that the diviners:

Get help from the devil.

Create hatred among the people.

Create conflict between villages.

Mislead the community by giving false information.

They influence people psychologically so that they become confused about traditional religion.

5.3.8 BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT

Belief in witchcraft is very rife in Lesotho; 93% (215) of the respondents said they believe in witchcraft and that witchcraft influence is: physical 40%, spiritual 38% and psychological 22%.

Fig 15 below shows the graphical representation of the responses.

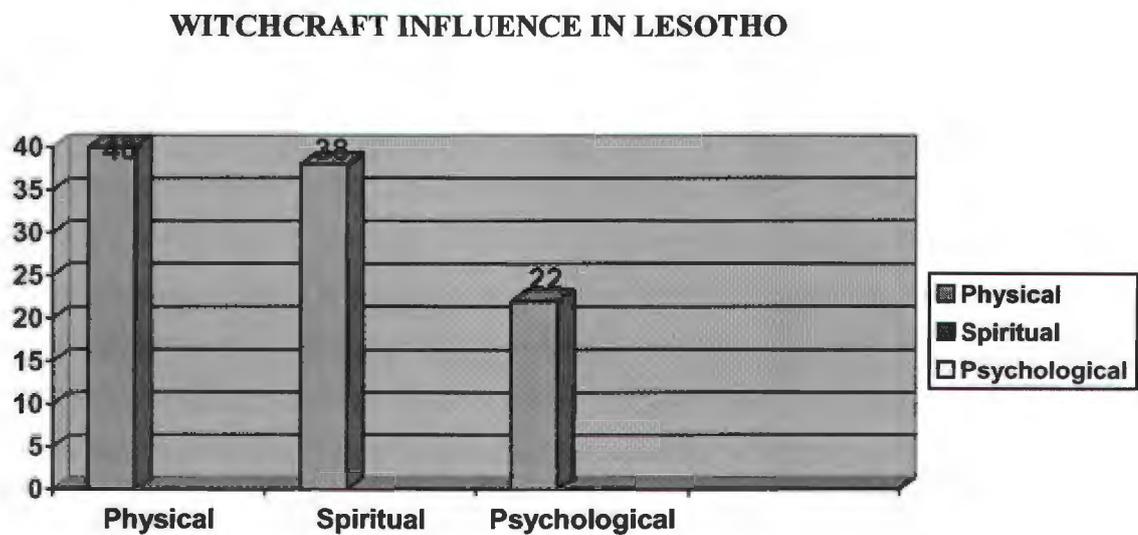


Fig. 15.

Belief in witchcraft in Ghana is equally strong. 208 (86%) of the respondents asserted that they believe in witchcraft, and that witchcraft affects people physically 25% spiritually 48% socially 15% and psychologically 12%. Figure 16 below shows the graphical representation of the responses.

WITCHCRAFT INFLUENCEN IN GHANA

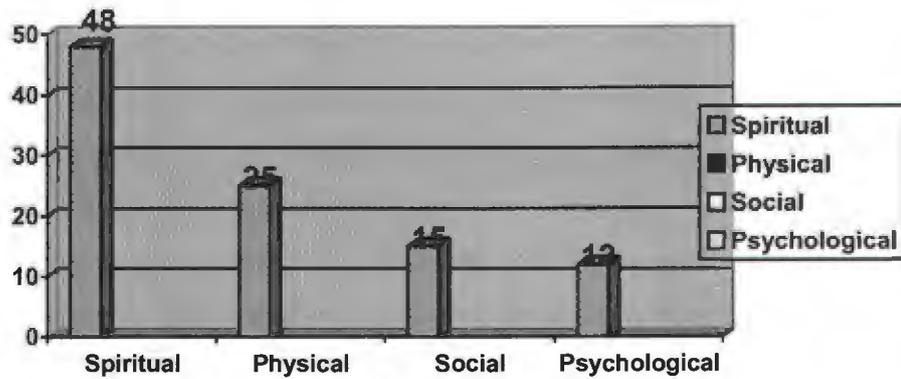


Fig. 16

5.3.9 BELIEF IN SPIRITS

Forty percent (92) of the Basotho respondents asserted that they believe in spirits; 60% claim they do not believe in spirits. Figure 17 below shows a graphical representation of the responses in a pie graph.

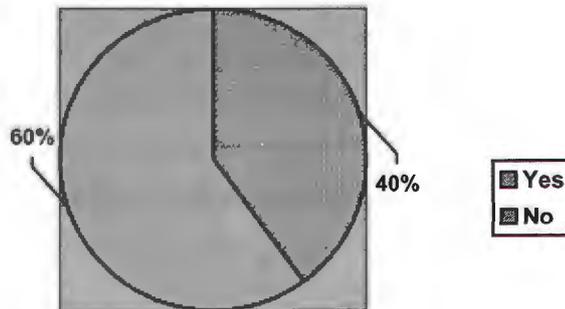


Fig 17

The effects of spirits on traditional religious beliefs and practices asserted by respondents are:

They disturb people's minds.

They punish those who tell lies about them.

They are the intermediaries between the gods and the people.

They help people to abide by the traditional beliefs.
They guide and shape people's behaviour.
They enrich the beliefs of people who do as they wish.
They warn about impending danger.

The above assertions reflect the experiences of those who believe in spirits and their influences on the social and religious lives of Basotho.

Forty-seven percent (114) of the respondents in Ghana asserted that they believe in spirits while 53% (128) said they do not believe in them. See figure 18.

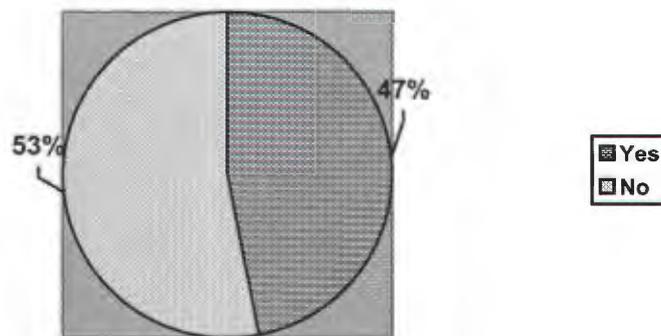


Fig. 18

Below are the respondents' assertions on the influence of spirits on traditional, social and religious practices.

They are believed to control the tides of fortune and misfortune in life; they bless, punish, kill and mediate between the gods and human beings; so believers try to comport themselves in accordance with the prescribed norms of the spirits to avoid incurring their displeasure.

They have influence on marriage, birth and death. People use spiritual powers to seek revenge and protection from their enemies; they promote idol worship, spiritualism and witchcraft; they can mislead people.

They are of immense help in physical, spiritual and moral life.

