

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PROPHETS OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS  
CHURCHES AND AKAN TRADITIONAL PRIESTS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION  
OF THEIR TRAINING**

**BY**

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**BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, KWAME  
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**COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

KNUST

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**JOSEPH OWUSU ATUAHENE (VERY REV.)**  
**BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY**

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this study is my own original work and that all references to other people’s work have been duly acknowledged. I further certify that this thesis has neither been presented in whole nor in part to any other institution for any degree.

Owusu Atuahene Joseph (Very Rev.) ..... ..

Student Name Signature Date

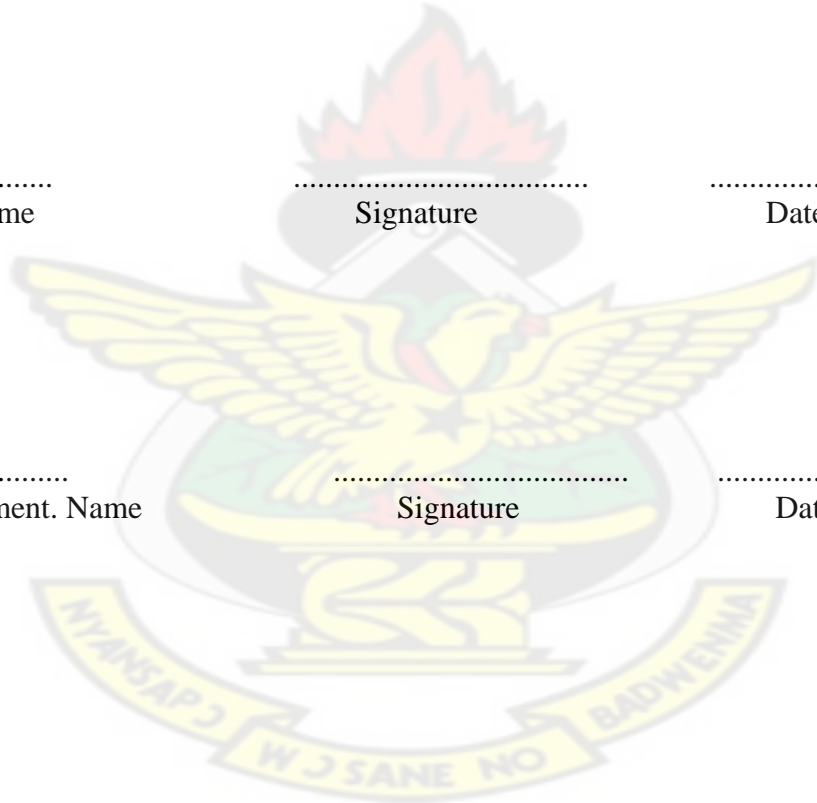
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Head of Department. Name Signature Date



## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my wife Mrs. Veronica Owusu Atuahene and our daughter Nana Akua Serwah Owusu Atuahene for their moral, material and prayer support and for enduring my long absence from home.

# KNUST



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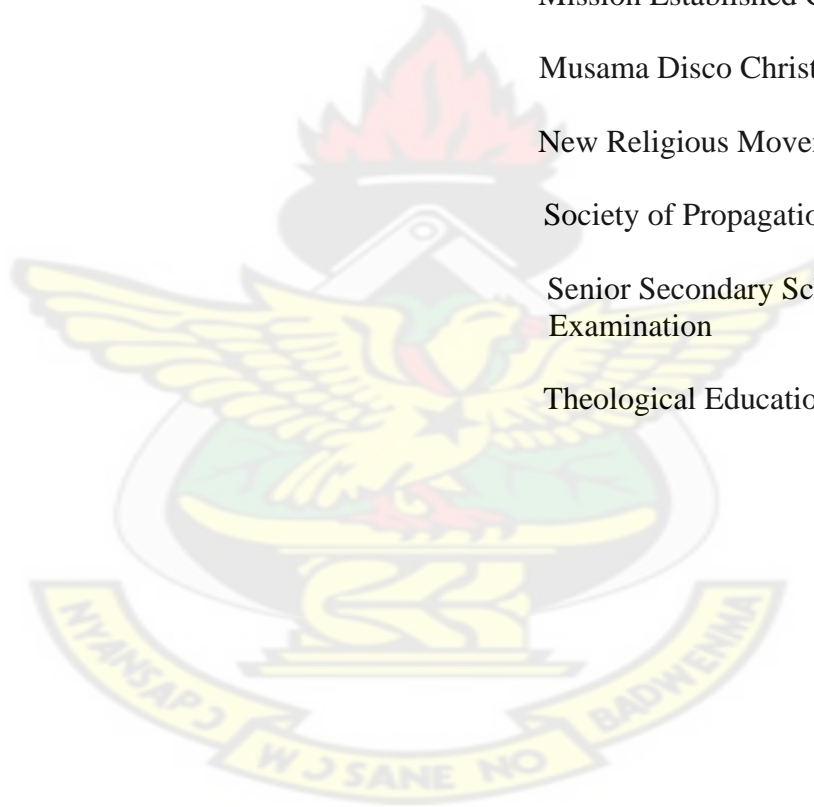
I cannot consider this acknowledgement complete without showing my gratitude to Mrs Zeniah Osei for editing the English Language aspect of this work. Finally, my thanks go to Mrs Evelyn Adjei Konadu, Mrs. Sabina Manu and Mrs. Lily Obeng Agyei, secretaries at the Methodist Church Ghana, Effiduase Ashanti who helped in the printing of this work. To all who have in diverse ways contributed to make this study possible, I say *Ayekoo*. While I share the credit of this work with these people any errors and shortcomings are entirely mine.

Owusu Atuahene Joseph (Very Rev)

August, 2010

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Indigenous Churches
BECE	Basic Education Certificate of Education
CCC	Celestial Church of Christ
GNTCS	Good News Theological College Seminary
JHS	Junior High School
MBM	Mennonite Board of Mission
MEC	Mission Established Churches
MDCC	Musama Disco Christo Church
NRMs	New Religious Movements
SPG	Society of Propagation of the Gospel
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
TEE	Theological Education by Extension



## ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines and compares the training of the (AIC) prophets and prophetesses with the Akan traditional priests and priestesses. There have been constant criticisms among Ghanaians, both Christians and non-Christians about the *modus operandi* and training of the AIC prophets and prophetesses. The abuses in activities of some AIC prophets and prophetesses in Ghana have called for a study of the kind of training the prophets and prophetesses go through. Besides examining the training of the AIC prophets and prophetesses the thesis also compares their training that of the Akan traditional *akomfo*, to find out the similarities and dissimilarities. The primary data for this study were obtained through interviews. The researcher visited some AICs in Ghana and interviewed senior prophets and prophetesses, as well as the would-be prophets and prophetesses for the study. Some schools that train AIC prophets and prophetesses were also visited. The principals of the schools and some past students were interviewed. Some traditional shrines Taakwadwo were visited to know in detail, through interviews the kind of training they give to their would-be priests and priestesses. Secondary data were obtained through relevant literatures. The researcher read some books and articles on the topic. The study revealed that the AICs in Ghana are mainly trained through mentoring or disciplining, though there are other forms of training, such as institutional type and the TEE. Many AICs prophets and prophetesses are not patronising these types of training institutions because some believe that they do not need such training. The researcher therefore recommends that the AICs prophets and prophetesses should take advantage of the available training institutions in order to change the perception of many Ghanaians towards them.

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**Appendix A1**  
**Interview with Archbishop Kwasi Sarpong, Archbishop of Catholic Archdiocese of**  
**Kumasi Asante on (15<sup>th</sup> June 2009), at his residence**

**RESEARCHER:** Nana may I know if there are similarities in the training of Christian prophets and Akan traditional priests.

**ARCHBISHOP:** There are similarities, but the training of traditional priests is very severe and intensive.

**RS:** Nana how severe and intensive?

**AKS:** The traditional priests have their training sometimes in forest. They sometimes go without food for longer period of time.

**RS:** How do you see the training of the Christian prophets?

**AKS:** Christian training in general is very luxurious, look at where they are trained. This has actually affected their performance. Some want to drive in modern cars. Those in the mainline churches sometimes give excuses of their inability to attend to their assigned work because of availability of duty cars.

**RS:** Bishop as an experienced person in the field, what do you recommend for Christian leaders in relation to their trainings?

**ASK:** Something must be learnt from the traditional training. The trainees must go through serious and intensive training.

## Appendix A2

### Interview with Bishop Agyei Mensah, Past Bishop of Obuasi Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana on (7<sup>th</sup> May 2009) at his residence

**RS: Bishop:** I overheard you talking about the contemporary prophets and prophetesses and their training. Could you elaborate little on what you said?

**Bishop Agyei Mensah (BAM):** I was talking about the need for the AICs leaders to critically look at the ways they may train prophets and prophetesses. I wish you were here to listen to some statements made by a prophet on a FM radio station.

**RS:** Do you think he made that statement because he was trained?

**BAM:** Yes, I think so. If the leaders of AICS may concentrate on educating their prophets and prophetesses in Ghana, it would be very helpful to the Christian community and the country as a whole.

**RS:** Bishop, do you know anything about the training of Akan traditional priests and priestesses?

**BAM:** Yes! I simply describe it as very demanding and intensive. They have to sleep sometimes in a thick forest for two to three years. Little mistake they make may affect the entire training.

**RS:** How can you compare this kind of training to that of Christian prophet?

**BAM:** I may sound harsh, but I will simply describe the training of the prophets and propheteeses as a “joke.” Even some of them do not go through any form of training. Listen to the kind of theological mistakes some of them make everyday on FM radio stations.

### Appendix A3

#### Interview with Bishop Daniel Obinim of International God's Way Church at his office on (4<sup>th</sup> July, 2009)

**RS: Bishop:** Are you a prophet?

**Bishop Daniel (BDO):** You need not to be told. I am prophet.

**RS:** Bishop, how long have you been in this prophetic ministry?

**BDO:** For nine good years. I was called into prophetism on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2000.

**RS:** Bishop Prophet, could you please tell me where you had your prophetic training and for how long?

**BDO:** Yes, I was trained by Rev. Bismark Owusu Ansah of Christian Triumphant Centre in Akwatialine, Kumasi for one year. And spent another two years with Bishop Osei Owusu of Calvary Revival Church, making it three years. I still receive training from Bishop Agyen Asare, I have not graduated yet.

**RS:** Any other training?

**BDO:** Divine Bible College in Kumasi for a Certificate in Biblical studies, and Advanced Diploma in Biblical studies from the same College. Oh I also had from God training at the Atwea Mountains for three good years.

**RS:** Do you agree with those who suggest that prophets and prophetesses should go through training?

**BDO:** Why not? Anybody who was called by God in the Bible went through training, though the Bible is sometimes silent about it.

**RS:** Bishop, have you also trained other prophets?

**BDO:** I have so far trained seventy-three prophets and pastors. Some are now even heading my branches, locally and internationally.

**RS:** Do have any plans to establish a prophetic school in this country?

**BDO:** Yes. A land has been acquired for this project.

**RS:** Bishop, why this Prophetic school?

**BDO:** I want prophets and prophetesses in Ghana to speak English and interpret scripture well like those in the Catholic and Methodist churches. And you know, a worker without training is like a bird without feathers, it cannot fly. Training makes one more efficient in his or her field of work.

**RS:** Bishop, do you know anything about traditional way of training *akomfo* (priests)?

**BDO:** the way they are trained is hard and wicked. I witnessed one when I was a young boy. The possessed woman was eating rotten foods and drinking dirty water. Sometimes scratches all over her body, brother it was hectic scene. If that is what we call training then is deadly.

**RS:** Do you see any similarities as compare with your training?

**BDO:** Almost the same. I went through similar hardships on the Atwea Mountains. I went without food or drink for almost sixty days.



## Appendix A 4

### Interview with Prophet Columbus Appiah of Asorenkwanta, Deliverance Ministry, Medoma- Kumasi on (7<sup>th</sup> May, 2009) at his chapel

**RS:** Prophet, may I humbly ask, when did you become prophet?

**PKC:** Eleven years ago

**RS:** Where did you have your training?

**PKC:** From God himself

**RS:** Prophet, what do you mean by God himself?

**PKC:** He called me and trained me. Before I became a prophet, the spirit directed me to move to mountains. I did, and it was there that I received the power I am using today from God.

**RS:** How do you see those prophets and pastors who go through training at theological colleges and seminaries?

**PKC:** It is very good, but they must listen to God more than teachers. Their training becomes irrelevant if they cannot provide the needs of the people. People need deliverance, healing, prosperity not ideologies.

**RS:** Any knowledge about the training of traditional priests?

**PKC:** No please, don't let us go there.



## **Appendix A5**

### **Interview with Prophet Banarbas of the Blood of Jesus Healing Church of Juaben**

**on (28<sup>th</sup> July, 2009), at his residence**

**RS:** Prophet, for how long have you been a prophet?

**PB:** Sixteen years now.

**RS:** Prophet, I hope you are aware of the increasing number of prophets and prophetesses in this country. What do you have to say?

**PB:** It is a good sign for the nation, but some of these prophets and prophetesses are not from God, they are self-imposed.

**RS:** What do you mean by self-imposed prophets and prophetesses?

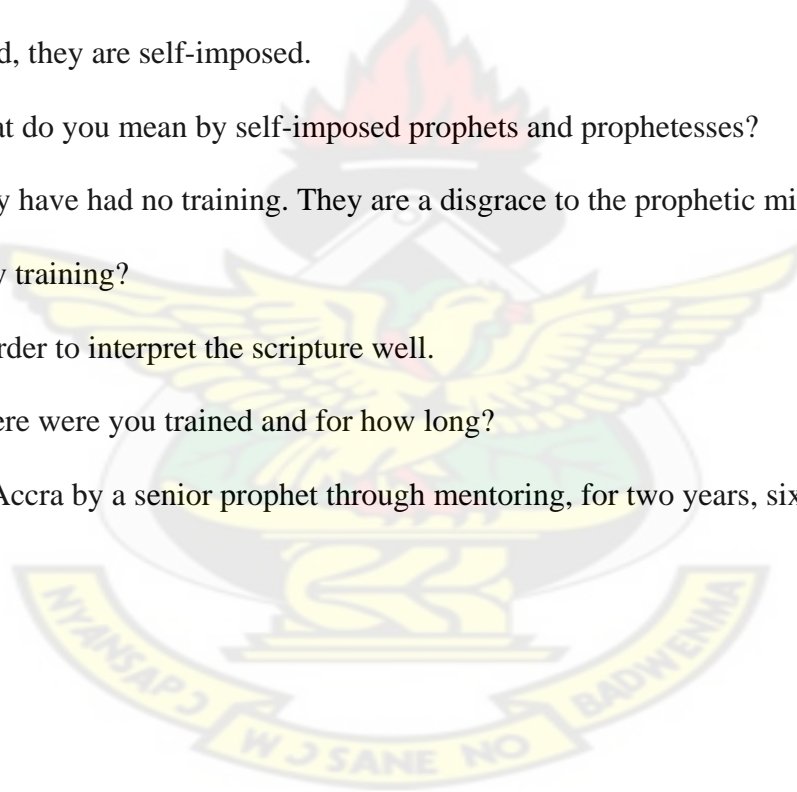
**PB:** They have had no training. They are a disgrace to the prophetic ministry.

**RS:** Why training?

**PB:** In order to interpret the scripture well.

**RS:** Where were you trained and for how long?

**PB:** In Accra by a senior prophet through mentoring, for two years, six months.



## Appendix 6

### Interview with Dr. Thomas Oduro, Principal of Good News Theological Seminary- Oyibi, Accra on (10<sup>th</sup> July 2009) at his residence.

**RS:** Sir, I have read your articles about the African Independent Churches. Thank you very much for your contribution towards the development of African Independent Churches. My interest therefore is on your presentation on the “training of African Independent churches leaders and prophets.” Is it true as you said, that people in this country look down on AIC prophets and prophetesses, because of their poor educational background?

**TO:** Yes.

**RS:** Why?

**TO:** I said this because, I have been working with the AICs for a quite number of years. This particular institution was established mainly to train the AIC leaders and prophets

**RS:** What is their response to the training?

**TO:** Nothing to write home about

**RS:** Why this attitude towards education?

**TO:** This is a big question. Majority of them are illiterates, and some also completed basic or elementary schools. Some also believe the Holy Spirit is their teacher. The concentration is mainly on the church not the academic work

**RS:** Is there any hope?

**TO:** Yes, it is gradually getting better.

**RS:** With your presentation, do you agree with those who think there is no structured training for the AIC prophets and prophetesses?

**TO:** Absolutely not. There are seven ways through which AICSs train their prophets and prophetesses. But I will mention the three common ones, Institutional type training, TEE and Mentorship. Search for the rest in my article on the “Training of AIC Prophets.”

KNUST



## Appendix A7

### Interview with Prophet J.K Jones of Musama Disco Cristo Church (MDCC) Goaso

Branch on (25<sup>th</sup> July, 2009) at his residence

**RS:** How long have you been in this prophetic ministry?

**PK:** Thirty-six years.

**RS:** Congratulations

**RS:** How did you become a prophet?

**PK:** I was chosen by the senior prophet among the lot to follow his steps for some years before he ordained me as a prophet.

**RS:** Could you please tell me how long you spent with the senior prophet?

**PK:** For six good years.

**RS:** Is that the normal years to train prophets and prophetesses?

**PK:** No, but my training was so unique, because he wanted me for something special.

**RS:** Prophet, what do you mean by something special?

**PK:** Yes, I am now in-charge of training.

**RS:** What is the normal way of training your prophets and prophetesses?

**PK:** First of all, one needs to prove beyond all doubts to have qualities of a prophet.

**RS:** How?

**PK:** The person should be able to fast for at least forty days. After this he or she appears before the head prophet to see if he or she has the call to be a prophet. If the person qualifies he or she may be assigned to a senior prophet for at least three years.

**RS:** Apart from mentoring do you have any other training?

**PK:** Yes, we have started a Bible College. The church in 2003 selected fifteen prophets and pastors to study at the Good News Theological Seminary. And since that year we have been sending students. The Church also organises annual week long courses for all Musama prophets and prophetesses and pastors. I am a product of Good News Theological Seminary. I had diploma in Biblical Studies in 2004; I am planning to go back for my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Biblical Studies.

**RS:** Prophet, have you come across the way Akan people train their *akomfo* (priests and priestesses)

**PK:** Yes. They were sent into the bush for some period of time and come back home dirty and sicklike. Sometimes seems they have been beaten. The training might be hard and dangerous. That is why they do not joke with their work. I have been even heard that if you joke the gods may kill you. So their training prepares them against jokes.

**RS:** Prophet, do you think something can be learnt from their training by Christians in training their prophets and prophetesses?

**PK:** Oh! Their training is similar to that of MDCC, it is hectic, look at my picture, I was in the bush for forty good days before I got my recommendation and ordination from the senior prophet.



**Prophet P.K Jones of MDCC. (Picture 1)**

## Appendix A8

### Interview with Prophet Amoateng of Fire of Jesus Ministry on (16<sup>th</sup> May 2009) at his Chapel.

**PB:** Afternoon sir, see the number of people there, kindly make your interview very brief.

**RS.** Prophet, could you tell me where you had your training?

**PB:** What do you mean? I spent eight months on the Atwea Mountains waiting on the Lord. That is all I had. Find time to visit those who claim to have been trained by scholars, their churches are dying, see the number of people here and justify it yourself. Let them do their scholarly thing. We are delivering captives, healing the sick, prospering the needy. That is all I can give you. God had really trained me.



## Appendix A9

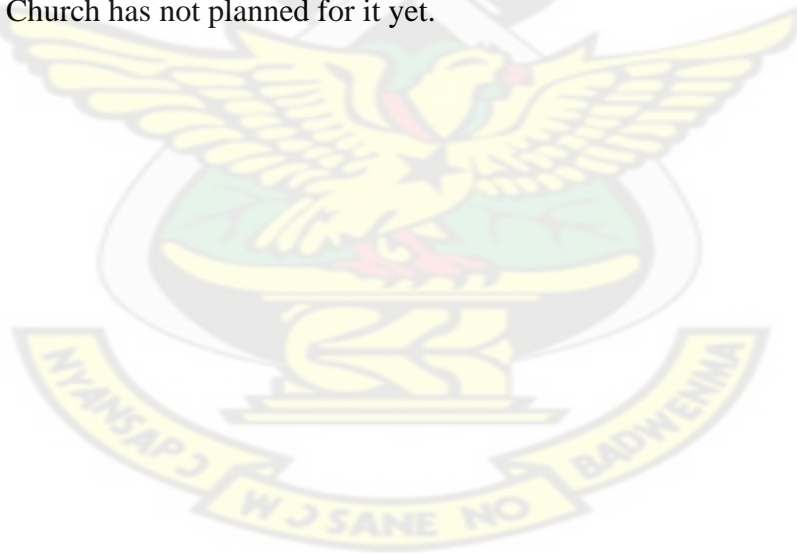
### Interview with Prophets of Savior Church's Prophets at their Head office, Osiem on (13<sup>th</sup> September 2009)

**RS:** How and where does your church train prophets?

**Administrative secretary:** All would-be prophets go through mentorship. They learn the church order and administrative structure from the head of the church. Apart from these studies, prophets in training are camped every three month for two years, before they are finally commissioned as prophets.

**RS:** Does the Church have any future plan to establish a seminary or theological institution or train your prophets in other established theological institutions?

**AS:** The Church has not planned for it yet.





## Appendix B1

### Interview with Nana Yaa Amoah of Taakwadwo Bosom of Brosankro on (3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009) at his Shrine

**RS:** Nana how long have you been a priest?

**Okomfo A. Amponsah (OA):** For thirty good years.

**RS:** Nana, have you trained other *akomfo*?

**OA:** Yes, I have trained a sizable number of people. At least seventy-five priests and priestesses

**RS:** How do you the training?

**OA:** Very rough, because the little mistake one makes may affect him or her badly. Even it may cause his or death.

**RS:** Nana, is it not the same as prophets and prophetesses in the church?

**OA:** Absolutely not, the mission established churches train their ministers very well, that is why they are different from the *yeyee* (noise-making) prophets and prophetesses.

Look at the way Presbyterian and Methodist ministers speak in public, the way they dress, and even relate to people. They are far different. The prophets and prophetesses should be trained.



The researcher and }komfo Yaa Amoah of Taakwadwo Shrine (Picture 2)



## Appendix B2

**Interview with Okomfo Yaa Bee of Agona Asaaman of Asubruku on (24<sup>th</sup> May 2009) at her residence.**

**RS:** Nana, who trained you?

**RS:** Dwarfs

**RS:** How is it different from that of those who trained by chief priests and priestesses?

**OYB:** The training depends on the deity. If it is dwarfs it has its own form. Mine is dwarf type, so I was not trained by human being. They themselves trained me for three years. They have specialization, somebody trained me in herbs, and others dwarfs trained me in different sector. For the whole three years I was in the hands of an old lady. She taught me counseling, human relations, marriage and divination.

