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AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS AND INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIP

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This paper is in three parts. The first part deals with short introductory remarks on inter-faith relations. The second, the longest part, focuses on the fundamental features of Akan indigenous religion and the forms of inter-religious relationship that have emerged from the religious heritage. The third part is a sort of conclusion of my arguments.

Western liberal approach to inter-religious relationship at international levels normally focuses on face to face encounter, in which persons from differing religious traditions meet to argue about their religious doctrines in either a polemical or diplomatic way. Unfortunately, the recent political history of European countries such as Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo, to mention just a few, has clearly demonstrated that the usual confrontational, the crusade or the jihad model of inter-religious relationship, particularly between Christians and Muslims in the West, has not been viable. There is thus an urgent need for a continuous search for new models, not only at the formal level but also at the grass root level.

My argument in this paper is that the indigenous African religious heritage, with its age-long plurality, offers useful insights into the search for viable inter-faith paradigm, which in my view takes seriously into consideration the reality of pluralism in our world today. This, of course, is not the same as saying that all persons have a positive attitude to the indigenous African religions. The fact is that some people, Christians and Muslims in particular, have such a denigrating attitude to the primal religions that they see them, even at the end of the twentieth century, as the *animistic religions of primitive people* (Pollitt, 1996). It is, therefore, not surprising that for a long time the primal religions of African persons, and indeed other indigenous people, do not feature in international inter-faith dialogue. At such a level, it is usually the well-known and 'world religions' such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism that engage in dialogue with each other (Pollitt, 1996 p. 84). One can arguably say that it was some Churches in Africa, for example, which joined ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches, that challenged those concerned with inter-faith dialogue to broaden the scope of their vision. Since then, the World Council of Churches, in particular, has directed much attention to the issue of African (indigenous) cultural integrity, which has come under the nomenclature, the *gospel and culture* debate.

It is my contention that despite this, in one way or the other, the indigenous religions have already entered into the process of dialogue with Islam and Christianity, the two major religions that were introduced to the continent of Africa. That is to say that African persons did not passively embrace Islam and Christianity. As indicated in a previous paper (1), African nations did what everyone else has done -- they modified Christianity and Islam as presented to them from the western and the Arab world respectively. They have set their own priorities and have interpreted the Islamic and Christian message in a way that is relevant to their African realities. In so far as there are religious pluralistic systems on the African continent, the occurrence of varied forms of inter-faith encounter is inevitable.

The emphasis here is on variations -- variations that have naturally given rise to different models and perspectives on the process of inter-faith relationship. Western scholars, for example, have aptly identified the exclusivist, inclusivist, pragmatic, relativist, and dialogical convergenistic perspectives or views on inter-relationship between differing religious traditions (Ninian Smart, p. 58 ff.). That is to say that there are many forms of inter-faith relationship and I believe that there are yet more from the African continent. Since eminent scholars such as Ninian Smart, John Hick (2) and others have done extensive and marvellous work on the western perspectives of inter-faith relationship, I would not attempt to add to their excellent work. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasise that our perspectives, modes and aim of inter-faith relationship are, to some degree, closely related to our understanding of what religion is and what its ultimate goal is. In saying this, we are not forgetting a crucial point that Professor John Hick makes:

There is of course no such thing as religion in general: Religion exists only in its many concrete forms. (John Hick, 1993, p. 22)

The obvious implication of this is that our understanding of religion and its ultimate goal is as varied as the many concrete forms of religion. This compounds further the variations in meaning, motivation and goal of inter-faith relationship.