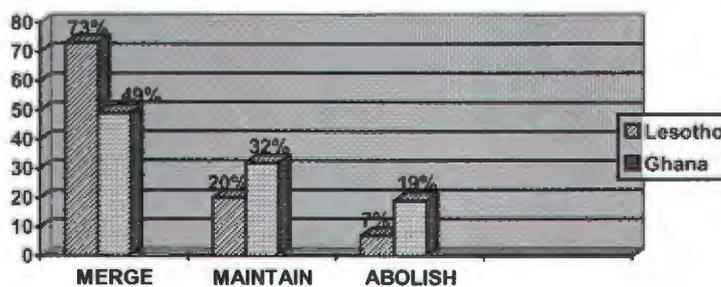
5.3.10 THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN RELIGION

Respondents were allowed to express their opinions about the traditional religion. They were asked to indicate whether it should be abolished, maintained, or merged with Christianity. From the responses in Ghana 19% said it should be abolished, 32% said it should be maintained but polished and 49% said it should merge with Christianity.

In Lesotho the respondents were also of the opinion that the traditional religion should merge with Christianity. The following were their responses: 7% said it should be abolished, 20% said it should be maintained and 73% said that it should merge with Christianity.

From the statistics, even though those who advocated for the merger of the two religions do not form an overwhelming majority, in the case of Ghana, the researcher believes that if there is a referendum those who advocated for the abolition may support the merger policy. In Lesotho, however the merger would not be a problem because those who support the view are in the majority. Figure 19 below shows the responses in a diagram

Fig 19



It should be noted that merger might result in something other than Christianity or the Traditional Religion in the two countries. In this respect one might wonder whether the splinter churches like the African Indigenous Churches or the New Religious Movements are not in fact concrete evidence of mergers that have already taken place in many

countries. In fact the informants mean something totally different, something that might replace both Orthodox Christianity and African Traditional Religions. On the other hand merger is not likely because each religion would like to maintain its sovereignty. As already said in this chapter syncretism is not the solution to religious pluralism, we should rather acknowledge and respect all religions as diverse means of perceiving the ultimate reality. Humanity is one but of diverse races and colours. The universality of humanity lies in respecting and upholding each other, unmindful of colour or race. This does not, however, mean that syncretism is totally ruled out. We would learn from each other by adopting and adapting each other's beliefs and practices to bring unity in diversity.

5.3.11 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The analysis of the questionnaires seems to confirm the view that Western Education, culture and religion have influenced the African religious concept. It also seems to indicate how Christianity and African religions have affected the modern trend of social and religious life in Lesotho and how Christianity, Islam and African religions have also affected Ghanaian social and religious life and the outlook of these groups of people on the concept of the divine in the modern African worldview. Platvoet (1979:546) writing about Ghana also has this to say about the African pretensions

...It is, however, also clear that the missionary churches, though they now dominate the religious scene, have failed in that attempt. They have not captured the exclusive allegiance of those they register as their members. Many of them 'owe allegiance to more than one religion at the same time. This basic fact in the religious situation among the Akan makes an analysis of it in terms of the concepts 'official popular religion' irrelevant and misleading.

The African does not cling to or profess one religion. He does not see anything wrong with belonging to more than one religion or religious denomination at the same time. Therefore in his analysis the researcher tried to draw on materials from researched fields on the relations of the African religion to migrant religions, 'and focused on the ways in

which individual (African) believers relate themselves to the several religions, that are endemic in their society now.'

As already quoted elsewhere in this work, Nürnberger (1975:195) asserts that there are hundreds of "backsliders" in the Sotho community. Many members of the Christian congregations are faithful churchgoers on Sunday morning but at night they are also found in secret vigils where magic rites are performed, or where an "independent" prophet offers his healing powers. Many youths attend confirmation classes and the Sotho initiation school at the same time.

Eugene Casalis (1992) also asserts.

To complicate matters further, the life of so many Christians displays, in varying degrees, the inwardness and stubborn strength of the traditional way of life standing side by side with orthodox Christian teaching and practice. Despite the vast changes to the religion in the past century, and the greatly altered circumstances of the Basotho themselves, most Basotho still choose to remain faithful, for a variety of reasons, to aspects of their traditional beliefs, values, rituals, etc. For even among many of the most devout, there are those who cannot in their heart of hearts relinquish what is dear and positive and life giving in certain traditional beliefs and practices. Surprising as it may seem, many Basotho Christians, despite official church teaching, seem quite capable of walking, without great anxiety or soul-searching, with one foot in each world, finding an equilibrium point which is comfortable for themselves and for their families.

The statistical data of the questionnaires reveal that almost all Basotho claim to be Christians belonging to one denomination or other, and even the 'Sangoma' or the 'Ngaka' claim to be Christians. This could mean that the Basotho practise Christianity and African religions side by side. Going to church or belonging to one Christian denomination or other has become a modern fashion, a sign of civilization; therefore nobody wants to be counted out of modern civilization yet the Basotho traditional religious beliefs and practices are not defunct. The researcher believes that this attitude of clinging to Christianity could be the result of giving African religion derogatory terms like primitive or heathenism.

The data on Ghana in section 5.3 also reveal that Christianity and Islam take 91.8% of the respondents while the traditional religion takes 8.2 %. Like the Basotho the Ghanaians also feel that the order of the day is Christian or Islamic religion, therefore only few people openly own up to be traditionalists yet there are many traditional priests, mediums and diviners in the country. Traditionally a chief cannot claim to be a Christian because the ritual practices expected of him are at variance with Christian doctrine yet some chiefs are Christians because they do not want to fall outside the brackets of modern civilization.

All the respondents in Ghana asserted that the Supreme Being is their highest object of worship. This suggests that they regard the divinities as the functionaries of the Supreme Being. In Lesotho, however, some people indicated that the ancestors (their gods) are their highest objects of worship. This seems to support the views of some informants that the ancestors were the sole objects of worship before the advent of Christianity.

Respondents of the questionnaires in the two countries affirmed the religious role of chiefs in their communities as religious leaders and mediators between the people, the ancestors and the gods. And the diviners, traditional priests and rain-makers are also religious leaders who play the role of mediators and spokesmen of the ancestors and the gods and that they serve their communities as healers and directors of rituals acts that promote harmony with the cosmos.

In the two countries the respondents asserted that the witches and the sorcerers are menace to the community. It was asserted that they could harm people physically, spiritually and psychologically. There were no positive responses about the witches and sorcerers. The religiosity of these phenomena therefore lies in the fact that they also tap or influence the supernatural or transcendental forces for their selfish ends.

In regard to maxims and social utterances as means of expressing African religious thought the responses to the questions confirmed the assertions in the literature review. Here too assertions were more pronounced in Ghana than in Lesotho nevertheless there

were examples in both countries. More examples other than those cited in the literature review were cited in the questionnaires. These findings, to the researcher's mind, go to confirm the assertions of numerous scholars that African religion is part and parcel of the whole fabric of African cultural life. Benjamin Ray (1976:16) asserts that Religious phenomena are closely interwoven with social, psychological, and moral dimensions. As such they contain a variety of semantic features, which the Western thought could interpret only by artificially dividing them up according to sociological, psychological, philosophical and historical methods of analysis. Thus posing problems for foreign scholars who study African religion.

The questionnaire response also affirmed the belief in the veneration of ancestors and the gods. Some of them asserted that they were aware of the existence of the ancestors and the gods, but they did not believe that they had any influence on human beings.