They brought me to where I am now and instructed me strongly not to this place.



**The researcher and Okomfo Yaa Bea of Asubruku Shrine of Agona Asaaman.  
(Picture 3)**

### Appendix B3

**Nana Kwaku Bosam of kofi oo kofi shrine of Akomadan Afrancho on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at his shrine**

**RS:** Nana what processes did you go through during training?

**NKB:** The process depends on the deity. But there are general processes that all novices go through during training. Abstinence from sex during training and in some cases beyond training, he or she does not eat certain food at certain periods, does not shake hands with relatives, does not bath during certain times.

**RS:** How do you select them for training?

**NKB:** The deity normally chooses his “wife”, the families sometimes look through the young people in the family and choose the one who has qualities to succeed *]komfopanin* in case he or she joins the ancestors to mentor the chief priest. The trainee will remain in training till the master dies. The person will be trained in human relation, medicine, dancing and other necessary things.

**RS:** How does the training affect their lives and work?

**NKB:** Very greatly. The deity will give the person all training he wants, for him or her to know the dos and don'ts of the deity. If one goes wrong after all this training the deity may not spare him or her. That is why we are always careful not like the Christian prophets and prophetesses.

## **CHAPTER ONE GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Background to the Study**

If there is anything that has caught the attention of many Ghanaians (both Christians and non-Christians) today, as far as the church is concerned, it is the many “men of God,” who assume the title “Prophet.” It has been observed that most of the men of God in the Africa Indigenous Churches (AICs) in Ghana today are adding the title “Prophet” to their already existing titles, and this has become a worry to many Ghanaians. The impact of these prophetic movements has changed the face of Christianity around the world and introduced a new concept in Christianity. It has also influenced the socio-economic life of the people as well as their political life. In other words, the prophetic movement has affected the entire Ghanaian society.

Many scholars have attempted to explain the phenomenon of African Indigenous Churches in Ghana. Even though some research have been done on why African Indigenous Churches are growing fast in Ghana and the prophetism in the African Indigenous Churches, it appears not much has been done on the kind of training AIC prophets receive. This study attempts to find out if there has been any training at all and if there has been, to what extent.

There is no doubt about the fact that the kind of training one receives in his or her field of work has greater impact on his or her work and sometimes his or her lifestyle and quality of output. This explains why some people sometimes boast of their institution of training or where they received their training. It is not very uncommon in Ghana to hear one boasting of his *alma mater*, such as “I was trained at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology or Oxford

University.” Some people even boast of the masters at whose feet they had sat to receive their training, all in a bid to prove their credibility.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

Scholars within and outside the churches in Ghana have raised many questions and doubts about the role of the AIC prophets. Others are worried about their *modus operandi*. More disturbing is the fact that “many men of God” are now adding “Prophet” to their existing titles - Pastors, Elders and Bishops. There are even cases where every leader in the ministry is given the title “prophet” with the founder or leader being the “Presiding Prophet”. The man who preaches the sermon is a prophet, the one who leads the praises and worship is called a prophet; and the pastor is a prophet; so is the one who administers healing and deliverance.

Prophetism is not a new phenomenon. There have been a number of prophets in the history of the church in Ghana. What is alarming is the proliferation of these prophets and the kind of training they receive. Many Ghanaians are searching for answers to the kind of training, and the contents and duration of training of AIC prophets because they are of the opinion that many of the AIC prophets do not go through any structured form of training like the pastors of the mainline churches such as the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Anglican and the Catholic.

Christianity in Ghana now gives birth to a new prophet every passing moment. It reveals that once a new prophet is born, it goes with the establishment of a new church, ministry, fellowship, healing centre, deliverance centre or a prayer camp. Unfortunately, a day hardly passes in Ghana without a prophet being alleged to have been involved in an immoral act, ranging from rape,

defilement, duping, stealing, using black powers and ritual murder. For instance, a leading Newspaper in Ghana, the *Daily Graphic*, Tuesday, 5 July, 2004 reported of a prophet who was involved in armed robbery.

The major problem is that, the majority of Ghanaians are questioning the kind of ministerial training or formation these prophets receive. Many Ghanaians conceive the idea that these prophets do not go through a 'proper' form of training according to media reports.

Some scholars have also expressed similar sentiments about the training of the AIC prophets. One of such scholars is Turner. He has observed that the AIC prophets represent an educationally disadvantaged sector. "Many of them are illiterates, many more are poorly educated and very few prophets have formal theological or seminary training" Turner (1967:17). Makhubu an AIC leader from South Africa seems to support Turner's assertion when he reiterated that, "Many African indigenous prophets are men of wisdom, but without education" Makhubu, (1983:84).

The researcher has discovered from media reports and discussions that, the questions now baffling the minds of many Ghanaians are: What are the African indigenous churches? Where and how do they train their prophets? What are the criteria of selecting their prophets for training? Who and what are involved in the training? How long does it take? What impact does the training have on the prophets?

The study seeks to compare the kind of training and the content of training that both the AIC prophets and Akan traditional priests go through before they are commissioned as Christian



prophets or *ak/mfo*, (traditional priests). This comparison may be most informing since many Ghanaians are now witnessing some similarities in the activities of the two groups under study. For example majority of the AIC prophets get possessed during drumming and dancing before they prophesy. This practice is not different from that of the traditional priests.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

- What are the African Indigenous Churches?
- To compare the training of the African Indigenous Church prophets and the Akan traditional priests.
- Attempt to address the questions baffling the minds of many Ghanaians about the training of the African Indigenous Church prophets.
- To provide a clear understanding of the formation processes of the African Indigenous Church prophets and the Akan traditional priest.
- To find out if there are some similarities in the training of the African Indigenous Church prophets and the Akan traditional priests.
- To come out with a study material to guide Christian leaders in the training of prophets.

## 1.3 Research Questions

This work seeks to find out the training pattern of both AIC prophets and traditional priests which many writers of the fields were silent about. It seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. Who are the AICs in Ghana?

2. Do the AICs train their prophets and prophetesses?
3. What sort of training do AIC prophets and prophetesses go through, if they have any?
4. What constitutes the training of the Akan traditional priests or priestesses?
5. What are the similarities and dissimilarities in the training of AIC prophets and prophetesses and Akan traditional priests?
6. Are there any lessons that can be learnt from the way Akan traditional priests are chosen and trained; and how AICs select and train their prophets and prophetesses?

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The Researcher hopes that, this study helps answer some of the questions people are asking about the training of AIC prophets. It helps provide an understanding and appreciation of prophetism and traditional religious formation in Ghana. A clear understanding of the formation process of prophets would increase people's knowledge of the phenomenon. The study serves as a source of reference and a study material for Christian leaders especially, and for all who want to know more about the training of AIC prophets and that of the Akan traditional priests. The research serves as a guide to future researchers on prophetic training and the formation of the Akan traditional priests in Ghana.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Work**

The study deals with the training of the prophets of the Africa Indigenous Churches in Ghana. Although there are many formation patterns in Christianity such as, leadership formation, youth formation through confirmation lessons, and formation of evangelists, the focus of this study is prophetic training or formation; it is an area which has drawn the attention of many Ghanaians -

both Christians and non-Christians. Similarly, traditional Akan religion has many ways to prepare people for positions, examples being chieftaincy, adulthood and marriage. The formation of traditional priests and the similarities and differences in training or formation between prophets of the AICs and the Akan traditional priests is the focus of this study.

The study is limited to the Asante, Brong Ahafo and Eastern Regions due to time limitations and financial constraints. However, this does not imply that other Akan people from the other regions such as Central, Western and others were not contacted. All other Akan groups such as Akuapems, Fante and Akyem abound in the Asante Region and they would add to whatever findings the researcher may acquire. Kumasi, the Ashanti Regional capital, for instance, has a Fante community called Fante New Town with their Fantehene (chief) under Otumfo, the king of the Asante kingdom. It had been observed that almost all other tribes in Ghana have their chiefs in the Asante Region. This is a clear indication that though the work was limited mainly to the Asante Region, it amply covers some of the other Akan communities in Ghana.

We are again discussing Christian prophets and not Christian priests because many Ghanaians can easily point at where Christian priests are trained – seminaries, theological institutions and Bible colleges; with AIC prophets, it is not as straightforward as that of the priests. As a result of that, many Ghanaians have conceived the idea that they (prophets) are not trained. This study therefore attempts to prove or disprove the point. The researcher discusses the Akan people of Ghana briefly and examines the training of the Akan traditional priests.



## **1.6 Research Methodology**

The qualitative research methodology was employed in this study. Both primary and secondary data were collected. Libraries consulted to collect data from relevant books, dissertations, and long essays. Data were sought through interviews and participant observation. At least ten prophets from some AICs in Asante, Brong Ahafo and Eastern Regions were interviewed. Some selected African Indigenous Churches such as the Nackabah, the Aladura, the Zion, the Musama Disco Christo Church, The Savior Church, The Apostle Continuation Church, The Apostolic Revelation Church, “In Him is Life” Church, International God’s Way Church were visited to find out the kind of training they give to their prophets. The study focused on the above-mentioned churches because they comprised both the old and contemporary African Indigenous Churches. Some Prophetic Training Camps in Ghana were visited to acquaint the researcher with what happens there. Some traditional priests mostly in Asante, Brong Ahafo and Eastern Regions were interviewed on the subject. Some devotees of the prophetic churches and traditional shrines including some religious leaders were also interviewed with the same interview guide, specially designed for the purpose of gathering firsthand information.

## **1.7 Problems Envisaged**

The researcher anticipated encountering several problems in gathering information. He was aware of the issue of negative media attention on prophets, causing some of these prophets to be unwilling to open up. Whereas there were some literature on the old prophetic tradition like the Nackabah and the Musama Disco Christo Church, not much has been done on the new prophets like Prophet Emmanuel Kumi and his Jesus Miracle Worldwide, Prophet Obinim, and his

International God's Way Church, Prophet Isaac Opoku (Obotuo), and his "In Him is Life" Church . Therefore information about them was not easily available. However, the researcher devised all workable means to get some information on them.

The position of the researcher as an ordained minister of a mainline church (Methodist) also posed a big challenge in gathering information from the AIC prophets as well as the traditional priests. Some colleague ministers and church members questioned why the researcher chose this topic of all topics. There were some practices of the *abosom* that were against the researcher's faith in gathering information but since the work was purely academic, conscious and cautious care was taken.

### **1.8 Literature Review**

Studies and publications on prophetic movements in Ghana have been conducted. For instance Baeta (1962) studied some of the early prophetic churches like the Twelve Apostles, the Musama Disco Christo Church, the Savior Church of Ghana, the Apostle Revelation Society and other African Indigenous Churches and how they have impacted the Ghanaian society. Baeta also wrote briefly on one of the methods of training AIC prophets - mentoring or apprenticeship. It has been observed that this method of training is not peculiar to the prophets in one particular AIC, but to almost all the African Indigenous Churches in Ghana, both old and new. Baeta remarked that the educational standards in the African Indigenous Churches "are the lowest of any non-pagan religious body in Ghana." He has observed that virtually all the prophets and disciples were stark illiterates and hardly could any of the prophets read English (Baeta1962:40).

Nevertheless, his detailed research did not discuss into details the actual kind of training these prophets go through. Why Baeta failed to discuss in details such an important aspect of prophetism is yet to be known. He discussed the reading ability of the AIC prophets. In his survey of the educational standards of the leaders of the church in Ahanta District of the Western Region, he noticed that only one member could read English. “By reason of this apparent weakness, all would-be prophets, only learn by observing and practising what their leaders do” (Baeta 1962:27).

In Pobee’s report on the South African Interdenominational National Ministers Conference, which sought to bring together ministers of historic churches, Pobee seems to confirm Beata’s observation. According to Pobee (2001), there were some notable obstacles. Many AIC leaders were unable to participate in the business of regional ecumenical bodies because of the languages used -English and French.

Clarke (1986:157) mentions how the prophets came in to free Africans from religious bondage and to search for a religion, which was not “adorned with colonialism.” If Clarke’s point is true about prophetism in Ghana, the question is, how did the prophets achieve this objective in liberating Africans from religious bondage without any proper form of training? No scholar can deny the good work done by Clarke on this topic, but he also failed to talk about the kind of training the prophets had that enabled and qualified them to achieve success in liberating African people.

It has been discovered that most of the local and international scholars who are interested in prophetism are only interested in its rise, the prophets' lifestyles and the proliferation of prophets in the contemporary world, but not their training. The few who have attempted to look at the training perhaps, were quite brief in their presentations. For instance, Herman (1990:98), the bishop of Christian International Apostolic Network, a leader of a prophetic movement, has observed that lack of training among the AIC prophets is doing more harm than good within the prophetic movements. He said that, "there are those who are called to be prophets but are immature, lack sound biblical knowledge have more zeal than wisdom, or who are usually presumptuous." Though Harman made this comment, he did not suggest or propose any form of training the prophets should have had nor did he assign any reason why they were not trained. He rather authenticates the prophetic movement and looked at the way forward by predicting that the movement would continue to grow to full maturity.

In addressing the issue of prophetic training, Price (2001:13) has said that before one is commissioned by God as a prophet, "He (God) puts the person through an extensive training programme." She further argues that God does not "use" untrained prophets. Although, Price has confirmed an undeniable truth, like the earlier writers, he did not move further to tell her readers the kind of training she was talking about and what was actually involved in the training. If really God takes the prophets through training and He does not use untrained prophets, then the question one could ask is, how extensive is the training? This is one of the questions this study seeks to find answers to.

Oduro (2001) a Ghanaian scholar in AICs, made this statement about the training of African Indigenous Churches prophets at the Fifth Continental Conference of the Network in AICs and Mission at Abokobi, Ghana from 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April 2001 to authenticate Baeta's view point. He said, "a great deal of theological education in Africa is irrelevant and that African Indigenous Churches are looked down upon by other Christians because they cannot articulate theological contributions very well to the wider Christian community."

Clarke (1986:4), contributing to the discussion on the education of the AIC prophets, wrote that indigenous churches were rather ambivalent towards formal education, which usually meant westernization at the same time. Their religiosity was more African in orientation and, therefore, less congruent to education. He further wrote that, it was also dependent on the charisma of the leader rather than the trained professional and on divine power rather than human wisdom and skill. Clarke in this article has made a very strong point about the prophets of African Indigenous Churches. Many of the AIC prophets see the missionaries as "imposters", "dictators" and wish therefore that Africans should have "nothing" to do with them. The Researcher shares a similar view; God understands Africans as they are, with their beliefs and cultural practices.

The point writers on the AICs made in the 1960s might be an unarguable fact, but the situation has changed now. The prophets of AICs have become aware of this handicap. It has been the agenda of the AIC executives to find solutions to these obstacles since the 1970s. Makhubu (1983:43), at a teaching and training meeting of leaders of African Indigenous Churches in Cairo, Egypt in 1970, has indicated that development work and political involvement of the AICs were left out. The main activity was Theological Education by Extension for AIC prophets or



leaders. As a result a centre was established in Nairobi, Kenya in 1980 to organize TEE programme for AIC leaders, mainly prophets.

According to Oduro, (2000:41,59) some western and local scholars who have constantly criticized the AIC prophets or leaders as not theologically sound, do so because they think it may lead to deviation from the Christian faith. Even though the AICs stress the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they still emphasise the need for a theological education. In Ghana, the Good News Theological Seminary at Oyibi, Accra, was set up to facilitate the educational aspirations of AICs. In Nigeria, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) has its own seminary-Aladura Theological Seminary with a campus in Lagos and another in Ogere. The Kimbanguist church has a theological programme, including a theological faculty. In Zimbabwe, Fambidzano has had the TEE programme. This study will find out the types of theological training institutions in Ghana and how the AIC prophets are patronizing them to develop themselves professionally.

On the issue of comparing the training of the AIC prophets with the training of Akan traditional priests, Akrong (1999-2000:18) examines why the prophetic movement in Ghana continues to be a major field of interest among both local and international scholars interested in developments within African Christianity. As to why the new movements in Christianity in Ghana want to be called prophetic, he says it is so because the leaders often claim to have been called by God to lead their followers to God, who through the Holy Spirit reveals secrets and provide solution to problems. These prophets combine the Bible and the African concept of traditional mediation by the priest to access divine power for human benefit. Akrong, though is suggesting some affinities in the activities of both the AIC prophets and Akan traditional prophets, does not look at their

training. However, there is an assumption that since they have commonalities in their activities there should be some similarities also in their training, because a person's training influences the way he thinks and even behaves, hence the purpose of this research.

Ayegboyin and Ademola (1997:11) made similar assertion about the AIC leaders. They said that, the theological institution of the mission established churches were not accepting the prophets of the AICs into their institutions simply because, some of these churches engage in some practices, which are not biblical. Some of these practices were renewal of ancestral cults and rituals, traditional divination through objects, pronouncing curses and laying of spells, consultation of spirits and other practices which are condemned in the Bible. All this happened because of the kind of training they receive from their leaders who themselves have no biblical training anywhere. They therefore combine their African cultural practices with Christianity.

The fact cannot be denied that, attempt by the AIC prophets to minister to Africans satisfactorily, has led some of them to the extreme of adding extra-biblical practice, such as ritual bathing, talisman and other images to their worship and ministry As much as we agree with the writers, there are certain statements they have made which show their ignorance of African culture. Combining elements of Africa culture with Christianity does not actually make their practices unbiblical. By this, we do not mean that Africa culture must be carried whole into Christianity. Theological institutions in Africa should combine the culture of the people with the existing theological ideas in training their church leaders to make it relevant to Africans.



Ekem (2008:43, 44, 45) sees Priesthood in Akan communities as a “multidimensional institution” and for that matter the term priesthood cannot lend itself to a straightforward definition. He says “Integral to the traditional Akan concept of priesthood are elements of sacral mediation, prophecy, healing and pastoral care.” In an attempt to define priesthood, he says that it is the “ability to approach the spirit world on behalf of others.” If Ekem’s definition is anything to go by, then any individual engaged in communicating with meta-empirical beings in support of others, could be described as a priest or priestess.

Etymologically, according to Ekem, *ak]mfo* (singular: *jk]mfo*) seems to derive from the root *k]m* which could be interpreted in several ways. He cited Rattray (1927:42) who wrote that the possible reference to the word is hunger (Akan: *jk]m*) that is abstinence from food. In Akan spirituality it is believed in many religions abstinence from food for a period of time for religious purpose builds one’s level of spirituality. There is another school of thought which believes that *k]m* denotes the act of becoming possessed by an external spirit-power. Others see the word *ak]m* as derived from the word *nk]mhye* (prophecy). Ekem for instance wrote that an *jk]mfo* is one who prophesies with full authenticity through inspiration.

Ekem, anticipating some kind of reaction from readers, explains that the *Okyeame* (Linguist) and *abusuapanin* (family-head) though engaged in communicating with meta-empirical beings in support of others could not be described as priests or priestesses. In typical Akan communities priests were considered the most enlightened and influential persons. Braffi (2001:14) adds that it was “because they were the soothsayers, the doctors, the exponents and organizers of the mysterious system of religion which prevailed in their society.” Ekem’s work on the subject may

be described as the most extensive so far, but he did not compare the training of the AIC prophets and traditional priests. His work was limited to the training of the Akan traditional priests. This work therefore looked at the forms of training among the AIC prophet and the Akan traditional priests. This presupposes that there are different forms of training within the traditional way of training priests.

### **1.9 Organization of the Research**

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the essay. This is where the background information, statement of problem, objectives and scope of the study, methodology, significance of the study, limitations of the study and problems envisaged are discussed. In addition, some literatures on the topic were reviewed. Chapter two attempts to find out what the Africa Indigenous Churches (AICs) are. The chapter also brings to light some forebears of the AICs and their achievements in Ghana. Chapter three finds out and examines the types of training for the African Indigenous Prophets in Ghana. The chapter seeks to find out why majority of AIC prophets do not have theological training. The chapter four explains briefly who the

The study is limited to the Asante, Brong Ahafo and Eastern Regions due to time limitations and financial constraints. However, this does not imply that other Akan people from the other regions such as Central, Western and others were not contacted. All other Akan groups such as Akuapems, Fante and Akyem abound in the Asante Region and they would add to whatever findings the researcher may acquire. Kumasi, the Ashanti Regional capital, for instance, has a Fante community called Fante New Town with their Fantehene (chief) under Otumfo, the king of

the Asante kingdom. It had been observed that almost all other tribes in Ghana have their chiefs in the Asante Region. This is a clear indication that though the work was limited mainly to the Asante Region, it amply covers some of the other Akan communities in Ghana.

# KNUST



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE AFRICAN INDIGENOUS CHURCHES (AICs)**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter we discuss the historical background and explain what African Indigenous Churches are since one of the main purposes of this work is to identify some existing forms of ministerial training of AIC prophets in Ghana. It also discusses the beliefs and practices of the forbearers of the African Indigenous Churches.

#### **2.1 What are the African Indigenous Churches?–Definition**

Oduro (2001:31), defines African Indigenous Churches as churches that have been established by Africans and, or denominations planted, led, administered, supported, propagated, instituted and funded by Africans for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and worshiping the true God. Akrong (1998:17) seems to support Oduro's definition. He sees these churches as independent of mission support and control. The AICs were formed to bring meaning to the gospel to suit African situation and worldview. Oduro and Akrong's definition had a little deficiency in that they failed to note that there are independent churches, which were founded by non-Africans, and yet claim to be Africa Indigenous Churches. Some of such churches were established by black Americans; their leaders were Black theologians, campaigning for contextualisation, inculturation and indigenisation of Christianity. Turner (1967:17) for instance, disagrees that AICs are financially independent from foreign missionaries when he wrote that, "Many African Indigenous Churches seek financial support from oversea missions to set up Bible colleges and theological institution to train their leaders". The economic situation in Africa has made many African churches to seek financial assistance from the west to support

church projects in Africa. According to Oduro (interviewed on 13th May, 2009 at his residence). The Good News Theological College and Seminary, one of the theological institutions providing theological education to the AIC prophets and prophetesses, has been receiving financial support from the Mennonite Mission Board to run the College. He further confirmed that to disassociate from the Missionaries will make the running of such an institution in Ghana difficult. All the buildings of the College were put up through their financial support.

Scholars all over the world have generally used the term African Indigenous Churches to describe churches that seek to contextualise the gospel to suit the African people understanding of God, through their beliefs and practices. Such churches also seek to renew African Christianity to create meaningful understanding of the gospel through African culture. Churches like the Musama Disco Christo Church, the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), The True Church of Christ, and Harris Church come under this category. These churches emerged to protest against the increasingly negative attitude of the Missionaries toward African people and their cultural beliefs and practices. The Missionaries saw many African practices as evil, the language, food, songs, dances and even names. The AICs were the sure reaction to this negative perception so that African spirituality which has been relegated or ignored by the Missionaries would emerge as genuine and equally authentic.