It is within this frame of thought that I would like to share with you some insight on indigenous African religions and inter-faith relationship. But firstly, what is indigenous African Religion, one may ask? Such a huge and vast continent as Africa definitely has complex and diverse cultural, social and political as well as the religious realities that are going through astronomical changes. Thus, in a short paper such as this, there would naturally be generalisation and oversimplification of the complex and varied realities on the continent. In an attempt to overcome such a situation to some extent, I shall limit the context of this discussion primarily to Ghana where most of my research has been conducted over the years. Even so, we need again to stress the fact that Ghana, though a small country, has religious diversity and complexity. I shall therefore focus mainly on the Akan indigenous religion. (3) Here too, we need to stress the point that the Akan traditional religion has several ramifications and so I shall attempt to highlight the basic characteristic features that, I believe, are relevant to our discussion. These are:

1) In the Akan indigenous religion there is a strong belief in a community of spirits that are said to be capable of influencing the lives of people. These numerous spirits range from the creator god, *Nana Onyame*, gods/godesses, *Abosom*, the earth deity, *Asaase Yaa*, to the ancestors, *Nananom Nsamfo*. The general belief is that the diverse spirits harmoniously work together for the total well-being of humanity. There are also appropriate communicative mechanisms devised to establish continual and reciprocal relationships between persons and the spirit powers.

2) There is also a demonstrable cultural disposition that emphasises the spiritual dimension of total human life. This finds expression in a certain specific conception of nature, of humanity and *Nana Onyame*'s (God's) relations with the creatures of various types. It also finds expression in the relationships between persons and their physical environment and in the ways in which explanations are sought for the major problems of life, the problem of the meaning of life, the problem of suffering and the problem of evil. In this regard, misfortunes or mishaps are, in some cases, interpreted as arising from the activities of malevolent spirits, a typical example of which is reflected in witchcraft. (4) This demonstrated feature of African indigenous religion should be taken together with the fact that the religion has a more practical (5) than meditative or philosophical slant. In other words, the practitioners of the indigenous African religions in general do not devote much attention and time to prolonged and systematic arguments or dogmatic and other theologies with regard to the validity of their religious experiences. The humanistic and the pragmatic slant is also seen in the way that persons easily and effectively engage with the spirit world.

3) Religion, to the Akan, is generally perceived as a tool for survival and for enhancing life in its broad sense. Being religious in this sense implies active participation in types of rituals such as praying, sacrificing, consulting diviners, and seeking esoteric knowledge and power from the spirits as well as maintaining good relationships with people. In sum, it implies enlisting the support of as many spirits as possible: God, gods and the ancestors, etc., to overcome social problems and evil spirits believed to exist in the world. It is also maintaining the harmony between humanity, nature and the spirits. I strongly contend that this is the essence of the religious life of many Akan persons (and perhaps Africans in general).

4) The ultimate goal of all this is to achieve the total well-being or the enhanced life, the signs of which are the following: prosperity, fertility, virility, children, good health, long and peaceful life, total protection from any malignant spirit, peaceful death and final reunion with the ancestors.

5) Again, life is seen, among other things, as a continuous struggle and a journey to be on the good side of the spirits and to equip oneself with spiritual power for such a journey. The quest for the holistic life is such an obsession that any religious tradition that promises life will be embraced.

6) There is the strong belief that life's contingencies are so many and varied that several different avenues may be needed for their solution. Pragmatic attitude to religion is thus an observed feature of the traditional Akan religious life, in which there is a marked degree of restlessness and movement from one religious tradition through several to the other or the practice of more than one religious tradition at the same time. Therefore, in the indigenous Akan religious system it is not irreligious to borrow from or combine several religious traditions. Religion in such a world-view becomes a sort of insurance policy. 'The more one has, the richer one is likely to be' (Nida, 1974 p. 33). The more cults one frequently consults, the more equipped one is for life.

7) As such there is great respect for other faith traditions. There is also, therefore, very little room for exclusive claims in religious truth. The Akan traditional religion strongly emphasises the belief that power (even spiritual power) can be communally shared. Members in this religious are therefore hospitable and flexible to other faiths.