5.4 INTERVIEWS:

The interview results revealed that despite the foreign religious and cultural influence on the African religions in the two countries under study, the African religious practices that reveal their concept of the divine are not defunct. They are practised alongside the foreign religions and the Western culture.

In Ghana the gods or the lesser deities are believed to be the children of God or created by him for the benefit of humanity. On the question of the relationship between God and the divinities (gods), the Chief Priest of Ta Mensa, the Techiman Traditional State god, told the researcher that God is worshipped through the gods who are his sons and daughters. He added that when the gods are consulted on some critical issues, they go into consultation with God before acting on the issues. Chiefs interviewed on the ancestor veneration also affirmed that it is incumbent upon them to make regular contact with their ancestors in the stool house on *Kwasidae* and *Wukudae*, which alternates on every twenty-one days. And that sacrifices and offerings are made on such days and other festive days to ask for help and blessing from their ancestors.

The names of the Supreme Being *Onyankopōn*, *Nyame* and *Odomankoma*, and the numerous attributes and honorific names mentioned in the literature survey and in the questionnaires were affirmed by the interviewees. These names, some of them said, are unique to the Akan concept of the divine because they are exclusively used for God only.

Unlike the questionnaire response, most of the interviewees asserted that African religion should be maintained. It should be noted that the interviewee responses include those of the informants because all the informants were selected from the interviewees.

On the issue of the divine kingship Nana Asibe Boaten, a chief in the Nsuta traditional area in Mampong district said,

It is the enstoolment ritual that bestows on the chief the divine nature not his personality. And the enstoolment ritual is sacred so when a person is enstooled he occupies the position of ancestors; therefore he becomes divine by virtue of his position. On the other hand when destoolment rituals are performed to destool him, he becomes desacralised and hence an ordinary person.

Some interviewees asserted that the worship of God through intermediaries is in the right line because it helps to bridge the gap between human beings and God. On this some issue Nana Kwame Sarfo from Mampong said, 'The gods can be rebuked or even rejected for failing to protect the worshippers but on no account can any Akan rebuke God or reject him.'

In regard to ancestor veneration, one interviewee, Nana Yaa Amponsaa asserted that Akan religion makes it clear that there are two worlds in their religious purview. They are: this material world, and the ancestral world, which is spiritual. And that life after death is the basis of Akan religious belief. The Akan does not hope to go to heaven but to the abode of his/her ancestors. He/she believes that his/her achievements here will be carried to the ancestral world.

One priestess also said that the ancestors are a reality, and that there are herbs that can be used to wash a person's face to enable him or her perceive the witches and the living dead. Some of the traditional healers, priests, diviners and mediums in both countries claimed that they sometimes get their medicines for curing diseases from their ancestors through dreams or divination. Others said that they learned the traditional healing from their predecessors.

On the question of whether witchcraft, sorcery and magic are religious phenomena, most interviewees, in the two countries, said that they considered them to be religious; except that witchcraft and sorcery use the supernatural and the preternatural sources or forces for mostly evil deeds. Magic, on the other hand, controls the forces to achieve ends that may be good or bad, depending on the situation.

In Basotho Worldview, the interviewees asserted that generally God is considered Otiose and therefore not prayed to directly. The ancestors are always addressed in prayer and they believe that there is life beyond the grave. They also believe that the ancestors are near God, therefore, implicitly, whatever they request from them comes from God.

On the issue of ancestor veneration, Mamolise said that caves are also regarded as ancestral shrines in Lesotho. She cited a cave in the Orange Free State where people visit regularly to contact their ancestors for solution to their social and spiritual problems. Dr. Rakotsoane also affirmed this assertion.

Remarking on the issue of water snakes in Basotho religious milieu, one interviewee Mr. Moilola Tota, in fact a former student of the researcher, said, 'When Basotho talk about the water snake they are referring to something like a mermaid but not on actual snake.' This assertion might carry some truth but other interviewees did not affirm it.

Most of the interviewees asserted that the chiefs are considered as divine leaders because they are religious and social leaders of the people. The people look up to their chiefs, in

times of crisis such as drought or war, for protection because they believe that they (the chiefs) are closer to the ancestors.

Interviewees also affirmed the role of the diviners and rainmakers as divine leaders in the community.

On the question of the gender of God there were differences of opinion. Among the Akan of Ghana even though God is generally referred to as father, sometimes he is addressed as mother. The divinities address him as *Noo (eno)*, which means mother.

In the case of the Basotho they are equally not sure of the gender of God. They refer to him as he/she and the Tswana refer to him as it.

5.4.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS/INFORMANTS

The interview results and information from informants revealed that the socio-cultural practices that reveal the concept of the divine in the past in the two countries still prevail.

And although foreign religions and culture have had considerable influence on the African religious concept and culture, the latter still prevails. It is practised alongside the foreign religions and culture, which have come to stay. There are many diviners, traditional priests and shrines of the gods in villages and towns. Vendors who sell herbs, roots and animal parts for making *muti*, *juju*, *suman* or charms abound in the streets of towns in both countries under study.

Chiefs, traditional priests and diviners continue to serve their communities as traditional religious leaders in times of crisis.

Marriage, burial and rites of passage rituals in general reveal belief in ancestors and life beyond the grave. Stories about the subterranean world still exist in both countries.

While the Basotho are cautious in dealing with their ancestors because they believe they are very vindictive, the Akan of Ghana are cautious in dealing with their gods who are believed to be very vindictive.

The researcher would like to conclude this section by saying that the interview responses and the assertions of informants confirm those of the questionnaires and the literature survey that the intermediary role of the gods and the ancestors in the African religions lead to an implicit worship of the Supreme Being. Therefore African concept of the divine as portrayed in this study is theistic.

5.5 PERSONAL OBSERVATION

Virtually every Mosotho belongs to one Christian denomination or other, yet the traditional religious practices are not on the wane. In the streets of Maseru (as stated in chapter 4) one finds many vendors who sell herbs, roots, bones, skins and feathers of animals and birds respectively for traditional healing or for preparation of charms or *muti/thakhisa* or *suman*. They serve the needs of the community. If they do not get customers they will not continue to trade in them. Such medications are prescribed not by the modern scientific doctors, nor the priests and pastors of the Christian Churches. The diviners and traditional healers found in their numbers in some homes and in kiosks at street corners, prescribe them. Strangely enough all the diviners the researcher contacted in Lesotho claimed to belong to one Christian denomination or other, though the Christian Churches discourage these traditional practices.

Ritual practices abound in the socio-cultural life of the Basotho. Pregnant women are seen in the street walking barefooted at certain stages of their pregnancies shielding their bigness with a goat or sheepskin. They believe that it protects their foetus from witches and sorcerers as well as evil spirits. It may be noted that since the traditional religions are inseparable from African socio-cultural life, the traditional medications, embodied in the traditional religious beliefs and practices, cannot be done away with even in the Christian dominated communities. As already quoted in this work Mbiti says, "A person cannot

detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security...”

Observations revealed that immolation of animals during pregnancy, childbirth, marriage and funerals are still observed as traditional religious acts. The people perform them to appease, propitiate or thank the *balimo* and the spirits concerned for protection, good harvest or whatever. These rituals reveal the importance the Basotho attach to their traditional religious practices that reveal their concept of the divine in their religious milieu.