The AICs are churches or Christian bodies in Africa that were established as a result of African initiative rather than foreign missionary organizations. They were planted in Africa by Africans, and not by missionaries from other continents. These churches may be found in both African and other continents. Some AICs in other continents are sometimes founded by the Blacks in the

Diaspora. Scholars use various names to describe the AICs. Some scholars refer to them as the African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, African Independent Churches and African `Instituted Churches. These names clearly portray that these churches were formed by Africans and their leaders are mainly African people. The word “Independent” for instance was used by Turner (1967:16) to refer to Christian churches which have been established in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans and which lacked the substantial association with Western Christianity found in almost all the older churches. The term has, however, been broadened in this work to cover other churches established in Ghana by Ghanaians - Classical Pentecostal as well as Neo-Pentecostal traditions in Ghana, such as Christian Action Faith Ministry, International Central Gospel Church, Generation, Calvary Charismatic Church, Faith Gospel Church, Church of Pentecost, and the Apostolic Church. These churches have been brought into the picture just to indicate the emerging trend of Christianity in Ghana and Africa as a whole although that is not the focus of this study. They are described in this work as “new African Indigenous Churches.”

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-initiated-churches>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009)

This work has grouped AICs in Ghana into three: Conservative, Charismatic, and Reformed type. According to Oduro (2006:2), Conservative AICs are those who hold on to the teachings of, and practices of their founders, no matter the perception of the wider church or what the Bible says about such beliefs and practices. They are highly ritualistic. Charismatic AICs are antithetical to the conservative AICs in many ways. The dividing line between Charismatic AICs and some Western Charismatic denominations is very thin. Anderson (1974:19) describes Charismatic AICs thus:



Their founders are, generally, charismatic and younger men and women, who are respected for their preaching and leadership abilities, and who are relatively educated, though not necessarily in theology. These churches tend to be more sharply opposed to several traditional practices than is the case with prophetic-healing churches, and they often ban alcohol and tobacco, the use of symbolic healing objects, and the wearing of uniforms.

Anderson further explained that, Reformed AICs are the third type. They have some similarities with the conservative type, though their differences are distinct in theological interpretations. (<http://www.gntcs.org>, assessed on June, 2009)

## **2.2 Historical Background of African Indigenous Churches**

Pobee (2002) has given a range of other names to indicate the variety in the genre Separatist churches” underscores that they have broken away from historic churches; an example is the Church of the Lord (Aladura) which broke away from the Church Missionary Society in Nigeria. Pobee further asserts that, the “Spiritual: or “Pentecostal” emphasises the Holy Spirit and the experiencing of Pentecost anew, and offer a range of techniques for the emotional enhancement of religious experience in, for example, Musama Disco Christo Church, which broke away from the Methodist Church Ghana (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-ehhtml>),(assessed on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2009).

It is a fact of human history that most changes came as a result of different ideologies and beliefs. A typical example is Apostles Peter and Paul establishing non-Jewish Churches to counter the Judaistic Jerusalem council, Protestant reformation also emerged as a result of



divergent views on certain practices. Founders of the AICs have histories in connection with misunderstandings and divergent views on beliefs and practices.

The AICs can be seen as the example of the New Religious Movements (NRMs). The AICs arose to counter the cultural and doctrinal imposition from the west. The Europeans saw some of the African cultural beliefs and practices as evil, including the believe in ancestral spirits and festivals. Agbeti (199:118) put it well when he wrote that, “Many of the missionaries affirmed that nothing in the African culture was worth building on and therefore all aspects of African culture must be destroyed before Christianity could be established.”

As a result of that, many African people converted to Christianity found it very difficult to reconcile their beliefs and practices with the doctrine of Christianity. The missionaries taught African Christians to disconnect their identity, but the Missionaries did not take into consideration that, African people were conceived, born into and bred in rich cultures, and therefore no African can disconnect from his or her culture. In order for African Christians to maintain their identity they split to form a church which would understand them more. A church takes the African worldview into consideration. This religious and cultural imposition created awareness in the African people of the need to struggle for an African Christian identity and African way of worship. It is an undeniable fact that the AICs emerged to challenge the attempt by the Europeans to control and eliminate Africans’ identity. Ishola, one of the early prophets of the AICs in Nigeria for instance is believed to have had a divine mandate to free Africans from religious bondage and search for a religion, which was not tainted with dogmatism nor adorned with colonialism (Sundkler 1961:52). Adams (1996:43) has observed that the superficiality of

the average African commitment to Christ is the result of the failure of early missionaries to take the African culture seriously. The missionaries did not recognise the potency of the religious and cultural values of the African people's worldview and how it could be used to interpret Christianity in Africa. This has made many African Christians to be still searching for the true meaning of Christianity, hence the emergence of Africa Indigenous Churches.

A phenomenon, which has been referred to as Prophetism which led to the formation of Churches variously designated as African Initiated Churches, African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches, African Instituted Churches, all of them with the same acronym (AICs), is an important landmark in the history of Christianity in Africa generally and Ghana in particular. Long before Classical Pentecostalism (either indigenous or in collaboration with Western missionaries associated with Missions with links to Azusa Street) became formalised in Ghana, Pentecostal stirrings amongst some leading prophets and prophetesses had brought renewal to some parts of the country (Amanor, [www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/amanor.htm](http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/amanor.htm), 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2009).

### **2.3 Theology of the AICs**

Ngumi (2009), citing Mbiti (1986) has written that, the important point to note is that these Churches have maintained an expression of African beliefs within Christianity, or the extension of African traditions on Christian doctrines. Most AIC prophets and prophetesses claim that they were ordered by the Holy Spirit to establish the churches. Hence, they prefer them to be referred to as *Honhomsore* (Holy Spirit Churches). Indeed, there are hundreds of African Initiated Churches with the prefix "Holy Spirit" as part of their full name. They believe that it is the Holy

Spirit himself that runs the church and not any human being; therefore there is no need for structures, constitutions and doctrines; instead, they are led by the Spirit. This brief discussion clearly indicates the theological beliefs of the AICs. They do not have any written, universally accepted theologies; they rely on the Holy Spirit in everything they do in the church. The AICs sometimes practise some of the doctrines of the Mission-established churches but they contextualise them to create a meaningful understanding to the African Christians (<http://www.nkzn.ac.za/sorat/theology/bct/aics.htm>, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2009).

#### **2.4 Beliefs and Practices of the AICs**

The AICs believe in spirituality, prophetism, spiritual healing, relying on the Holy Spirit rather than the human intellect. Although the prophecies come from human beings, they still believe it is through the Spirit's guidance. The AICs see the formality of structures of the Mission-established Churches as unspiritual, valueless and very boring. Obinim (interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at his prayer camp) said, *y[nfirimo asore no mu efiris[ na y[n kra rewu nkakra kakra. Y[nntenyanes[m papa biara. Momma Honhom kronkron no kwan. Mongyae y[n mmera se, [nyf saa a mo nyinaa beba y[n ha* (We left your church – mission-established church, because our souls were dying little by little, no spirit-filled sermons and programmes. You better stop formalities and allow the Spirit to work and stop the constitution says this and that or else very soon all of you will join us.)

There are certain beliefs and practices which make the AICs distinctive. Prominent among them are revelation through the prophets. According to Prophet Amoateng, his congregation sometimes “forces” him to prophecy. Some members sometimes shout during the service,

*odiyifo hy[ nkom.* (Prophet, do prophesy.) The second is faith healing. African people believe that whatever happens to one's health has spiritual linkage and therefore can be restored through spiritual consultation. That is why almost all the AICs have established healing centres or camps where patients could be kept for a period of months and sometimes years, until he or she is completely recovered. Healing is usually effected by praying and laying on of hands and through the use of anointing oil, and *nhyiransuo* (blessed water). Larbi (2001:32), confirmed this when he wrote that, the use of healing agents like florigal water, incense, consecrated water, and candles are integral part of the ethos of the Spiritual Churches.

The AICs are noted for contextualising Christianity to suit the African Christians. Their sermons are deeply rooted in African primal culture and they are tailored to respond to the demands of their adherents. Their sermons are relevant to Africans. They are concerned with responding to the issues raised by the African worldview that contains a strong belief in malevolent spirits, witches and wizards. They attach great importance to the interpretation of dreams and visions (<http://www.patteos.com/Library/African - Independent - Churches.html>, assessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009).

Prophet Obinim in a sermon once remarked that, *y[nim y[n asoremma [no nti y[nka as[m huuhu biara.* (We know our congregation and therefore do not preach any extraordinary sermons.) Their sermons are straightforward and simple. The AIC prophets are always accused by the Mission Church ministers as polluting their congregations with misinterpretation of the scripture. But Obinim has a different opinion altogether, he said that, *as[m ne nyinaa ne s[ onipa b[te ase[ na ay[ ne mu adwuma.* (All the congregation expects is the understanding of what is preached

and the fulfillment of one's spiritual and physical needs). The AICs aim to contextualise Christianity in African by providing an expression for the African spiritual search for the true meaning of African Christianity.

While the Mission-established Churches emphasise Christology, the AICs focus on pneumatology – Holy Spirit. While the Mission-established churches firmly believe in the person of Jesus Christ, the AICs appear more at home with the Holy Spirit. They emphasise the Spirit as power made manifest in healing, exorcism, glossolalia and mission. This emphasis on the Spirit asserts both continuity and discontinuity with the many spirits of the heritage of traditional African religious epistemology and ontology. To that extent, the phenomenon is a protest against the tendency of the historic churches to institutionalise every manifestation of the Spirit

(<http://www.patteos.com/Library/African-Independent-Churches.html>, assessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009).

AICs are leader-centred. The story or narratives about the establishment of the church or the life store of their founders are sacred. The members cherish their leader more than even the scripture. The leader is the church and the church is the leader. They believe in the prosperity message preached to them, every Christian must prosper at all cost. A member has this to say, *y[n de[ firi Awurade ho, nti [s[s[ onyame ba biara y[ yie.* (Every child of God must prosper, because prosperity comes from God.) The AIC members strive for prosperity; to them poverty is alien to any child of God. They search for a kind of well-being which involves both the spiritual and the physical. They have the belief that, only those who are not children of God suffer in life.



They believe in the existence of earthly suffering but not for the children of God. That is why the prophets are there to counter any suffering that the devil plans to plague the child of God with. To them the eternal suffering is for those who did not accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour while on earth.

The AICs are ritualistic. Rituals are performed at each stage of person's life, similar to that of the African rite of passage, in birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Drumming, singing and dancing are used to stimulate possession by the Holy Spirit. The worship structure of the AICs in Ghana is similar to that of many Christian denominations with the exception of a slight difference in their combination of African styles in their worship, for example, African language is used in worship. The symbolic systems of AICs are described by many scholars as complex. The AICs combine western Christian symbolic meanings with local African ones. It was discovered that water, fire, crucifixes, staff and herbs are important symbols in many AICs ([http://www.patteos.com/Library/African - Independent - Churches.html](http://www.patteos.com/Library/African-Independent-Churches.html), assessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009).

## **2.5 African Indigenous Church Prophets and Akan Cultural Practices**

Pobee (2009) said that, the AICs represent first of all, a place for one to feel at home. (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-eh.html> assessed on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2009). The Missionaries attitude toward African culture was nothing to write home about. They were largely negative to the extent that they did not want the African Christians to stay with their families. The Presbyterian missionaries for instance, separated their converted Africans from their family members to Salem. (Holy Camp). The Missionaries taught their converted African



Christians to dress like them. Even for one to dress like an African was evil in the eyes of the missionaries. The typical example was the Epharim Amo's incidence, when he was sacked by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana for preaching in a traditional cloth. He was expected to be in suit. They actually clothed the Gospel with Western culture and brought it to Africa. It was therefore difficult for the Africans to comprehend, accept and assimilate. The AICs therefore are truly African; they understand the culture, beliefs and practices of Africans by making considerable use of African symbols, instruments, style and type of music and dance. They share some cultural beliefs and assumptions with African culture; including the belief in the existence of malevolent spirits, such as *abayifoo* (witches), *sasabonsam* (strange evil creature), *sunsumbone* (evil spirit), *mmoatia* (dwarfs) and *samantwentwen* (wandering ghost). They believe that these are spirits that can convert one's fortunes into misfortunes; they could make or unmake a person. To them these spirits must be resisted in the name of Jesus Christ.

Most of the AICs were established as a result of misunderstanding between the African converted Christians and the missionaries on participation of African cultural practices or observation of African beliefs and taboos. The disagreements normally arose over the extent to which traditional African beliefs and practices were permissible. For example, African Christians were prohibited to dance to the tune of any African music or get involved with *adowa*, *kete*, *fontonfrom*, *bobo* dance (all Africa dances). Furthermore, they should be practising monogamy. The AICs often have a belief that the world is full of spirits, good and bad. As a result of the presence of these spirits, man is at the battlefield in a world full of demons, witches and diseases which have spiritual causes (<http://www.patteos.com/Library/African-Independent-Churches.html>, assessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009).

## 2.6 The Forebears of AICs in Ghana

According to Annorbah-Sarpei (2004:16) between 1900 and 1950, southern Ghana witnessed a strong and widespread prophetic and spiritual activity. Scholars have assigned many reasons for these prophetic and spiritual explosions. Some of them are: answer to syncretism in African Christianity. The African world is full of spirits, such as ancestral spirits, spirit of rivers and streams, spirit animals and witchcraft. In African traditional belief these spirits may be either helpful or destructive. They may relate well or hostile to humanity depending on how one relates to them. As a result of this belief, it is common to find most African Christians at the church in the morning and at the shrine in the evening for a protection. Some scholars also believe that this prophetic explosion emerged to counter the negative attitude of the missionaries to African beliefs and cultural practices. The missionaries taught the African Christians to share their religious perspective of God – monotheism. To African people God is supreme, far, dangerous and unapproachable; therefore to communicate to God one should do it through the *abosom* (gods). The African Traditional Religion is polytheistic – it is the belief of more than one God. In African Traditional Religion salvation is here and now not eternal. It is wholistic, the total well-being of a person, unlike the Christians understanding of salvation. To avoid this religious confusion the African people establish churches that are freed from imperialism and oppression. Churches that would understand African people, their beliefs and cultural practices well and make African people to comprehend God easily and comfortably.

Larbi (2001:32) also said that some revivalist type figures began emerging on the religious scene during the early part of the second decade of the twentieth century. They actually brought a new era, the era of the reign of Christ, demonstrating the power of the gospel. Emphasising the

widespread influence and the catalytic role the anti-witchcraft cults played in the rise of Prophets in the country. Larbi (2000:40) further quotes an observation by Smith:

It difficult to estimate the importance of these cults in the total religious life of the people: they are active in many parts of Ghana and from time to time a particular one has gained sudden fame in a specific area or, as in the case of Tegare, over the entire country. Their rise has coincided with the decline in influence of the national and traditional shrines *abosom* and with the rapid development of the country on Western European lines. Pastors' reports from 1922 to the present day mention the falling-away of Presbyterian Church members to take the medicine of one or other of them. In the nineteen forties the number of Christians lapsing to Tegare caused all the Mission Churches deep concern. Nkwantanan in Kwahu, the headquarters of the chief Tegare priest, became a place of pilgrimage attracting devotees, so-called pagans, literates and illiterates, Christians and Moslems, in thousands: special Lorries were hired for the last part of the journey up the scarp from Nkawkaw railway station.

The AICs were more appealing to many African Christians, because of their practices which are almost similar to the Akan as well as a number of African cultural and religious customs and practices. African Indigenous Churches, according to those interviewed were established to rescue Africans from the oppression of witchcraft and other foul spirits. People were attending their worship services, because they were finding right solutions to the problems of the African people. Both Christians (mainly from the Mission-established churches) and traditionalists were going to the AIC prophets for help. For example, the ritual bathing, wearing of talisman, which they used were not strange to Africans.

There were many prophets who pioneered, established and maintained AICs in Ghana. Among these prophets are three prominent ones that stand out as the forebears of Pentecostalism in Ghana. They were Prophets William Wade Harris, John Swatson and Sampson Oppong.

### **2.6.1 Prophet William Wade Harris**

Harris was a Kru born in Liberia, West Africa, and his alleged involvement in protest against the harsh policies by the Americo-Liberia government towards the Krus led him into prison. He is believed to have testified that while he was in prison in 1910, he had some experience which led to his call by God to become a prophet. He said that in a trance he was visited by the Angel Gabriel.

In many ways, Prophet Harris can be considered as the precursor of the Pentecostal Movement in Ghana. The renewal he brought to Christianity was unprecedented. Africans, who were afraid to join the missionary churches for the fear of the wrath of the *ab]som* (gods), now confidently joined and readily availed themselves for baptism.

Harris in the real sense did not establish a church, but through his renewal he brought into Christianity in Ghana, many of his followers started *Sunsum* sore (Spiritual Churches or Prophet – Healing Spiritual Churches.) His zeal for evangelism was exceptional and contagious. Many of his disciples described him as the “African saviour.” Harris in a strictest sense was a liberator of African people from religious enslavement. The fear to incur the wrath of the *ab]som* (gods) whilst at the same time, reducing to a minimum, the religious and cultural oppression by the western missionaries. What attracted the people most was his ability to foretell, very

accurately, events in the future; he spoke in tongues, healed the sick and cast out demons from their victims ([www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/annor.html](http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/annor.html), assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

Harris seemed to have succeeded in areas where the Missionary Churches had difficulty because he did not only preach about a God who was not known to the people. As compared to the missionaries he brought God closer to the people. He actually contextualised the gospel to suit the understanding of the people about God. He was performing miracles; the sick were healed, and witches were freed. According to Amanor, he was able to tap into the thought patterns, perception of reality, and the concepts of identity and community, which prevailed within the primal worldview of African Societies. One of his successes was the use of herbs to treat diseases. In areas where the people relied on the traditional priests or priestesses for herbal preparation, he took them and blessed them for the people before its administration and as a result of this his message became more attractive to the people. But the missionaries saw this practice as ungodly. Larbi (2001:59) wrote that, Halliburton's (1973:30f) observation touches the core of the issue:

Harris claimed to be a prophet with all the special powers that God bestows on those he chooses. These powers enabled him to drive out demons and spirits, the enemies of God. He cured the sick in body and in mind by driving out the evil beings preying on them. Those who practised black magic had to confess and repent or be made mad. He had all the power of fetishmen and more: with his basin of holy water he put God's seal on those who repented and accepted baptism. If after that they fell into the old wickedness, they died or went mad. He believed God had given him other powers, more dramatic assertions of their relationship, notably the power to call down fire and rain from heaven.



Some Africans who became converted by Harris teachings refused to join the Mission-established churches, they started their own independent *Honhom sore* (“Spiritual” Churches.) The Twelve Apostles Church, which claims to be the first of such Churches, was started by two of Harris’ disciples – Grace Tani of Ankobra and John Nackabah of Essuawa. This Church was later to be popularly known as Nackabah Church. Harris himself was not establishing churches, because he saw himself as an evangelist or an itinerant preacher (Larbi 2000:59).

### **2.6.2 Prophet John Swatson**

Swatson was a native of Ghana (then Gold Coast). He was born to a royal mother and an European father attached to the royal court of the chief of Beyin, a town in Nzema in the Western Region of Ghana. He was educated by the Methodists and even worked for them as a teacher-catechist for some time. He was inspired by Harris’ teaching and his quest to have the renewal and Holy Spirit baptism made him leave the Methodist Church to become a disciple of Harris.

According to Larbi (2000:22), Swatson’s evangelistic impact on the growth of Christianity in Ghana then caught the attention of Archdeacon Morrison. Morrison was so impressed by Swatson charisma. In his report presented to the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) (1916), after touring the district in which Swatson had been working.

An extraordinary man named Swatson, (a mulatto) has been evangelising and baptising the remote heathen villagers of the Western Province of the colony. He has told many of his converts to become members of the Church of England

(Amanor 2009:<http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>, assessed



on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

### **2.6.3 Prophet Sampson Oppong**

Another influential prophet named Sampson Oppong also came onto the scene not long after the evangelistic campaigns and the great harvest of souls by Prophet Harris in 1920. Prophet Sampson unlike his predecessors Prophets Harris and Swatson who concentrated their evangelistic efforts in the Western part of the country, centred his evangelistic work in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions. Oppong made a very great impact on Christianity (particularly the Methodist Church). Amanor said that, in these regions he converted as many as 10,000 people to Christ within two years. This was very remarkable because it was at a time when there was distrust of Christianity in Ashanti.

According to Larbi (2000:26), Oppong was an illiterate who did not learn to read and write but had such a good grasp of the Bible. He was a converted fetish priest whose conversion to Christianity was occasioned by a dramatic encounter with God during which he was instructed by the Spirit of God to burn his fetish and become a preacher of the Gospel. As was characteristic of prophets of his days, he moved about in a white flowing gown with a wooden cross and preached to turn people from idolatry to serve the only true God. Oppong fell out with the Methodist Church approaching the end of his career and retired to his native village doing evangelistic work in his village and those surrounding until his death in 1965

(Amanor : <http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

Larbi (2002:27) said through the ministry of Opong within the Methodist Church Ghana, the Church was able to harvest a record of souls in Ashanti, an area where Christianity had been held in considerable distrust. According to Haliburton (1965:92), Webster described the incredible harvest thus.

Chiefs and people have confessed their faith in Christ in such numbers that, for the moment, my colleagues are at their wits' end to find either accommodation or teachers. They have enrolled over a thousand during the past week

It may be said confidently that the growth and expansion of Prophetism in Ghana was due to the use of African resources in terms of personnel such as Harris, Swatson and Opong. They were able to combine the African cultural and religious beliefs very effectively, to make Christianity meaningful to Africans. The missionaries saw everything in African culture as ungodly and evil and that negatively affected the impact Christianity will have had on African people.

#### **2.6.4 Prophet Solomon Owusu Krow (1937-2003)**

Krow was not one of the pioneers but had contributed immensely to the growth of AICs in Ghana. According to Oduro (2007) Owusu Krow was born in October 20, 1937 to David Ankamah Owusu and Christiana Appiadia Krow of Aburi, a hilly town thirty miles northeast of Accra. He was nurtured by his guardian, Robert Krow. After completing an elementary education he attended the West Africa Senior Secondary school, graduating in 1953. Solomon Krow was working as an ice cream vendor, when he unexpectedly became ill. Several attempts by doctors to cure him proved futile. He received healing after much prayer and fasting. After

his recovery, he continued his work as an ice cream vendor, and also shared the gospel with his customers. Prophet Sagoe saw his zeal for evangelism and subsequently recommended him to Josiah Ositelu, founder and primate of the Church of the Lord (Aladura). Solomon Krow was invited by Ositelu to Nigeria in 1956 and personally trained him for one year. Solomon Krow was then sent to Monrovia (in Liberia) from 1957 to 1960 for further pastoral training before returning home to Ghana. He started a branch of the Church of the Lord in Accra Newtown, a suburb of Accra. As the membership grew rapidly under his leadership the congregation built a bigger worship center in 1964 which he named the Nima Healing Temple. Krow's ministry was successful because he had the gift of healing and prophecy. He related well with prominent political figures in Ghana, including Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana.