8) Another typical fundamental feature of the Akan traditional religion is the strong emphasis that is placed on reciprocity and inter-relationship between the members of the community. Members are, therefore, expected to give each other mutual support because it is believed that they are so closely inter-related with each other that what affects one member affects all. Thus the Akan say, *Annie nay a, an ehwene anya*, which means, what affects the eye, affects the nose, or, *Wo nyonko wuda ne wo da*. (6) This also means, the day one's neighbour dies is the day one dies. The point is that as a family or a community, actions of members affect each other one way or the other. It is on the basis of this that the members are committed to supporting each other regardless of religious differences.

The fundamental features certainly encourage inspiring forms of inter-religious relationship, particularly at the grass root level. Surely, the stress on accommodative, the communal and pragmatic aspect of religion and the concept of religion as a tool for survival, provide essential tools for sustainable inter-faith relationship in our world which is increasingly becoming more and more diverse and pluralistic. For these basic and fundamental features of the indigenous Akan religions (features that one may say are also very typical of and fundamental to many indigenous religions in Africa) naturally encourage (religious) pluralistic systems that are becoming inevitable in our time. More importantly, the strong sense of community with the emphasis on sharing (spiritual) resources further encourages respect for other persons' faith traditions, and this makes it easier for people to live together for the common good, namely, the enhanced life for all.

Earlier on in this paper it was indicated that the differing religions in Africa do encounter each other. One of the several consequences of such encounter has been inevitable *exchange*. Indeed, it has been a phenomenon of exchange whose focus has been between non-African and African thought-form. More importantly, however, within the minds of African persons, traditional African realities have continued to exist in exchange with Christian and Islamic expressions. In so far as some African Christian and Muslim converts continue to practise, even if in modified forms, some of the resilient cultural practices that are intertwined with indigenous religions, these converts live aspects of indigenous religions. We have in mind 'rites de passage' at such times as death, birth and puberty, as well as marriage, in which many African converts or non-converts still take part.

For example, an occasion of death in an African family typically brings together all members -- Muslims, Christians and adherents of the indigenous African religions, etc., with the common goal of giving appropriate and fitting funeral rites to the deceased, believed to be moving on to another form of existence. To achieve such a goal, each adult individual, regardless of one's religious persuasion, is required to contribute in one way or another towards the successful performance of the funeral rituals, whether or not such rituals are Christian, Islamic or indigenous. In times of crisis such as death that cuts across religion, the family members instinctively turn to their cultural belief that death is just a

moment of transition to another world to which the deceased should be properly prepared through the performance of appropriate funeral rituals.

Again, it has been observed that some Christian and Muslim children take part in the much-talked about female circumcision rites that are indigenous to some African societies, purely for the sake of ethnic or cultural identity. For example, even though the Government in Ghana has legally abolished such harmful practices as the rite of female circumcision, individuals, regardless of their religious tradition, continue to practise such rites to prove that they authentically belong to a particular ethnic or cultural group. Another instance of this is the attitude of some Anlos towards the *Trokosi* system, an aspect of the *Yewe* cult in which women are taken as compensation for evil acts committed by relatives, and which has been strongly criticised as being sexist, immoral, and against human rights. Some Anlos see the various efforts made by the government, religious and non-religious organisations to abolish or at least modify certain outmoded aspects of the system, as a deliberate effort of non-Anlos to destroy their ancient ancestral practice. In respect for the ancestors and tradition, the defendants of the Tokosi strongly believe that the system should continue regardless of its harmful effects on women.

Similarly, some members of the Ewe Dome and the Krobo of Ghana continue to practise the traditional rituals of initiation into womanhood. In fact, some churches are accommodating aspects of the ritual to their practices. (7) The rationale behind the continued performance of the puberty rituals is that these rituals inculcate the community's cherished beliefs, values and norms into the initiates. There was an instance where a girl of about 15 years objected to going through the *Dipo* puberty rituals for adolescent girls because she had become a Christian. The parents, who were also Christian, insisted that she should go through the rituals because she had to be taught the traditional Krobo norms and values, which they believed to be still relevant. In other words, she was being told to be first a Krobo and a Christian second.