It was also observed that funeral rituals reveal the belief that life does not end in the grave but that there is life beyond the grave. During funerals Christian and traditional religious practices are observed. There was not a funeral, the researcher attended, which was devoid of such rituals as an immolation of an animal to provide a blanket for the deceased, a farewell meal after burial, the cutting of sod in order of seniority of the bereaved members of the family during burial, the washing of hands in a basin of water shredded with the leaves of an aloe plant after burial, the cutting of hair and the wearing of ‘thapo’ a day after the burial. These rituals and the burial of the deceased with some items, in the past, go to support the belief that there is life beyond the grave. And that death is an important rite of passage that must not be traversed without the necessary rituals. All these rituals are performed with prayers said explicitly or implicitly to harmonize this world with the spiritual world.

In Ghana too the researcher observed that the socio-cultural norms reveal the people’s traditional religious beliefs and their concept of the divine. The rites of passage are accompanied by the pouring of libation as a formal prayer. They use local wine or dry gin- for the libation- to ask for the support and blessing of the ancestors, the gods and God.

Christian marriages are preceded with traditional marriage rites. The bridegroom provides two bottles of schnapps, among other things, for libation and prayers to both the

paternal and maternal ancestors of the bride. There is no slaughter of an animal for sacrifice in Akan marriage.

The Akan rites of passage are not punctuated with sacrifices as those of the Basotho; rather the pouring of libation is the main medium of communication with the ancestors and the gods. It is their main form of formal prayer; even where sacrifices are made prayer, in the form of libation, is accompanied to communicate with the ancestors, the gods and God. In the recent past there used to be immolation of animals (sheep) during funerals, to prepare a farewell for the deceased. This practice has ceased but the pouring of libation to ask permission from the earth spirit before digging the grave is still practised in the rural areas.

The people's belief in life beyond the grave is revealed by such practices as the provisions of burial material (*asiedee*) which comprise a ring, new pillow, mat, cover cloth, a coin (for a ferry or gate fee), a pipe, in the case of an old man or woman, and even a prayer book, rosary etc (if the deceased was a Christian). The funeral dirge is composed of certain utterances, which denote sending of messages through the deceased to dead relatives in the ancestral world or sometimes a request for remittance after reaching their destination.

The Akan socio-cultural life is punctuated with many festivals. During such festivals the ancestors and the gods are revered. It is during such occasions that animals (mostly sheep) are immolated for sacrifices; and there are spectacular scenes for observers to witness the Akan concept of the divine.

Even though some Akan chiefs are Christians, they oversee the celebration of the *Adae* festivals in the palace. During such occasions they communicate with their ancestors asking for their protection, support and blessings. They play their part in the community as the traditional religious leaders and custodians of the state properties including state gods. Apart from the *Adae* festivals, which are solely for the ancestors, they lead other state festivals such as *Odwira*, *afahye* (*bayedie*) and *Apoō*. During such festivals

observers are allowed to view and or participate in the ceremony. They are public ceremonies that include worships.

The Ghanaian community, like that of the Basotho, is full of vendors who sell traditional items for medication and protective charms. Apart from these there are many traditional shrines of the numerous gods in the villages where people from the cities go for consultation, medication and protective charms, for prosperity i.e. in trade, higher positions in civil service and even political positions. Some of these gods are classified as executioners (abosombrafoō) who punish or kill people who are evil, or fail to honour their promises or covenant with the gods.

The researcher observed worship at the shrine of the Ntoa god at Nsoko when a relative was sent there for medication. The priest carried the shrine of the god and after incantations of some sacred words and songs sung by the attendants, he became possessed by the god. It was then that the god spoke through him, telling the patient what went wrong, the many bright chances she had missed and then prescribed medicine for her disease. After the service the priest collapsed into the arms of the attendants and after a while he gained consciousness.

It is pertinent to remark finally that the Basotho and the Akan of Ghana are predominantly Christians or profess to be Christians but from observations they are traditionalists at heart because when it comes to critical or stress situations they do not hesitate to turn to their traditional religious practices. They seem to be torn between two worlds, namely the Christian world and the African religious world. They can neither profess to be true Christians in the Western sense of the word nor true traditionalist in African sense because they refuse to adhere fully to the African religious practices. Such attitudes may result into something other than Christianity or pure African religious practices.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research findings have revealed that religion permeates the social fabric of the Basotho and the Akan of Ghana. Theism or believe in God is the basis of the African religions in both countries. While the belief in the Supreme Being, the lesser deities and the ancestors play dominant role in the Akan, concept of the divine, the Basotho dwell on their ancestors as their gods and their mediators between them and the Supreme Being who according to Manyeli (1995:60) is generally regarded as “deus otiosus.”

The deity concept is a universal phenomenon, which has not left itself unknown among any group of people. Therefore in Africa God is not the prerogative of any one ethnic group or tribe or race, there is no apostasy nor proselytism nor atheism because religion is not an individual affair or preference whereby one can decide to opt in or out. It is part of the communal life, the socio-cultural life that binds on the entire society. It is incumbent upon every member of the community to adhere to the socio-religious norms in order to bring sanity to the community so as to create harmony with the cosmos for the total well-being of the individual and the society at large. So there is no membership register for African religions. Every member of the community is an automatic member by birth or by right of residence and is therefore governed and affected by the beliefs and practices.

African religion as revealed in the two countries is not independent of the society; therefore it governs, and is governed by the societal norms. This strong hold of the traditional religion was what the Christian religion and or Islamic religion tried to destroy but failed.

There are instances where the Christian members of the community visit the shrines of deities or diviners for help in times of serious crises or sometimes done by proxy. And there are African Christians who practise divination or are registered diviners. During the research, the researcher encountered many such diviners.

Some elders of the community in Ghana confessed to the researcher that if one does not belong to any Christian or foreign religion, one is regarded as primitive or backward therefore everybody is running away from such degradation by registering with one religion or other. Generally people feel it is convenient to practise a foreign religion alongside the African religions because the latter do not restrict members from affiliating with any other religions provided they keep to the social norms that create harmony with the cosmos. It is the foreign religions, especially Christianity and Islam that claim superiority over all other religions and are in to proselytise. There is a case in Lesotho where a diviner, the researcher visited told him that he was a Catholic Priest and was forced to resign because he was practising divination and traditional healing. This ex-priest is very knowledgeable in Basotho traditional religion and has been one of the researcher's major sources of Basotho traditional religion and customs. According to him, he got his inspiration to become a diviner and a traditional healer from his ancestors especially his late uncle, a diviner, with whom he lived in the Republic of South Africa in 1938. He said he could not deny his people when they approached him for help and he knew that he could help them. He said that the healing and divination power he got from his ancestors was meant to help the Basotho, therefore since he was not allowed to practise it alongside his clerical duties, he resigned and married and he struggled hard to get his marriage blessed by the Church. Currently he is a diviner but still a Catholic.