Solomon Krow was consecrated as an apostle in 1989 in recognition of his hard work and successful ministry. He was then transferred to Monrovia to supervise churches. Solomon Krow was one of the pioneers of the African Indigenous Church movement in Ghana. He had a passion for church growth and holistic Christianity and for teaching the Word of God. At his funeral service, his children gave this tribute "... when we as children were growing up, we had morning prayers everyday before going to school. Now, waking up at dawn is not easy for a child (Funeral programme, 2003:8).

Oduro (2007) remarking about the achievements of Krow said that, one of his remarkable contributions to Christianity, particularly AICs, was the significant role he played in the establishment of the Good News Training institute, a Bible school for AICs at Oyibi in Accra.

When the Weavers, ( missionaries from the Mennonite Board of Missions), came to Ghana in 1970, they were looking for a place to begin a Bible class for the AICs; Prophet Krow gave them a place in the Nima Healing Temple.

He further said that, about twenty-five leaders of the various church organizations, patrons and matrons, prophets and prophetesses, seers and seeresses, laymen of all kinds, and most importantly, both Bishop and Mrs., Krow enrolled. The seed planted by Krow, has produced the Good News Theological College and Seminary. It is the only standard inter-denominational theological training institution for the AICs prophets and prophetesses. (<http://www.dacb.org/stories/ghana/krow-solomon-html>),

## **2.7 Classical Pentecostalism in Ghana**

In Ghana the term that describes the AICs well is *sunsum sore* (spiritual churches). In earlier years, anyone who believed in the possibility of the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in the New Testament as being available to believers today was considered a Pentecostal. Amanor (2009), sees the Pentecostals as those who believed that the “Bible Pattern” of baptism in the Spirit was an experience subsequent to salvation and evidenced by the ability to speak in tongues and manifest the other gifts of the Holy Spirit as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 (<http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>).

The following are some AICs in Ghana, which have been selected for this work. In Ghana alone, there are about 3000 AICs. But this work will dwell on a number of them for a detailed examination.

### **2.7.1 “Nackabah: The Church of the Twelve Apostles**

The Twelve Apostles Church, which is believed by some scholars to be the first indigenous church in Ghana, has been variously christened. Ayegboyin & Ishola (1997:107), said that sometimes it is called “The Church of William Harris and his Twelve Apostles,” at times it is designated simply as “The Church of the Twelve Apostles.” The Church of Twelve Apostles is one of the foremost Harris churches in West Africa as claimed by members. In Ghana, it is better known by its nickname “Nackabah” because of John Nackabah, the co-leader and founder of the organization.

Ayegboyin and Ishola (1997:109), commenting on the training of The Church of the Twelve Apostle prophets or prophetesses said that the training of all would-be prophets and prophetesses are by observing and practising what their senior prophets or prophetesses do. Instructions are given by mouth to the trainees. They are expected to be disciplined throughout the training period and trainees are to spend more time in solitary prayers in the Church Garden, keeping a regular fast.

The Church stresses solely on the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It does not attach much importance to creeds and dogma; rather emphasis is placed on casting out demons, speaking in tongues and healing. The Church of Twelve Apostles does not object to polygynous marriage; the Church has no special formalised ceremonies for the a newly converted person to the Church, consecrated water is used for divine healing purposes; fasting is prescribed by the senior prophet to any person who needs spiritual assistance; there is a place prepared for reflections and meditations called “Church Garden”, it a very large place surrounded by flower beds

(Amanor, 2009:<http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Larbi (2001:69).

### **2.7.2 The Musama Disco Christo Church**

The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) can be said to be one of the oldest African Indigenous Churches in West Africa. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Prophet Jemismiham Jehu-Appiah, then a Catechist in the Methodist Church, together with others who shared his vision, (indigenisation of the gospel) decided to break through the barriers built by the Missionaries that prevented African Christians to have meaningful understanding of God. To them God must be worshipped with understanding. Therefore any group of people who accept Christianity must worship God with their own beliefs, musical instruments, songs and languages. God should be worshipped within the context of one's cultural setting. This ultimately led to the founding, in the formal sense, of Musama in 1922.

Amanor in his article cited above said that, at its inception, the Church had among other things, the following unique characteristics:

- (i) Against the background of colonial set-downs of traditional approaches to God, it accepted the singing of African lyrics with traditional accompaniments such as *donno*, dancing and clapping of hands to the glory of God during worship.
- (ii) It believes in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit through individual members. It recognises and endorses the operation of divine gifts including prophesying, speaking in tongues and healing.



(iii) It incorporates in its formal and administrative structure, certain traditional practices such as pertains in the traditional and socio-political context.

(iv) It practises a monarchical system of government with its leader called the Akaboha. The Church's constitution provided that the incumbent Akaboha held office for life and was succeeded by his son. Thus, when the founder, Akaboha I died, he was succeeded by his son Prophet Matapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah as Akaboha II. When he died, Miritaijah Jonah Jehu Appiah became Akaboha III in 1972. (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:114), ( Larbi 2001:69).

MDCC is an indigenous church because in the words of Opoku (1990:34), "it draws heavily on traditional Akan religion and culture in the search for more satisfactory answers to the problems of contemporary life." The MDCC began as "a prayer group within the Methodist Church Ghana at Gomoa Oguan in the Central Region of Ghana in 1919. Some three years later, the prayer band called the "Faith Society" flowered into the MDCC when its founder and leader Joseph Egyanka Appiah, 1892-1948 was dismissed from the Methodist Church Ghana (<http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

### **2.7.3 Aladura Churches**

The Aladura Pentecostal Churches originated from Nigeria. They rely on the power of prayer and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some typical examples of these churches today are Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Church of the Lord (Aladura). The first Aladura Movement was planted at Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria in 1918 by Sophia Odunlami, a school teacher, and Joseph Sadare, a goldsmith. They both attended St. Saviour's Anglican Church. They rejected infant baptism and all forms of medicine, whether western or traditional. Prophet Boahen

(interviewed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009), said that, *y[nny] aduro biara [firis] onyame ne oduy[fo] kese[,w]n a w[y] abibiduro no fa y[ abayifo*, (we don't take medicine from anywhere, because our God is a great healer). The Church believes that, majority of the people who practice herbal or traditional medicine are witches, it believes the knowledge on herbs and the power in the herbal medicine are derived from satanic and demonic forces, therefore, those who practice them should be cast out by the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

In consequence, they initiated the "Prayer Band", popularly called "Egbe Aladura". The Aladura began as a renewal movement in search of true spirituality. It is probably rather important to the success of the Aladura Churches that they do not reject modernization or westernization in general, though their religious beliefs share many of the underlying presuppositions of traditional African religions (while sharply opposed to them), (Ayegboyin & Ishola (1997:90); Larbi (2001:67, 68).

#### **2.7.4 Cherubim and Seraphim Movement**

The Cherubim and Seraphim Movement started as a prayer group under the leadership of Prophet Moses Orimolade in Lagos, Nigeria in 1925 Ayegboyin & Ishola (1997:81). The movement believes in the Holy order. Turner (1967:29) said, the Order holds a strong faith in the Holy Bible as the word of God, Jesus Christ as a channel of salvation and in the Trinity in unity. The use of incense, purification by prayer and fasting and resurrection of the dead are some of the notable practices in the Church. Prayer and preaching of the gospel have been the fundamental practice in the Church. The Church believes in the curative effect of prayer for all afflictions, spiritual and temporal but do not entertain the use of charms or fetish, witchcraft or

sorcery of any kind and all heathenish sacrifices and practices. The Cherubim and Seraphim Movement endorses and does practice the *nsuo ho te* (sanctification of water) by prayer. These practices have actually attracted many African Christians into the Church. Many of its members testified that they were saved several times from spiritual attacks by the use of the consecrated water. Sanneh (1983:190) said that the church has many branches in West and South Africa. (Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997:81)

(<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-e.html>. assessed on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009).

### **2.7.5 Celestial Church of Christ**

The Celestial Church of Christ sees itself as a church “born of the Holy Spirit.” It is the Spirit himself who directs the activities of the church. Any attempt to bring human directives will be resisted by the members. Ayegboyin and Ishola (1997:97) described the CCC as one of the most attractive and flourishing indigenous churches and is relatively young. They further said that, the founder Prophet Osahoffa’s father at his infancy arranged for him to live with Bishop David Hodono Loco, who was a Methodist Bishop of Porto Novo. Osahoffa did not get chance to continue his formal education in a Seminary as a result of his disagreement with the College’s authorities and he also refused to take part in blocks molding for a hostel. He was among the pioneering students who were tasked to build a hostel. As a result of this disappointment he joined his father’s profession – carpentry. Osahoffa received his divine call in 1947 after the power of the Holy Spirit touched him. He began his preaching in the same year after a period of three months in the forest and the appearance of an angel who commissioned him to teach people to rely on Jesus Christ alone. The members claim, their beliefs and practices came through spiritual instructions from God himself and therefore followed them meticulously. These include

worship, fasting, foot-washing, seclusion of women, purification after childbirth, naming ceremonies, confinement, seeking guidance, taboo, green water and mercy-land. Amanor (2009) said that the Church believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has completed the work of redemption. It believes in the Christian Creed, the ordination of ministers and the sacraments. The Church also believes in the infallibility of the scriptures as the guide to the Kingdom of God and in the Holy Spirit as the enabling power of believers for divine life. There are five ministries: pastor, prophet, evangelist, shepherd and teacher. Ayegboyin and Ishola (1997:101-103) said that their beliefs and practices are a mixture of that of the Methodist Church and other Protestant Churches. Prophecy is especially important; some are visioners, dreamers or divine voice hearers. Their role is to make known the will of God. The church came to Ghana in 1962 through Prophet Charles Odoi of Accra; and has its headquarters at Somanya (Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997:101 – 103), (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/ecumenical/aic-e.html>, assessed on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009, <http://www.pctii.org/cyber/cyberj13/amnor.html>, assessed on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2009).

### **2.8.1 A New Development: The Council of independent Churches of Ghana**

In contemporary times in Ghana, there has been a new development in the AICs. The churches have come together to form a council. Prophet Adu, Secretary of the Council (interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 at his office), said that there are more than three thousand independent churches in Ghana. He seems to agree with those who criticise the AICs prophets and prophetesses of their low level of education, when he reiterated that, the AICs in Ghana do not have recognition because many of them have not gone through any proper training. One of the Council's core objectives is to give formal training to the AIC prophets in the country but some of them have

not seen the need for joining the council with reasons best known to themselves. This work discovered that many of the AIC prophets and prophetesses do not like to be under authority; they are the masters and always like to remain as such. Coming together will bring them under norms, rules and regulations. The Secretary further said that, the Council is working around the clock to bring all AICs in the country together, and when they are able to achieve this, training will be their core objective.

### **2.8.2 Conclusion**

The AICs emerged to make Christianity in Africa meaningful to African people. Their main objective is to work out a salvation of Africans by combining African cultural beliefs and practices and the Biblical beliefs and teachings to make the gospel relevant and meaningful to African people. Some people believe that AICs emerged to counter the missionaries' imposition of western cultural beliefs and practices on African people. The missionaries hid behind the gospel to impose their cultural beliefs and practices on African people. The extreme rejection of African cultural beliefs and practices was a clear indication of their hidden agenda. This attitude made it difficult for many African people to become true Christians by a western perspective of who a Christian is. The expectation of the African Christian to give up his or her African civilisation for western civilisation could not work well for the African Christians. In Africa the people is culture and the culture is the people. The combination of the African culture and Bible culture by the AICs has made them successful in Africa. They attracted many African people to join them. The African Christians understand God properly within the context of the AICs. They have real meaning to the songs they sing, the rituals they perform and all other activities conducted in the church.



The challenge facing African Indigenous Churches in Ghana today is identity crisis. The question is, where do they belong now? Are the AICs practicing African Christianity or the European Christianity? Would they be able to maintain their infusion of African culture and European culture in Christianity or separate themselves from anything European? Are they also ready to face challenges posed by modernity, such as the use of sophisticated gadgets or instruments for worship, wearing of sandals and others practices that distract the educated and the elite from the AICs in Ghana? It is an undeniable fact that, if they remain extremists in terms of blending the two cultures in Christianity, very soon they will pay dearly for it. The system must be changed to attract all groups of people. The task of AICs leadership in Ghana now is to look for the ways and means to bridge the gap between the western influence and the African cultural influence. Many African scholars such as Oduro (1973:9) and Beata (1972:29) have foreseen that if both African traditional religion and the doctrine of the mission-established churches are carefully and systematically studied to find the similarities and dissimilarities, the barriers of conflicts and misunderstandings could be bridged and demarcated.

The AICs have to work hard to regain their past glories by concentrating on the theological education of their prophets to stop many Ghanaians from criticising them. The beliefs and practices of the AICs should be explained to people in writings. They must be abreast with modernity to avoid loss of membership. As indicated earlier, one of the areas the African Indigenous Churches are criticised most is the area of training. It is common knowledge among most Ghanaians that the AIC prophets do not have any form of training. The subsequent chapter will discuss some forms of ministerial training or formation among the AIC prophets in Ghana.



## CHAPTER THREE

### TRAINING OF AIC PROPHETS

#### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter we are going to discuss the training of the AIC prophets; and further find out if there are theological training institutions available to them and whether they are taking advantage of these institutions to improve their profession. Other forms of training among the AIC prophets will also be discussed. Some selected theological seminaries and Bible colleges will be discussed briefly to find out if any of them has contributed to the training of some AIC prophets in Ghana.

#### 3.1 What some Scholars and Prophets have said about the Training of AIC Prophets

There is a general perception among Ghanaians that the AIC prophets are not trained and do not have any form of structured training. Oduro (interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at his residence) said that, “some western writers and local scholars were constantly criticising the AIC prophets as not being theologically sound; they regard them as people who have deviated from the true faith.” Scholars like Bacta (1962:57) Turner (1962:14), Clarke (1986:30), are among others, wrote that the African Indigenous Church Leaders or prophets were illiterates in both formal and theological education. Makhubu (1983:61) supported their assertion when he reiterated this at a Conference of African Indigenous Church leaders or prophets in Kenya. He said that “Many AIC prophets are men of wisdom, but without education.”

One may disagree with Baeta on the grounds that the inability to write or read English does not mean that the person is not trained. One may be trained in his own mother tongue. God

understands all languages and always speaks to one in his or her own language. He is not a chaotic God; when He wants to speak to an Akan, he will not speak Ga; he speaks Akan. Many AIC prophets and prophetesses are illiterates but read Akan version of the Bible fluently and accurately make scriptural references when they are preaching.

Oduro (2004) in his presentation at the Conference of African Indigenous Churches in Kenya seems to disagree partially with scholars who believe that prophets of the AICs do not have any form of structured training. According to him the fact that some of them are not living to expectation and are unable to speak the English language does not mean that they do not have “professional” training. He remarked during an interview on (10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009) that, “The fact that formal training of their pastors [prophets] is lacking does not always mean that AICs prophets are not trained at all.” However, he agrees with the fact that upon all attempts by some AIC leaders to provide formal training for the AIC prophets and prophetesses, majority of them do not see the need for formal education because they rely on the Holy Spirit. He further confirmed that, “AIC leaders are aware of the institutions with good facilities and well-trained lecturers. Yet, they do not always allow their prophets to enroll in such institutions because they fear that would-be prophets will be taught the beliefs of other churches.”

Amoateng of “Come to Jesus” Prophetic Ministries of Abesewa in Ashanti Region (interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at his chapel) seems to confirm this fact. That is, their disinterest in being trained in other church training institutes. During an interview, he said, *Onyame nyansaboakwa no na afr[ me. ]tumi ade[ nyinaa y[ na ]nim ade[ nyinaa [no nti memma obi mfa onipa adwens[ me da. W]nmfaw]n mwoma na y[n mmfa y[n gyedie, wonngyina nwomanipoo so na y[n*

*de[ y[gyina honhom kronkron so.* (It is the Omniscient God who has called me into this ministry. He is able and all- knowing, and therefore I will never allow my faith to be destroyed by human ideologies. They should take their books; we shall keep and practice our faith. They should rely on scholars; we shall rely on Holy Spirit).

Akoa Nazareth of Israel King of Jews Church also seems to support Amoateng’s view, when he said on Ghana’s state television, the GTV on “Jewish Hour” programme on (October 24, 2009) that, *as]fo a w]se[ br[ w] sukuu mu k]sua nwoma ahodo] ansa na watumi akyer[nyames[m ase y[ Farisifo]. Teorogifo] no nyinaa y[ Farisifo] w]sua nwoma s[ de[[b[y[ na w] ne onyame adi asie, w] de y[[ Yesu, br[ a w]k]bisaa no s[[s[s[w]tua to] ma Caesar. W]nni bribi papa biara de ma akristofo], w]n nyinaa bek]]bosam gya mu.Nea wop[ ara ne din akesea, onyame retwen w]n. [y[ Nyame na w]tete as]fo [ny[ onipa* (those who spend time in schools to study theology, anthropology, philosophy, Hebrew and Greek in order to interpret scripture correctly are Pharisees. “All theologians are Pharisees; they learnt theology to challenge God’s anointed men as they tempted Jesus with the question on either to pay tax to Caesar or not. They have nothing good to offer, if you follow their teachings you will go to hell. All they want are big titles like Bishops, Right Reverends, Very Reverends, Philosophers and nothing else. God is patiently waiting for those theologians; it is God who trains His men for the task, not human beings).

Both Amoateng and Akoa Nazareth seem to see theological training as “evil” and therefore any serious Christian-minded leader or prophet should not offer himself or herself for such training. When I inquired from Amoateng about the young men around him he contradicted himself by saying that, “They are under training. They are studying how I do counseling, deliverance and

teachings.” This answer from Amoateng seems to suggest that the prophet himself does not understand the word “training.” He later explained that his type of training is not the academic-kind, a human-type like what goes on in theological institutions. In general, AIC prophets see some inadequacies in theological training or education. To them Ghanaians need healing and deliverance not “letters.” Victor Osei of Family Chapel in Kumasi, on FM radio interview on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 in responding to a question on prophetic training said that, he did not go through any theological training or Bible college, because it was God who directed him not to have any human training. “God himself trained me that is why I have a lot of followers, and handle the scripture also very well.” He quickly said that he was not saying training per se is not important in the profession. He said that he has encouraged all his ministers and prophets to study at Bible colleges of their choice. “All my ministers and prophets have gone through institutional training.”

According to Ayegboyin and Ademola, (1997, <http://www.war.jaibide/news-file/2pdf>, assessed on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009) research has shown that several of the leaders or prophets of the AICs have no Bible or theological training whatsoever. As a result of that, the sermons, preaching or teachings are usually of a low and unattractive quality and show no careful preparation. Many of listeners to their sermons, preaching and teachings feel that they are not biblical. Their sermons and teachings are always concentrated on prosperity, witchcraft and other malevolent spirits.

According to Oduro (1973:124) the situation now is different. Many institutions in Africa train AIC prophets, though he agrees that it is an undeniable fact that most AIC institutions do not have enough formal training facilities to train their prophets as compared to the mission-

established ones in Ghana. Oduro is of the view that, “Bible schools, pastoral training institutions and seminaries are not common among AICs and many of them lack training facilities.” It has been observed that very few of such Bible colleges have been established in Ghana such as Good News Theological College and Seminary at Oyibi, Accra, Apostolic Prophetic Institute at Koforidua, and others that train African Indigenous Church prophets. However, not all of them have necessary equipment and facilities as already stated. Oduro further said that, these inadequacies are not limited to the AICs in Ghana, but also other African countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe face similar challenges. He quoted Pastor Babs Mala’s Comment on nine AIC seminaries in Nigeria to support his claim.

At the moment none of these seminaries are well-developed, fully-equipped or have enough staff to cater for the demands of their members. Even if all these seminaries were to unite, they would not match any one of the seminaries of the mission churches in terms of building libraries, staff and study programmes. Unfortunately, the study programme is often imported from overseas. No one makes an effort to interpret, indigenise and contextualise it to fit the needs of the future development of AICs (<http://www.org/theological-education.html>, assessed on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009).

Today, training is important than ever, because the world is growing very fast with its technological advancement. There is the need for every worker in God’s vineyard to be abreast with them in order to interpret the scripture very well. Pastors and prophets need to develop their professional skills in order to satisfy people of this modern age. If any prophet or pastor wants to be called a serious person in this modern era, he or she must be trained. Those who still believe that ministerial training is not necessary in doing the work of God should begin to rethink.



### **3.2 Some Theological Institutions that Train AIC Prophets**

There are existing ministerial formation centres or institution in Ghana especially among the mission-established churches such as the Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Anglican Church and some Pentecostal churches. There are also Bible colleges and theological institutions that train the AIC prophets. Two of them are: Good News Theological Seminary at Oyibi in Accra and Apostolic and Prophetic Training School in Koforidua.

#### **3.2.1 Good News Theological College and Seminary (GNTCS)**

The establishment of the Good News Training Institute (now, Good News Theological College and Seminary) in Accra, was a culmination of many incidental events in the 1960s in West Africa. Oduro said that, the most important event was the phenomenal growth of African Independent Churches in Africa, particularly West Africa. This attracted the curiosity of scholars, missionaries, missiologists and researchers to find out why AICs are becoming so popular among the African people. The causes of the popularity, growth and challenges of AICs became the focus of many scholars. Turner and Walls were some Western scholars who piloted the study of the AICs in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The AICs in South Eastern Nigeria invited the Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM) to work with them to enhance their theological education in 1960s. The civil war in eastern Nigeria (1967-1970), however, disrupted the AIC/MBM interaction. Among the MBM missionaries was



Weaver evacuated from Nigeria. Oduro explained that, on the advice of Turner, Adeleke Adejobi, then the head of the Church of the Lord (Aladura), invited the MBM to establish a seminary for his church in Nigeria. The Weavers came into contact with the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Sierra Leone, but due to the civil war in Nigeria, Adejobi recommended the Weavers to Apostle Oforu, then head of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ghana. The result of this meeting was the establishment of the Good News Theological Seminary and College (<http://www.gntcs.org/History.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009).