It is demonstrably clear that the inevitable process of exchange of African and non-African thought-form is a form of inter-faith relationship in many African societies. In other words, persons in Africa would not wait for councils, intellectual or academic forum and conferences to debate whether or not dialogue must occur between African reality and Christianity or Islam. A clear inference from this is that the traditionally oriented Africans do not see dialogue as being merely arguments between two parties. Dialogue, for them, is also a process of fruitful exchange of beliefs, concepts, practices and sharing resources, etc., that contribute to the attainment of the enhanced and peaceful life.

Consequently, various forms of dialogue in the form of exchange and sharing of religious views and practices have already happened and have unfortunately been dismissed at times, as problematic syncretism, as if it were so novel. We should not overlook the fact that African persons did (and are doing) what others throughout history have done. The point is that the Christianity and Islam that came to Africa were not just packaged in European and Arab cultures respectively. Rather, I want to suggest that Christianity and Islam themselves are packaging. They do not just come boxed in particular cultures. They are boxes. There is no pure, pristine, cultureless Christianity or Islam. Dare I say again that if Jesus the Mediterranean revolutionary or Muhammad the Arab were to be in Africa today, they would both encounter and be encountered? There would have to be inevitable exchange, a form of dialogue.

It is also not surprising that some resilient features in the indigenous African Religions persist in the African Instituted Churches and the renewal movements. (8) Clear examples of such prevailing features are the strong belief in the pervasive presence and the power of the spirit and the practice of belong to several religious traditions at the same time. This is a clear indication of the process of exchange between Christianity and African indigenous religion. Similarly, some Muslim groups, particularly in Nigeria and Ghana, have retained some fundamental beliefs and practice of the indigenous African religions. It is precisely because of the mixing (*shirk*) process found in some Muslim groups that, for example, two widespread Islamic movements in West Africa are engaged in unending conflicts which at times erupt into violence. The reformist and rigorous *Wahhabi* (*Sunni*)

movement, which is anti Sufism in general, accuse the Tijaniyya, a mystic movement, of incorporating certain indigenous religious practices such as divination. Thus, the *Wahhabis* accept the fact that Islam in Africa has been packaged in an African box and so they are seriously engaged in purifying Islam to its pure state.

The process of exchange is also affecting the indigenous African religions. In line with the accommodating and receptive nature of Indigenous African Religions, some of the basic Christian and Islamic symbols such as the Bible and the Koran have also entered the traditional shrines. Members of these religions move freely from the shrine to church and mosque. New forms of indigenous religions are emerging on the continent. (9)

There is yet another form of inter-faith relationship that is evident on (though not unique to) the African continent. As I was growing up as a child with Methodist parents in my village, we lived in a large compound house with other members of the 'extended family'. My maternal grandmother, a strong, powerful and influential person in our life, lived with us. Unlike my parents, my grandmother was a devoted member of the Anglican Church in the village but she continued to practise as a traditional healer. On several occasions when I accompanied her to the thick forest to collect therapeutic herbs and plants, I observed her pouring libation to the gods/goddess and ancestors, etc., before collecting the plants. We had tenants who were also committed Muslims. We played with their children and we sometimes ate together. I had an aunt who was a traditional priestess of one of the several divinities in the village. At times she invited us to share meals with her in her room, at the corner of which was a shrine. Some of my cousins were married to Muslim men so they moved to the 'Zongo' where there were predominantly Muslims. There was scarcely any problem with regard to religious differences.

This is a form of inter-faith dialogue, which typically occurs at the grass-root level. In many African societies it is very common and normal to find within the extended family, members who belong to Islam, Christianity and the indigenous African religions living peacefully together in a common household. They live together as wives and husbands, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts, co-wives and brothers and sisters as well as grandparents. Though with different religious beliefs and practices they at times share common meals, participate in communal activities such as farming, funeral rites and festivals. The local and grass-root type of inter-faith dialogue is closely bound with the family and the work life of the household and the community at large.