It is no wonder therefore if the diviners and mediums claim to be Christian on contact. Sanctions like the above make it difficult to call for a synthesis and or syncretism of Christian and African religion and more so to think of an African Christian theology. In this retrospect, Kirwen (1987:106) asserts that the African people had to understand the Christian priests as diviners. There is no other role or model into which the Christian Priest could fit. A great deal of the respect and interest of the people in the Christian priesthood, no doubt, came from this linkage. The more a Christian priest takes on the role of the diviner - the divinely inspired healer - the more effective and meaningful he becomes in the lives of the Africans. The fact that the African Christians can find nothing

wrong with calling Jesus a diviner, in song, is a clue that the kind of religious leadership that the people know, want, and understand is that provided by diviners.

We have to be aware that African Christians, as stated earlier on, do go to the diviners and the traditional priests for consultation and treatment/healing no matter how hard the church impresses upon them not to do so, and regardless of the sanctions imposed on those who do it. After all Jesus, the founder of the Christian church was a spiritual healer.

During serious crisis the African Christians turn to the African beliefs and practices for solution. There was an instance in Ghana where a village Catholic Church Leader fell seriously sick. He was sent to the nearest hospital for treatment but his case was getting worse, he was not responding to treatment. His relatives took him to a diviner and he got well came back and continued his work as the church leader. He was taken to the diviner because his relatives detected some witchcraft symptoms in his sickness. If there had been a Christian spiritual healer around they would have preferred to take him there. The New Religious movements train their pastors as divine healers and most people attend their churches because of their healing powers and their ability to deal with some social evils. These are the expectations of the Africans. They are looking for salvation here and now.

In the Jewish religion, not long after King Saul had banned divination in his domain, he faced a crisis of war and consulted a diviner to call the spirit of Samuel to find out about his encounter with the impending enemy (1 Samuel 28:8-19). This is to say that human inclination to use such media to solve problems is not peculiar to Africans alone; it is a human phenomenon.

The Researcher identified that in Africa:

1. Religion is a community affair not individual affair.
2. The tabooed moral codes are the 'moral sins' against the gods and the ancestors, which can bring disaster to the community. And the breakings of such taboos are expiated by offering sacrifices to the gods and the ancestors.

3. The gods and the ancestors are the custodians of the community law and order.
4. The keeping of the social, cultural and religious ethics promotes harmony with the cosmos and hence brings success and peace to the community.
5. Everybody is his neighbour's keeper for safeguarding the social and religious moral codes of the community because the breaking of a taboo by an individual brings the wrath of the gods and the ancestors on all members of the community.
6. The ancestors and the divinities/gods are regarded as the intermediaries between the people and God.
7. African religions are basically religions of structure which are looking forward to salvation here and now not here after, hence much attention is paid to the rites of passage and social activities geared towards success in life.
8. The diviners and the traditional priests are the mediators between the people and the ancestors and the gods.
9. The chiefs are the social and religious leaders of the community. They are also the custodians of the land, which is for the ancestors.
10. In African worldview even physical evil has its agent cause, which can be avoided if identified in time.
11. The diviners and the traditional priests, who are the favourites of the ancestors and the gods, are chosen at random through possession, sickness and even death. Therefore as Fr. Kirwen (1987:104) asserts, "the call of the ancestors are dangerous, dramatic and painful." This, to the researcher, is the general contention of Africans.
12. It has also been identified that in both countries under study, religion draws on symbols for renewal and replenishment of rituals; and like other religions, rituals play a major role in the religious practices.
13. There is interdependence between religion and the socio-cultural and political machinery. Each sector is affected and influenced by the other in the smooth running of the community.

6.2 THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE (SUMMARY)

The researcher does not hesitate to assert again that the concept of the divine permeates the whole social and cultural fabric of the ethnic groups under study. They express their consciousness and experience of the divine in natural phenomena such as symbols, proverbs, social interaction, rites of passage and worships in general. The dominant role played by the ancestors, the divinities, and the spirits as custodians of the social moral order and as mediators between the people and the Supreme Being is a major belief system in African religions.

The constant interaction between the living and the living dead in African cosmology is also a reality and practical in African religion. It is not a fantasy, or a myth or a make belief. It is a way of life practised by the traditional adherents of the religion and even the African Christians, and they know that it works. Busia (1951:38) comments on people's feelings and remarks about *Adae* rituals as,

Literates and illiterates, Christians and pagans have participated in ritual Adae ceremonies, and shared the sentiments they expressed or symbolized. I have questioned literate and Christian young men who have been privileged to attend the pouring of libation to ancestors, or have witnessed the sacrifices at Adae and similar ceremonies. Their answers were in many instances, 'I felt its reality' or I was deeply moved? The Ashanti expression often used 'Ctōō me so' describes a very exalted feeling of awe.

The Akan belief in the omnipotence of God is explicitly found in the belief that everything comes from God, be it good or bad, hence the maxims: "If God does not sanction your death the enemy will toil in vain", "If God gives you disease he gives you medicine to cure it." "Everything is by God."

In regard to the otiose nature of God in African religious milieu in the views of foreign scholars, the research has revealed that the otiose outlook reflects the socio-political structure of the traditional system of rule. Therefore like the hierarchical order in the chiefdom from the headmen through divisional chiefs to the paramount chief or King as discussed earlier on, the Supreme Being is usually not bothered with our material needs

which can be taken care of by his functionaries. He takes care of the general well-being of the universe.

Therefore the African ascribes the maintenance of law and order in our universe to the gods and the ancestors. They punish evildoers and lawbreaker and bless those who uphold the laws. Hence the Akan and for that matter Africans can easily swear by God or the Christian cross or Bible but would hesitate to swear by the divinities or the ancestors for fear of immediate punishment.

The Akan maxim: “*Onyankopōn fa boō a ōnto no ntem*” literally means “when God picks a stone to throw at a culprit he delays.” The African is therefore aware of the elastic patience of God but sure of the final retribution.

6.2.1 WORSHIP

Worship as discussed in Chapter 4 reveals the concept of the divine in the two countries under study. Worship occurs during such socio-religious phenomena as rites of passage, farming, harvesting, and festivals and during special days set aside for worship in the shrines of the deities/gods - in the case of Ghana. During worship sacrifices and offerings, rituals, prayers, songs, dance and drumming occur as features of liturgy.

6.2.1.1 SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS

Although sacrifice does not necessarily always form part of worship nevertheless sacrifices and offerings are means of renewing and cementing cordial relationship with the spiritual beings in order to promote peace, harmony and success in our material world. It is a way of showing our appreciation for the assistance and protection we get from the ancestors and the deities and appeasing them for the wrongs done.

6.2.1.2 RITUALS

Ritual act is the means of interacting with the divinities. It is a means of revealing the concept of the divine in African religion. It permeates all the other religious phenomena in worship. Thus one cannot bypass it to perform sacrifices or offerings, prayer, ritual dance, songs, and drumming. It regulates the liturgy during worship.