The College began by Weavers as a Bible study class at the choir loft of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) at Nima, a suburb of Accra, which was given by Archdeacon Solomon Krow, the Head Pastor. Oduro said that, Mills, an AIC leader and brother-in-law of Krow, introduced the Weavers to many AIC prophets who were not in Aladura Church. The students were grouped into classes and became known as the Leader's Fellowship. More Good News Classes were opened at many AIC worship centers in Accra. The classes were handled by Western missionary scholars, Ghanaian scholars, church leaders and some students of the Trinity College, a seminary for Protestant churches in Ghana (<http://www.gntcs.org/History.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009).

Oduro said that in early 1971 a decision was arrived at to turn the various Good News Bible Classes into an evening part-time theological institute. The school was called the Good News Training Institute. The school was opened at the YMCA, Accra, on 4 October 1971. It was formally inaugurated on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1971 (<http://www.org/History.html>, assessed on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

The Principal of Good News Theological College and Seminary explained that the College is an interdenominational institution of higher learning. The College provides biblical, theological and pastoral education primarily for leaders or prophets of the AIC. The other AICs in Ghana are benefiting from the educational programmes of the seminary.

The faculty and staff are committed to providing evangelical and contextual theological education. The seminary has been given accreditation by the National Accreditation Board to provide two programmes: (1) Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and (2) Bachelor of Theology. The College also provides seminars and conferences for church workers mostly from the AICs in addition to the full-time programme Student Handbook (2008:49). The vision of the seminary is to provide theological training primarily to the AICs prophets and prophetesses. The core value of the College is Wisdom, Spirituality and Diligence. The College trains students to take on the spirit of wisdom in their daily activities, thereby building their spirituality. In order to achieve these goals the students are trained to work hard, in spite of any hindering circumstances. Students are trained and prepared to study and interpret the Word of God in its totality. The students are trained to work in any cultural setting. They are trained in all sectors in order for them to feel comfortable anywhere they will be sent to work. The students are taught all subjects taught by the other theological institutions but at Good News Theological College and Seminary, these subjects are combined with African studies. They are trained to fit into the African context (The Student Handbook (2008:51).

According to Oduro, the Principal (interviewed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009 at his residence), there are more courses organised by Good News Theological College and Seminary, in addition to full-time residential education. The College offers both full-time and extension programmes leading to the award of Certificate in Pastoral Ministries and Bachelor of Theology. The extension programme is offered through Theological Education by Extension and in the evenings and at weekends. Other programmes include leadership Seminars and training workshops. (GNTCS, Student Handbook 2008:52).

### **3.2.2 Apostolic and Prophetic Training School (APTS)**

The APTS is established to develop AIC prophets and prophetesses to work in all ministry areas especially in Africa. The school prepares the prophets and prophetesses for effective leadership and church management. Through this programme students are helped to gain adequate understanding of church life, church leadership in African context, and prophetism. The prophetism in the contemporary world is critically examined to bring out prophetic ministry should be handled. It is opened to all prophets at any level of Christian leadership, of varying ages and degrees of experience. The programme lasts for three months in a classroom setting and is followed by an internship phase of three or more months. According to Appiah Osei, the proprietor of the school (interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at his office), the training that is offered through this programme is often not available at the established Bible Colleges and Seminaries. Here speakers include some of the most dynamic prophets in the forefront of prophetic movements.

The curriculum includes: how to receive Apostolic Ministry, the Roles of Christian Prophets, Understanding Prophecy, A Framework for Prophecy in the local church, the value of Prophecy, Keeping Prophecy alive. The prophets of the AICs need to take advantage of these training facilities to further equip themselves for a balanced and more effective ministry.

### **3.2.3 The Agabus Prophetic Institute – Adweso, Koforidua**

According to Opoku Nsiah, the Director of the Agabus Prophetic Institute (interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 at her office), the school was established by her husband Opoku Nsiah of the Christian Redemption International Ministry in 2000. The objective of the school is to train the AIC prophets and prophetesses to be more balanced in their thinking and practices. She said that her husband, Opoku Nsiah and she conceived the idea to establish an institution to train the prophets and prophetesses in Ghana, because of some comments many Ghanaians have been making about the AIC prophets and prophetesses. There is a general perception among Ghanaians that the AIC prophets and prophetesses are professionally incompetent due to their attitude toward both education and theological training. They therefore established the Institute to provide education to the AIC prophets and prophetesses whose educational standard is generally very low in order to be able to fit into the Ghanaians definition of who a priest or prophet is.

According to Obeng, the Administrator of the School, (interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 at his office), the Institute since its establishment has trained more than five hundred prophets and prophetesses from different AICs in Ghana. The current enrolment stands at 70, comprising 50 prophets and 20 prophetesses. The ages of the trainees range from 15 to 65 years. They come

from different areas in Ghana. We discovered that out of the 6 lecturers, four were the products of the school.

The prophetic training takes six months. She said that after the six months training the school identifies the good students for further training in ministry. They are trained in Practical Ministry, Understanding Authority, Demonology, Bible Doctrine, Faith and Prayer, Leadership, Homiletics, Missions, Pneumatology, Old and New Testaments Studies, Counselling, and Prophetic Insights, Gardening and Computer Studies (Agabus Prophetic Institute Time Table, 2010).

### **3.3 Types of Theological Education and Training**

It has been said that there are various types of training among Christians in Ghana. However, the major ones among them are theological education either in residential training at a theological institution, seminary or by extension, correspondence and mentorship or discipleship.

Oduro, (1973:96) has identified seven types of theological training. Theological education and training to him, can take many forms. One of them is the formal or western institutional type, with a well- written curriculum, duration of study, library, and the award of certificates after completion. This is usually called 'Bible Institute or College or Seminary training'. It is either run on full-time or part-time basis. Another one is the periodic type – seminars and workshops. Of this type, those in ministry or those intending to be in ministry are invited periodically to study a specific aspect of Christian ministry. Mentorship or discipleship or apprenticeship is the next identified type of training. In this type the master or senior prophet identifies someone in



the church with potential ministerial gifts and puts him under the tutelage of an experienced prophet for on-the-job training. The would-be prophet learns mostly by observation and practising what has been taught and observed. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is the fourth type of theological education and training. With this type, the learner goes through some selected books or modules with the assistance of sometimes the text-writers at a particular centre for shorter period as compared to the institutional type. It is a sustainable and supervised type of theological education, yet students study at their pace. The fifth type of theological education is the Distance Learning, commonly referred to as correspondence course. Learners and teachers scarcely meet since they are separated by distance. Most of the work is done on paper (with the help of lecture notes, audiovisuals and textbooks) and mailed to the teacher. It is then marked and sent back to the students through mails. The self-taught one is sixth type. With this type the learner buys some theological materials, audiovisuals, and Bible study tools like, commentaries, Dictionaries, Concordances, and Handbooks and studies them without recourse to any instructor present. The use of theological libraries is another means of teaching oneself without a teacher. The seventh one identified is a regular Christian education facilitated through the teaching of Adult Sunday School teaching manuals.

In the following section we will discuss in details two of the methods of theological education, which are mostly used by the AIC to train their prophets – Mentoring and Theological Education by Extension.

### **3.3.1 Discipleship or Mentoring**



The term mentoring “is linked with a wise and trusted counselor or teacher. It was used about Odysseus’s trusted counselor, in ancient Greek Mythology, where Athena became the guardian and teacher of Telemachus” ( <http://www.gntcs.org/History.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009). The disciple is simply a student. A student is one who is studying from and committed to the master. The relationship between the mentor and the learner is sometimes voluntary, but each trainer has a certain requirement or standard for the training of his disciples. Mentoring type of training is to guide, encourage and monitor the learner to manage his or her studies at his or her own pace in order to maximize their capabilities, potential, skills development and, improvement of performance.

Many scholars see mentoring as a powerful tool to empower individuals for development. It has been generally accepted by the leadership of AICs as an effective way of building one’s potential and sometimes assisting people to identify their gifts or potential. Mentoring can be described as an agreement or partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally finds themselves in the same working field or sharing similarities in experiences. The main objective of the mentoring type of training is to prepare learner to be professionally balanced. Instructions and orders are sometimes issued by the mentor to the mentee, and observe him or her closely to find out if the requirements have been satisfied by the mentee. The learner receives guidance and directives from the mentor. All these are done to improve the competence level of the learner.

Mallison (1998:34) for instance says that “Mentoring is a dynamic relationship of trust in which one person enables another to maximize the grace of God in his or her life and service.” Mentoring in the biblical sense is a relationship through which an experienced person prepares,

empowers, and shares God-given talents or resources. The experienced person shares his experiences with the less experienced person with the intention to equip the trainee to take a higher office. The less and inexperienced person observes closely and keenly the experienced person and follows closely what he does and how he does them. Mallison sees it as an agreed-upon exchange between two people, a more experienced person and a less experienced, developing the less experienced to his maximum potential in Christ and empowering him with abilities to meet a need, achieve a goal, or to grow through a situation.

In discipleship or mentorship, the prophet or prophetess looks through with carefulness the congregation and identifies members of the congregation who show signs of being gifted to do ministry. There are some cases where some of the identified members had left vocations or jobs and given themselves to be trained by their senior prophets. Every mentor wants his or her learner to become like them. He or she looks carefully at what their leaders or mentors do and how they do it. Many of them even want to walk like their mentors. They watch how the leader preaches, interprets the scriptures, teaches, and counsels. For the mentors to test the readiness and the “perfectness” of the learner the senior prophet sometimes assigns or delegates some duties to him or her and watches them very closely as they carry the duty out. The trainee is then praised or criticised with necessary corrections made.

### **3.3.1.1 The Biblical Model of Mentoring**

The Bible has examples of mentoring relationships. Coleman (1963) has given some biblical examples of mentoring, Moses receiving directives and guidance from Jethro, his father-in-law on how he could deal with such a huge number of people effectively (Exodus 18). Moses mentored Joshua (Deuteronomy 3:28). Prophet Elijah trained Elisha. The kind of relationship which existed between these two people was beyond description (2Kings 2:1-16). Other kings were mentored by their religious teachers.

In the New Testament, the life and ministry of Jesus is a perfect example of what the mentoring process should look like. How he related and interacted with his disciples could be seen as a perfect example of mentoring and serves as a pattern for ministerial formation agents. Jesus looked through carefully among the people and selected only twelve for training. He might probably have found something special in them that could be tapped to accomplish his earthly mission. Jesus therefore moved closely with the twelve. Instructions and assignments were given to the twelve.

### **3.3.2 The Training of the Twelve by Jesus Christ through Mentoring**

The mentoring, discipleship or apprenticeship method is what Jesus used to train The Twelve. Jesus saw the importance of training and therefore drew the disciples closer to himself so that they would be able to study and understand Him very well. Bruce (1988:30) said that, The Twelve, however as we know, were to be something more than travelling companions or menial servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to be, in the meantime, students of Christian doctrine, and occasional fellow-labourers in the work of the kingdom, and eventually Christ's chosen trained agent. From the time of their being chosen, indeed, the twelve entered into a

regular apprenticeship for the great office of apostleship, in the course which they learnt, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their master to receive, what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world.

The purpose of Jesus coming into this world is to free and reclaim the world. The master plan and strategy of Jesus is simple and profound. He chose twelve ordinary men, and trained them through association with them which can be described as mentoring. The disciples were to observe, and obey the commands of the master and later on be sent out after being satisfied that they had been equipped.

A pattern of the ministry of training The Twelve has become the model for the AICs. Jesus selected few among the lot. These ordinary men were with Him and he gave them both verbal instructions and constant example of preparing them through their time with Him to do same.

According to Coleman, (1963) the leadership training principles that Jesus, used were simple, logical and full of wisdom. They are as follows:

- a. Selection - He chose a few faithful, available, teachable disciples. (Luke 6:13-17, Mark 3:13-19). They were not scholars, but ordinary men whom He could shape and mould into leaders.
- b. Association - He devoted His time to them, even in the midst of ministry to the masses. They were with him, in all sorts of situations. The instructions were “be with me and follow me.”

- c. Consecration - He called them to obedience. To turn away from sin and sacrifice their own personal interest and turn to the master and his teaching.
- d. Impartation - He gave Himself to them and for them. His commitment to them, and giving of Himself for them was motivation of their giving themselves totally for Him.
- e. Demonstration - He taught them by sharing with them. All the disciples had to teach was what the teacher had practised. They expected to learn. So they learnt to pray; hearing Him pray, they learnt how to use the word by observing. They became evangelists by His demonstrations of [evangelism. Discipleship is easier caught than taught.
- f. Delegation - He put them to work (Mk 6:7, Mt 10:5, Lk 9:1-2). This was “on the job training” at its best. They were given adequate room to work and learn, yet never without His concern and guidance as it was needed.
- g. Reproduction - It was clear that He intended them to become disciples, like Him and even more than what He was (<http://www.gntcs.org/History.html>, assessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2009).

With the biblical example of mentoring mentioned above and comparing it with the method the AICs use in training their prophets and prophetesses, it can be said that the method the AICs use in training is quite biblical. But the big question is that, which of the AICs are using this method efficiently and effectively to train their prophets and prophetesses, since it has come to light that many AICs prophets in Ghana find it very difficult to be under an experienced person and study?

The training of the AIC prophets was the type Baeta calls “learning by doing.” Discipleship training has been found to be the most common form of prophetic training among AICs in Ghana. According to Oduro, (interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at his residence) the programme is

required before being ordained or recognized as a leader (prophet) in some AICs such as Musama Disco Christo Church, Apostle Continuation Church, Saviour Church of Ghana, the Church of Lord (Aladura) and some other AICs in Ghana. Jacob Asirifi, a teacher, in the Saviour Church of Ghana (Interviewed on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009 at his headquarters) confirmed this when he said that, mentorship is the most popular type of prophetic training among African Independent Churches in Ghana. He further said that, “with this, the leaders are able to observe the loyalty, obedience and ministerial skills of the disciple. The disciples are trained in the laws and rituals of the church.”

Disciples may include those who are being trained to take up leadership positions because they are family members of the leader of the church. Such trainings are usually special, as in the case of Moses Jehu-Appiah whom his father encouraged as follows,

You, my son are quite different from the rest: I gave you the training befitting your rank, and now that this period of preparation is over, put away childish things and become a man.

Take good and proper care of all affairs” (Opoku: 2009).

The period of discipleship training is not fixed. The disciples may graduate when the leader is satisfied with his performance. When the leader is finally satisfied, he sets a special day to ordain the disciple either by the laying on of hands or by pouring oil on his head.

Jones’s method of training prophets under him is quite unique. It is a combination of hands on prophetic mentoring and biblically sound prophetic teaching. He totally disagrees with prophets who do not see the need for training, when he remarked, those who say, “it is the God who called me so only God can train me, I don’t need man to train me; the Holy Spirit will train me”; need



to revisit their calling. “They need to sit at the feet of a senior prophet in order to interpret God well to his people.”

According to Jones the one in charge of training of the prophets of Musama Disco Christo Church in the northern sector of Ghana (interviewed on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at his residence), discipleship is best understood by the ministry of Jesus. He (Jesus) could be said to have had a school of the prophets. They were all trained disciples.

Touching on the role or responsibilities of the masters or senior prophets in training the young prophets, Jones said, “the ultimate goal of all discipleship or mentorship is to impart all you have to others, and then to encourage them to go on from there and to become even more than you (the master) are.”

It is generally believed that, anybody who would be a trainer or master of others must have the same mind that was in Christ, and if one is not prepared to impart to others all that he or she has, and not prepared to encourage his or her disciples to go on and perform better than the master, then one is not qualified to take the position of mentor or master or trainer.

Some of the AIC senior prophets believe that a mentor has to produce his or her likeness, because there is a basic principle which states that “like produces like.” An Akan proverb, *Ʒkoto nwo anoma* which literally means, “a crab does not give birth to a bird” summarises it all. It is a belief that every mentor is supposed to produce his or her likeness. The purpose of this type of training among the AICs in Ghana is to give the learners the opportunity to emulate or learn from

the senior prophets or prophetesses to the extent of becoming just like them. Some of the senior prophets or prophetesses are limited in ministerial training and competence. Many of them are illiterates and cannot read and write; this actually limits their ability to impart knowledge and experience effectively. The Ghanaian perception of a minister does not qualify the AIC prophets and prophetess because of the limited scope and competence in ministerial training. The AIC senior prophets and prophetesses that train the would-be prophets and prophetesses have narrow scope of knowledge and experiences. Jones' comment made during the interview confirms our observation, when he commented that, "Even founders, who can read and write, also do not have an expansive scope of theological education of which their learners could benefit." Though popular among the Ghanaian AICs, the mentorship or apprenticeship or discipleship type of theological training does not adequately prepare them to face the ministerial challenges of modern day Ghana.

This method can be considered as one of the best in the sense that it is learner-centred, cheaper, comfortable and flexible to the learner. It is a method still being used by many AICs. It is beneficial in training workers who cannot leave their work to residential institution. This method of training the prophets and prophetesses by the AICs can be described as effective if it is handled well. In the New Testament this pattern of training was used by Paul in his ministry; he always stayed at a place for a period long enough to build or reproduce leadership for the newly established churches; Timothy was charged by Paul, his mentor to make disciples (2Tim 2:2). This method is better although, the institutionalized theological education and training has been accepted worldwide as the most standard form of theological education and training. There is

the need for the AIC prophets and prophetesses to take advantage of the institutionalized type of education.

### **3.4 Theological Education by Extension (TEE)**

Theological Education by Extension is a new type of alternative training programme, which is non-residential, but would allow for the award of a degree. One of the churches in Ghana that employs this approach a great deal is the Methodist Church. Asamoah-Okyere, General Director of Board of Ministries in The Methodist Church Ghana (interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at his office), sees Theological Education by Extension (TEE) a convenient alternative to the institutionalised type of theological training which is aimed primarily at providing training for ministers who are already in the active service of the church. It is simply a decentralized theological education approach. The TEE programme does not interrupt the learner's regular programme in the church, because it is a field-based approach. The student remains in the church while pursuing the programme. Okyere explained that the typical TEE programme has three parts - course materials are prepared for the students to study at home; seminars and discussion of study materials are held weekly and monthly respectively; lesson materials are written to include work assignments which relate in practical ways to the student's own ministry. Kinsler (1986:30) said that, one of the main visions of the TEE model is "to encourage and enable local leaders to develop their gifts and ministries without leaving their homes, jobs, communities, and local congregations."

Since TEE materials are prepared with instruction and well-defined objectives to enable the students do self-study, it seems to be the most appropriate, considering the educational

background of many of the AIC prophets and prophetesses. It also gives chance to student to solve problems in the study material. Also because demonstration on how to handle churches are done in selected AICs closer to the students, the supervisor is able to look closely as students perform and at the end reinforces the strengths and make the necessary corrections. Further, since AIC students are involved in leadership positions, the knowledge gained in the lesson material and through sharing in the seminars may be applied almost immediately.

### **3.4.1 Theological Education by Extension at the Good News Theological College and Seminary**

The College uses the TEE method to train the AIC prophets because of its flexibility. Lecturers are able to adjust to the needs and abilities of the students; the programme is developed and adapted to the local situation and meets particular needs. According to Oduro (interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at his residence) since the inception of the programme in 1996, eight-six prophets from AICs in Ghana and abroad have been trained by this method. Currently there are twenty-two Ghanaian prophets and five prophets from other countries undergoing training at the Good News Theological College and Seminary from the following churches in Ghana – MDCC, Aladura, The Twelve Apostles, Apostle Continuation Church, Cherubim and Seruphin, The Church of Lord – Nachaba, and other AICs abroad – USA, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, Kenya and Benin.

The process begins with advertisement in newspapers and on FM radio stations and announcements in the AICs. Letters are written to the churches after which the churches send the list of prophets to be trained to the College. The TEE programme for the AIC prophets takes

two years. The students come into residence early July and stay for four weeks for lectures. They engage in individual study during the interval between lectures. Some of the topics discussed during the two year study include: How to receive Apostolic Ministry, The Roles of Christian Prophets, Understanding Prophecy, A Framework for Prophecy in the local Church, the value of Prophecy, Keeping Prophecy alive, Communication Skills of Presenting Sermons (Homiletics), Church Management, Old Testament and New Testament (selected books), Ghanaian Language (Akan and Ga) and History of AICs.

At the end of the fourth week they go back to their stations with assignments which they complete and mail back to the lecturers for marking and grading. The Prophets come back after Christmas, in January, for another one month lecture and interactions with the faculty. The assignments they worked on are discussed and new ones are given. Spiritual development of the students by the staff is also part of the programme.

### **3.4.2 What some Prophets and the Principal of the Good News Theological College and Seminary say about the TEE programme**

This section tries to find out from some prophets who have gone through the TEE programme in the College and the Principal of Good News Theological College and Seminary, Oduro, how the programme has benefited them. Some prophets who have benefited from the TEE programme at Good News Theological College and Seminary have these to say. Aidoo (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2010 on phone) said that, *s[ ny[Kob[da adesua yi a anka meda so tim nea me tim. "TEE" de[w[y] mma y[n a yennsua ade[ ank] akyiri yi.* (TEE programme has been very helpful to those



of us who did not get opportunity for secondary education. I would have remained theologically illiterate without the introduction of TEE programme by Good News Theological College).

Ando (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2010 on phone) also said that, *Mab] mm]den mprenu a manya kwan ank] sua ade[ w] Trinity, [nam m'adesua a ank] kan no nti. Nwommanimfo] no agye afa.* Good News Theological College and Seminary *de[ [nte saa, aboa me paa.* (Two attempts have been made to gain admission to Trinity Theological Seminary to study but I failed. The College has been monopolised by the brilliant students. But Good News Theological Seminary, TEE programme is different; it has room for all groups of people.)

Nana Osei (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2010) stated that, he loves studying at the Good News Theological College and Seminary, *[firis] [da fam, wote de[ y] kyer] ase yie. Wonnya w'asore h], wonya br[ hw] w'asore [br] a wo sua ade[.* (the training is more practical and “on the job training.” One needs not to leave his or her church for the study.)

Kwakye (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2010 on phone) contributed to the discussion on the benefits derived from the College when he said, Good News Theological College TEE *ma adesua y] mmer[ ma adiyifo, w]dey[n ammamer[ ne y[n gyedie kyer] ade[. W]dey[n ara kasa kyer] ade[ mma wo te ase] yie. Ente s[ abor]fo de[ no* (I was comfortable in studying at Good News Theological College and Seminary, through TEE programme. The College takes into consideration our beliefs and culture unlike the institutionalised type which mainly focuses on western ethos. My local language is used to teach me and at my own pace, nothing is forced on



me. We sang local choruses not hymns during devotions, we play local drums not theirs – western type.)

Oduro (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 on phone) said that, the benefits of the Theological Education by Extension Programme can be well understood when problems that led to the demand for it have been laid bare. He quoted Burton (2000: xiii – xiv) that, throughout the world there is a desperate need for the Church to be fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

As a result of this, the agents who will be working for this Great Commission to be achieved need some kind of training. The training of the prophets and prophetesses and leaders, requires the study of the church theology to enable them pass it on to successive generations. Theological Education by Extension has emerged to provide theological education free from western beliefs and cultural practices for AIC workers.