At the political and public level, there is another form of inter-faith relationship and this is what we may call the diplomatic type of dialogue. The diplomatic type of inter-faith dialogue is normally initiated by governments and political organisations and not by the religious leaders themselves. Usually, representatives of the three major religions, the indigenous African religions, Islam and Christianity, are invited to take part in national events such as Independence Day celebrations and other political forums. Thus, since 1957 it has been the practice in Ghana, for example, to find African indigenous religious, Muslim and Christian leaders sitting together on such occasions, each with their specific religious roles to perform as citizens of the nation. In Africa, the inter-faith dialogue in its various forms is not a novelty.

Again, at the formal level religious institutions and political organisations have been making deliberate efforts to engage different religions in constructive dialogue. In this regard, we have in mind religious institutions and organisations such as the All African Conference of Churches, National Christian Council of Churches, the Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), etc. Departments of Religious Studies also show concern for inter-faith relationship. For example, many of the Departments of Religious Studies, such as my own Department at the University of Ghana, are ecumenical in orientation, and this is based on the assumption that all religions have theologies and that they are to be put on an equal footing irrespective of numbers. The aim of all these formal levels of inter-faith dialogue is the enhancement of peaceful coexistence of the various religious traditions. The ultimate aim is peace, justice and reconciliation, ideals that many religions strive to achieve.

So far, we have argued that the pluralistic situation in Africa, coupled with the search for common identity and the necessity to strive towards the common good, have resulted in sustainable forms of inter-religious relationship which may be summed up as follows:

1) The pragmatic model: Precisely because the underlying and the basic goal of indigenous religions is generally for human survival, one of the obvious forms of inter-faith dialogue in Africa is the pragmatic and the humanistic model. In this model individuals see each of the differing religions in the existing context as having something good to offer humanity. Thus, for example, the adherents of Akan indigenous religion borrow bits and pieces from Christianity and Islam because they regard the borrowed elements as being useful for their existence. In the same way, some African Muslims and Christians retrieve some elements that they find useful from the indigenous religious heritage. This practice of borrowing or retrieving bits and pieces from differing religious traditions has also been appropriately described as pragmatic accommodation. Sometimes the pragmatic accommodation results in an innovative process in religion with the consequent emergence of New Religious or revival movements that are very prevalent in many parts of (West) Africa.

2) Respectful co-existence Model: This type of model is demonstrated at the grass root level of dialogue seen in many African extended families where persons of differing faith traditions live in friendship and co-operation. In this sense, they are one as a family but with different religious beliefs and practices. Again, we have also noted that in times of national celebrations (and crisis) Christians, Muslims and members of the indigenous religions come together in search of the common good. This model is underpinned by the reality of religious plurality which is portrayed in the famous Akan proverb that 'one person's hand is not sufficient to stretch across the face of *Onyame*, the creator God.' Although we are conscious of the fact that Akan proverbs have multiple interpretations, we may rightly infer from this proverb that to the Akan, an aspect of religion is striving towards the creator, an act which is not the prerogative of a particular group of people. A further implication also is that the creator has provided several avenues, including differing religious traditions, for the solution of the contingencies of life. This is also why it has been observed that many religious persons in Ghana (Africa) move from one religious group through several, to the other, in search of material and spiritual security.

In highlighting these two models, there is no deliberate attempt on my part to glorify the inter-religious relationship on the African continent. Actually, there are two contrasting and opposing categories of inter-religious relationship. The first, into which we have gone in detail above, is the pragmatic category. The second, the crusade or the jihad category, completely rejects the pragmatic one. In this type of inter-religious relationship some Christians and Muslims, particularly those with fundamentalist orientation, engage each other in rather confrontational and polemical ways, sometimes burning churches, Bible, or Koran. As a result we have recently experienced violent eruptions between Christians and Muslims, and between Muslims, in towns such as Takoradi, Kumasi, Oda and Wenchi.