6.2.1.3 PRAYER

Prayer in worship is quite often intertwined with music. Most of the songs sung during worship are some forms of prayers. Among the Akan formal prayer usually takes the form of libation, during which an alcoholic beverage is offered to the divinities. Although there is no direct worship of the Supreme Being among neither the Akan nor the Basotho, prayers usually include the name of the Supreme Being. In such cases his name is mentioned first in the invocation before the ancestors and the deities. Even in cases where the Supreme Being is not mentioned (Which is rare) it is implied because the ancestors and the deities are his functionaries. As mentioned earlier, in Ghana, state functions are opened with Christian prayer followed by traditional prayer said by a spokesman of a chief. The Basotho address their traditional prayers mostly to their ancestors, who are their gods. Prayer therefore permeates worship in both countries.

6.2.1.4 SONGS

Africans love music and express their emotions in songs, so they sing to express sorrow, happiness or joy; they sing during rites of passage, at work, during worship and during war. They have songs of praises for God, the gods, ancestors and their heroes.

6.2.1.5 DRUMMING

Drumming is another form of prayer and it forms part of the liturgy during worship. Among the Akan drumming plays a major role in the cultural and religious activities.

During festivals, durbars, funerals and in fact state functions the drummer plays an important role. He is well versed in drum poems full of praises to God, the gods and the ancestors, chiefs and some individuals of public stand. Drum language discussed in chapter 4 is full of African philosophical and religious thoughts expressive of the African concept of the divine.

6.2.1.6 DANCE

African dance is not just mere movement of the body and foot works to the rhythm of the music but calculated movements meaningful and expressive of one's emotional feelings. It is communicative and hence forms part of prayer in worship. Ritual dance has meaning and is translatable into ordinary language by those who are trained in it. Dance, music and drumming are inseparable but distinct in their functions.

6.2.2 ATTRIBUTES AND HONORIFIC NAMES OF GOD

Attributes and honorific names of God which express African awareness of the existence of God, and hence their concept of the divine, abound in the religion of the two countries under study. The examples cited in Chapter 4 adequately prove that the African religion is theistic and Theo-centric.

6.2.3 MAXIMS

Like the attributes, the maxims are also expressive of the African concept of the divine. Maxims are African philosophical thoughts, which express African beliefs and practices socially, culturally, politically and religiously. Examples of religious maxims about belief in God, the divinities and the ancestors can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

6.2.4 MYTHS

Like all other religions, the African religion, as revealed by this study, is not without myths that reveal their religious beliefs and practices. There are myths about the Supreme Being, ancestors, subterranean world, life after death, the origin of death and the separation of man from God. Such myths as found in Chapter 4 reveal the African concept of the divine.

The belief in the existence of the underworld or the subterranean world in the two countries and in Africa in general is expressed in Middleton's assertion of the Lugbara culture hero Rembe. Benjamin Ray (1976:115) says that Rembe was "a man of God" and that people came to hear him because he spoke the "word of God." His power was recognized as coming from the Lugbara creator, Adro, who in his immanent form resides in pools and streams where Rembe got his sacred water.

6.2.5 CHIEFTAINSHIP IN AFRICA

The King or Chief in the traditional worldview is the spokesman and mediator between the ancestors and his people. He is the custodian of the land. The land belongs to the ancestors and must therefore not be sold. The chief in the cultural milieu is the spiritual leader, the high priest, and is accorded a divine status. It is not his personality that is divine but the position he holds as spiritual leader and spokesman of the ancestors. Zuesse (1979:93)-talking about the Lozi kingship-says, "The King is the unity of the people, culture and the land. He is truly semi Divine, a priestly figure as much as political one. He sustains the land and the people through his relationship with his ancestors..." This assertion, in short, summarizes what is said about African kingship. It would also be recalled that talking about Bantu chiefdom, Smith (1950:82) says, "...The chief or king is the focus of tribal life and conveys considerable rights and powers with corresponding obligations to his subjects. His person is sacred. The well-being of his people is mystically sustained by him."

6.2.6 DIVINERS

Diviners, medicine men and rainmakers also play vital roles in the cultural and religious milieus in the two countries. Their role in society as mediators between the ancestors and the community and as spiritual leaders accord them special respect and give them divine status.

6.2.7 PRIESTS/MEDIUMS

Priesthood and Mediumship among the Akan of Ghana go hand in hand because some priests are themselves mediums and they combine the two functions. They are specially trained to perform the task of mediators between the gods and the community they serve, performing rituals that go with sacrifices, offerings, and healing. They divine and prophesy to the chief and individuals. The priest or the medium is thus very important in a community. He is the chief adviser and spiritual director of the chief and the community as a whole.

6.3 THE MISSIONARY INFLUENCE

The findings in both countries indicate that the African Religion has been influenced by the missionary enterprises positively and adversely in social, political, cultural and religious contexts as discussed in Chapter 3 and, since the sacred and the secular are interrelated in African milieu, all the peripheral influences affected the African religions. The missionaries aimed at destroying the African religions and in their place build the Christian faith. So they aimed at establishing a social structure, which would promote the Christian faith, hence they established Western social and cultural life.

School curricula included Christian religious instructions but not African culture and religion. Attempts were made to disabuse the Youth's mind of traditional ways of worship. The formal education therefore produced new brand of Africans who were aliens in their own homes. But since the African religion is not independent of the socio-

cultural life of the people they could not wipe off the traditional religion from the African society. So those who had joined the Christian or the Islamic religion as the case might be practised the traditional religion alongside the Christian or Islamic faith.

Another point of interest is that the missionaries' attack on the social institutions such as polygamy, bride wealth (lobola), puberty rites, initiation lodges and funeral rites had repercussions on the African religion, because they all go with some ceremonial rituals, that are religious, to sustain the cosmos. Therefore when they are destroyed they affect the cosmic order. Physical attempts were made to desacralise the African cosmology, which quite often brought chaos into the social system.

Chiefs are both political and religious leaders of the communities; hence the disruption of the religious or social order affects the smooth administration of their communities.

In most communities, like those of the Akan, the early Christian converts were mostly social deviants, outcasts and redeemed slaves who did not care to disrupt the cosmic order by breaking traditional cultural and religious norms of the communities. On this issue Jim Kiernan (1995:75), commenting on the impact of white settlements on African religion in South Africa, says, "An alternative religious outlook exercises attraction only when social organization is severely disrupted or individuals became dislocated from it. That is why, in the early stages of missionary contact, only a handful of refugees, outcasts and the discontented of African societies went over to Christianity."

Chiefs were scarcely won over into the foreign religions because they were the custodians of the African religion, hence their conversion would mean a betrayal of the religion, the ancestors and the people as a whole. Or else they would become Christians in name but traditionalists in practice because they could not forego the traditional, cultural and religious practices as the Christian religion demanded. Thus the negative effect of the missionary influence on the African concept of the divine is direct disruption of the African perception of the divine.

It would also be observed that generally the influence of the Christian missions, one way or the other, enabled African scholars to undertake a systematic study of the concept of the divine in African religious perspective. On the other hand, one could say that since most of these early scholars "in this field" were Christian theologians their studies were some how influenced by Christian doctrines.