Theological Education by Extension seeks to educate the potential church prophets, pastors and leaders while they go about their ministry rather than removing them from their communities. In other words the entire ethos is training people in the ministry rather than training people for the ministry. Oduro said that, it is difficult for almost all AIC prophets to leave their churches for any person to handle with the fear of losing them to another church. They always want to be present, since the AICs are leader-centred (<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/ruttsomecaveatsfortheologicaleducation.pdf>, assessed on 12th July, 2009).

Oduro shared the vision of the College so far as the Theological Education by Extension is concerned. He said that, it is the vision of the Good News Theological College and Seminary that through Theological Education by Extension they will be able to produce prophets and prophetesses who not only learn, but teach. The expectation permeates all levels of the teaching that the knowledge and experience gained should be handed on. As students are being disciplined they are also disciplining.

Nana Owusu of the True Faith Believers' Church, a beneficiary of the TEE programme (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at his residence), said that, he had been able to go through theological training due to its flexibility. He further remarked that, the training is more practical, and can be simply described as “on the job training.” One studies as he or she works; though there are challenges, one is sometimes preoccupied by the job at the expense of one's studies. According to Oduro, the Theological Education by Extension programme has produced or trained more Sunday school teachers and youth leaders for the AICs in Ghana and other countries.

### **3.5 The Institutional Type of Training at Good News Theological College and Seminary and its Impact on AIC Prophets and Prophetesses**

Bon Kumah, the head pastor of Peaceful Healing Church of Agate in Volta Region in Ghana and a product of the Good News Theological College and Seminary (interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 on phone), said that his training at the Good News Theological College and Seminary has contributed tremendously to his competency in ministry. He had three year training at the College and came out with Diploma in Theology. According to him, the training has equipped him to extend training to young prophets and prophetesses in his church. Currently he has twelve

would-be prophets and prophetesses in training. They are camped for six months for spiritual exercises. They fast and pray. They are taught to experience the Holy Spirit and strategise to deal with demons.

Bon seems to disagree with those who believe that education and human training are not important, when he remarked that, “we know the importance of education and training and totally disagree with some AICs prophets and prophetesses who do not see the importance of education and training for the prophetic ministry.” Kumah further said that in the Peaceful Healing Church, the young prophets and prophetesses who are identified to have the urge for institutionalised training are sent to the Good News Theological College and Seminary; so far thirty-one out of the total number of sixty-six prophets, prophetesses and pastors have had institutional training at the Good News Theological College.

Boateng of The Church of the Lord Brotherhood, (interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 on phone), who completed the training in 2010 with a Diploma in Pastoral Studies, enumerated some benefits he has derived from the Good News Theological College and Seminary. He said that he was trained by his Church through the mentoring type of training for six months at Asuoyeboa in Kumasi. But he later realised the need for theological education and training; he therefore applied for and gained admission to do two year institutional theological training at the Good News Theological College and Seminary. He testified that his training at the College has really improved his theological thinking and professional competence.

Botwe of Ossa Maggi Church (Church of Light) (interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 on phone) who completed in 1994 with Diploma in Theology also testified that his training at the Good News Theological Seminary has contributed immensely to his position in the Church and theological reflections. He is now a tutor at the Church's Bible College at Lapas, Accra. He further said that the Church has a Bible College that trains the would-be prophets and prophetesses. They are trained in Pneumatology, Demonology, Counseling and Prophetic Revelation and other relevant subjects. Like most of the Bible Colleges in the country the period is six months. After the six months training the best students are selected and sent to the Good News Theological College and Seminary.

Theresa Appiah of The Twelve Apostle Church (interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2010 on phone) and a product of the College seems to vehemently disagree with some prophets and prophetesses who think that sitting at the feet of lecturers to teach or train them is evil and unbiblical when she remarked that the Bible was not written by man's own initiative but rather God's. Therefore God wants the scripture to be interpreted as he wants it to be. This cannot be done effectively if the person is not trained to do so. She supported her argument with the fact that the disciples of Jesus Christ were not allowed to move about with only the directives of the Holy Spirit, they were put together with their master and trained for three years before they were sent to the field to practise.

According to Theresa Appiah, her training at the Good News Theological Seminary has really improved her confidence level. "My training has equipped me to now wrestle with men on theological issues. I can now confidently speak good English as compared to my olden days,

when I did not have theological training.” She agrees that the power of the Holy Spirit in theological education is very important in the prophethood. She confessed that she used to say certain things and act in certain ways which are not the same as today. There are certain things to her, every prophet and prophetess must know professionally and that can only be achieved through “standard” training. She is of the view that the Scriptures should be interpreted well, human relation is a cardinal point in the prophethood, so is the strategy to overcome demons and how to hear and speak prophetically. All these subjects can be dealt with well through institutionalised prophetic training programmes like what the Good News Theological Seminary does.

### **3.6 Challenges**

Oduro enumerated some challenges facing the Theological Education by Extension programme in Good News Theological Seminary. There is the issue of low commitment on the part of students resulting in poor performance. Again students feel isolated in the TEE programme unlike the regular session where students are on campus. Also many AIC prophets interviewed on why they were not taking advantage of the TEE programmes by the Bible colleges and Theological institutions in the country to improve their professional capabilities said that, the training of church leaders, prophets and pastors in the country is very expensive. It was discovered that some AIC prophets and prophetesses were willing to be enrolled but could not afford the fee for the programme. However, Oduro (interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010 on phone) has a different opinion about the AICs prophets and prophetesses attitude towards both the institutionalised and TEE programme. He insisted that the fee for the TEE programme at Good News Theological College is minimum and affordable.

### **3.7 Are AIC Prophets Making Use of These Available Training Institutions?**

The TEE programme at the Good News Theological College and Apostolic Prophetic Training School were introduced to serve three basic purposes, first to prevent AIC prophets from being influenced by the missionary established churches and second to suit the level of the educational background of the AIC prophets and finally to train them to be a little bit more professional and theologically balanced. But the question is, are the AIC prophets making use of these institutions? This research has revealed that, in spite of these available institutions, AIC prophets or prophetesses are not taking advantage of them to improve themselves. Oduro (interviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010 on phone), for instance said that in spite of all measures like TEE programme, use of vernacular and flexibility in pursuing the programme put in place to motivate the AIC prophets to take advantage, they are still not patronising as expected. According to Oduro, they are more concerned with the profession than training. To the AICs, what matters is who trained a prophet or prophetess and not the institution.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

African Indigenous Churches have some ways and means of training their prophets and prophetesses. Although there might be some weaknesses in their methods of training, they do things according to their understanding and methods that work best for them. To the AICs, the gifts of the leader and the work of the Holy Spirit are what matter most. The charisma of the leader matters most not his or her professional training. The members depend also on divine power rather than human wisdom and skill.



In fact, until recently, most of the AICs prophets and prophetesses did not have any formal or theological education. They had no Bible schools or theological seminaries. Their training was a form of apprenticeship. But now they have some institutions that train their prophets and prophetesses, such as Good News Theological Seminary and College – Oyibi, Apostolic and Prophetic Training School - Koforidua, Bible College and Prophetic Institute at Kumasi and other Bible colleges in the country where their prophets and prophetesses are trained. The AICs need to take advantage of these training institutions to equip their prophets and prophetesses for more balanced effective and efficient ministry.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRAINING OF AKAN TRADITIONAL *AKUMFO* (PRIESTS)

#### 4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter mainly focused on the training of the prophets in the African Indigenous Churches in Ghana. Some types of theological training were also discussed. This chapter aims to examine the training of Akan traditional priests. Although the focus of this thesis is to compare the training of AIC prophets and Akan traditional priests, the chapter briefly explains who the Akan are and their religious worldview. For some reasons this chapter will not cover all the Akan communities geographically but will focus mainly on the Ashanti Region where almost all the Akan groups may be found.

#### 4.1 The Akan People of Ghana

The Akan are the dominant group in the modern Ghana. Boahen (1966:58) wrote that, the Akan constitute nearly fifty percent of the population of Ghana. The Akan comprise the Asante, the Fante, the Akuapem, the Akyem, the Akwamu, the Kwahu, the Nzema, the Ahanta, the Wassa, the Bono, the Safwi and the Ahafo. The Akan are predominantly found in Ghana and Ivory Coast but this work will focus on those in Ghana. Historians are still arguing out the origins of the Akan. According to Boahene (1966:58), it is generally agreed by scholars that their ancestors first lived in the open country of modern north-western Ghana and north-eastern Ivory Coast.

The Akan are organised both matrilineally and patrilineally. There are eight matrilineal groupings or *Abusua*, (family) and their clans are [*koona, Asona, Aduana, Atwea, Oyoko, Bretuo,*

*Agona, Asene, and Asakyiri*. The patrilineal sub-groups or Akra are *Bosommuru, Bosompra, Bosommram, Bosomtwe, Poakwa, Nkatia, Afram, and Abankwaade*. Every Akan must belong to one of the matrilineal and one of the patrilineal. (Boahen 1966:59)

#### **4.2 The Akan Religious Worldview**

Worldview always determines the whole life of a group of people. It influences the true identity of a people group. Worldview defines the being of a person, and it also directs the way one thinks. One is exactly what he or she thinks. The common concept of reality shared by a particular ethnic group of people is referred to as a culture. It is the way the group of people live, think and behave; simply put, it is the totality of life lived by a particular group of people. Worldview is an individual as well as a group phenomenon. According to Braffi (1990:10), “expressions of community in individual worldviews make up the cultural worldview of the group.” This actually leads to social culture, the way people relate to one another in daily activities, and how they cooperate for good of the group as a whole. Coffie (1998:32) said that in the Akan worldview the spirits are real in everyday experience as natural objects are. This Akan sacred worldview articulates a physical and spiritualised universe and does not distinguish one from the other. “Also, the “spiritual beings” can change into “physical beings” in order to interact with the human being.

The Akan believe that *ewiase* (world) did not come into existence of its own volition but was created or brought into by somebody known as *Jdomankoma-Jboadee* (Eternal creator) (Asare 1982:62). The Akan people, like all African people, believe in a supernatural being, *Onyankopon* the (Supreme Being), who is the source of all creation, and is involved in all things but seen at a

distance and sometimes unapproachable (Idowu 1973: 78). In the Akan religious view, apart from the belief in the existence of *Onyankopon*, the (Supreme Being), they also believe that there are of *abosom*, (lesser divinities or deities), who are believed to be intermediaries between God and man. *Abosom* are easily approachable. The Akan think that *Onyankopon* (God) is too powerful and sacred and as a result becomes too dangerous for a sinful man to come close to him. The axiom is *Wop[ as[m aka aky[r] onyame a [na woka ky[r] mframa*, literally, (To speak to God one has to speak to the wind). The Akan have no rites, petitions, appeasement, or atonement for *onyankopon*. How then is this God to be approached? God can only be approached either directly or indirectly through His chosen priests or priestesses. The priests or priestesses are responsible for keeping the welfare of the people; because of this they have been entrusted with sacred rituals of worship. This brings the idea of *abosom* (gods). *Abosom* are for God, they are the “ear” and “mouth” of God. He created them for himself and for the welfare of humanity.

#### **4.2.1 The Akan Concept of *Abosom***

The African, and for that matter the Akan of Ghana, have *abosom* (gods) of different realms of influence and fall into groups such as:

1. The tribal god - those that are worshipped by one tribe
2. Area gods or those worshipped by the natives of a particular traditional area or locality.
3. Family gods, which are worshipped by a small community or family. It appears every family of Akan origin used to have its own god.
4. Community god and a national deity. These are worshipped by the community as a whole.

It is generally believed by the Akan that *abosom* have been in existence since creation. God created them for a purpose. God could not come to our world every day to address the problems of his children and therefore created the *abosom* to represent him and also take care of his children on earth. Some groups of people also believe that the *abosom* (gods) were accidentally found in the bush or were created by Satan. Some African converted Christians believe that the *abosom* were created by Satan to terrorise the children of God.

The *abosom* can either be created, purchased or received from rivers, streams, lakes, skies and sometimes a forest or any sacred place. It is discovered that the traditional *abosom* are made by a well experienced traditional priest or priestess from medicine, materials that are believed to have special powers such as clay from the sacred River Tano; plants, *homakyem* (a fearful plant normally found in the thick forest areas), certain herbs and roots, ancient beads, cowries, shells and prehistoric stones or tools. Sometimes these materials are pounded together into a mixture and then placed in a brass basin or under *Nyamedua* (sacred plant). The shrine is then considered the potential abode of a supernatural presence, which has the power of temporarily entering into a priest, who then becomes the mouthpiece of the god. There are many mysterious things connected with the building of an *Abosom*. It is believed that religion is full of mysteries.

Some African scholars like Idowu (1962:18-22), Braffi (1990:17), and Coffie (1996:73) have observed that, the African people including the Akan believe in the spiritual and universality of *Onyankopon*, (God) and equate him with heaven (sky), wind, air, and the breath of life. God has never had temples or shrines rather the *abosom* (deities). The *abosom* (deities) are the representatives of God on earth. They are also seen as the intermediaries between God and man. They are appointed by God himself to serve him and humanity in general. The *abosom* are there

to receive offerings and sacrifices on behalf of God. In African traditional belief, no human approaches or speaks to God directly except through his *abosom* “subordinates.” (spokesperson).

The *abosom* (gods) are the intermediaries between *Onyame* (God) and human. *Abosom* in Akan concept carry our petitions to God and at the same time interpret God as well as the ancestors to the people. They are consulted in all matters concerning African people’s day to day activities. They are part and parcel of life in Africa. Some African scholars rate them as the first officers of every Akan traditional society. They are not only acting as intermediaries between God and men but they are the mouthpiece, consultants, lawyers and deputies of the Akan traditional kings. The *abosom* are consulted for directives on all matters concerning the Akan communities. They are seen by the Akan as the “eyes”, ears” and “mouth” of every Akan community. It is the *abosom* that listen, see and confirm before any action can be taken by the Akan people. The Akan view their *abosom* as means to an end. Their popularity waxes or wanes if they are responsive or unresponsive to human demands. Busia sums it when he says:

The *abosom* are treated with respect if they deliver the goods, and with contempt, if they fail...

The Akan, like other tribes, esteem the Supreme Being and the ancestors far above gods and amulets. Attitudes to the latter depend upon their success and vary from healthy to sneer contempt (Busia 1954:36).

#### **4.2.2 The Akan Concepts of *Nsamanfo*, *Asaase Yaa*, *Abayie*, *Mmoatia***



The Akan of Ghana, like other ethnic groups in Africa believe in *Nsamanfo*, (ancestors) *Asaase Yaa* (mother Earth), *abayie* (witchcraft) and *mmoatia* (dwarfs). The ancestors are the living-dead. They once lived on earth but have died physically. They are living because they are remembered. They are believed to be the real owners of the land and everything the living have. According to one informant, Opanin Kwame Boakye (interviewed on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2009), *Onyame akyi no obiara nni ho a ]ky[n asaase. Asaase so na y[nante, [so na y[didi,[so na y[da. Asaase na [ma nnipa, mmoa ne nnua nyinaa aduane, nsuo,mmep], ne ab]de[ nyinaa dan Asaase Yaa. [d[n na onipa b[tumi ay[ agya asaase Yaa mu. S[ onyame p[s[ ]hyira nnipa a ]defa asaase Yaa so anaa ne mu.*

(Besides God nothing else is as important as Asaase Yaa (Earth). We walk and sleep on Asaase Yaa . Also, it is Asaase Yaa who gives food for humans, animals, and all plants. The rivers, mountains and all creatures depend on Asaase Yaa. What could we do without Asaase Yaa? If God wants to give blessing, he has to pass through Asaase Yaa).

The Asaase Yaa is believed to be a goddess immediately after *onyankopon* (God). Every *]k]mfo* (priest or priestess) has to consult her before he or she does anything. According to Nana Otuo Serebour, (interviewed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009), *Asaase y[ ]bosom kese , obi ntumi nkwati no ny[ biribi wo y[n Akanman mu ha. Ak]mfo na [te Asaase Yaa kasa [nti na y[tete w]n.* (Earth is a goddess, there is no way one may escape Asaase Yaa and succeed. It is only traditional priests and priestesses who understand her language. That is why they are trained to interpret her to humans).

The Akan in general believe in the existence of *abayie* (witchcraft) whom they perceive as human beings functioning in spiritual bodies, engaging in errands during the day and night. They are secretive; they are believed to be either *bayiepa* (good witch) or *bayikwasea* (foolish witch); but in general the Akan perceive them as malevolent spirits. The *abayifo* are feared in Akan communities. Thus, people secretly visit *abosom* and or prophets and prophetesses for protection against them.

The *Mmoatia* (dwarfs) are believed to be short creatures that sometimes live usually in the thick forest; they are powerful and good in herbal medicine. They are sometimes very cruel to human beings, especially evil doers and witches. According to Nana Yaa Bee (interviewed on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2009), she was trained by *Mmoatia*. She said they are playful and mischievous. They cannot be seen physically by any human being apart from *Mmoatia ak]mfo*.

Since the *nsamanfo*, *Assase Yaa*, and *abayifo* and *mmoatia* are powers believed to be in a existence in Akan communities and are consulted in all matters concerning the living, would-be *ak]mfo* are trained on how to communicate with them.

#### **4.3 The Akan Traditional Priesthood**

Priesthood in Akan traditional religion is, a solemn vocation centering on the choice of *abosom* themselves regarding who should become their priest and priestess. Any person who manages his way into Akan priesthood will be denied recognition and honour given to priests Ekem (2008:48). In Akan traditional belief, for one to be chosen as a traditional priest, there are criteria for measuring a genuine call into priesthood. Ekem further says that there must,

principally, be evidence of possession by a particular deity who desires to enlist the possessed individual in its service Ekem (2008:48). The person cannot just become a priest simply by expressing the desire to enter into the profession and finding a tutor to direct his training. There must be evidence of the call; the principal among them is the deity that possesses the person. A senior priest who is very experienced and familiar with the characteristics of the deity will determine this evidence. According to Ekem (2008:48), it is the community's responsibility to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to determine the source of the possessed individual's experience.

The training of a traditional priest begins immediately after his or her "call." Among the Akan, individuals do not become *ak/mfo* by their own choice. The initiative rests entirely with the deities. This belief underscores the fact that in African societies one cannot just get up to be trained as a priest; the person needs to be called by a deity. There are two main ways for choosing a priest or priestess. The first is by divine calling, and the second by choice of the traditional owners or elders of a cult. On the other hand, one also may inherit it from a family but even that one needs to get approval from the family deity. In African traditional belief, for one to be chosen as a traditional priest or priestess, it means he or she is responding to a highest calling a person could respond to in the structured world of tribal life. The call into the priesthood means that the priests or priestesses are entering into a world in which honour awaits him or her.

#### **4.3.1 The Call**

“In Akan religion, unlike the Christian religion, no ordinary person can get up and say ‘I have got an inner conviction and therefore I want to be a priest or priestess’. The call in Akan is an ‘individual’ but also a ‘public’ affair” (Coffie 1996:115). The Akan have three expressions for call. The first is, *Ak]m asi ne so*, which is translated as (an *Jbosom* (deity) has descended on him or her). The second is *Ak]m aka no* (an *Jbosom* (deity) has mounted him or her). The third expression is *Jbosom aforo no*, (an *Jbosom* has possessed him or her). According to Coffie (1996:118), all these expressions point out the fact that *Jbosom* mounts human beings, just as a rider mounts a horse. A devotee is a “horse” and the *Jbosom* is the “rider.”

The priests or priestesses are sometimes “called” by the gods because of their love for them. Many a time the person who is “called” to the profession is made to tell stories about how he or she has been called to become an *Ik]mfo*. One thing that is common among the novice is that most do not initially understand all that is involved in the initiation and practice process. A person is subjected to possession by some spiritual influences through an ecstatic trance when he or she is alone carrying out his or her daily activities or sometimes during religious ceremony. Braffi (2008:14) gives an example of a girl who was seized by the spirit when she was gathering firewood in the bush. The girl ran home dancing and trembling and became emotionally disturbed for some weeks. At Brosankro in the Brong Ahafo Region, a young girl, Nana Yaa Boo who was regular at church service and a member of the singing band was seized by the spirit of Tano Kwadwo, a local god on one Sunday during church service. She was asked by a diviner to go and train as *Ik]mfo*. She resisted, as she was a devout Christian. She nearly became deaf and dumb according to her mother, Maame Yaa Anane. She became well after yielding and began the training.

The Akan believe that God is great and fearful and cannot be dealt with directly by human being that is the reason why He has appointed agents, *abosom*, (gods). They also believe that as God cannot be dealt with directly so the *abosom* also cannot be dealt with directly rather through their appointed people, *ak]mfo*

(<http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/76/1/54#LFM091C13>, accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

Such people undergo some period of training to prepare them very well for the task. Braffi, confirms this when he said that, the local deities calls persons to undergo years of austere professional training until they attained the highest socio-religious and spiritual state, to get into the integrities of the profession in order to ensure ritual efficacy.

Sometimes the call comes through sickness or by possession during which the person becomes ecstatic, and then it is believed *Jbosom* has taken him or her. According to Coffie (1996:118), this may happen at any time, but it is during some ceremony connected with cultic dancing. The person may be just standing apart watching, or be dancing as one of the worshippers. In Akan traditional religion if *Jbosom* wants to “marry” a person and he or she refuses his “proposal”, the person’s refusal may result in madness or failure in economic ventures or develop a strange disease like seizures, intermittent fits and frequent convulsions, abnormal behavior, and sometimes both. The person sometimes goes through a series of crisis both mental and physical which sometimes defy any form of treatment. The person may sometimes run into the bush and then be brought back by a search team in a forest.



Such acts and diseases come and disappear. When such happen, the family seeks healing by either seeking prayer from prophets or prophetesses, hospital, care or consulting with diviners. When the situation seems not to improve, the family sometimes begins to suspect that the person may be possessed by a particular deity, especially if the family has any linkage with a deity. The person will be sent to a senior and experienced priest or priestess to diagnose to find out if the person has been possessed. If it is found out that the person is possessed by a particular deity, a preparation is made for the person to begin training. However, if the person decides not to “marry” the *Jbosom*, that is if he or she refuses to be a priest or priestess of the deity, he or she only has to ask or plead for his or her release. If it accepted by the deity to release the candidate, some series of rituals will be performed to satisfy the deity else calamity will befall the person and sometimes his or her family.