The swing of the pendulum between these two contrasting categories, however, depends on several factors, the obvious factor being how Islam and Christianity reacted to African realities, particularly during their early missionary activities. It has been clearly demonstrated by scholars in Islam and Christianity in Africa (10) that (in general comparison of the two religions) some aspects of the Islamic message were in consonance with the fundamental aspects of African reality. We have in mind aspects such as belief in the existence of evil spirits and polygamy. On the other hand, many of the nineteenth-century Christian missions in Africa dismissed, for example, the indigenous African fundamental belief in the pervasive presence of the spirit world as mere superstition. The result of this is that individual religious groups such as the charismatic and the *wahhabi* movements are desperately trying to rediscover and maintain their identity.

3) The crusade/jihad Model: The further consequence is the emergence of numerous religious groups with distinct and different beliefs, ideologies and practices, in many African societies. Some of these

groups are not only trying to maintain and rediscover their identities, but also doing what they can, in an aggressive way at times, to convert others. The crusade and jihad model, which rejects the authenticity of other religious traditions, is very typical of Christian and Islamic religious traditions, and has obviously resulted in the upsurge of intolerant, closed-minded and uncritical attitudes to religious faiths. The inevitable outcome of this is the serious inter- and intra-religious conflicts that have frequently characterised many African nations. The media has not failed to tell the world about the devastating inter-religious conflicts in Africa. Muslims and Christians are engaged in violent conflicts in Algeria, Sudan, and Nigeria, to mention just a few. We have also seen instances of this in the recent history of Ghana.

Naturally, with the strict adherence to their monotheistic religious traditions, many African Muslims and Christians find it extremely difficult to accept the belief in the community of spirits. For the Christians, there is only one God, who is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-seeing. Similarly, Muslims have a strict monotheistic belief and so they stress strongly the unity of Allah. In this regard, some African Muslims find the Christian doctrine of the Trinity very problematic to accept. In the same way some Christians find it problematic to accept the Muslim concept of the state, where there is no differentiation between religious and social aspects. Thus the encounter of these two powerful religions in Africa has, at times, been an encounter of rival claims.

Besides, in their histories, Islam and Christianity have respectively built strong nations and kingdoms that they desperately want to hold on to. Therefore, these religions, that make the absolute claim that their specific religion offers the only way to salvation, at times tend to be aggressive and polemical in their missionary activities. One may not be wrong in making the observation that the focus of such activities is on winning numbers, as if to say again that the success of their mission is determined by the quantity rather than the quality of life of converts. At the end of the day the target group of these two competing religions' aggressive mission activities, in Ghana in particular, are mostly the adherents of the indigenous African religions. In my view, a viable mission should be something more than merely competing for numbers. I am afraid this model, with the resulting inter- and intra-religious violent conflicts, is not viable in Africa or any part of the world.

Our world, as it is often stressed, is becoming a global village, and people from different cultures with different faith traditions willingly or unwillingly have no choice but to live together. For several reasons, people are massively migrating from one country to the other, making it inevitable for Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, people of the Baha'i faith, and members of the indigenous African religions, as well as other religions, to live more closely together than before. Plurality is becoming persistently a local as well as a global phenomenon. Again, it has been well demonstrated by several scholars that our global village, with its remarkable achievements, is a broken one. We are currently threatened by global economic depression with devastating and frightening repercussions. The gap between the rich and the poor is seriously widening. The global ecology is also in serious crisis. The media has again not failed to tell the world that in Northern Ireland Roman Catholics and Protestants are killing each other. Devastating ethnic cleansing, in which Christians and Muslims have lost their lives and property, has been going on in Eastern Europe, specifically in Bosnia and Chechnya, Kosovo and Croatia, etc. We have briefly touched on the situation in Africa where Muslim-Christian conflicts with devastating effects are in evidence in Sudan, Algeria, Nigeria, and Kenya, as well as my own country, Ghana. The story is no different in Asia. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, there are conflicts among Sikhs, Muslims, and Christians, to mention just a few. In the USA churches are being burnt by those who disagree with what goes on in these churches. In all these instances, untold lives and property are being destroyed in the name of religion, among other things.