6.4 COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

The study reveals that the colonial administrators in the two countries worked hand in hand with the missionaries. While the missionaries looked up to the colonial masters for support and protection, the colonial administrators in turn used the missionaries as their mediators and or social welfare officers. For example as discussed in Chapter 3, in Ghana Freeman and Riis were used by the British and the Danish administrators at Cape Coast Castle and Christiansburg Castle in Accra to contact the Asantehene on their behalf. In Lesotho too a missionary facing a 'bohali' problem in divorce appealed to the Government Agent Griffith to intervene on his behalf, though the case was not judged in his favour, it is an indication that the missionaries always looked up to the colonial government for support and protection. Working hand in hand the colonial administrators and the missionaries tried to suppress traditional laws and customs, which were intertwined with the African religions.

Among the merchandise brought by the colonial masters, as discussed in Chapter 3 were guns, gunpowder, cartridges and alcoholic beverages which were detrimental to the stability of traditional governance and peace. The guns triggered petty tribal wars while the alcohol promoted indiscipline and petty quarrels. Some Akan chiefs were destooled on charges of drunkenness. These defects affected the African religion, in that; some shrines of the gods were desacralised. Sometimes the instability caused the neglect of the gods and the regular contact with the ancestors for promoting harmony with the cosmos.

6.5 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

Personal observations reveal that even though almost everybody in Lesotho is a Christian and Christianity and Islam dominate the Ghanaian Population the African concept of the divine prevails because as already said, the African takes his religion everywhere even to the Christian and Islamic worships. For example an appeal to donate to the Church for the upkeep of the poor and the needy finds meaning in votive and or thanksgiving sacrifices or offerings after annual harvest time, which, in Ghana, coincides with Christmas festivities. The people donate so generously at this time that the Churches have made it an annual appeal. The people donate generously because they believe they are giving to God in appreciation for the good harvest or in anticipation for a better harvest the following year, as they do in the shrines of the gods.

Observations reveal that the predominance of Christianity and Islam in the case of Ghana has not displaced the traditional religion. All the three are practised side by side. The traditionalists, Christians and the Muslims alike, attend the traditional cultic worship and the public worship during festivals, funerals and other rites of passage because they are socio-cultural and religious practices, which a true citizen cannot refrain from. It is obvious that it is not only the 4% traditionalists in Ghana (according to recent population census) who carry out the traditional cultural and religious rites that punctuate the socio-cultural life of the people. Such rites usually embody the entire society.

In Lesotho, there has been no occasion or situation where the researcher found some people trying to abstain from traditional religious beliefs and practices on the grounds that they were against the Christian faith. During funerals all members of the family including the religious, adhere to the cultural and religious practices inherent in Basotho religious milieu. They all participate in cutting the sod in order of seniority during burials, the washing of hands in basin of water, shredded with aloe leaves, after burials, wearing the thapo and cutting their hair. Bulls and cows are slaughtered to provide blankets for the deceased members of the family and to provide meals for the 'balimo'.

It would be observed that in their attempt to explain the absence or remoteness of the Supreme Being in Basotho Traditional Religion scholars use the terms like “deus otiosus”, “deus remotus” and “deus absconditus” that are obviously imports but if they use them to give the message, the researcher does not find anything wrong with it. He believes that foreign terms are used in order to drive the message home to foreign readers.

The belief that the Supreme Being can and is being worshipped through the mediation of the ancestors and the lesser deities is predominant in African religious practice. It is this belief that makes the mediatorial role of Jesus and the saints acceptable to the African Christian converts because they already knew and practised the mediatorial system in the traditional religion before the advent of Christianity. What the researcher is trying to establish by this analogy is that the study, development and promotion of African Religions will make African Christians understand the Christian doctrines better. And this is to say that the African religions, as practised in the two countries are not at variance with the Christian religion.

Therefore the concept of the divine in African religions as pertains in the two countries under study perceived as diffused monotheism by some scholars is rather a hierarchical administration of the cosmos in which the Supreme Being is the King and the ancestors, deities (gods) and spirits are his functionaries or regents in African purview. He therefore remains one Supreme God in African perspective. He is not a God among gods but God of the gods.

6.6 THE SYNTHESIS

Is it possible to synthesize the traditional religious concepts in the two countries under study? Can African religion be synthesized with Christianity or Islam? Just as the differences call for differentiation or uniqueness of each belief, the similarities point out that there are points of common interest and beliefs that call for unity or syncretism. How then should the syncretism be done in order not to antagonize any group? Basing

ourselves on the similarities some of the differences may be adopted and adapted, while others may be jettisoned. Hocking, in Parrinder (1977:83), regards the better way of synthesis as preparatory to his idea of pre-conception. In this a new faith will take up the values of an old one and transform them, thus producing new creation. This is regarded as the natural process of religious growth, whereby a religion builds deliberately on the foundation of another, say Christianity or Hinduism, incorporates its noblest aspects and produces a new higher Christianity.

To synthesise the African religious beliefs, we must aim at a common goal of religion qua religion and the ultimate reality, which is God. All religions aim at experiencing God or harmonizing our physical world with the transcendental world for success here and now or hereafter. Toynbee, according to Parrinder (1977:96), holds that there is this common element at least between all religions that they believe in spiritual reality as distinct from materialism of communism.

The similarities in the two traditional religions show that they are one and the same belief. They are all geared toward ancestor veneration and their mediatorial function in the worship of the Supreme Being. The differences are cultural and or ethnic peculiarities. Parrinder (1977:84) says that if one thing is striking in the comparative study of religions, it is the diversity of religion, and the different levels at which it is manifested.

On this note one might ask, is there a need for synthesis at all? Is it not enough to study and compare in order to learn and appreciate the universality of religion qua religion? Should we not learn to appreciate and respect other religions as various ways of reaching the ultimate reality? The researcher believes that much as there are differences in climate, environmental and physical conditions, which influence our racial and cultural differences, our perception of the cosmos will remain diverse and pluralism of religion will persist. If the historical religions or the great religions of the world such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc. have broken into fragments, how then do we hope to fully proselytise the adherents of the traditional religions we call heathenish? The

researcher feels that the fragmentation of the historical religions through schism is an indication of the fact that religious pluralism is a natural phenomenon that must be respected and upheld. Parrinder (1977:81) records that Rāma Krishna, expressing his comments on multiplicity of religion in India aggravated by Missionary activities, said, "God is one but his aspects are many, one God is worshipped in different countries and ages and has different forms and names". He adds that all paths lead to the truth nevertheless every man should follow his own religion.

Parrinder (1977:87) also asserts that if a syncretic religion is not desirable, it is possible that there are elements in other religions, which may be borrowed. He adds that Christian ashrams have used classic Hindu expressions of devotion, so as to root worship in an indigenous setting. Parrinder (1977:82) says again that a religion of synthesis, however, is not the only possible result of recognizing the good in other religions. It has been tried, with varying success. But other attitudes are possible, and are held in fact by large numbers of people, in other religions. And that many leading Muslims, in all ages, have seen some truth in Judaism and Christianity, but have not been less convinced and devout Muslims for that. Similarly Africans have seen some religious truth in Christianity but have not been less convinced and devout traditionalists; hence the converts practise the African religious beliefs alongside Christianity.