NanaYaa Bee (interviewed on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at her shrine), remarked that, there are two main ways of choosing a priest. The first is by divine calling that is by the deities, and the second is by choice of the traditional owners or elders of a cult. In this situation the *Jk]mfopanin* (chief priest or priestess) looks through the young people in the family and recommends one who possesses and exhibit qualities such as respect, studios, teachable, courageous, secretive, confidentiality, frugality and kindness to become a priest or priestess. Coffie (1996:24) in supporting Nana Yaa Bee’s point said, “Some people become *ak]mfo* on a hereditary basis.” For instance, the Antoa *Jk]mfo* (interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2009) said that he inherited that role because his family has provided a custodian for the Antoa shrine. He explained that when a candidate is selected, he will be groomed by his predecessor, the *Jk]mfopanin*. The potential



candidate would accompany the chief priest or priestess, his or her mentor, to the shrine and other important places just to observe what his or her mentor does and how he does them. The chief priest or priestess throughout that period teaches the candidate on protocol, diagnosis, herbs, divination, interpretation and dancing. The young man in the case of Antoa shrine, takes over after the death of the *Jk]mfopanin*. The takeover cannot be done until it has been declared by the deity. Nana Yaa Amoa (interviewed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009 at her shrine) said that, each deity has a way of “taking” a priest. After a deity has chosen a priest, he goes through many processes of discipline.

Ekem (2008:48) writes that “possession alone does not automatically make one a priest or priestess. Those possessed must normally undergo a period of training to be instructed in the ways of the deity and equipped for effective service to their communities.

#### **4.4 Training of Akan Traditional Priest**

There are institutions among the Akan which train young *ak]mfo*. The numbers of years spent on training are not the same; it varies from shrine to shrine. For instance, Nana Yaa Amoah of the Taakwadwo shrine said that, the period of training ranges from six months to two years. But Nana Oparabea of the Akonnedi shrine also said that due to modernity the number of years spent to train young traditional priest and priestesses has been reduced. She further remarked that, some trainees come from America to be trained and one cannot keep such people here for a longer period of time. In such situations, the training period is structured to suit the training by reducing the training period to at least two to three years depending on the ability of the trainee and smartness in learning.

According to Ekem (2008:48), the training period “ranges from six months to four years or more, depending mainly on the trainee’s submissiveness and ability to learn.” The training time is a period of both physical and spiritual transformation. During the training the person has to bury all his or her personal beliefs, personal traits, behaviour, perspective, values and habits. The training challenges one’s personal philosophy, culture, superstitions and acquired mannerisms. The training period aims to cause a personal transformation for each trainee. The way the trainee behaves in public transforms completely, he or she has now become a public figure. The public also watches closely, all what he or she does. He or she cannot eat in public, talk anyhow; involve himself or herself in certain games in public, such as *dame*. The novice or trainee is prohibited from challenging the chief priest or priestess on any issue whatsoever. The novice has to be submissive and obedient to the trainer or mentor. The *Jk]mfopanin*, (chief priest) the *abosom* (god) and *nsamanfo* (ancestors) partner in the training of the novice.

Many African scholars including Mbiti (1969:182), Busia (1954:54), Braffi (1990:14), Coffie (1996:24) and Ekem (2008:49) have described the training of traditional priests or priestesses as long, strict, tiring and dangerous. (A deity can kill one during training). As Braffi (1990:16) puts it, “the training of a *Jk]mfo*, (priest) is long, tiring and very serious business; the profession is no sine cure; it takes about three years to go through the training.” Opoku (2009) has said

entry into the ranks of training, lasts three years or more under tutelage of a senior priest or priestess. The training process is described as quite arduous, rigorous and lengthy.

The novice is charged with learning the character, songs, dances, and loads of information about their personal deity as well as other known Deities. Other pertinent information such as

family and community rituals, medicines and protocols are taught. They become the repositories of Akan history, community knowledge and traditions, customs and taboos that are revealed during this period of training. Most of the information is privileged information and shared only on a need to know basis, perhaps not on the same level as other *ak]mfo*. Every *jk]mfo* has the opportunity to acquire knowledge of traditional medicine, use of herbs, roots, and other items nature provides.

The training of Akan traditional priest or priestess begins immediately after his or her call. The training of the Akan traditional priests and priestesses, unlike the training of the AIC prophets, involves the parents and relatives of the novice. For the training to begin, the parents or relatives of the novice must accept and be prepared to support the training. After the acceptance and preparedness by the family to support the trainee, the chief priest or priestess receives the novice to begin formal training. The novice generally receives his or her first ritual bath for seven days by a senior priest or priestess. The ritual bath involves a combination of herbs into concoction. Ekem (2008:50) reveals that, the would-be *jk]mfo* is regularly given ritual baths with special leaves sacred to the deity. There are some leaves, which help strengthen the ankles for dancing, while there are others which help the spirit of his or her god within him or her. Nana Kwaku Bonsam (interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> May at his shrine, Akomandan Afrankyo) also added that, there are many and varied bathing which bring the *nk]moa*, (the spirit of possession). The novice nails are usually clipped and his or her hair is cut down, and allowed to grow from then on into long strands. Generally, the novice is forbidden to shave any part of his body during the training; this can be done after the graduation.

According to Mbiti (1969:183), there are different methods used in training the novice in Akan traditional religious practices, from simple to complex or elaborate. These may include the

separation or seclusion from the “world.” (the world here means the community). For instance, Nana Yaa Bea confirmed this fact during interview when she said that she spent almost three years in the forest.

#### **4.4.1 The First Year.**

Ceremonial ablutions occupy the first year and these consist of bathing a mixture of leaves, herbs and bark of trees by the trainer. There are some leaves to help strengthen the ankles for dancing, while there are others to help the spirit of his or her god within him or her. The purpose of these ablutions is to obtain help from the spirit of his god within him or her. There are many and various bathing, which bring the *nk]moa*, (the spirit of possession). (Rattray, 1954: 56) mentions the leaves and their uses. Leaves of *krampa* tree are used to strengthen the ankles and those of the *asoa* tree “cause the god to stay with him.” Nana Yaa Amoah, priestess of Taakwadwo of Brosankro in Brong Ahafo (interviewed on 3rd May, 2009 at her shrine) confirms that some of the leaves are also meant to arouse spirit possession if the ecstasy is slow in recurring. According to Nana Amoah, plants are gathered from the *nsamanpomu* graveyard and are placed in a pot for sacrifices. After the sacrifice the novice or trainee sends the plants back to where it was taken alone at midnight and bathes with the medicine for seven nights. The bathing at the cemetery is to enable the novice to get into contact with spirits of the departed. As indicated earlier in the introduction, ancestors are key factors in all activities of the living. They are part and parcel of the living. They need to be informed about whatever is going on concerning a family member. The Akan see them as though dead but still living. Thus Opuni Frimpong in a lecture stressed on the fact that no African can disconnect from his or her ancestor. The African is always connected.

During this period, certain secrets are not revealed to the novice. His or her basic assignments are to help the master (experienced priest or priestess) in his or her work and sleeps in a temple near the shrine. The hair of the novice is left uncut and he or she has a number of charms and amulets around the arms and waist. The novice is compelled to sleep early during the first year, must use cold water, and should use neither sponge nor soap. He or she goes to his or her town on sacred days to offer sacrifices to his or her own god. On such days the novice stays without food. He or she is also instructed in dancing and is enjoined to abstain from tapping palm wine, to set traps to catch fish, to pluck palm nuts and to wander about in other peoples' houses Amponsah (1975:42). According to Sarpong, (interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 at his residence), this first stage is referred to as “stage of separation,” because the novice is separated from the public to a secret place.

#### **4.4.2 The Second Year**

Nana Yaa Amoah (interviewed on at her shrine) revealed that, in the second year the novice is introduced to other taboos and laws of the god. The novice wears *asuman* (charms) and is informed of special taboos attached to each. At this stage he or she is not taught how to make the charm. There are taboos, which have to be observed by the novice. The observance of these taboos set the novice apart for the work of his or her god. He or she is then separated from normal secular life. His or her life then becomes sacred and his or her god has an absolute claim on him or her. Therefore any “breach of moral purity could lead either to expulsion from the shrine, or to fresh beginning as novice, following the performance of rituals to restore the trainee



to favour with the deity” Ekem (2008:53). He or she begins to salute the elders by bending on his or her right knee and touching the ground with his or her right hand.

Sarpong (interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 at his residence) referred to this stage as stage of liminality - neither here nor there. A stage as very dangerous and crucial because the novice is not yet *jk]mfo* and at the same time not an “ordinary person.” He or she is in between. During this stage there would be no sexual intercourse, bath, or eating of any favourite food is allowed. Failure to adhere to the laws will lead to one’s death, or to start the whole thing afresh.

#### **4.4.3 The Third Year.**

The third year is often regarded as the final year for the training depending on the deity. The novice should be able to identify different types of herbs and their uses with the help of *suman* (lesser spirit). Therefore instructions in herbal medicine become an integral part of the training programme. He or she is also taught water gazing (object in the water with a special meaning), divining, how to hear nature, and how to read omens from, for example, the colour of a fowl’s kidney. Dancing lessons continue and the new priest or priestess dresses in *doso* (raffia-fiber kit). The symbol of the traditional priest or priestess office is the ceremonial sword with *doso* which he or she always uses, while performing his or her duties. The traditional priest or priestess *jk]mfo* has the ability to foretell future events when he or she is under possession of his or her god. Since the language of a god is always strange, an *js]fo* (chosen interpreter) is appointed either by the deity or the *jk]mfo* subject to the approval of the deity. Ekem (2008:50) writes that human relations as well as the history and traditions of the community in which the trainee will serve after graduation are taught. This particular lesson is learnt through constant observation of



the *Jk]mfopanin* (experienced priest or priestess or the teacher). Sarpong again refers to this final stage as “stage of integration.” That is the stage at which the novice is supposed to appear public. This happens after one has been able to go through the training successfully.

#### **4.5 A Testimony of a Priestess of Atia Mframa Shrine**

According to Nana Adwoa Konadu, priestess of Atia Mframa, (interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 at Juaben Ashanti) there are three modes of possession: *Mmoatia* (dwarfs), family gods, and the purchased one. She said, she was captured by *Mmoatia* at the age of eighteen and sent to Akomadan forest. She spent seven years with the creatures under tutelage of an old woman who claimed to have come from Anyinasu near Sekyeredumasi. There she was taught herbal medicine and identification of spirits. After seven years in the forest, she was sent back to Akomadan palace. The dwarfs later took her to Nkronza Bredi in the Brong Ahafo Region to be trained by the *Jk]mfopanin*. According to Nana Konadu she spent another five years under her new master. She was taught how to dance, identify witches and counter other spirits. Nana said after two years of her training something happened. She ran away from the camp due to some strict restrictions imposed upon her such as having no sexual intercourse, no sandals, and no bath. She was required to have regular fasting and other restrictions, which were somehow similar to what she experienced in the forest. The family took her back to Bredi because she nearly went mad. As already stated, Nana had to start everything afresh, so instead of seven years it took her nine years to graduate, making it sixteen years for the training.

The old lady dwarf who was tutoring her in the bush told her that she came from Anyinasu near Sekyeredumasi in Ashanti. She was first sent there by the family purposely to thank the old lady

for the seven years she took care of their family member. She said after libation, a family member welcomed them and asked for their mission. It was there that Nana claimed to be aware that she was with other creatures rather than normal human beings. The elders of the town said that they knew that name; it was the name of one of the stools of a dead chief of the town who died over hundred years ago. So rituals were performed to welcome Nana to the town. She was then sent back to Juaben in Ashanti, her hometown.

In order for the authenticity of her call to be accepted by the Juaben community she gave three prophecies and all came to pass. She was given free plots of land by Nana Otuo Serebour to start business. She then organized a graduation ceremony. *Ak]mfo* were invited and gifts were presented to welcome them. In Akan we say *y[b] no atenase[*. ( Honour is given to older people in Akan community, because of their intimate contact with the ancestral world. They are given the title *nana*, the same title is given to *ak]mfo*).

#### **4.5.1 Training the Priestess at the Akonnedi shrine**

We have chosen the training of priestess at Akonnidi shrine as a case study in this chapter, because of its uniqueness. Akonnedi shrine trains only women to take the office of *]k]mfo*. The office is strictly for women. An interview with Nana Oparebea (14<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at her shrine, Larteh), the chief priestess, said that, the first thing they look for before one begins the training is whether the candidate is truly “called” by Akonnedi or any of her associate deities. Opoku (2009:34) puts it right when he writes that, “... it is firmly believed that no one on her own accord volunteers to become a priestess, the initiative rests with the deities.”

Training at the Akonnedi shrine in spite of its uniqueness is generally not far different from the normal procedure used in training the *ak]mfo*. If all obstacles such as the readiness of the novice to begin the training, ability of the family of the novice to pay the training fee charged, and their preparedness to support the novice throughout the training and others are removed, the training begins, with ritual bath for seven days by the *Jk]mfopanin*. She goes through all the process earlier explained.

At the Akonnedi shrine the novice is taught about the taboos before he or she starts training. It has been discovered that observance of taboos is very important during and after the training. The novice has to remain ritually clean during and after the training in order to avoid incurring the wrath of the deity.

Nana Oparebea enumerated the following as some of the taboos of Akonnedi :

- (a) The trainee should not go out of the precincts of the shrine without the permission of the chief priest; she can only go out when on errands for the chief priest.
- (b) She should strictly abstain from sexual relations during the training. According to Braffi, (1990:14, 15). preservation of sex force which accelerates spiritual development in every religion is required to be strictly adhered to, by the new traditional priest or the novice
- (c) The novice is strictly forbidden to eat sweet things, such as ripe plantain, sugar and honey.
- (d) No alcoholic beverage during training. She may be given a drink by having it poured on her wrist, on ordinary occasions; or she can also have a drink by having it poured on her back, when she is possessed.

- (e) A novice under the tutelage of the Akonnedi chief priest is strictly forbidden to eat kenkey on Tuesdays and Fridays, which are Akonnedi's days; she is also instructed never to bring dough to the shrine.
- (f) Under no circumstances can a novice of Akonnedi shrine eat pork, or chew kola
- (g) She should voluntarily absent herself from the shrine for seven days each month during her menstrual period.
- (h) She should not go back to her home till the end of her training; she is also not allowed to talk or shake hands with her relatives except by the permission of the *Jk]mfopanin*
- (i) The novices should be obedient to elders.

Opoku (2004) explains the reasons behind these restrictions. According to him, the first prohibition is part of the general expectation that the novice should be obedient. It is the responsibility of the chief priestess to keep watch on her and guide her activities. That is the reason why the novice should always remain constantly within the precincts of the shrine to enable the trainer watch diligently. Any move that will be made by the novice must be permitted by the chief priestess. The novice's whole life during the training is monitored and scrutinised by the chief priestess. This is actually done to prevent the novice from falling into temptation to deviate from the fixed code of behaviour.

It is generally believed in Akan traditional religion that when one is "called" by a deity, the person is married to that particular deity. That is why the would-be priest or priestess is prohibited from having sexual relationship during training. Opoku put it well when he said that, marriage to the deity is not restricted to the training period; it is for the rest of his or her life. However, the person can do so after training and rituals are performed. The marriage to the deity

signifies that the novice is supposed to dedicate her full life to the service of the deity; hence sexual intercourse is strictly prohibited to avoid divided attention. That is why in some instances, the trainee could be granted a divorce from his or her spouse to enable him or her to concentrate on the training. The person has to go through some purification exercise or rituals and many sacrifices, if he or she goes contrary to the orders of the deity. In addition to the purification exercise and sacrifices the trainee may be asked to start his or her training all over again and in some occasions he or she is banned completely from the shrine.

Nana Oparabea said that, abstinence from sexual intercourse on some specific days are still observed, the reason is that on such days rituals are performed for the deity. It is believed that if the *Jk]mfo* is involved in sexual activities before the performance of such sacred rituals, he or she may incur the wrath of the deity, because the act makes him or her ritually unclean.

The trainee is prohibited from eating sweets. The Akan believe that sweet things have power to arouse one's sexual desire. In order for the trainee not to think about sex, anything that will lead to arouse his or her sexual desires is prevented.

The novice is banned from taking any alcoholic beverages. In the Akan tradition alcohol is very important because it is used for spiritual matters. The alcoholic beverage is prohibited because many of the rituals involve the use of alcoholic drinks; this is done to prevent trainees who might be tempted to take alcoholic beverage which might ruin them and their profession. In addition to this, one of the basic functions of *Jk]mfo* is to listen to the gods and interpret them accurately; this cannot be properly done by someone who is under influence of alcohol. Hence one is

forbidden to drink alcoholic beverage in order to be accorded the respect due *Jk/mfo* and above all to interpret the gods well to the people.

The trainees are prohibited from eating certain foods; this varies from shrine to shrine. For instance those receiving training at Akonnodi shrine do not eat kenkey on Tuesdays and Fridays. Nana Oparebea brought to light that such days are sacred days for Akonnedi. The chief priestesses receive visitors or clients, and since kenkey and dough are taboo to the deity, all priestesses and priestesses-in-training are expected to observe this taboo.

The trainees at Akonnedi shrine are prohibited to eat pork and this has been discovered to be common rule in many of the deities in Akan as well as religions of the world. Many religions see the pig to be an unclean animal. Nana Oparebea said that the priestess-in-training are prohibited to eat pork in order not to defile themselves.

In Akan traditional religion, menstrual blood is considered to be impure; hence women in their menses are prohibited from shrines and other places of ritual importance. This prohibition is like pork eating prohibited in many world religions. The priest-in-training is banned from talking to any relative. This is done to enable the novice to concentrate on the training, and it symbolises a break from her previous life for he or she has entered into a new life. However, her relationship would be restored after the training.

A cardinal virtue to priesthood is obedience. The novice is to serve the deity and elders at the shrine and the general public. He or she is dedicated to the service of deity and the general



public. Any priestess who abides by these prohibitions normally finishes his or her training in the minimum time of three years; failure to obey these rules would affect the training period.

It was discovered at the Akonnedi shrine that the priestesses-in-training are trained to do household chores. Opoku (2004) wrote that the training begins with learning to do household chores around the shrine, going on errands for the chief priestess and learning to live and cooperate with other priestesses-in-training, quarrelling is strictly forbidden among them. She learns how to dance and sing.

Another important area the trainees are taken through is the art of divination, and a divining pot. A concoction is rubbed into the eyes and ears of the trainees in order to see and hear the deity when they look into the divining pot. The trainee has to practice this skill regularly throughout the entire training. The success or failure of the priestess depends on one's ability to hear and correctly interpret the deity. The number of years a trainee spends on training mainly depends on the acquisition of this ability. This skill is described by priestesses to be the most difficult skill for one to acquire easily. During this period the novice learns to identify spirits such as ancestral spirits and other spirits other than her own deity. Other skills are also learnt by the would-be priestess including how to diagnose diseases and call for other spirits for support or spiritual assistance.

If the chief priestess is satisfied about the performance of the trainee, she recommends the trainee for the graduation.

Opoku (2004) said that at the Akonodi shrine if the trainee distinguishes

herself well and gives evidence of her fitness and aptitude for the job, she is tattooed on her right shoulder, back and joints at the end of the first year. This ceremony marks the beginning of an important phase of her training, for she is from now on confirmed and stabilised. The tattooing is intended to “toughen” the trainee, it helps her to develop stability and resistance to dizziness when she dances; and it also renders her immune to poisoning by her enemies.

In the many shrines of Akan priesthood, the training does not end immediately after the graduation, in order for the priests or priestesses-in-training to become professionally perfect, they keep on consulting their mentor for another two more years.

In Africa particularly in the west, the traditional priests or priestesses have very important roles to play and for one to be able to perform them satisfactorily one needs to go through intensive training; else, one will fail to get the recognition of the society. Among the roles are medicine man or woman and religious leader.

A traditional priest may be a medicine man who is expected to fulfill the function of a medical doctor or herbal healer. In Africa, some diseases are bound up in mystery. A disease is believed to be rooted in the supernatural and the priest who begins by getting in constant touch with the supernatural realms through his or her deity has an effective control over diseases. While some traditional priests are very good at administering fertility herbs on barren women, others are also good at the treatment of diseases affecting children. Some specialize in the treatment of impotence among men, while others may be good at treating cases arising from accidents of all kinds.

He or she is the religious head in his society, and is charged with religious duties in the temple, shrine, or sacred grove. He or she does not only look after the “soul” of the entire community but plays a great role of the installation of chiefs. Traditionally, the priest or priestess is regarded as the next person to the chief. Although he might be a young person, he or she is still addressed as Nana (a title given to the elderly people in Akan). There are major roles that they perform in society such as witch doctor, counselor, politician, but since the focus of this study is not basically looking at the roles of traditional priest or priestess the study cannot cover all of them.

#### **4.6 Akjmyi (Graduation)**

The novice has to go through all the training experience satisfactorily before he or she is recommended by the chief priest or priestess for graduation. The novice goes through different kinds of experience each year of the training though, there is generally, a certain level one must reach before he or she is recommended for graduation. The period of graduation is described by many of the graduants as an exciting moment, because it is moment of “freedom.” The person is now free from certain limitations and prohibitions; free to eat certain foods he or she was prohibited to eat during the training; the hair can be now kept well; the dress code can now change. The wearing of certain prescribed cloths characterised the period of training is now no more. The person is now seen wearing white cloths signifying victory over all obstacles during the training.

I discovered that most of the graduation ceremonies take place in the night, because of the initiation aspect in it. Some of the activities that go on during the night, according Nana Yaa

Amoah of the Taakwadwo shrine of Brosankro are “jumping over” a bonfire. From the Akan traditional perspective, the ability of a person to walk through fire indicates the level of spiritual and intellectual competence and readiness for the task ahead. That is why in Akan community any person who is believed to be spiritually powerful is described as *Jbenfo* having been “baked” or “cooked.” They measure the level of spiritual and intellectual prowess of their leaders such as kings, elders and the *akJmfo*. That is the reason why Akan people address somebody who been able to study to the PhD level as *Jbenfo*, because it believed that the person has gone through fire. He or she has been “cooked.” The Akan people believe that if the novice is able to go through the fire successfully, the person has now become a master and can now deal with both physical and spiritual cases professionally.

Amponsah (1975:44) also explains that among the Fanti, the ceremony starts in the evening when the novice is dressed in white calico shirt with charms around the body. White clay is sprinkled on him, and there is a lot of drumming and dancing for all the priests or priestesses. At midnight the novice is sent to the sea-shore carrying a big pot containing dried chewed sugar cane pieces. Fire is set into it and flames come out as the person carries this to the seashore. This rite is known as *wonhyia* (should not meet). It is regarded as a taboo for the novice and his or her attendants to meet anybody on the way when he or she is being led to the shore. If one meets them accidentally the novice is bathed with water and the clothes are changed and new ones are used to dress him or her up. The person is then brought home. The following day is a day of rejoicing and sacrifices to the god.