From my point of view and from the vast array of data that the modern forms of knowledge, particularly critical and informed study of religions, has unearthed concerning the rich varieties of religious traditions, the confrontational mode of inter-religious relationship should be seen as unnecessary. In the African context, because members of the community face common realities such as the resilient nature of the indigenous cultural heritage and the struggle for daily survival, persons

from differing religious traditions easily come together to search for the common good. In such communities the focus is more on acting together and sometimes sharing each other's views for the well-being of all, rather than arguing and insisting that a particular religious view is more authentic than the other. The ability to share together and to build each other up is what some modern scholars have termed *diapraxis* (Kerr, 1998, p. 2).

In other words, the persistent crises in the global village should form a common base for religious people to forge peaceful relationships with each other. The *tertium quid* model, then, which recognises the 'civilising role of religion' (Kerr, 1998, p. 14) is very relevant to inter-religious relationship in any pluralistic situation. The *tertium quid* is a process whereby individuals with different religious traditions, faced with a common reality, come together to search for the well-being of all. Individuals may differ in doctrines and in practices but the fact remains that their experiences of transcendence, which is typical of many faith traditions, call for liberating and transforming actions. I believe strongly that the pragmatic and the respectful coexistence models, which are evident on the continent of Africa, reflect very much the *tertium quid* model. In advocating for the *tertium quid* model for viable inter-religious relationship a pluralistic system, one is neither obliterating the particularity of individual religious tradition nor ignoring the importance of mission, mission that focuses on harmony, peace, and well-being for all persons. For me, the issue then is, faced with a common reality, how do people from different religious traditions live and act together without being necessarily arrogant and triumphant about (human made) doctrines? Surely there is a lot that can be learnt from the varying indigenous African religions.

Notes:

- (1) See for example, Elizabeth Amoah, 'Indigenous African Spirituality, Religion and Innovation', a paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the British Association for the Study of Religions, Lampeter, 1998.
- (2) See for example, J. Hick, 'A Religious Understanding of Religion: a model of the relationship between traditions', and N. Smart, 'Models for understanding the relations between religions', in J. Kellenberger, ed., *Inter-Religious Models and Criteria*, Macmillan Press Ltd, Great Britain, 1993.
- (3) See for example, K. Busia, 'The Ashanti', in D. Forde, ed., *African Worlds: Studies in the cosmological ideas and social values of African peoples*, Oxford UP 1954.
- (4) In my view the spirit reflected in witchcraft is morally neutral spirit. That is, it is neither good nor bad. It is the purpose for which it is used that determines its moral nature.
- (5) The word 'philosophical' here is used in the western sense in which empirical justification and validity are sought to explain reality.
- (6) Elizabeth Amoah, 'The concept of the Akan Traditional Household', a paper presented at the meeting of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Nairobi, 1996.
- (7) Miss Rebecca Ganusah is carrying out research into initiation rites into womanhood in the Ewe dome traditional area. She confirms that some churches in the area even encourage the performance of certain aspects of the rituals in church vestries.
- (8) See E. Amoah's paper on 'Indigenous African Spirituality, Religion and Innovation'.
- (9) The Bible, for example, is sometimes used as a tool for divination. We have in mind movements such as the Afrikania Mission in Ghana and Godianism in Nigeria. These two religious movements aim at reviving the indigenous African religions in new forms.
- (10) See for example, J.S. Trimingham, *The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa*, SCM Press, London 1959.

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