On this note the researcher will, however, like to say that the differences in the religious practices in the two countries concerned, arising out of ethnicity and environmental influences need not hinder the uniformity of African religions. The differences can be maintained and respected. And since the religion is enshrined in the culture and the cultural differences do not create any barrier in seeing ourselves as Africans so should it not be a barrier in African religion. In this case syncretism may be possible because it is internal, within the same religion, African religion.

6.7 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDY

1. In order to work towards a comparative theology for African religion, scholars should carry out more such studies so that the findings could be synthesized for a unified theology.
2. It is also noteworthy that a detailed study be made in the African funeral rituals that reveal the African concept of life after death. This will throw more light on African religious phenomena such as reincarnation and ancestor veneration.
3. The enculturation of Christianity in Africa as it appears to have been done in Europe is a point to be considered seriously; for it is only then that the psychological tension, which seems to have victimised the African Christians, who are full of pretensions may be relieved. They can cope better with this tension only if they can feel free to observe and practise some of their traditional religious beliefs, which at any rate they do secretly or in disguise.
4. African educationists should introduce the teaching of African Religion in the secondary school and high school levels as done in West Africa (if not at the primary level) not under Social Studies or Language Studies but under Religion to impress upon the youth that their society is not without religion.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the two countries under study have certain religious beliefs and practices in common which reveal their Africanness and promote the universal African religion. For example belief in God, Spirits, Ancestors and Ancestor veneration, life after death, the subterranean world, divination and witchcraft are common religious phenomena in the two countries. In each case there are state ancestors who oversee and protect state properties, and there are family and or clan ancestors who are in charge of

family or clan properties and members. The above assertions prove that the concept of the divine as prevails in the two countries is indigenous African concept that probably permeates the various religious beliefs in Africa south of the Sahara.

It is believed that cordiality between the people and their ancestors promotes harmonious order; but whereas the Basotho depend solely on their '*Balimo*' for protection and guidance, for success, and as sole mediators between them and God; the Akan of Ghana, on the other hand, depend on both the ancestors '*nsamamfoō*' and their gods '*abosom*' for protection and guidance and as mediators between them and God. In both cases the ancestor veneration plays a major role in their concept of the divine. To them the communion with the ancestors is not an imagination but a reality. It is the fervent conviction of the researcher that African religion as revealed in this study is Theistic. The concept of the divine in Africa is centred on God the Supreme Being, and that the African is aware that God is the maker and sustainer of the universe, but that God is too great and transcendental to be bothered with the activities and petty problems of his subjects. Therefore he has delegated his powers to the lesser deities and or the ancestors who are his regents or deputies and children to control the affairs of this world and cater for the needs of people. This belief, as stated in Chapters 2 and 4, reflects the divine Kingship or chieftainship administration in African polity. It is a respect that ordinary subjects do not address or speak to the king direct but through an intermediary or a spokesman.

It is also evidently clear from the research that the African concept of the divine has been influenced by foreign religions, culture and education and as a result seems to have lost some of its tenets but still prevails alongside Christianity and Islam.

In the researcher's view if we uphold that the Supreme Being is almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent and immanent, then it goes without saying that he supersedes and controls all spirits and powers of the universe. Therefore he is the source of power and hence all power derives from him. This will imply that the gods, spirits and the ancestors and even human beings draw their powers from him; therefore the veneration of gods and

ancestors as mediators is not a misnomer. They all portray the African concept of the divine as means of experiencing the ultimate reality - God.

The first principle the researcher would like to establish from his studies is that African religion as portrayed in his findings is theistic. Second, it is monotheistic because it recognizes or acknowledges only one Supreme Deity. Third, the recognition of the lesser deities as the children and or functionaries and mediators of the Supreme Deity does not render the religion less monotheistic because Africans believe that God created the lesser deities (and the ancestors) for the benefit of humanity. The divinities and the ancestors are subservient to the Supreme Being. The researcher will therefore call it neither diffused monotheism nor implicit monotheism; he may perhaps call it monolatry.

To the African God is not a philosophical concept which an ordinary person is not capable of conceiving but a universal intrinsic principle which even a child is capable of perceiving as reflects in the Akan maxim: "Obi nkyere abōfra Nyame." "God needs no pointing out to a child." Therefore African concept of the divine as revealed in this research study is the experience of the Supreme Being, the universal God. Thus the Akan (Ghanaian) and Basotho religions are all forms of experiencing and worshipping the divine- God- in diverse forms.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A STUDY
IN AFRICAN RELIGION**

THIS RESEARCH WORK IS FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSE

Tick what is applicable or write

1. NATIONALITY..... TRIBE.....

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION: Christian, Traditionalist, Muslim,
Bhufist, or.....

AGE: 25-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50
 51-55 56-60 60+

MARITAL STATUS: single married divorced separated

Gender: Male Female

2. a. Who or what is your highest object of worship?

God, ancestors, spirits,
others.....
(Tick the one appropriate)

b. Do you believe in: gods, juju, muti, amulets, and
talisman, for protection?

(If yes tick those applicable)

c. Do you ever pray to God on your own? Yes/No.
If yes on what occasions?

d. How did you come to know God? i.e. Through: Tradition, Parents,
Christian religion, Islam, Buddhism,
others.....

3. a. Do you believe in Ancestors? Yes/No

b. If no why? (State your reasons at the back of this sheet)

- b. If yes how do they influence your life? i.e. Guidance, Protection, blessing, punishment. (Tick those appropriate)
- c. Do you ever ask for help from them? Yes/No.
- d. How do you appease them when you offend them? Through Prayer, sacrifice, other rituals (Tick those appropriate)
- 4 a. Does the king or chief play any role in the traditional religion of your tribe? Yes/No.
 b. If yes what part does he play?.....
5. Apart from church worship do you or your tribe pray to God during any occasion(s)? i.e. festivals, durbars, birth, marriage, death, periods of suffering or harvest. Yes/No (If yes tick those appropriate)
6. a. Write down any local or traditional name(s) of God you know.....

 b. Do you have any names of God (attributes) which reveal His qualities i.e. All loving, Almighty, etc. in your language? Yes/No.
 c. If yes write some of them down.....

7. a. What part do ancestors play in the traditional worship? i.e.
 i. Sole objects of worship.
 ii. Intermediaries between the living and God.
 iii. Any other.....

- b. Do you believe in other deities (gods) apart from God?
 If yes mention them.....

8. Are there any traditional shrines for God in your tribe? Yes/No
 If yes mention the name.....

- 9 a. Are there shrines of other deities or gods? Yes/No

If yes mention the name(s).....

b. What part do the shrines play in the worship? Adoration, consultation, sacrifice, any other?.....

10. a. Do you believe in witchcraft? Yes/No.
b. If yes how does it affect people? Physically/Spiritually

11. Do you think diviners are of any importance in your community? Yes/No
If yes how?.....
If no why?.....

12. Traditional African Religions should be: abolished, maintained, merged with Christian Religions. (Tick the one appropriate)

13. Do you have any traditional proverbs about God or in honour of God's bounty? Yes/No
If yes give examples in your language.

14. a. Traditionally do you believe in spirits? Yes/No.
b. How do they affect your traditional religious beliefs and practices?