In some places such as Brosankro, logs are collected, a fire is kindled, and the assembled priests jump over the fire in turns. The hair of the new priest is shaved off and the old priest or priestess inspects the head of the new priest and takes off spiritually any bad thing he or she might discover. The relatives of the new priest or priestess come to thank the old priestesses and sacrifices are performed to the gods. Sometimes the old priest or priestess demands a fee for the training. The fee presented to the instructor usually amounts to six pounds plus a bottle of gin. When I inquired about the “meagerness” of this amount in the face of present economic changes, my informant said that these have changed. Now instead of charging the graduate to pay any specific amount, they ask him or her to thank her with any appreciable amount.

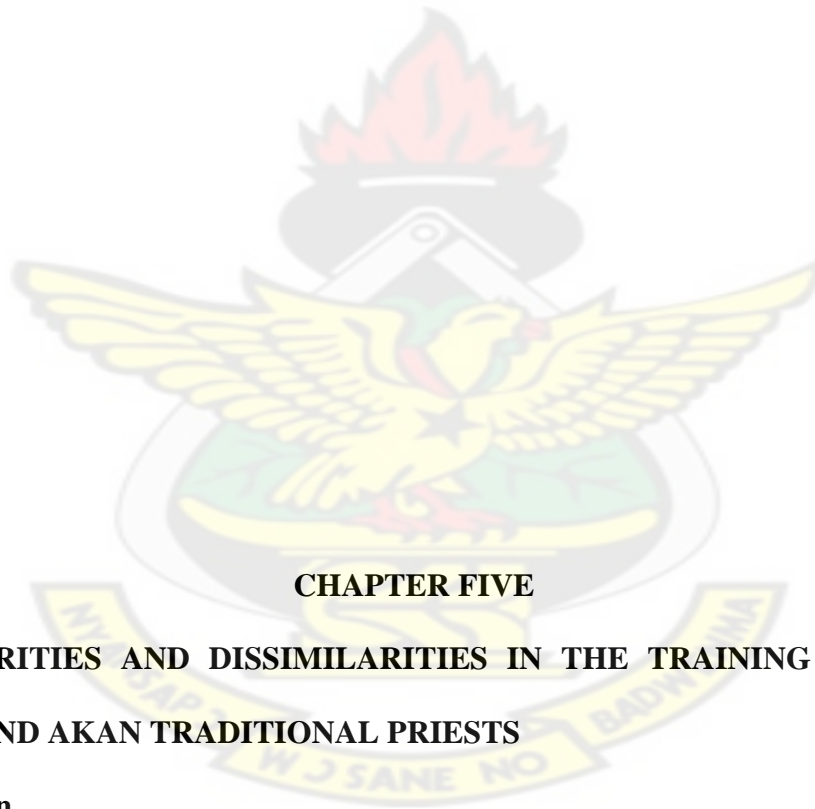
#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In West Africa, especially among the Akan of Ghana priests or priestesses are moralists-men and women of respectable character who have to observe taboos of the gods. They have to be morally and ritually cleansed before communing with an object of worship. To be able to know the taboos and how to observe them effectively to avoid incurring the wrath of the gods needs well-structured training. The training helps the novice to be able to interpret the deity well and relate well with the people he or she serves.

From what has been written so far about the kind of training traditional priests or priestesses go through before graduation, one may agree with Sarpong,( interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009, at his residence) when he suggested that many Christian priest or priestess are “joking” so far as the training of religious leaders are concerned.

It is an undeniable fact that there is something precious and unique in the method of training of traditional priests or priestesses, for example the kind of discipline involved in the training is the kind churches need to adopt and make use of in the training of the clergy. The next chapter focuses on the similarities and dissimilarities in the training of the AIC prophets and Akan traditional priests.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES IN THE TRAINING OF THE AIC PROPHETS AND AKAN TRADITIONAL PRIESTS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous two chapters explored the training of African Indigenous Christian prophets and Akan traditional priests. Some Ghanaians, both Christians and non- Christians conceive some ideas that the African Indigenous Church prophets do not have any formal training like the Missionary Established Churches - Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian ; and



if they have at all, there may be no difference between their training and that of the Akan *ak]mfo*. This assumption exists because some of the practices of the African Indigenous Church prophets are similar to that of the Akan traditional priests. This chapter therefore seeks to find out the similarities and dissimilarities in the training of the AIC prophets and Akan *ak]mfo* (traditional priests).

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### 5.1 Similarities

The information gathered has shown that there are some similarities in the training of the AIC prophets and the Akan traditional priests. The research has revealed that in Akan priesthood, individuals do not become *ak]mfo*, by their own accord. Ekem (2008:48) seems to support this view when he says, Akan community has criteria for measuring a genuine call into the priesthood and it is the deity who chooses the novice. Ekem further reveals that, the initiative rests entirely with the deities. The choice is centred on deities themselves regarding who should become their priests or priestesses. For that reason, a person cannot by his or her own effort become a priest, or work his or her own way into the priesthood, and thus expect to be accorded the recognition and honour due to priests and priestesses. One will be accorded the recognition and honour due to the *ak]mfo* by the community if only he or she has been chosen. This will solely depend on the deity who has chosen the person.

The first question Akan people ask, when one is seen possessed is *]bosom b[n na afa no?* (Which deity has possessed him or her) This question has to be answered by normally a senior and experienced priest or priestess who is always invited to come and confirm before one would

be accepted for training as a priest or priestess. In other words, among the Akan, the entire community takes part in authenticating one's call into the priesthood, before one even starts the training. The community takes part from the beginning to the graduation. Hence the Akan saying, *onipa na ]mma ak]m y[ ak]m*, (It is people who make one a priest). Thus, without the support of the people or the community, though one may be chosen by a deity one cannot practise the profession. The novice needs the support from his or her close family and the entire community during and after training.

In the same way, in the African Indigenous Churches prophets as indicated in chapter two, individuals who become prophets claim (have the conviction) to have been called by God. The prophets therefore see themselves as prophets of God. The recognition and honour accorded them by their followers (the church members and those who usually go to them for help) depict the belief that they are indeed called or chosen by the Supreme deity to serve Him. It is believed that one cannot just get up and claim to be a prophet or prophetess. Any person who does this may lack recognition and honour due prophets and prophetesses by the community. All the prophets and prophetesses interviewed claimed to have been called by God.

Another similarity is what is termed as "inheritance". Both the traditional priests and the AIC prophets claim to have inherited their offices from a parent, a relative or from a senior priest in the service of the deity. However, in the case of traditional priesthood as Ekem (2008:48) explains, "the initiative rests solely with the deity and not with its human agents."

During the interview, it came to light that the chief priest or priestess can recommend someone from the family to succeed him or her if he or she finds desirable qualities in the person. In such situation the person has to be either confirmed or rejected by the deity. For instance, Nana Amponsah of Taakwadwo deity of Brosankro revealed that she inherited the deity from her late mother. At Antoa Nyamaa shrine, the *Jk]mfopanin* said that the deity normally looks through the young men in the family and selects the one who has qualities to succeed the incumbent when he becomes old or dies. Though it is believed that it is the deity that makes the choice, the family has to present the novice for acceptance and approval. When he is accepted or approved then he begins training. He will accompany the *Jk]mfopanin* to wherever he goes and participate actively in the services of the deity, such as collection of herbs and ritual bathing. Similarly, some AIC prophets in Ghana claim that they inherited their offices from their parents or relatives. For example, Akaboha Jehu-Appiah claimed that he inherited the mantle from his father who was the leader of the Musama Disco Christo Church.

It has been observed both institutions use mentoring or apprenticeship as a form of training. The mentee learns by observing and doing. With the mentorship or apprenticeship method the leader identifies a member of the family or congregation who seem to be gifted to do ministry. In Akan communities when a person is identified, it is assumed that he or she is “married” to an *Jbosom* (god), and then he or she is sent to a senior and experienced priest to be trained. During the training, the person will stay at the house of the senior priest and observe whatever he or she does. This process of training is similar to the training of the AIC prophets who learn by doing. The trainees look at what their leaders do and how they do it. They watch how the leaders receive visitors, prescribe medication, dance, interpret dreams and visions. Sometimes the leader

delegates some duties to the disciple or novice and watches him or her very closely. The leader later, either praises or does corrections when he or she goes wrong.

There is a holistic nature of the training for both traditional priests and AIC prophets. For the traditional priests the training is geared toward certain goals such as healing, divination, counseling, cultivation of virtue, physical and spiritual alertness. These goals are common with the training of the AIC prophet trainees too, though sometimes the methods may differ.

Primarily, both training seek to cultivate virtues in the trainees. With the traditional priest, the trainee is expected to be morally pure. Such a person should not have sex with any one. Any breach of moral purity could lead to either expulsion from the shrine, or a cancellation of all that has been done or starting the training all over again. The novice is charged to cultivate a disciplined character. He or she is expected to have much respect for the *Ikemofananin*. The training period is time of spiritual transformation for each novice. Such virtues are also required of a prophet trainee who is at the Bible College, Theological Seminary, doing Theological Education by Extension, or as a mentee or disciple. There are instances where mentees or disciples or students have been expelled from schools, seminaries or churches for misconducting themselves.

In addition, novices of both groups are trained to engage in a holistic healing ministry. Concerning the traditional priesthood, Ekem (2008:49) explains that, “The candidate is taught how to identify various herbs for curative and protective purposes.” Many of them become experts in medicinal herb and others go beyond herbal treatment to “meeting” pressing socio-

economic and spiritual needs of people who approach them for help. The novices of the African Indigenous Churches are also trained in the art and skill of healing and deliverance. Some prophets in the African Indigenous Churches in Ghana use medicinal herb and prayers to meet the spiritual and socio-economic needs of their clients, such as healing for any physical ailment.

Another common feature of the two institutions and their trainees is prophecy. In traditional priesthood, the art of divination offers the trainee the opportunity to communicate with the spirit world for guidance on the correct use of medicinal herbs. Through divination, the trainee receives messages from deities and other spirit powers for the benefit and admonition of inquirers. This act of transmitting messages cannot be explained in any other term than “prophecy” - a term or name which is so synonymous with the AIC prophets, because of what they are known to be or stand for; healing, deliverance and prophecy.

This calls for a high level of physical and spiritual discipline to make the trainees psychically awake, and spiritually sensitive to the promptings of deities. In both circles this condition of service is a must, and trainees indulge in long periods of fasting and prayers, to awaken and sharpen those “gifts” or skills.

Rattray is quoted by Ekem to have said that *jk/m* in Akan is a possible reference to the state of hunger arising from the act of going without food (Ekem 2008:44). The training process is described as long, quite arduous, and rigorous. During training the chief priest takes the novice through a very intense spiritual exercise to prepare him or her for the profession.

Another important aspect of the training which is common or found in these two groups is the instruction in counseling, protocol and human relations. Ekem for instance observes, on the strength of their training in human relations, the *ak]mfo* usually emerge as good counselors to whom delicate matters are referred. They function as community arbitrators and their word is taken seriously. It is almost the same with the prophets of African Indigenous Churches in Ghana. Asamoah Gyadu, a scholar in Pentecostalism and New Religious Movements, once remarked in his book that there are prophets and pastors of Pentecostal churches who identify themselves with the government functionaries (politicians) more often than their counterparts of the mainline churches do. This could be the result of their training in human relations.

There is similarity in the graduation ceremonies, which climax the training. Personal interview with chief priests of some traditional shrines among the Akan and some senior prophets of the African Indigenous Churches came out that there are certain criteria one has to satisfy in both institutions, before he or she is recommended for graduation. Nana Yaa Bea of Agona Asaman for example said that, if the novice did not satisfy the requirement she would not be recommended for graduation. “The number of years of training would depend on satisfying the conditions by the novice. Some would spend two, others three and some as long as eight years.” “When the trainee has met all requirements for the priesthood, a day is fixed for the *ak]myi* (graduation ceremony). This ceremony is usually witnessed by the entire traditional community, and it marks the beginning of a new era in the life of the *Jk]mfo* after graduating Ekem (2008:51-52).



Similarly, the AIC have some requirements to satisfy before they can be recommended for graduation. According to Nana Yaa Bea (interviewed on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2009) “It is only the senior prophets who recommend the trainee for graduation.” She also said that the senior prophet critically examines the trainee very closely for some period, to make sure that the trainee has satisfied the requirements before he or she (the senior prophet) has laid down and then recommends the trainee for training. Prophet Jones said that, “many prophets are not doing well in the field now because they either could not go through the training or did not satisfy the requirements. Many of such prophets are claiming they were trained by God. In Ghana today they form the majority group in the AICs.

## **5.2 Dissimilarities**

Whereas the traditional Akan communities have rigid criteria for measuring a genuine call into the traditional priesthood, it is not so among the AICs. In the traditional community, Ekem (2008:47) says, that, “there must, principally, be evidence of possession by a particular deity who desires to enlist the possessed individual in its service. This is determined by an experienced priest or priestess who is familiar with the characteristics of the deity.”

Such “evidence of possession by a deity” is not mentioned at all in the prophethood in AICs (and in ministerial training in Christian circles in general). Perhaps, the major yardstick for measuring a genuine call into the prophethood among the AICs would be the gift of healing and performance of miracles. Other criteria may be the cultivation of Christian virtues and one’s commitment to church activities.

Whereas training is indispensable in traditional priesthood, it is not always the case with prophethood among African Indigenous Churches. One may conjecture to explain that, the Christian minister and for that matter, some of the prophets in African Indigenous Churches might think that if one can read the “Scriptures” that is enough for sufficient instruction. However, the only alternative left for the traditional priest is the oral or verbal instruction, which could be received or obtained only through the period of training, which is between three to seven years.

Whereas the would-be *Ik/mfo* is given regular ritual baths in order to see visions and hear spiritual voices to facilitate possession by and communication with the deity, the would-be prophet is not bathed, neither is he or she expected to experience possession by the Holy Spirit (God). What facilitates the would-be prophet’s communication with God are regular study of the scriptures, prayer and fasting. (Though bathing may be used as a method of healing the sick in some African Indigenous Churches).

Whilst the traditional novice is to allow the hair to grow and left uncut through the period of training, as a mark of dedication to the deity, the would-be prophet is expected to shave and appear pleasantly. Though dedication and commitment to the work of God is demanded from the trainee, the uncut hair is never the mark. Again whilst cultic dancing is much pronounced during training and graduation ceremony of the traditional priest, this is nothing to talk about among the prophet-trainee of the AICs

### **5.3 Conclusion**

It can be therefore concluded that though there are similarities, their *modus operandi* are not the same when the trainings are critically compared. All traditional priests go through mentorship training, which is the only means of training for the traditional priest. On the contrary the AIC prophets have various forms from which to choose. They may be trained at theological institutions, seminaries or pursue Theological Education by Extension (TEE) or be mentored by senior prophet. The trainings have some similarities but the methods are not same. They may operate on a similar line but that does not mean that they have exactly the same training. The objectives and the contents or substance are not the same.

The logo of KNUST (Kwame Nnamani University of Science and Technology) is centered in the background. It features a yellow eagle with its wings spread, perched on a green shield. Above the eagle is a black mortar and pestle, and above that is a red flame. The entire emblem is set within a circular border containing the university's name in Swahili: 'NYANSAPU WJ SANE NO BADWENNI'.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter sums up the findings and gives some recommendations.

#### **6.1 Summary of Findings**

Generally, the AICs have been defined by scholars as churches that have been established, funded and managed by Africans. Contrary to this definition, it was discovered that some of the

AICs were not established by Africans but rather Black Americans. Also some of the AICs have enjoyed financial support from foreign missionaries. A typical example is the Mennonite Missionary Board's financial assistance through the Weavers to The Church of the Lord to establish the Good News Theological Seminary at Oyibi to train the leaders, the prophets and the prophetesses of the AICs in Ghana.

The researcher found out that the AIC prophets and prophetesses go through some forms of training. The AIC prophets and prophetesses in Ghana are given "on the job" training through mentoring or the discipleship method. Twenty-one out of 35 AIC prophets and prophetesses interviewed for this study claimed that they have been trained by a senior prophet or prophetess. They felt proud to have sat at the feet of their mentors. Some of them in addition to the "on the job" training have gone for further training at the Good News Theological College and Seminary, Apostolic and Prophetic Training Institute and Agabus Prophetic Training School. Eight of the prophets and prophetesses interviewed said they were trained at the Good News Theological College, two at Apostolic and Prophetic Training Institute, one at Agabus Prophetic Training School and three at other colleges. Others said they were trained at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Christian Service University College, Maranatha University College and other Bible colleges.

The Conference of African Indigenous Churches in 1970 saw that the AIC prophets and prophetesses were not respected educationally because many of them could not express themselves well, theologically. The Conference therefore resolved that Theological Education by Extension should be the starting point for the training of the AIC prophets and prophetesses to

improve their competence. Consequently, Theological Education by Extension has been the most common type of theological training many AIC prophets and prophetesses go through because of its accessibility and flexibility. The Good News Theological Seminary for instance has trained 200 AIC prophets and prophetesses. Currently the College has 35 AICs prophets and prophetesses in training through the TEE programme (Oduro interviewed on phone on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2009).

It was also discovered that the training of Akan traditional priests and priestesses is very important. One has to go through a well-structured training before he or she can enjoy the recognition of being called *ak]mfo* (priest or priestess). Inability for one to go through each stage of the training successfully results in one restarting the training or dismissal. Thus the trainees take the lessons seriously. They submit to the instructions of their mentors, because the completion of the training of the trainee depends only on the trainer–mentor. He or she recommends the trainee for graduation. It is the duty of the senior or the experienced priest or priestess to observe the trainee closely to see how he or she relates to the deities as well as human visitors to the shrine, how he or she administers herbs, dances to various tunes of drums and songs and above all his or her ability to interpret the deity. When the senior or the experienced priest or priestess is satisfied with his or her performance, he or she recommends the trainee for graduation. No other person has the prerogative to recommend apart from the high priest or priestess.

The study has also brought to the fore that, there are some affinities in the training of AIC prophets and prophetesses and Akan traditional *ak]mfo* but the approaches are not the same. The

training of the Akan traditional priests or priestesses is found to be more intensive, focused and “risky” as compared to that of the AIC prophets and prophetesses. It was also discovered that the training of *ak]mfo* is very extensive and demanding. The little mistake one makes may cause his or her withdrawal or back to the starting point of the training or to some extent death. Similarly, if the AIC prophet or prophetess in training misbehaves towards his or her senior prophet or prophetess, he or she is either “sacked” from the training or given extension of the training period.

It was discovered that majority of the AIC prophets and prophetesses in Ghana who claim to have had theological education and training may have attended three or six months training at unaccredited Bible colleges usually established by the leader. For instance, a prophet interviewed at Effiduase, Ashanti has, an Honourary Doctorate degree from one of these colleges. It was later discovered through the interview that he could not even complete Junior High school (JHS). The educational level of some lecturers in such colleges is low; in one of such institutions it was discovered that the highest qualification among the lecturers was Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE).

The researcher discovered that at the Good News Theological College and Seminary, many of the AIC prophets and prophetesses who start the TEE programme are not able to complete within the stipulated period. The authorities do not “force” them to complete the programme within the stipulated two year period, because majority of the AIC prophets and prophetesses hold Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) or Basic Education Examination Certificate (BECE) and find academic work difficult. Furthermore, their main concern is their churches and not academic



work. Thus, they spend greater part of the time on counseling, deliverance, revivals and prayer sessions. Consequently, the college authorities allow such students to work at their own pace.

It was discovered that many AICs were formed out of misunderstanding between the trainee and the senior prophet and prophetess who is training him or her. As a result of that many of the AIC prophets interviewed said they could not graduate because they were not recommended by the senior prophets and prophetesses. Some of them claimed to have been dismissed by the senior prophets and prophetesses or stopped under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The main cause of their inability to go through the training was intolerance on the part of both the trainers and the trainees. It was discovered that majority of the AIC prophets and prophetesses found it difficult to submit to authority or obey instructions. They sometimes claim to be more “powerful” than their trainers or mentors. And many of them see training under a senior prophet or in an institution as not important for the prophetic ministry. Such prophets and prophetesses claim it is the Lord himself who directs them, and not a senior prophet or prophetess.

It was further discovered that poverty has been one of the factors that has made many AIC prophets and prophetesses incapable of enrolling at Bible colleges or theological institutions. As a result of the high level of poverty, many of the AIC prophets and prophetesses have little or no theological education. Greater numbers of the AIC members are illiterates, people of the low class and disadvantaged who normally believe their predicaments were caused by some forces, mainly witchcraft. In Ghana, the poverty level of such groups of people is high. This has affected the finances of some AIC prophets though some in the contemporary AICs are financially sound.

In spite of the availability of training institutions in Ghana for the AIC prophets and prophetesses, it came to light that many AIC prophets and prophetesses are not taking advantage of these institutions to improve their professional competence. Mediocrity has made some of the prophets and prophetesses to refuse seeking formal and theological education like ministers of Mission-established churches. As a result, the majority of the AIC prophets and prophetesses are not theologically balanced.

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## **6.2 Recommendations.**

From the discussions in the previous chapters, we recommend that:

- (a) Since there are some similarities between the training of the AIC prophets and prophetesses and Akan traditional priests and priestesses, the study of the African cultural beliefs and practices should be part of the training programme for the AIC prophet and prophetess going to work among African people.
- (b) For AICs to take theological education or training seriously the curriculum should be suitable to the educational level of the AICs prophets and prophetesses. It should be down-to-earth and Africa-oriented.
- (c) There are theological training institutions in Ghana to train AIC prophets and prophetesses. They should take advantage of them to correct the misleading perception created about them in this country concerning their quality of training.

- (d) The AIC leadership in Ghana should sign a Memorandum of Understanding with established ministerial training institutions to train their prophets and prophetesses. Examples of such institutions are Christian Service University College in Kumasi and Agabus Prophetic Institute in Koforidua where in addition to the English Language Akan is used as the medium of instruction.
- (e) The TEE programme should be strengthened in theological training institutions in the country to attract more AIC prophets and prophetesses, since through TEE programme, they can have enough time to take care of their churches and at the same time study.
- (f) The AICs should begin to consider awarding scholarships to young prophets and prophetesses to attract them for institutionalised training. This will enable them to get balanced and competent prophets and prophetesses.
- (g) The AIC leadership should begin to organise workshops to educate their prophets and prophetesses on the need for theological training for effective ministry in the contemporary world.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

It is appropriate to point out here that this work cannot claim to have addressed all the issues on the training of AIC prophets and prophetesses and Akan traditional priests and priestesses. With

the media focus on prophets and prophetesses in Ghana in recent times, some of them were unwilling to disclose how they were trained and some were not prepared to be interviewed.

It is clear from this study that the AIC prophets and prophetesses have some forms of training and training institutes, but majority of them are not taking advantage of these training programmes. The reason why they are not taking advantage of these facilities could be the focus of another research. Equally worth researching is the reason why majority of the AIC prophets and prophetesses who opted for institutionalised training could not successfully complete the programme.

